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CEĻĀ UZ SALIEDĒTU SABIEDRĪBU EIROPĀ: LATVIJAS GALVENAIS UZDEVUMS

Starptautiska konference
Rīga, Latvija, 1998. gada 4.–5. maijs
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An international conference
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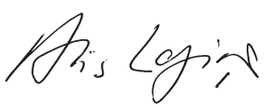
The present publication contains the proceedings of the conference "Building an Inclusive Society: the Challenge Facing Latvia" (Riga, May 4–5, 1998), organized by the European Commission Delegation in Latvia and the Latvian Institute of International Affairs.

The conference addressed a wide audience from all parts of the society in Latvia, it was broadcast live radio and enjoyed extensive reporting in the media. This publication should contribute to a continuation of the discussion, and to the shaping of an inclusive, united society in Latvia. The prospect of Latvia's membership in the European Union was of course part of the forward–looking debate.

As the integration of Latvian society and Latvia's request to join the EU are the top domestic and foreign policy priorities of Latvia, the conference came at a very timely moment, when the investigative report of the Latvian Naturalization Board "On the road to a Civil Society" had been published, and when the Government and Saeima had taken courageous steps to introduce and debate a new citizenship law, meanwhile adopted — even if with delayed promulgation. We are convinced that the conference was one more contribution to the building of an inclusive society in a state which regained independence only in 1991, still digesting the burden of centuries of foreign rule, and in particular the recent 50 years of the Soviet regime. More than 600 people from different towns and regions in Latvia, as well as experts from EU states, participated. We are particularly pleased with the large number of young people who actively contributed to the debate.

We are confident that this conference and the present proceedings, but also the activities of many non–governmental organizations, the media and other well established democratic institutions will further contribute to a better understanding of Latvia's obvious choice for its future: to consolidate the unity of the state and shape a united society in order to avoid internal frictions, and to reintegrate Latvia into the democratic world society by its integration into the European community of peoples.



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BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY FOR EUROPE: THE CHALLENGE FACING LATVIA

An international conference organised by the Delegation of the European Commission in Latvia and the Latvian Institute of International Affairs

Riga, Latvia
May 4-5, 1998

Conference Report

by Nils Muižnieks,
Chief Rapporteur
Director, Latvian Center for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies

I. Introduction

The Delegation of the European Commission in Latvia and the Latvian Institute of International Affairs organised a conference on May 4-5, 1998 in Riga, Latvia entitled "Building an Inclusive Society for Europe: The Challenge Facing Latvia." The purpose of the conference was to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about social integration in Latvia and to examine this process in the light of EU citizenship and the experience of EU member-states. The conference attracted over 600 participants, including many students, minority representatives, public officials and the diplomatic community.

The conference was opened by President of the Republic of Latvia Guntis Ulmanis and head of the Delegation of the European Commission in Latvia Ambassador Gunter Weiss. President Ulmanis highlighted and elaborated upon three of the conference's keywords: Latvia, an inclusive society, and Europe. A number of critical turning points in Latvian history have taken place in early May, including the convocation of the Constitutional Assembly in 1920 and the declaration of independence in 1990. Referring to the demands of Europe in the 21st century, President Ulmanis proposed drafting a new, more modern constitution that would unite Latvia, define more precisely the balance between the legislative and executive branches and include a bill of human rights.

President Ulmanis stressed that in an inclusive society, nobody feels left out, each

member remembers his or her roots, and the talents and capabilities of all are employed for the common good. The Law on Citizenship is being made more inclusive through amendments and the abolition of naturalisation "window system." However, one must speak not only of an active citizenship policy, but of a modern effort to strengthen civil society through education and language policy, support for small and medium sized businesses, campaign finance reform, and the circulation of information.

President Ulmanis noted that Europe acquired new horizons about 10 years ago with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism. With the recent decision to adopt a common currency, the European Union will acquire a new symbol of unity which will further consolidate society. Latvia must fully understand the underlying values behind these changes. At the same time, President Ulmanis stressed that integration into the European Union represented the European path to overcoming the legacy of Latvia's occupation.

