

## **DESK RESEARCH: LATVIA**

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## **1. DEFINITIONS**

**Ethnicity:** According to the sociologist Max Weber, ethnicity can be defined as a group of people which has a subjective belief to be of common decent. This belief is based on similarities in habits and customs or on shared memories of colonization and migration. Beyond this subjective belief there is no need for a „real” connectedness between the group members e.g. trough family ties. Furthermore, ethnicity is not only a belief in one’s own decent or history, but also a method to construct and categorize otherness. According to these categories of otherness, the behaviour of one group to another is determined, e.g. nation states grant or withhold social, political, and economic rights. Thus, ethnicity is a social construct with severe social implications.

**Violence:** An action that purposely harms the physical and psychological integrity of another person, this may include insults, sexual harassment, social exclusion, physical aggression, racial slurs, continuous bullying etc.

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF CONTEXT**

### ***A DESCRIPTION OF LATVIA’S EDUCATION SYSTEM***

#### **1. General information<sup>1</sup>**

The Latvian state guarantees equal rights to an education to every citizen and permanent resident of Latvia, anyone who has the right to hold a non-citizen’s passport, as issued by the Republic of Latvia, anyone who has a permanent residency permit in Latvia, and anyone who is a citizen of the European Union and has been given a temporary residency permit.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.izm.gov.lv/defaultx.aspx?tabID=20&id=550&lang=1>.

## **2. Basic education**

Children usually begin their basic education during the course of the year when they will turn seven years old. They continue until the age of 16. In certain cases, the basic education can continue until the age of 18. Basic education in Latvia is mandatory, and the education programme lasts for nine years. The mandatory content of the education programme is specified by national standards which also cover preschool activities.

The aim of the basic education is to allow young people to gain the basic knowledge and skills that are needed in life and in one's surrounding society. The aim is also to allow young people to make their way through value systems which exist in their world.

The education programmes are implemented by educational institutions which are called **elementary schools**. The first four years of the programme can also be handled by **primary schools**. High schools, too, can offer the full basic education programme. Other institutions which can do so are known as trade schools, special educational institutions, evening (shift) schools, residential schools, institutions for social or pedagogical adjustment and education, or other education institutions in which the basic education programme is instituted in full or in part.

In primary school (grades 1 to 4), children are not given grades with respect to their knowledge and skills. From the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and forward, knowledge and skills are graded on a 10-point scale.

When students complete elementary school, they take centralised examinations, the number and content of which are defined by the Ministry of Education and Science. Those who pass all of their subjects and all of the national tests receive a certificate to confirm their basic education and the grades which they received.

Evaluations in those subject areas in which there is a centralised examination are confirmed in basic education certificates.

These documents allow young people to continue their education in education programmes at the secondary level.

If a student has not been given a grade in a subject area or a national exam, he or she receives a report card. This allows the student to enrol in professional basic or trade education programmes.

### 3. Secondary education

There are two kinds of education programmes at the secondary level in Latvia – the general and the professional secondary education. General education programmes are academic in nature, their aim is to prepare students for ongoing studies in the future. Professional secondary education programmes are more aimed at professional skills, helping students to enter the job market and/or to pursue a further education. When students are admitted to secondary education programmes, educational institutions can insist on entrance examinations in accordance with basic education standards. They may not, however, examine students on subjects in which they have already received their basic education certificate.

The mandatory content of the general secondary education programme is defined by national standards in this area. General secondary education programmes are offered in the following areas:

- A general education, which is offered without any specifically emphasised subjects of study;
- The humanities and social sciences direction, where the education programme particularly accents subjects in those areas;
- The mathematics, natural sciences and technologies direction, where the education programme particularly accents subjects in those areas;
- The professional direction, where the education programme particularly accents a professional area (art, music, business, sports, etc.).

In all of the aforementioned cases, there are eight subjects of study that are mandatory for everyone. Each programme direction has three to six other subjects that are mandatory. Schools can offer various electives, and these can account for 10 to 15% of a student's time at school. There can also be opportunities for a more in-depth study of one of the mandatory subjects. The general secondary education programme in a specific direction can also be merged with a minority education programme, including the student's native minority language, as well as courses which have to do with the identity of ethnic minorities and their integration into Latvia's society.

General education programmes are implemented at **high schools** and **gymnasiums**. High schools are institutions where the full basic education programme, too, is offered. Gymnasiums usually offer only the general secondary education

programme, although they sometimes accept students from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade forward. Gymnasiums must offer at least two or three educational programme directions. Students in a single class follow a single education programme.

Centralised exams are mandatory for students who wish to graduate their secondary education programme. The content and procedures related to these exams are defined by the Ministry of Education and Science and approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. Would-be grads have to take five centralised examinations. One subject is defined by the ministry, the second is determined on the basis of the programme direction which the student has been following, the third is determined by the school, and the fourth and fifth can be selected by the student himself or herself.

Students who have received a grade in all of their subject areas and in the national exams receive a certificate of secondary education and a printout of their grades. Assessment in those areas of study in which there is an organised centralised exam is confirmed in a general secondary education certificate.

These documents, which confirm the completion of a general secondary education, allow the student to continue his or her education at the level of higher education. If the student has not received a grade in a subject of study or on one of the national exams, he or she receives a report card.

#### **4. Vocational secondary education**

The aim in professional education is to allow the student to continue with his or her education after being graduated from the basic education programme or from high school. Students are given a chance to develop initial professional qualifications, to develop themselves for professional ongoing education, or to gain the right to go on to a higher education. Professional education institutions offer education programmes in all areas of economic activity.

The modern job market places serious demands on people – good contact skills, knowledge about maths, the natural sciences and the social sciences, skills in foreign languages, and the ability to use modern information technologies. All of these are subjects that are covered in the relevant education programmes. During a professional education, moreover, there is a serious focus on business development, environmental protection, intercultural issues, and self-development among young people – these are all subjects which help students to develop a successful life and career. The teaching

process is organised so that theoretical lectures intermingle with practical activities in workshops and laboratories. Students in their later years of study can also serve internships at companies or institutions.

The content of professional secondary education programmes is determined in a standard on the subject, but also in professional standards. The professional secondary education programmes are implemented in accordance with all areas of economic activity in Latvia.

A professional secondary education is available at **trade schools** and **trade high schools**.

Trade schools offer professional basic education programmes which last up to three years. There are also trade education programmes which last for two or three years. In both cases, students are admitted if they have completed their basic education. In some exceptional cases this is not necessary, but in that case the student can be admitted no sooner than during the calendar year when he or she turns 15. Those who have not completed their full basic education by the age of 15 can complete their studies in the content of the basic education programme once they have been admitted to the trade school. This is done in parallel with the professional training which the student undergoes.

The difference between the two programmes is that professional basic education programmes are aimed at professional preparedness which will allow the student to handle very simple tasks, those that correspond to the lowest level of professional qualifications (*Level one — skills and knowledge are learned at an educational institution or in practical work. This level of professional preparedness allows the individual to handle very simple tasks under the supervision of others.*) The trade education programmes for people who have completed their basic education are aimed at the second level of professional qualifications, knowledge and skills (*Level two – preparedness which allows the individual to do the work of a qualified worker independently. The individual is responsible for his or her work, which is done in accordance with instructions, and is able to work in a group.*)

The content of trade education programmes integrate general subjects at a level which allows graduates to continue their education in professional secondary education programmes where they can achieve a level of knowledge and skills which corresponds to the third level of professional qualifications. Alternatively, graduates can continue their education in a general secondary education course which is aimed at

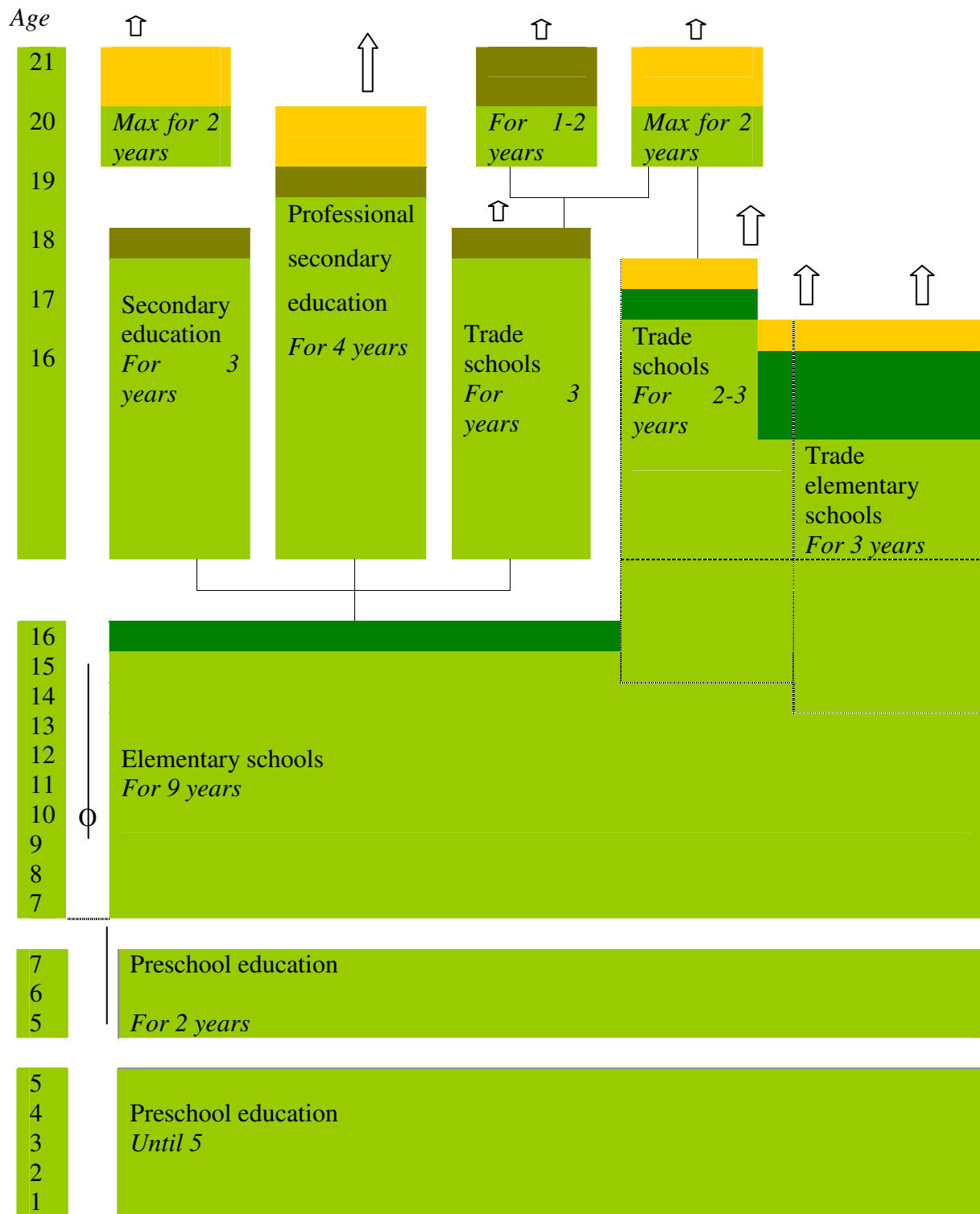
allowing them to catch up with students who completed their general secondary education earlier. This course lasts for one year, and successful graduates can then pursue a higher education.

A trade high school (sometimes known as a *trade gymnasium* or *technical school*) offers professional secondary education programmes which last for four years after the student has completed his or her mandatory basic education, or one to two years after the student has completed a trade education.

Professional secondary education programmes are focused on the knowledge and skills that are needed for the third level of professional qualifications (*Level three – preparedness which allows the individual to do work which involves planning and organisation of the work. After gaining practical work experience, the individual can take responsibility for the distribution of resources and the work of other workers.*) The professional secondary education programme covers subjects from the basic education programme at a level which allows graduates to pursue a higher education.

Table 1 shows the general secondary education system in Latvia.

TABLE 1. GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM IN LATVIA



Data source: Home Page of Ministry of Education and Science

## **MINORITY EDUCATION**

### **Language of instruction**

Classes at all state and local government education institutions are taught in the state language – Latvian. Education in other languages is available at private education institutions, as well as those state and local government education institutions where minority education programmes are being pursued. The state language is taught in all cases, including those when a student is pursuing his or her basic or secondary education in another language. The Latvian language examination is administered in accordance with national rules.

Government-financed secondary education in Latvia is offered in eight minority languages – Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Ukrainian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Roma and Belarusian. In 2004/2005, there were 724 schools in Latvia in which classes were taught in Latvian, 155 schools where classes were taught in Russian (a bilingual education programme is being offered in those schools), and 108 where classes were taught in Latvian and in Russian (these are dual flow schools where there are both Latvian and minority classes). There are four schools where classes are taught in Polish, and one apiece where students study in Ukrainian and Belarusian. At one Estonian and one Lithuanian school, certain subjects are taught in the minority language. The Roma language is taught as an elective at two schools.

**TABLE 2. NUMBER OF SCHOOLS BY LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION**

School year	Total	Latvian	Russian	Dual flow schools - Latvian/Russian	Polish	Ukrainian	Belorussian
2004. /05.	<b>993</b>	<b>724</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
2003. /04.	<b>1009</b>	<b>729</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
2002. /03.	<b>1017</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
2001. /02.	<b>1029</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
2000. /01.	<b>1037</b>	<b>724</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
1999./00.*	<b>1057</b>	<b>727</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>* 2</b>
1998. /99.	<b>1074</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	

\* int. al. 1 Lithuanian school

Data source: Home page of *Ministry of Education and Science*.

<http://www.izm.gov.lv/default.aspx?tabID=20&id=550&lang=5>

Over the last 10 years, there has been an increase in demand for an education in Latvian, and there has been a correspondingly lower level of demand for an education in Russian. In 2003/2004, 74.4% of preschool children began their studies in Latvian, and in the 2004/2005 school year that percentage was up to 75.2%. This is mostly because non-Latvian parents increasingly want their kids to have an education which will later offer them greater opportunities to study at the university level and to become more competitive in the labour market.

TABLE 3. NUMBER OF STUDENTS BY LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

School year	1995/ 1996	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005
Latvian	203 607	239 163	242 475	242 183	237 425	230 212	214 855
Russian	132 540	120 925	116 009	108 454	101 486	95 841	84 559
Other minority*	1513	1344	1344	1352	1397	1305	1253
Total	337 660	361 432	359 818	351 989	340 308	327 358	300 667
Study in Latvian (%)	60.3	66.2	67.4	68.8	69.8	70.3	71.5

\* Study language in most minority schools is Latvian or Russian.

Data source: *Ministry of Education and Science*

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL MINORITY STUDENTS BY NATIONALITY

School year	Russians	Belorussians	Poles	Ukrainians	Lithuanians	Roma	Jews	Estonians
2003/04	75 144	5494	5314	4184	2455	1508	676	162
2002/03	78 345	6844	5546	4326	2512	1591	723	178
2001/02	83 686	6464	5742	4690	2649	1317	762	183
2000/01	88 506	6702	6090	5219	2757	1187	867	166
1999/00	91 745	6910	6081	5158	2707	1067	877	176

Data source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2003 (Ministry of Education and Science)

Table 5. COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL STUDENTS PERCENTAGE BY NATIONALITY (%)

School year	Latvians	Russians	Belo-russians	Poles	Ukrainians	Lithuanians	Roma	Jews	Estonians
2003/04	68.9	24.1	1.8	1.7	1.3	0.8	0.5	0.2	0.1
2002/03	68.5	24.1	2.1	1.7	1.3	0.8	0.5	0.2	0.1
2001/02	68.0	24.5	1.9	1.7	1.4	0.8	0.4	0.2	0.1
2000/01	68.0	25.7	1.97	1.8	1.5	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.1
1999/00	66.2	26.4	2.0	1.8	1.5	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.1

Data source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2003 (Ministry of Education and Science)

### 3. LEGISLATION REGARDING INTEGRATION OF MINORITIES IN SCHOOLS

Following legislative documents regarding the education of ethnic minorities have been passed by the Latvian Parliament (Saeima):

- Satversme (Constitution) of the Republic of Latvia (1918);
- Law On Education (1998);
- Law On General Education (1999).

Republic of Latvia has also adopted several international documents regulating the education of ethnic minorities:

- UNO General Declaration On Human Rights (1948);
- UNESCO Convention On Discrimination In Education (1978);
- European Council General Convention On The Protection of Ethnic Minorities and extended report (1995).

#### **Development of education system for ethnic minorities in Latvia (1990 – 2005)**

Until 1995 actually two systems of schools existed: education institutions with the Latvian language of instruction and education institutions with the Russian language of instruction. From 1990 till 1992 the first ethnic minority schools (Riga Polish

Secondary School, Riga Ukrainian Secondary School, Daugavpils Polish Secondary School) and classes (Lithuanians, Estonians, Roma) were established.

In 1995 the first amendments to legislation concerning education of ethnic minorities were made (*Amendments to the Law On Education*), determining that in general basic education 2 subjects shall be studied in the state language and in general secondary education 3 subjects shall be studied in the state language. A request was addressed to international organizations asking for assistance in the implementation of the requirements set by legislation, i.e., to work out suggestion and methodic for education in Latvian in Russian schools.

In 1996 the activities of National programme for Latvian Language Training (LVAVP) commenced. The main target of these activities were to prepare teachers and teaching resources for teaching Latvian language in Russian schools.

From 1998 teachers of the schools for ethnic minorities are required to prove the achievement of the advanced level in the attestation of the state language skills (there are three levels to evaluate the language proficiency). Also a new legislation on education was adopted in 1998: the Law on Education anent to minority education (int.al. schools with education in Russian language) determines the use of language in the process of education.

In 1999 implementation of education programmes for ethnic minorities was introduced, determining the use of two languages – Latvian and ethnic minority's – for the acquisition of curriculum. Transition to bilingual approach in teaching and learning has been commenced in basic education, setting a 3 year transitional stage.

In 2001 in jurisdiction of Ministry of Education and Science the Consultative Council for Ethnic Minorities' Education Affairs was established and 4 centres of bilingual education were set up (in Daugavpils, Liepaja, Riga, Rezekne).

In 2003 Cabinet of Ministers revised a model programme of general secondary education, stipulating the use of state language and ethnic minority's language ratio for acquiring subjects (60% in the state language, 40% in the ethnic minority's language).

In 2004 it has been envisaged to commence the implementation of the requirements set by the state in grade 10 (i.e. up to 60% of the total curriculum of general secondary education must be acquired in the state language in the education programmes for ethnic minorities), setting a 3 year transitional stage.