Ambassador Gunter Weiss, the head of the Delegation of the European Commission in Latvia, noted the opportune timing of the conference, which commemorated the anniversary of the restoration of independence, the onset of Europe Week and the continuation of intensive discussions on the integration of Latvian society. Ambassador Weiss stressed that Latvia has always been a multi-ethnic, multicultural European society, though including the large non-citizen population represents a new challenge. Though European history is contradictory, lessons can be derived from the experience of co-existence in EU member-states. Ambassador Weiss introduced the concept of European citizenship, which is not meant to replace national citizenship, but to complement it and broaden notions of shared rights and duties, creating an additional basis for European security and prosperity.

II. Latvia: Past and Present

Rasma Kārkliņa, professor of political science at the University of Illinois at Chicago, related Latvia's demographic history to current dilemmas, stressing that "the demographic processes of the past influence Latvia today and are an essential basis for ethnopolitical issues." With the partial exception of Estonia, no European country has witnessed a demographic fate similar to Latvia's. Due to war losses, deportations to Siberia, flight to the West and low post-war birth rates, Latvians are fewer in number today than they were in 1935. The minority population has changed dramatically over the last century as well, with the forced repatriation of the Baltic German minority to Nazi Germany, the annihilation of the Jewish and much of the Gypsy communities in the Holocaust, followed by the mass influx of settlers, primarily Russians, in the post-war years.

As Professor Kārkliņa noted, "the Soviet regime carried out a conscious policy of internationalisation in line with the model of the communal apartment, in which people

were forced to live together against their will. This approach was in direct contrast with the model of European integration, which is voluntary and based on respect for the interests of all sides." As a result of the aforementioned demographic processes, Latvians were increasingly transformed into a minority not only in numerical terms, but also in terms of cultural and political power. Non-Latvians continue to outnumber Latvians in the major cities and many workplaces, and their frequent lack of Latvian language proficiency often compels Latvians to speak Russian in order to communicate.

Since the restoration of independence, the demographic situation has changed again, with the outmigration of some non-Latvian settlers and an increasing differentiation in birth-rates. Latvians now constitute 57% of the population, 64% of all schoolchildren and 64% of all new-borns. Linguistic change has accompanied demographic shifts and some progress has been made in restoring the public functions of the Latvian language.

After the overview of demographic history, the conference turned to contemporary Latvian and broader European affairs. Director of the Latvian Naturalisation Board Eiženija Aldermane acquainted conference participants with the results of a large action and research programme entitled "On the Road to a Civil Society." The programme was devised by a working group including representatives of government, NGOs, and international organisations working in Latvia. The Naturalisation Board co-ordinated and various foreign donors funded the effort, which consisted of the following elements: focus group research of citizen and non-citizen views towards citizenship, language and education policy; a quantitative survey of 1500 citizens and 1500 non-citizens on these topics; expert interviews; a legal analysis of legislation affecting ethnic relations; and a media content analysis regarding the citizenship issue. At the same time, the Naturalisation Board organised a series of contests in schools on civics-related issues and four regional conferences to discuss the results of the research.

Ms. Aldermane's presentation was followed by a panel discussion of prominent experts on the results of the national survey. The panel was moderated by Mr. Ainārs Dimants, editor-in-chief of the newsmagazine "Fokuss," who asked panel participants what conclusions could be drawn from the results. The spectrum of answers was quite broad, but the following points were reiterated by several speakers.

A number of features unite all of Latvia's inhabitants, regardless of their citizenship status or ethnic origin. All are struggling to survive the difficult economic transition and face extremely harsh socio-economic circumstances. Moreover, most are alienated from government and have become socially and politically passive. At the same time, all are united by a sense of belonging to Latvia, common values, the recognition that all must know the Latvian language, and hopes about an easier future within the European Union.