### **Transitional stages in the education for ethnic minorities**

There are several important transitional stages in the development of basic and secondary education of ethnic minorities:

#### Basic education:

- from the school year of 1995/1996 – studying of at least 2 subjects in the state language;
- from the school year of 1999/2000 – bilingual teaching and learning in grade 1;
- from the school year of 2002/2003 – bilingual teaching and learning in grades 1-9.

#### Secondary education:

- from the school year of 1995/1996 – studying of at least 3 subjects in the state language;
- from the school year of 2004/2005 – in 10<sup>th</sup> grade 60% of subjects must be taught in the state language and 40% in the ethnic minority's language;
- from the school year of 2007/2008 - from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade 60% of subjects must be taught in the state language and 40% in the ethnic minority's language.

### **State guarantees for the education of ethnic minorities**

The Latvian state has declared the following principles for the education of ethnic minorities:

- The possibility to acquire basic education and to learn the native language at the same time, to keep and develop the cultural values, shall be provided for the residents representing ethnic minorities who are at the age of compulsory schooling.

- The bilingual approach used in the implementation of general basic and general secondary education programmes for the acquisition of curriculum enhances competitiveness in the labour market, ensuring not only the knowledge, but also skills to use both languages in different situations.
- The implementation of education policy for ethnic minorities facilitates the integration of the society of Latvia, providing guarantees for the rights of ethnic minorities and ensuring the requirements set by international documents.

### **Main areas of activities in the education for ethnic minorities**

Since the restoration of independence of Latvia the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science in collaboration with several other state and non-governmental actors has carried out many activities around the following main areas:

- development of education programmes for ethnic minorities;
- development of bilingual education methodology;
- training of teacher trainers of bilingual education methodology;
- provision of teaching and learning resources for bilingual education;
- devising of teaching and learning resources for the subjects of social studies as for a single and uniform cycle of social studies;
- conceptual and content development of a programme for citizenship education
- promotion of intercultural education;
- facilitation of cooperation among education institutions;
- teacher pre-service and in-service training;
- development of the assessment system of educational achievements.

### **General education programme models for ethnic minorities**

Since 1999 each educational institution has the possibility to choose one of the four general minority basic education programme models offered by the state. In following the proposed models are characterised.

### Model 1

- In grade 9 teaching and learning mainly takes place in the Latvian language, the acquisition of the ethnic minority's language and literature is provided in the form of separate subjects.
- Depending on parents' wishes, the education institution provides the possibilities for keeping national culture.

### Model 2

- In grade 9 the state language and ethnic minority's language is purposefully used for the acquisition of curriculum.
- The possibility to take national examinations and tests in any of the two languages of instruction is provided for students.
- The acquisition of the ethnic minority's language and literature provided in the form of separate subjects.
- Depending on parents' wishes, the education institution provides the possibilities for keeping national culture.

### Model 3

- In grade 9 – a gradual transition from teaching and learning in the ethnic minority's language to Latvian language is being implemented.
- The acquisition of the ethnic minority's language and literature provided in the form of separate subjects.
- Depending on parents' wishes, the education institution provides the possibilities for keeping national culture.

### Model 4

- In grade 9 at least 10 - 11 subjects are studied in the state language or bilingually; at the beginning in grades 1- 4 the language of instruction is the language of ethnic minority only

- The acquisition of the ethnic minority's language and literature provided in the form of separate subjects
- Depending on parents' wishes, the education institution provides the possibilities for keeping national culture

### Individual model

Educational institutions can also develop their own models for minority education. A programme developed by an education institution must fulfil the following conditions:

- in grade 9 the use of state language in the acquisition of curriculum shall be within 50 – 70%;
- the acquisition of the ethnic minority's language and literature provided in the form of separate subjects;
- depending on parents' wishes, the education institution provides the possibilities for keeping national culture

Below the preferences of education institutions for general basic education programme models for ethnic minorities are shown as made in 2001:

- |                    |                               |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| ○ Model 1          | 15% of education institutions |
| ○ Model 2          | 13% of education institutions |
| ○ Model 3          | 42% of education institutions |
| ○ Model 4          | 11% of education institutions |
| ○ Individual model | 19% of education institutions |

In 2002, experts who were surveyed by the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences under the auspices of a study called "Analysis of the Introduction of Bilingual Education" said that the introduction of bilingual education in elementary schools, which began in 1999, was a process that was organised in too great hurry. It was only three months before the beginning of the school year (on May 27, 1999), that the Ministry of Education and Science approved four sample education programmes for minority schools. The models were selected in a great hurry and without much

thought. Many schools chose the programme which would require the fewest changes in the existing education process.

#### **4. DESCRIPTION OF CONFLICTS IN SCHOOLS**

##### ***Education Reforms and the Problems of Ethnic Conflicts in Latvia***

Since 1999 several studies on education reforms and problems of ethnic conflicts have been carried out. The main studies in this field are following:

1) Implementation of Bilingual education policy 1999. Baltic Institute of Social Sciences.

The aim of the project is to discover the readiness of minority schools to introduce bilingual education, to study attitudes of teachers, students and their parents towards bilingual education, education reform, towards Official Language Law. Totally situation in fifty schools around all country were studied. The practical aim of the project was to develop Education policy regarding schools of minorities.

2) Analysis of the implementation of bilingual education 2002. Baltic Institute of Social Sciences.

The aim of this study was to see how successful the Education Ministry has been in implementation of bilingual education, as well as to look at the extent to which minority schools have been preparing successfully for the next phases in this process. Bilingual education has been implemented in all classes of elementary school in the 2002/2003 school year, while minority secondary schools have shift toward a system in which most classes are taught in Latvian in 2004. The study covers all of the major stakeholders in the field of education policy, including those who shape the policies and the target audience for education reforms.

3) Latvian Education reform in the context of the existing and possible models of bilingvism in Latvia: an evaluation of the dual flow schools as examples of bilingual education 2003. Baltic Institute of Social Sciences.

Short term aim of the project was to evaluate current situation at the dual flow schools in order to use the experience of the dual flow schools for accomplishment of minority education.

Long term aim of the project was to mark out possible future models of bilingual schools basing on the experience of dual flow schools and the existing and predictable bilingvism in the Latvian society.

4) Integration of minority youth in the society of Latvia in the context of the education reform, 2004. Baltic Institute of Social Sciences.

The aim of the project was to study the way in which minority education reforms have helped to shape the political views and positions of students vis-à-vis the Latvian state, its policies, their sense of belonging to the state, ethnic relationships and integration into Latvia's society. To develop an understanding of the factors which are promoting the integration of minority schoolchildren and students into Latvia's society, along with the factors, which, on the contrary, may be facilitating political dissatisfaction and more in-depth conflicts.

The studies done in this realm have shown that in analysing the attitudes of students and teachers vis-à-vis education reforms, we must separate out attitudes toward bilingual education and toward the transfer of minority high schools to a situation in which 60% of classes will be taught in Latvian and 40% will be taught in the minority language. Study done in 1999 showed that students and teachers had a positive attitude toward bilingual education, believing that it represents a compromise in terms of minority education reforms. Dominant attitudes of pupils, teachers and parents about the shift toward a system in which most classes are taught in Latvian, however, were negative.

During the latter phase of education reform implementation, negative attitudes among target groups, particularly students, have been exacerbated. In 2002, the BISS conducted a study that was called "Analysis of the Introduction of Bilingual Education" and found that 40% of students, 42% of teachers and 42% of parents supported the shift toward a system in which most classes at the high school level are taught in Latvian. In 2004, however, the transfer toward a system in which 60% of classes are taught in Latvian and 40% - in the minority language was supported only by 15% of students, 13% of parents and 30% of teachers. In interpreting these data, it is very important to keep the socio-political context of the study firmly in mind. In 2004, while the research was being conducted, there were important socio-political events in Latvia, which surrounded the education reform issue - the education law was amended, there was vast public debate about those amendments, there were various kinds of protests. In this context it has to be noted that only 10% of those students who did not take part in any protests said that they support the need for reforms.

The discourse analysis that was used in analysing qualitative data revealed the fact that students base their critical attitudes on argumentation schemes that are disseminated in private (family) and public (the mass media, schools) situations. They parrot views that have been formulated in the past. Typically, students did not analyse or reveal their own experiences and related attitudes. Instead, they used the transfer tactic in speaking about “others” who, as a result of the reforms, are losing their native Russian language and culture, as well as their competitiveness in higher education and the labour market. Young people, in other words, are confirming solidarity with their linguistic community, but on the other hand, they are also justifying their negative attitudes by shifting the responsibility on to the shoulders of “others”.

In the group discussions, students expressed the certainty that the reforms have caused inter-ethnic relations in Latvia to become harsher, thus promoting an ethnic split in the country. This idea is based on the commonly held belief among non-Latvians that those who are organizing education policies are all ethnic Latvians. This means that opposition against the political elite and its decisions indirectly manifests a dislike of the Latvian speaking community in Latvia. Survey data confirm this conclusion. When asked to agree or disagree with the statement that “over the last six months, my relations with Latvians have worsened”, 20% of students agreed, as opposed to just 8% of parents and 4% of teachers. The application of discourse analysis made it evident that at the level of ideas, negative ethnic relations result in conflicts. At the discourse level, this is identified as an ethnic conflict, but in essence it is an ethno-political conflict, because it is based more on political than purely on ethnic interests.