The most important elements dividing Latvia's populace include contrasting evaluations of the past, the continued lack of Latvian language proficiency among many non-Latvians, and different understandings of the meaning of social integration. Moreover,

the inability of non-citizens to participate in decision-making and the negative, highly critical sentiments prevailing among them and much of the Russian language media are incomprehensible to many citizens, especially Latvians, who are unfamiliar with the problems faced by many of their non-citizen countrymen. Latvians and citizens themselves are not united in their knowledge of Latvian or high level of civic consciousness, which hinder the broader process of integration.

Several speakers highlighted the key role of the education system in promoting an integrated civil society. Some speakers were highly critical of the school system for failing to inculcate adequate Latvian language proficiency and an interest in acquiring citizenship among non-citizen youth. A serious problem is the lack of Latvia-centric Russian-language history texts. Moreover, proposals to amend legislation affecting language and education policy have created feelings of insecurity.

A number of speakers stressed the importance of generational divisions, suggesting that youth can more easily find common ground and are more open to each other, the outside world, and Europe. On several occasions during the conference the sentiment was expressed that while the past cannot be ignored, it should not be dwelled on. The path to the future lies in respect for the co-existence of many identities and the strengthening of participation and dialogue. Several speakers suggested the establishment of a government institution charged with monitoring and promoting the process of integration.

III. The Experience of EU Member-States and Neighbouring Estonia

On the first day of the conference, guest experts presented a number of European case studies. The case studies were intended to broaden the domestic Latvian debate about social integration to include insights and experience from other EU member-states. The case studies were Sweden/Finland/Sweden (two-way migration), the Netherlands (progressive integration policy), Italy/Austria - Tyrol, and Estonia (compared to Latvia). Below, the presentations are summarised and the most relevant elements to the Latvian situation are highlighted.

Bert Isacsson, the former general secretary of the Swedish delegation to the Nordic Council, related the history of Sweden and Finland, which were a united kingdom for seven hundred years and have experienced significant two-way migration. As a result, each country has a sizeable minority from the other, which "has been a matter of mutual concern, a factor bringing the two peoples closer to each other, but also, frankly speaking, a reason for criticism sometimes expressed by both sides."

However, Nordic co-operation has facilitated equality and co-operation both

between the majority and minority in Sweden and Finland, as well as between the two countries. A Common Nordic labour market allows Nordic citizens to work and resettle without a work permit or permanent residence permit. A Nordic passport union permits Nordic citizens to travel without presenting passports. According to the terms of the Nordic Convention on Social Security, Nordic citizens, regardless of their countries of origin, receive the same social benefits. The Nordic language convention grants Nordic citizens the right to use their mother tongue when communicating with the authorities. Finally, foreign citizens resident for three years enjoy the right to vote and eligibility in municipal elections.

While Swedish is a second official language in Finland, Sweden has taken a number of steps to promote the integration and cultural rights of its Finnish minority, including majority and minority language teaching and state support for minority culture, media, and social activities. At the same time, the Swedish government is investigating the possibility of ratifying Council of Europe instruments relating to minority rights.

Walter Palm, senior adviser to the Dutch Ministry of the Interior, related the long history of migration to the Netherlands, including political refugees, migrants from former Dutch colonies and labour migrants from Southern Europe, Turkey and Morocco. A turning point in Dutch integration policy came in 1979, when the Dutch Scientific Council on Government Policy published a report pointing out that labour migrants were not returning to their countries of origin and that the government had to start developing minority policy. The subsequently devised policy framework called for reducing minority disadvantages with regard to education, the labour market and housing; combating prejudices and discrimination and emancipation. Mr. Palm stressed that integration was a two-way street between the majority and minorities. Not only must immigrants learn Dutch, all schools must teach multiculturalism. Since 1985 all non-citizens resident for five years have passive and active voting rights on the local level. Mr. Palm also noted that the policy process must be future-oriented and consist of a number of steps: defining a problem, offering policy options, setting policy goals, monitoring results and revising policy over time. In the Netherlands, minority policy is coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior, which employs scientific research for monitoring, submits annual reports to parliament, and operates a National Dialogue Structure. The Dialogue Structure does not deal with everyday matters, but with strategy, thereby boosting the effectiveness of minority policy and offering minorities an important platform.