If we analyse statements which students made about ethnic relations, we can define two different viewpoints. Some students pointed to ethnic relations at the level of the society (the general or global level), while others spoke of ethnic relations within their own social networks (the concrete or local level). Typically, when students spoke about interethnic relations at the general level, they had negative things to say and spoke of conflicts. When speaking of their personal relations with Latvians, however, the non-Latvian young people spoke in friendly or neutral terms. This supports the assumption that conflicts in ethnic relations exist primarily at the level of political discourse and the mass media, not at the level of everyday practice.

A vivid example of the linguistic self-sufficiency of the Russian language can be found in the city of Daugavpils. The Eastern Slavic community there has greater

solidarity than is the case in Riga, because there are no significant external groups (i.e., the Latvian community) with a different discourse. This means that interethnic relations are assessed from an alienated viewpoint, from a certain social distance:

*I have noticed that there is an unhealthy attitude toward Russians in Riga. When people find out that I am a Russian, I immediately feel that I am being rejected.*  
(Daugavpils)

*It is very hard in our city to feel any negative tensions, because the Latvian population here is very small. My acquaintances tell me, though, that the criminal situation really will increase in Riga, because Russians and Latvians frequently meet, they are starting to spit in each other's faces for no reason, and that leads to fights.*  
(Daugavpils)

Participants in the discussions tended to differentiate between “Latvians” (“them”) and “Russians” (“us”). The way in which young people spoke about the two groups pointed to a polarisation in society – each group has its own discourse.

Young respondents described ethnic relations on the basis of their own, individual experience. We can define two types of relations. The comments made by young people when asked about their experience with ethnic relations do fall into these two basic types, and this indicates that the principles of binary logic are in place when it comes to attitudes and evaluations among young people in the area of interethnic contacts.

First of all, there is the issue of conflicting ethnic relations. Researchers took note of a xenophobic discourse among the surveyed young people – intolerance, dislike of Latvians as an external group, as aliens. Respondents interpreted Latvian attitudes in a way which suggests that Latvian attitudes vis-à-vis Russians are also xenophobic. There was a very distinct division between “us” and “them”:

*More than 50% of the people in Bolderāja are Russians. If you've lived there your whole life, then it is easy for you to live there, you know everyone, no one will touch you. God forbid, however, if a stranger arrives. God forbid! We have problems with Latvians. In our neighbourhood they are hated, they are disliked, they are not respected. (Students, Riga, Group 1)*

*We are people of our own specific kind, we know how to stand up for ourselves, and she [the homeroom teacher of the class, an ethnic Latvian] understands us. She is the only one who does. I have tried to find common ground with Latvians, yes, and most often I have found it, but I have been successful only until the moment when they*

*have quietly and properly put me down. Then I came to understand that those people are not of my breed. (Riga, Group 1)*

The statements by the young people suggest that ethnic relations between the two largest communities in Latvia have become more fraught in the context of education reforms. The following statements make it perfectly clear that at the level of discourse, the reforms are associated with Latvians.

*Since the meetings, there has been increased negativity in relations between Russians and Latvians. I have friends in Mežciems and Purvciems, there are harsher conflicts there. (..) The same was true before the reforms, but since the reforms were instituted, there has been increased negativity vis-à-vis the Latvian community. (Students, Riga, Group 2)*

*I am scared about the fact that the community is no longer patient. Now [i.e., after the protest demonstrations; the discussion took place on February 23, 2004] there can be ultimatums. The day is not far off when certain groups of Latvians and Russians will become carried away with nationalism, may pick up weapons and create conflicts. (Students, Riga, Group 2)*

*If someone attacks me or my family, if I have to protect myself and my relatives, then I will go and fight. This is an issue of survival, no longer is it an issue of language or ethnicity. It is purely a matter of survival. It is a movement that cannot be controlled. There has been an emotional push because of ethnic considerations, and this can no longer be controlled. (Students, Riga, Group 2)*

Second, there is the issue of friendly ethnic relations. It was interesting that some respondents who were talking about relations with Latvians and saying that mutual understanding is usually present in those relations actually applied the concept of friendship to an “us” group which involved both Latvians and Russians. Another respondents, however, differentiated between “us” and “them”. There were respondents who had weak links of interaction with Latvians – they spoke of Latvians who are acquaintances. Respondents, who used the “us” form, had strong interactive links. They talked about Latvians who were their friends.

*I have lots and lots of Latvian friends, I have attended countless events at which most of the people are Latvians, and we have always found common ground. There have been lots of Latvian girls, I have had normal conversations with them, there haven't been any problems. (Students, Riga, Group 1)*

*I have outstanding contacts with Latvians. I have lots of friends and acquaintances. My best friend is a Latvian. (...) We work together to organise dances at our school, we have a small business of our own. We have never had any differences of opinion. (Students, Riga, Group 1)*

*I have acquaintances who are Latvians. They speak with me in Russian, and when I feel that it is too hard for them, I start to speak Latvian, because I have to take the tests. They helped me. I have never seen myself as being superior to them. Neither have I ever felt any aggression on their part. (Students, Riga, Group 1)*

The interethnic contacts that were described by the students allow us to define several causes for conflicting relations. These can be analysed in the broader context – as reasons for a socio-linguistic split in Latvia:

(1) Attitudes among Latvians when it comes to the need to know and speak the Latvian language. Language is one of the most important elements in the views of students about issues which split up Latvia's society. It is particularly in statements about the Latvian language that there is a differentiation between "us" and "them." In the schemes of the arguments that are presented, a positive self-image and a negative image of "the other" is the strategy that is most often brought to bear:

*I want to say that each and every Latvian speaks Russian. Even older people, they all speak the Russian language. They have no problems in expressing themselves in Russian. I guess that they simply do not want to speak Russian, but they speak the language. (Students, Riga, Group 1)*

*I personally think that Latvians often think too highly of themselves and look at the Russian people down their noses. You Russians don't speak the Latvian language, even though you live in Latvia, and you should speak the language – that's what is claimed. (Students, Riga, Group 1)*

*I think that the Latvian language will not bring the two nations closer together. If the Russians are forced to study the Latvian language, they will hate the Latvian language even more. (Students, Daugavpils)*

(2) Historical experiences with contacts. Some students expressed the view that an ethnic split in Latvia's society "is nothing new" and "has always persisted". Respondents tended to speak to the years of Soviet governance in Latvia, and they suggested that this is a characteristic of the local society – two communities existing in

parallel spaces. Some respondents said that integration of society (primarily in ethnic terms) is not possible in Latvia.

*It is inevitable. No merger is possible. If we couldn't merge during Soviet times, then that is all the more true right now.* (Riga, Group 1)

*Who splits us? Why are Latvians of a different breed?*

*That has always been the case.*

*It's a matter of history, now it's just continuing as a tradition.* (Students, Riga, Group 1)

(3) Ethnicity as a mark of demarcation. Young people spoke about negative attitudes vis-à-vis the other ethnic group both in terms of Latvians and in terms of Russians. Possible causes for such conflicting relations and splits in society include the xenophobic attitudes which students have toward “the other” – an external group which is unified by a different ethnic belonging than is the case in the “us” group.

*Both among Russians and Latvians there are people who beat up a person of the other nationality when they spot such a person. There are Latvians who are hostile to Russians and Russians who are hostile to Latvians.* (Students, Riga, Group 1)

*We heard the view here that Latvians think of Russians as being inferior. Sorry, but hasn't anyone heard Russians saying ... look, I don't want to offend anyone, but Russians have sometimes said that being a Latvian is not a nationality, it is a diagnosis.* (Students, Riga, Group 1)

*People seldom get beat up for being a Russian, but it happens to Latvians more frequently.* (Students, Riga, Group 1)

*I have an international name – Anna. Sometimes I'm asked whether I'm a Latvian. No, I'm a Russian. Then they look at me strangely. If I didn't say that I'm a Russian, no one would know. There have been incidents in which attitudes change simply because you are of the other nationality.* (Students, Riga, Group 1)

Some students in the group also expressed an alternative discourse which is in line with the discourse of multiculturalism which prevails today. These students confirmed ethnic tolerance not only vis-à-vis Latvians, but also in relations with other ethnic groups.

*I have never cared whether someone is Latvian or Russian. My people are people. Who cares about the ethnic group to which someone belongs?* (Students, Riga, Group 1)

*I don't think that you can divide people up according to nationality or skin colour, I don't know. I think it's foolish. People are the kind of people that they are, and then it makes no difference whether he's Latvian or Russian, white or black.* (Students, Riga, Group 1)

*When people meet, they don't ask, 'Are you a Russian, a Latvian, a Pole, a Ukrainian?' First of all they look at the person as such.* (Students, Daugavpils)

(4) Political decisions on issues such as citizenship, language and education apply to minority nationalities in Latvia, and they are another serious cause of disintegration, both in the vertical and the horizontal level. Students think that a series of these decisions discriminate against ethnic minorities in Latvia and, therefore, have a deleterious effect on attitudes vis-à-vis Latvians as the majority. They cause problems, say respondents, in interethnic relations, both at the individual and the community level. Because political decisions are taken by politicians, respondents typically argue that ethnic disintegration in Latvia is their fault:

*As far as the split between races in Latvia is concerned, I completely agree with (X), who said that the split was created by our politicians. Until 1991, Latvia was a part of the USSR, and Latvians think that Russians have to leave just because someone said so on television.* (Students, Daugavpils)

*I am a non-citizen, for instance, and there are probably other violations of my rights, as well. The main and grossest violation of my rights, however, is that I am not a citizen of Latvia.* (Students, Riga, Group 1)

*I am not a citizen, but I wanted to volunteer for the army. I went down to the recruitment centre, and they rejected me. I don't understand the difference between citizens and non-citizens – they are all people.* (Students, Riga, Group 1)

*The point isn't money, it's not the effort. The point is that you have to take an oath when you undergo naturalisation. Latvians of our age don't have to take the oath to this country. They're citizens automatically, but we have to take the oath. That means that we are undertaking a certain level of responsibility. That's discrimination – we have to take responsibility by swearing an oath to this country.* (Students, Riga, Group 1)

*I think that Russians and Latvians have the same problems, there shouldn't be a split like this. It's politicians who divide us up and position us against one another.* (Students, Riga, Group 2)

*I have friends who are Latvians. We don't believe that we should go out and fight. Politicians fire us up.* (Students, Riga, Group 2)

*Leave us alone. Don't sow the seeds of hatred, because there won't be aggression without reason, no physical aggression, no other kind of aggression. Knowing the Russian people, the aggression will be self-defence. I think that compromise has to be sought, we can live together peacefully, we can be friends. I can't understand why politicians are trying to make us hate one another.* (Students, Riga, Group 2)

If one analyses the causes for increasingly tense interethnic relations and for the split among ethnic groups in society, one finds that these are more likely to be conflicts of a political nature, ones that are based on different political interests and interpretations of ethno-political issues (citizenship, language, education).

Researchers did not ask directly about ways in which the split can be reversed or the gap between society and the political elite can be minimised, but the respondents did touch upon these issues in their answers. Respondents said that it is necessary to improve the overall level of welfare in Latvia. This idea was also expressed by parents and teachers, and it suggests that there is a correlation between social status and material welfare on the one hand and political tolerance on the other (this assumption was tested in the quantitative phase of the research).

*I would wish economic progress for Latvia so that it can achieve the level of the United States and Germany. Many problems occur not only because people don't speak the language, but also because of the economy. That's no secret to anyone.* (Riga, Group 2)

*I wish for unity and cohesion, I don't want people to be divided up among Latvians and Russians. We should understand that we have one country, we are strong when we stand together. Then we can achieve economic growth and democracy – the things about which people in Latvia are so worried.* (Students, Riga, Group 2)

*The government must seek to ensure that people, both Russians and Latvians, understand one another, are not divided up, that there is no aggression amongst them. Then there will be fewer problems. If people feel happy, they will not want to do anything bad.* (Students, Riga, Group 2)

It is positive that young people want Latvia's society to be unified and integrated. Some statements suggested that students see themselves as being

responsible for integration. Such respondents were more likely to make loyal statements vis-à-vis Latvia and the Latvian language. These are people who engage in ongoing interethnic conflicts, and that fully corresponds to the idea of a hierarchy of positions in socio-political attitudes.

*Listen to us, sitting here and debating. At school, we decided to establish an organisation, "Vector in Europe", to bring together five schools with various nationalities. Everyone smirked at first. We wrote up the first project proposal, it was called "We Are So Different, Yet the Same", and a European organisation gave us EUR 1,500. We rented facilities, invited lots of people, and put together a programme which brought people together. People do draw closer together. (..) It all depends on us, on the younger generation. (Students, Riga, Group 1)*

*I want us to be the generation that changes something, instead of just talking, we need really to do something. Our thoughts and judgments should not be based on stereotypes. If we are really talking about integration in society, then we have to set up organisations, organise events at which Latvians and Russians can come together, make contacts – so that they're not strangers. (Students, Riga, Group 1)*

### **Attitudes against other ethnic groups and religions**

The main studies touching upon the question of relations between Latvians and other ethnic groups but Russians are done during the last years and they are:

1) Integration of Romany representatives in the Latvian society, 2003. Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies (LCESC)

The aim of project was to explore obstacles for social integration of Romany representatives in the Latvian society. Five focus group discussions were organized with Romany representatives at the respondents' city, town of residence (Riga (2 groups), Talsi, Ventspils, Jelgava).

2) Ethnic tolerance and integration of the Latvian society, 2004. Baltic Institute of Social Sciences.

The aim of project was to study biases which dominate Latvian public thought and the level of tolerance toward various ethnic and religious groups; to discover the mechanisms which lead to the emergence of xenophobic attitudes and the factors which determine the tolerance of Latvia's residents or lack thereof.

TABLE 6. THE BREAKDOWN OF THE PERMANENT RESIDENTS OF LATVIA AS TO ETHNICITY. 2004.

	<b>Citizens of Latvia</b>	<b>Non-citizens</b>	<b>Foreigners</b>	<b>In total</b>	
Latvians	1 355 067	2 536	936	1 358 539	58.6%
Lithuanians	16 977	13 662	1 382	32 021	1.4%
Estonians	1 466	776	307	2 549	0.1%
Belarussians	25 939	62 148	1 829	89 916	3.9%
Russians	327 293	321 755	19 362	668 410	28.8%
Ukrainians	10 974	45 232	3 613	59 819	2.6%
Poles	40 209	16 488	495	57 192	2.5%
Jews	6 443	3 176	308	9 927	0.5%
Others	18 483	15 579	5 019	39 081	1.7%
<b>In total</b>	<b>1 802 851</b>	<b>481 352</b>	<b>33 251</b>	<b>2 317 454</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. Statistics, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/? p=351&menu\\_id=117](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/? p=351&menu_id=117), date of visit: 2004-12-04

Research „Ethnic tolerance and integration of the Latvian society” conducted in year 2004 reveals, that between Latvians and Russians there is lower level of ethnic prejudice than between main nations of Latvia and newcomers from Africa, Middle East, South Asia. When participants of group discussions talked about other ethnic groups such as Africans, Arabs and others, they often evidenced unjustified biases and intolerance, a fear of the other. At the same time, however, there were also clear desires to be “politically correct” and tolerant. This was seen in statements during which negative views were expressed: *“I’m probably not tactical here, but ...”*, *“I was ashamed of myself, I guess I’m a racist”*, *“There are good people and bad people in every nation”*, *“Each culture has its own geniuses and its own scoundrels - more in one nation, fewer in another”*, *“Although there are good people among them, too ...”*. The approach of critical discourse analysis suggests that the respondents were thus trying to set up a positive self-presentation so that listeners would not get the idea that the speaker is a racist or highly biased (Van Dijk, 2000).<sup>2</sup>

The ethnic and religious groups vis-à-vis which participants most often expressed negative views were Africans, Chechens, Azerbaijanis, the Roma, Arabs, Turks and Muslims. The dominant xenophobic discourse was typified by a statement that was heard from one of the participants in the Latvian group of young people in

<sup>2</sup> Van Dijk, T.A. (2000) *Ideology and discourse. A multidisciplinary introduction*. English version of an internet course for the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC). July 2000. In: <http://www.discourse-in-society.org/teun.html>

Riga: “*I’m no racist, but I hate Negroes.*” This is an absolutely textbook example of what theory calls “apparent denial” (Van Dijk, et al, 1997:170).<sup>3</sup> According to this theory, the statement indicated an attitude that is xenophobic and somewhat racist. It has to be added that this mood was found in nearly all of the groups, except only for the Latvian group of middle aged and older people in Riga.

In the Russian group of young people in Riga, distinctly negative attitudes were expressed toward Islamic people. Several respondents said that Islam should be banned: “*I favour religious discrimination specifically against Islam. This religion might even be banned in Latvia*”, “*That is not permissible, it has to be regulated by law*”, “*This religion should be hauled into court!*” Less radical respondents said that people can believe what they want, but non-traditional religious groups in Latvia should be banned from appearing on television or agitating on the streets. Essentially this is a call for limitations on freedom of speech and religion.

It has to be noted, however, that in each group discussion there was at least one respondent who tried to uphold the “multiculturalism discourse”, emphasising all of the interesting things that can be learned from people of other nationalities, or talking about positive and pleasant experiences that the respondent had had in contacts with people of other nationalities or religions.

### **Attitudes among various social groups in Latvia from the point of view of foreigners**

In the study „Ethnic tolerance and integration of the Latvian society” there were in-depth interviews with people of different appearance and religious belief conducted. The aim of this part of the research was to find out experience of people of different appearance in Latvia and about the everyday attitude of Latvia’s residents toward them. Respondents were found through national cultural associations in Latvia, as well as via the “snowball” method (with one interviewee nominating the next one).

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<sup>3</sup> Van Dijk, T.A., Ting-Toomey, S., Smitherman, G. and D. Troutman (1997). “Discourse, Ethnicity, Culture and Racism”, in van Dijk, T.A. (ed.). *Discourse as Social Interaction. Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, Vol. 2. London: Sage, pp. 144-180.

According to this study foreigners usually encounter positive or neutral attitudes, and most respondents stress that most of the people of Latvia are friendly and helpful. On the other hand, it often takes a longer time to form a closer relationship. In comparing the attitudes of various social groups vis-à-vis foreigners with a different visual appearance, respondents most often talked about different attitudes among young people and older people. Nationality and place of residence did not seem to be of any decisive importance here.