Professor Christoph Pan of the Southtyrolean Institute of Ethnic Groups examined the Case of South Tyrol, a part of the former Austrian Empire which passed to Italy in 1919. In South Tyrol 2/3 of the inhabitants have German as a mother tongue, one fourth have Italian and about 4% use Ladin. The South Tyrol case has attracted much attention recently because it is a rare instance of successful minority accomodation through territorial autonomy.

The Italian facist regime had sought to "italianse" the province. After World War II,

the government tried to unite the province with a neighbouring province inhabited almost exclusively by people of Italian mother tongue. Against this background, Austria raised the South Tyrol question in the United Nations and activists carried out a number of attacks. Italy then drafted a "package" of measures that were implemented from 1971 through 1992, when Austria informed the UN that the question was settled.

Among the measures included in the "package" were the following: a devolution of considerable powers to the South Tyrol local government, recognition of German as an official language equal to Italian in all public offices, guaranteeing persons belonging to the three ethnic groups a fair distribution of administrative posts, education in the mother tongue through high school, the possibility of receiving German broadcasts from neighbours and acquiring a higher education in Austria. Government policy has been bolstered by a network of non-governmental organisations and a flourishing economy.

Professor Pan stressed several distinctive features of the South Tyrol case. First of all, management of the controversy was successful because policy did not consist of isolated steps, but of a package of 137 (!) measures arrived at by consensus. Several of the measures, for example, ensuring fair representation in administration, were to be implemented over a very long transition period (35 years!) so as to avoid new injustices. Finally, economic forces have rendered bilingualism an "indispensable necessity, not de jure, but the more de facto."

Rafik Grigorian, adviser to the Minister of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Estonia, related new developments in his country's integration and minorities policy. A significant turning point in Estonia's integration policy came with the 1997 establishment of the Minister without portfolio for Ethnic Affairs and the subsequent adoption of the bases of Estonia's national integration policy by the Cabinet in February 1998. According to Mr. Grigorian, the preconditions for these steps did not exist several years ago and time was required to acknowledge the existence of the challenge.

The integration "theses" call for "a significant reduction in the number of persons with undetermined citizenship, a substantial breakthrough in teaching of the official language and real participation of non-Estonians in Estonian society." The emphasis of integration policy should be on children and youth with the Estonian educational system to be the central integration agent. The theses also call for reducing regional isolation of non-Estonians, and Mr. Grigorian noted that the integration challenge of necessity has a socio-economic component, as unemployment among non-Estonians is twice as high as among Estonians.

Mr. Grigorian emphasised that integration policy requires information, tolerance, a long-term perspective, but above all political will. No less important, integration policy requires considerable resources. Teaching Estonian to non-speakers will require a major resource mobilisation effort. Until now, funding for this purpose has not been effectively used. Moreover, thus far, experts have volunteered their time to work under

the auspices of the Minister of Inter-Ethnic Relations, but this cannot continue indefinitely.

Several lessons for Latvia can be drawn from the experience of Estonia and the EU member-states. Firstly, the Nordic and South Tyrol cases suggest that good neighbourly relations and regional co-operation can promote domestic integration and peaceful coexistence. Secondly, integration requires a very long time horizon, but once a problem is recognised and policy options are elaborated, it is possible to consciously guide processes. Thirdly, socio-economic aspects of integration, including employment policy and regional development, cannot be ignored. Finally, integration and cultural development require considerable financial and institutional resources.

IV. EU integration, EU citizenship and Latvia

Angel Vinas, Director of the Multilateral Relations Department of the European Commission, explored the "external and liberating effects of EU membership." Dr. Vinas asserted that "from a historical perspective, membership of the European Union made a substantial contribution to the breaking-down of age-old patterns of political and social interaction among the countries and peoples of Western Europe which were traditionally based on hostility, enmity and national strivings for hegemony." Co-operation among formerly bitter enemies within the EU represented "a conscious attempt at liberating our societies from the inherited shackles of the past."