### Age

In comparing the attitudes of young people and older people vis-à-vis foreigners, interviewees said that young people are more open and tolerant. Here we should remember, however, that most of the respondents are also young people, which means that it is more likely that they will encounter other young people, and it is easier for them to form contacts. First of all, young people tend to be more open to that which is new and unknown, they have more frequent contacts with the people and culture of other countries, both because of the mass media and because of travel. Foreign language skills are of great importance, because a lack of such skills hinders contacts between foreigners and older people.

*Younger people are more open, it's easy to contact. Older people don't want to be open. We feel that on trolley buses and ordinary buses, for instance.*

*That's the attitude of older people, those who are older than 50 or 60. Younger people talk to you, they smile, they're interested in your country, it's interesting to them. Middle aged people change their attitudes, too, but when it comes to older people - pensioners, for instance, it's not all that easy.*

*They stare at us, they feel uncomfortable because of our skin colour. That's particularly true among older women.*

*Once I was in the trolley bus, and I wasn't even sitting up front. Two old women got on and started to talk to one another, Just look, just look - too many blacks in this country. They didn't think that I understood. I said, Why are you talking about me?*

*That's not polite. They were shocked, they blushed. And then one of them started to speak to me in Russian.*

*I don't think that there are problems with racism among the younger generation, these are people who have black friends. I don't think that they can hate us or anything like that. I don't think that they have problems with racism, I don't think that they criticise others. No, I don't think so. The situation with older people can change, but other people are just super!*

*I visited my girlfriend's grandmother, I think that she had never seen a black person in her life. How she loved me! She gave me a whole sack of fruit. I didn't want to take it, but my girlfriend said, Please, take it. And she gave me fruit and vegetables. She prepared dinner, we went into the forest to pick mushrooms. It was wonderful. The grandmother was so nice!*

### Nationality

Upon arriving in Latvia, many foreigners are surprised to learn that the country is actually populated by two major ethno-linguistic groups with different cultures. For full contacts with the people of Latvia, one has to learn both Latvian and Russian. Foreigners are fairly quick to notice various differences in behaviour and attitudes. Foreigners describe Latvians as being quiet, peaceful, closed-off and polite, while they describe Russians as being friendly, active and open.

Foreigners in Latvia report meeting more or less equal numbers of Latvians and Russian speakers. Those who have lived here for 15 years and more, however, have mostly become a part of the Russian speaking environment, and only in the last few years have they started to develop more extensive contacts among Latvians. The same difference is also seen in language skills - those who have been here for a longer time usually speak very good Russian and poorer Latvian, while those who have arrived in recent years tend to have a better command of Latvian.

Some respondents said that it's easier to make contact with Russians:

*I think that recently foreigners have been feeling closer to Russians than Latvians, because Russians also feel as if they're foreigners. Russians are also more*

*active than Latvians. We're closer on an everyday basis. When you talk to a Russian, you move, you jump around. Latvians think slowly, they check out everything about you before they take the next step. In business, for instance - we need something tomorrow, but the Latvian will say that he will think it over, he needs guarantees. The Russian will take the decision quickly.*

*Russians have more money, they travel more. They support the Arabs, in political terms, too. Latvians are afraid of Russia, and so they chose the American position. I don't want to say that they're against us, but your [Latvian] behaviour, your temperament - you're peaceful people. It's hard for someone who is accustomed to doing everything quickly.*

Asked to compare the attitudes of Latvian and Russian speaking residents vis-à-vis foreigners, most respondents said that people from both groups are nice and friendly, adding that there are good and bad people in every ethnic group. Most foreigners reported friends among Latvians and Russians alike. When talking about racist statements and physical threats, however, foreigners more often spoke of Russian speakers, usually young ones.

### Place of residence

Most foreigners in Latvia live in Riga and seldom visit other places in Latvia. That means that those residents of Latvia who are not residents of the capital city very seldom meet people from other countries and, particularly, from other continents. That allows us to understand why foreigners attract much more attention in other parts of the country than in Riga. Foreigners said that in other places in Latvia they attract a greater number of looks. One respondent who is very different in appearance, however, said that he doesn't feel that people are staring at him outside of Riga in particular. Most foreigners don't feel that this interest is anything negative, that it disturbs them in any way. They demonstrate understanding and say that the searching looks are based on the fact that rural people have never seen anyone of a different race. Outside of Riga, moreover, foreigners do not usually encounter racist statements or

behaviour, perhaps because they do not spend much time in other locations or because they tend to be there with their friends.

*I didn't feel bad. I was definitely the first Chinese person they had ever seen, and so they just looked at me and wondered at what I was doing there. (..) There was nothing negative, however, I felt nothing of the sort. Everyone smiled - particularly the girls.*

*I once was taking a bus to visit my friend's grandmother. (..) There were young people on the bus, they were all staring at me, and I became embarrassed, because they were staring at me as if I was a black ghost. Then I smiled, and they all calmed down.*

Asked to compare the attitude of various groups in society toward visually different foreigners in Latvia, respondents in the interviews stressed that young people tend to be more open and favourable than older people. Some foreigners reported that it is easier for them to make friends with Russian speaking residents, because they are more open and active, thus closer to the mentality of the foreigners. Conflict situations, however, are also more common with Russian speaking young people. When comparing people in Riga to people in other parts of Latvia, respondents said that foreigners attract more attention outside of the capital city, but there are no fundamental differences in attitudes.

In government institutions (foreigners most often encounter the Citizenship and Migration Board), foreigners mostly find proper attitudes, and that is particularly true with respect to the police. Universities which are attended by foreign students devote particular attention and care to them.

Most people in Latvia know little about various distant countries, their religion and culture, and that can cause them to behave in a reserved or rejecting way. It has to be stressed, however, that many people are interested in other countries and would like to learn more about them.

A lack of information and negative stereotypes about people from other countries and their culture can create the idea that there are exaggerated differences

between various people and their habits. This creates dislike and fear - usually unjustified, because the behaviour and habits of foreigners who live in Latvia are usually in line with locally accepted norms of behaviour. This means that experience with contacts with people of different nationalities is of paramount importance here. Contacts allow one to get rid of one's fear of the unknown. People find those things that they have in common, and relations are based less on one's origin, but rather on one's individual personality and on the common interests that one has with another. This means that a contact is no longer perceived as a contact between two ethnic groups, but rather as one between two individuals. This is usually a more positive thing than a contact at the group level.

It seems in general that attitudes and behaviour of people in Latvia sometimes have racist properties, which are often hidden - instead of distinctly negative behaviour, it is manifested through an absence of positive and favourable attitudes. Help is not given in an unclear situation; negative information about an ethnic group is accepted unquestioningly. Also of importance here is the so-called "new racism",<sup>4</sup> defined as the view that the culture and lifestyle of certain nationalities are too different to be merged into one's own society. Latvia has been a multi-ethnic country for centuries, but many people still believe that a culturally homogenous society is the norm and the ideal which should be pursued. This hinders the acceptance of people of other nationalities, particularly if they are visually different and have expressed a desire to live in Latvia.

As the availability of information about various cultures and countries expands, however, and as contact experiences with people of various nationalities become more common, the attitude of Latvia's residents is gradually becoming more tolerant and open.

### **Attitudes toward the Roma in schools**

The historical situation of the Roma people in Latvia has been different from that of other ethnic groups. The main factor here is not language, it is the stereotypes

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<sup>4</sup> See Barker, M. (1981). *The New Racism*. London: Junction Books.

that persist vis-à-vis the people who have also been known as Gypsies. A study on the situation of the Roma in Latvia was conducted in 2003, and attitudes vis-à-vis Roma children at Latvian and Russian schools were discussed as a part of that study.<sup>5</sup>

There were focus group discussions with the Roma, with some participants arguing that there was no discrimination against Roma children at school. These were respondents who said that Roma children were treated just like everyone else by students and teachers alike. This view was most commonly heard in Riga and Talsi.

*It depends on the child's behaviour. If he is respected by the class, then there are no differences. If the child merges into the collective, the class, then there can be no arguments. Perhaps it is different for boys. It wasn't a problem back in my day.*

*I didn't feel any discrimination of that kind.*

In Ventspils, however, and particularly in Jelgava, there was also talk of incidents in which Roma children felt a negative attitude toward themselves at school, manifested both in spoken and in physical form. In some cases, children no longer wanted to go to school because of this discrimination. Respondents had the following things to say about the matter:

*I can tell you about my granddaughter. There are times when she says that she has had it with school. She says that she doesn't understand what others want from her, she studies just like everyone else, she dresses like everyone else, and hardly anyone can tell that she is a Gypsy. But then kids walk up to her and start to pinch her. You Gypsy girl, you – that's what they say.*

*I have a school-age granddaughter, and the teacher once swore at her, in part because she is Roma. She doesn't want to go to that school. My sister's daughters say the same thing.*

*It wasn't that terrible back during Russian rule. There were different attitudes, people didn't yell at you and poke you because you're a Gypsy. That didn't happen back then, but in independent Latvia, that's how things are.*

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<sup>5</sup> "Integration of Roma people in Latvian society", 2003, Baltic Institute of Social Sciences.

*They really suffer from the fact that they are mocked and pushed aside. The teachers, too – they push the children away to an even greater extent.*

*They don't complain, she just says that when she's in the hall, other kids bump into her, the bigger boys. I tell her to step aside, don't let them bump into you, but they do. The kids are horrible, yes, they are – spoiled, spoiled, spoiled. You must understand that Roma children are never as spoiled as Russian and Latvian children. It's terrible.*

Parents and grandparents said that teachers have a great role to play when it comes to attitudes which students display toward the Roma, and they were surprised when teachers did nothing to hinder negative attitudes among other students. Teachers, say the parents and grandparents, are right there with the kids, they see how the Roma children are treated by others.

*It depends on the teacher, on what the teacher thinks.*

*She went up to the teacher and told her what happened, and the teacher yelled at her. Where can she go to complain?*

*My granddaughter – during the winter, in the cold, children tore off her hat. It was very cold, and she came home with no hat. No one did anything, even though the teacher was standing right there. No one said a word, no one cared. The Roma are a suffering people.*

Respondents were asked about the possibility of establishing special classes or schools for the Roma, and the view seemed to prevail that such schools are not necessary. Respondents said that it is in the interests of the Roma children to attend Latvian schools. It cannot be denied, however, that classes for the Roma have an important role to play when it comes to the education of Roma children. There are many children who don't speak Latvian well enough when they start school. In such cases classes for the Roma help them to start their education in a timely way and with adequate Latvian language skills to continue their education at a Latvian school.

When it comes to negative attitudes toward Roma children at Latvian schools, it has to be said that the attitudes are not found at all schools, and also that such attitudes can be encountered by any student, whether Latvian, Russian or Roma. Furthermore, the isolation of Roma children in separate schools would not solve the problem, it might well exacerbate negative attitudes of various kinds outside the home – at school and in various public places. It must be remembered, furthermore, that parents and grandparents were the ones who spoke about attitudes toward Roma children. If we wish to come up with a firm understanding of discrimination against Roma children at Latvia's schools and of the way in which such discrimination affects the education of Roma children, we will need an in-depth study which involves several target groups – Roma children who go to school, students from other ethnic groups, as well as teachers.

## **5. THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN RESOLVING CONFLICTS**

### **The Open School**

Various methodological and pedagogic programmes have been drafted for Latvia's schools so as to prevent conflicts or to reduce the seriousness of any conflicts that may have emerged already. One of the most extensive projects was called "Open School", and it was financed by the Soros Foundation.

In 1999, the Soros Foundation selected 10 schools where Russian was the language of instruction and seven where classes were taught in Latvian, making the selection on the basis of an open competition. The Foundation also chose 14 kindergartens with Latvian or non-Latvian attendees. As the project expanded, another 10 Russian schools and 10 Latvian schools were brought into the process in 2000, as were seven pedagogical universities. Each educational institution was represented by three or four employees. Particular attention was devoted to the need to inform the public about integration, intercultural education, and bilingual education. The "Open School" project also produced a series of TV broadcasts, "Open". There was a

bilingual magazine for students, *Tilts* (Bridge), and there was also a handbook for parents – “Bilingual Children”.

During the course of the project, some 200 people were trained to introduce bilingual and intercultural education in schools. These were people who work for regional support structures – schools, universities and preschool educational institutions throughout the country.

Sustainability of the project was ensured by the development of adult training programmes in 2002. Courses on introducing bilingual and intercultural education were developed and tested.

The courses are offered to teachers, preschool instructors, parents and other interested parties. A total of 15 programmes have been designed and tested for teachers who work in bilingual classes and ethnically diverse environments. Each runs for 36 hours.

The Internet homepage of the Centre for Educational Development has a section on the “Open School” project – <http://atvertaskola.iac.edu.lv/>. The Public Integration Fund provided financing for the homepage. The goal is to provide information about bilingual and intercultural education, about tested experiences and theories.

### **Dual flow schools**

A special aspect of Latvia’s educational system is the fact that there are so-called “dual flow” schools – these are schools at which some children study in Latvian and others in Russian. Most of these schools date back to the early 1960s, when the government began to shut down so-called “small schools”. Large ones were established instead.

Many of the dual flow schools were shut down in the very late 1980s and early 1990s. That was particularly true in the city of Riga. In most cases, the educational institutions were simply split up, and the explanation was often that there was not

enough room for everyone. The result was the emergence of separate schools for Latvian and Russian-speaking students.

The Baltic Institute of Social Sciences has conducted a study that is called “Education Reforms in Latvia in the Context of Existing and Possible Models of Bilingualism: Dual Flow Schools as an Example of Bilingual Education.” The authors of the study found that the role and place of dual flow schools have been understood to an insufficient degree when it comes to the emergence of integration policies. This was confirmed by experts who were interviewed during the research, as well as by an analysis of relevant documents.

Experts from volunteer organisations told researchers that the dual flow schools represent a miniature model of Latvia’s society at large and can serve as an example of how an integrated and multiethnic community can be assembled. The existence of dual use schools, said these respondents, should be encouraged:

*From the perspective of the issue of integration, where we have to think about various mentalities, perceptions about life and co-existence of cultures, dual flow schools are, of course, the optimal option. (NGO representative)*

*Dual flow schools are the future of the Republic of Latvia, (..) [they represent] a platform for integration. (NGO representative)*

NGO representatives think that dual flow schools represent a way of bridging the gap among various ethnic groups, because they allow students to learn more about one another and to determine interests which they have in common.

*Dual flow schools do have a future, because children really do have to grow up together, they must learn about one another so that they no longer differentiate between “our people” and “aliens”. This cannot be overcome just by transferring to the Latvian language. We will never be able to bridge the gap in that way – students have to meet one another, they must see that their interests are the same, that they are all people, that they all live in Latvia, that they were all born here. They are the future of Latvia, and Latvia is their future, kids must understand that. (NGO representative)*

Principals and teachers at linguistically mixed dual flow schools also said that such schools are very appropriate for Latvia's situation:

*It's a normal thing, Latvians and Russians both need these schools, because otherwise each group stays apart. People lose some of their opportunities in that case, because people can, after all, take a broader look at the world, have a broader world view. The dual flow school provides such an opportunities if the two sides want to converse, to see one another, to make friends. I don't think there are too many alternatives in our present-day society, and that is at least one of the alternatives.*  
(Teacher, Daugavpils)

*We're proud of our school, we're a model for the rest of Latvia. If kids at our school learn to get along, then they will find their lives to be easier in the future.*  
(Principal, Kurzeme)

*We cannot split the kids apart, if we want a unified society, then we cannot allow them to be separated. If we keep separate Latvian schools and Russian schools, then we will absolutely be creating a society in which there are two separate communities.* (Teacher, Iecava)

When it comes to civic education in dual flow schools, principals and teachers say that the process is a very successful one, that there are no ethnic conflicts at their schools.

*People ask about patriotic education at our school. Everything is just fine. I tell people to listen to how our kids sing "God, Save Latvia" [the Latvian national anthem]. Any more questions?* (Principal, Kurzeme)

*No matter whether we plan to live in Latvia or plan to live somewhere else, Latvia is still Latvia. It is our motherland, and we must know about it.* (Student, Viļāni)

The research shows that dual flow schools are a key element in the emergence of an integrated society. First of all, linguistically mixed two flow schools are schools

at which bilingual education programmes are being introduced in the context of a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic social environment. Second, dual flow schools in which minority children study in a bilingual system and in Latvian must be emphasised, because these schools emerged from the “grassroots” – it was the parents of minority children who spoke up about the language of education that would be preferred. This indicates that parents are interested in Latvian language learning. Parents understand the role which language will play in the integration of their children into Latvia’s society.

To summarise the role of dual flow schools in the context of integration policies, we must conclude that the way in which these schools encourage cultural interaction and integration of the local society has not been fully understood. This argument was presented by the authors of education policy, by representatives of NGOs which seek to defend the interests of minority ethnic groups, and by school principals and teachers.

There are also issues which cause doubts about whether dual flow schools really set a positive example for people in Latvia. First and foremost there is the fact that attitudes vis-à-vis dual flow schools were negative in Soviet times, when the system was forced upon everyone. The bottom line was that Latvian schools were Russified. It is believed by many people that dual flow schools present an environment which encourages or creates conflicts. Many parents are not prepared to support a situation in which Latvian and non-Latvian children study at one and the same schools. This was also pointed out by experts.

Most of the interviewed experts said that during the Soviet period, mutual understanding and examples of positive co-existence were not particularly common at dual flow schools.

*In the context of the Soviet culture, [dual flow schools] essentially established an antagonistic system of values for children and adolescents who attended such schools. The emphasis was not on co-operation, but (..) on mechanical unification (..) at the psychological level. The entire life of the school was based on the fact that “our own” and “aliens” were studying under the same roof. They had to battle, the relationship between the two groups was very (..) aggressive.*

Experts talked about tension and conflicts when the flows are strictly kept apart, arguing that there was no co-operation and dialogue among students in the two groups. Dual flow schools during the Soviet period were described by several experts as examples of “disintegration”, and this has been seen as one of the main reasons for why such schools need to be broken apart.

*There was this tension between the two flows, sometimes it led to hatred. (..) The flows existed in one building, but they were absolutely isolated. I don't see you, and you don't see me until there is some kind of incident. (Expert-politician)*

*There was just a single roof, and there were conflicts. (..) Never was there any joint work [at these schools]. (Researcher: History, ethno-politics, ethno-psychology)*

If we look at dual flow schools at places in which Latvian and minority children communicate with one another, then we find principals who say that the differences of opinion and the examples of intolerance which existed during Soviet times are now gone. Some principals who have run dual flow schools since Soviet years said that even back then, there were no serious conflicts.

*We absolutely had no problems, back in the so-called Russian era we did not have anything of that kind [differences of opinion, intolerance] between Russians and Latvians. Long, long ago there were such problems, but we have had completely normal lives over the past 10 years. (Principal, Zemgale)*

The other major explanation that is heard for why dual flow schools have been split apart is that the Latvian national renaissance was a political process:

*It [dividing up the dual flow schools] was a purely political process, it coincided with the renaissance. It not only coincided with the renaissance, it was created by the renaissance – nothing is good at those schools, people said, bilingualism is forced upon the children. Children have to grow up in their own environment, case closed. (NGO representative)*

There were some experts who said that the breaking up of the dual flow schools represented “*something in the way of revenge against the Soviet government and the totalitarian regime.*” “*Back then, for political reasons, there was a great deal of talk about the idea that these schools were thought up and created by the Soviet government, that their aim was to Russify Latvians, that the schools had to be broken up. (...) I do not remember a single specific document to this effect at the Education Ministry, but the idea was that the schools had to be divided up, that they were bad schools, and that they were a leftover of the Soviet government and the totalitarian regime.* (Expert-politician)

Several experts and principals from dual flow schools have also said that the reason for breaking the schools up was based on rational considerations related to the technological and material capacity of schools and the amount of space in the schools. Some schools were simply too small for dual flow instruction.

*I think that [the dual flow schools] were split up because there was no room. There were few classrooms, and it was possible for some students to be moved elsewhere. I don't think that the point was that Russians and Latvians were studying in a single school and that one side wanted the other to leave. I have never thought that this was true, I would never agree to or permit such a situation.* (Principal, Latgale)

The idea that schools were too small is upheld by demographic data. Because of recent migration and natural growth rates in the population, the number of children of school age at that particular point in time was larger than had been the case before.<sup>6</sup>

## **6. EXAMPLES OF HOW SCHOOLS ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE INTEGRATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

Several schools in Latvia have become involved in the integration processes of young people with the support of various funds. Several projects were financed by the Soros Foundation-Latvia. In 1999 and 2000, there was a project called “**Establishing**

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<sup>6</sup> LR CSP Latvijas Statistikas gadagrāmata 2002/2003 (Latvian Statistical Annual, Central Statistical Board). See Eglīte, P. “Padomju okupācijas ilglaika demogrāfiskās sekas” (Long-term Demographic Consequences of the Soviet Occupation), [http://vip.latnet.lv/LPRA/2002konf/p\\_eglite.htm](http://vip.latnet.lv/LPRA/2002konf/p_eglite.htm).

**a Network of Bilingual Centres in Latvia**". The project involved information exchanges and seminars, bringing together the No. 8 High School of Liepāja, the No. 3 High School of Daugavpils, and the Riga Classical Gymnasium. A creative camp was organised for bilingual teachers and students from the aforementioned schools in Pāvilosta in 2000.

Special issues of the Liepāja inter-school newspaper *Paralēle* (a bilingual publication) and the magazine *Tilts* were published. Students write articles for both publications (see <http://www.8vsk.lv/school/index.htm>).

The Krāslava Gymnasium<sup>7</sup> organised a project aimed at promoting naturalisation and integration among young people. The project was called "My Country and Me." The aim was to help young people to discover a sense of belonging in Latvia and to promote ethnic harmony among people of various ethnic groups. A total of 35 high school students from Krāslava and Daugavpils were involved in the project, 14 non-citizens among them. The students attended a meeting at the Daugavpils branch of the Latvian Naturalisation Board, learning about the content and procedures of the naturalisation process. They also met with people who had become naturalised citizens. The students conducted research on the process of naturalisation, and the results of their study were published in the school newspaper. The young people also visited the Occupation Museum in Riga, learning more about Latvia's 20<sup>th</sup>-century history and the tragedies that have occurred. The students also visited Parliament, where they learned about how laws are passed. This enhanced greater interest in social and political issues in Latvia.

At the Rainis No. 6 High School of Daugavpils, there was a project to integrate non-Latvian teachers and students into the Latvian environment.

The No. 1 Elementary School in Preiļi organised a whole series of events seeking to enhance dialogue among cultures in the Preiļi District – "We Are All in Preiļi – a Colourful Mosaic of Nations".

At the Riga No. 49 High School, research was conducted among young people to learn about obstacles against the integration of Latvia's society.

The Lāči Elementary School in the Naujene Parish of Daugavpils District organised an intercultural week of events from February 18-22, 2002. Culture days events were held at the school, covering the culture and traditions of Russians, Poles,

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://web142.deac.lv/index.php/lv/?id=65&tid=7&prjid=199&pid=51&date=2001>.

Lithuanians and Belarusians. At the conclusion, it was time for the Latvian culture day. Latvia was presented as a country in which people of various cultures live together. Students learned about the culture and history of various nations, and they met their peers from schools where classes are taught in a variety of languages. The materials that were collected during the course of the week were assembled into an exhibition which featured the culture, traditions, folk costumes and national symbols of the various nations.

Many of the school projects which were aimed at ethnic integration were implemented with the support of the Society Integration Foundation (<http://www.lsif.lv/lv/?id=4>).

<b>Year</b>	<b>Schools which take part in project</b>	<b>Project title</b>
2002	Daugavpils Polish Secondary school/ Daugavpils 1. gymnasium	Folklore – bond of the pupils of different nationalities
	District of Jelgava extramural teaching secondary school/ Jelgavas vespertine secondary school	Reflection of nationalities character in masks (tale, ornament, color)
	Daugaviešu Elementary school/ Nagļu Elementary school	Development of pupil conception about common and different in Latvian and Russian cultures
	Maltas 2. Secondary school/ Maltas 1. Secondary school	Power in unity
2003	A.Puškina Secondary school No 2. of Liepāja; Rēzeknes Secondary school No 6.; Rigas Gymnasium of Zolitūde; Jelgavas Secondary school No 6.	School as a integration process promoter
	Classic gymnasium of Riga; Riga Secondary school No 10.; Riga Secondary school No 13.	Individualized training of teaching in Latvian for Secondary school teachers
	Valdorfa free school of Adazi; Mihaila Lomonosova school of Riga	Collaboration project of 5 Latvia nationality schools – national work shops and trail “Green Peak”
	Rīnūžu Secondary school of Riga; Riga Secondary school No 28.; Gymnasium of Smiltenes	Idealistic and realistic way to integration of nowadays youth
	Preiļu Secondary school No 2.; Šampētera Elementary school of Riga; Riga Secondary school No 55.; Liepas Elementary school of Cesu district; Daugavpils Secondary school No 10.; J.Pilsudska Polish secondary school of Daugavpils; Preiļu	“Language is given to people not to declare war, but to understand each other” (Z.Mauriņa)

	Elementary school No 1.	
	Ezernieku Secondary school; Daugavpils Secondary school No 12. vidusskola; Classic gymnasium of Riga	Teenagers integrating summer camp of study of local history "Ezernieki"
	Sabiles Secondary school; Rainis No. 6 High School of Daugavpils	Ethnic integration in Sabiles Secondary school and Rainis No. 6 High School of Daugavpils students exchange
	Bēnes Secondary school of Dobele district; Bēnes Elementary school	Shaping of dialogue between latvians and minority pupil in Benes civil parish
	Carnikavas pamatskola; Suntažu sanatorijas internātpamatskola	Different minority pupil opinion about summer solstice
2004	Jelgavas vespertine secondary school; Secondary school of Augstkalne	Popularisation of roma and latvian cultures
	Classic gymnasium of Riga; Riga Secondary school No. 64./ Riga Secondary school No 84./ Riga Secondary school No 74./ Riga Secondary school of Jugla / Riga Secondary school No 45./ Riga Secondary school No 49./ Riga Secondary school No 100. / Riga Secondary school No 85.	Latvian and minority school teacher cooperation in proces of shaping qualitative transition to education in latvian language in 10 <sup>th</sup> grades . (school year 2004./05.)
	Varavīksne Secondary school of Kraslava; Council of Kraslava district / Elementary school of Sauleskalna / Elementary school of Andrupes	"Latgale Latvian and minority school history: yesterday, today, tomorrow "

## **7. IDENTIFICATION OF THE FIELDWORK SAMPLE ON THE BASIS OF THE DEFINED CRITERIA**

To realize aims of this research we have chosen five schools in which focus groups and in-depth interviews will be held. One of the main factors which influenced choice was schools activities in stimulating integration process. Research objects were chosen among the schools which in past few years have taken membership in school cooperation program "Ethnic integration program" E.2 (subprogram: „Support to school cooperation”). These criteria can filter schools which try to solve their problems and are active. Relying on these criteria schools from project „Latvian and minority

school teacher cooperation in process of shaping qualitative transition to education in Latvian language in 10<sup>th</sup> grades (school year 2004./05.)” were selected:

1. Riga Secondary school No 84;
2. Riga Secondary school No 74;
3. Riga Secondary school of Jugla;
4. Riga Secondary school No 49;
5. Riga Secondary school No 100.

In selecting schools in account was taken main nationality of school pupils and locus of selected school. With such filter schools were selected so that there were representatives of different nationalities and they represented different districts of Riga.

If a school will refuse to take part in research process then this school will be exchanged with a different school with same characteristics.