According to Dr. Vinas, the Union has evolved into a "security community" in which the use of force or the threat of using force as mechanisms for regulating interstate interaction are obsolete. The European Union has instituted a voluntary surrender by the nation-state of specific areas of national sovereignty in favour of the Union's political structures. These structures are based on Community law and supported by a network of institutions and no less than 30,000 officials and experts involved in committee work.

Within the European Union, a rapid internationalisation of national cultures has taken place and frontiers have become increasingly notional. With the partial exceptions of France, Austria and Germany, nationalist extreme right-wing parties represent a negligible fraction of the electorate and hostility is not directed towards other citizens of member states, but towards non-European immigrants. Overall, though, surveys suggest that nationalism has perceptibly eroded and mutual trust has increased. All this points to the "internal liberating effect" of EU membership.

Advances in integration and interaction with a changed international environment have set in motion forces which require novel forms of conflict resolution. As European integration gains momentum and a new round of enlargement begins, it is instructive to recall the past travails of current member-states. As an example, Dr. Vinas noted Spain's democratic transition and the challenge posed by nationalist sentiments and minority

demands. Spain moved from a highly centralist non-democratic state to wide regional devolution, taking into account the cultural and linguistic claims of Catalan, Basque and Galician nationalisms, thereby making demands for independence irrelevant.

Dr. Vinas further contended that the most significant features of political change in the Union today are at the constitutional level in the field of political liberties. Four important innovations were made at Amsterdam, including 1. transferring visa, asylum and immigration to the Community framework, 2. bringing the Schengen agreement within the purview of the Union, 3. moving forward in social policy and anti-discrimination provisions, and 4. highlighting human rights as criteria for membership in the Union.

Dr. Vinas observed that "in the Baltic states there is a clear potential for making loyal citizens among minority groups." Finally, he concluded that "the countries and people that have, not long ago, recovered their own sovereignty after years of Soviet occupation or domination will find out that membership of the Union will liberate them from the remaining shackles of their own past."

A further exploration of the implications of European Union membership took place in a panel discussion on EU citizenship and national identity, which was chaired by Ambassador Gunter Weiss of the Delegation of the European Commission in Latvia. Professor Hans Claudius Taschner, former director responsible for the European Commission's programme "A Europe of Citizens" and the Schengen Agreement, stressed that citizenship of the European Union is "derivated" and is automatically acquired through citizenship of a member state. Although the European Union is not a state itself, increasingly it is assuming state characteristics æ freedom of movement (among Schengen states), the lack of felt borders, a common currency, a common parliament with EU citizens enjoying the right to vote in local elections throughout the Union, the power of European institutions to create directly applicable law, and a European Court of Justice with the power to render judgements and impose fines.

Professor Taschner stressed that the rights conferred by recent innovations within the European Union may seem limited, but they are very concrete: the right for students and pensioners to move and live elsewhere in the Union, the right to vote for the European parliament from one's country of residence and to vote in municipal elections, diplomatic protection to persons in danger, and the right to table petitions and apply to the ombudsman. Despite the acceleration of integration processes, Professor Taschner stressed that the EU has not the slightest interest in impairing the cultural identity of its members. On the contrary, it is interested in preserving diversity and cultural identities.

Professor Taschner's presentation was followed by two Latvian interventions, first by Juris Kanels, former Latvian ambassador to the European Union, and second by Pēteris Laķis, rector of Latvia's Academy of Culture. Mr. Kanels remarked that the beginning of the conference – the overview of Latvia's demographic history – reflected Latvia's tendency to focus on its past. Mr. Kanels noted that Latvia's approach to

citizenship was similarly conservative, insofar as most Latvians perceive citizenship as a means to preserve something already in existence, rather than to create something altogether new. Mr. Kanels stressed that membership in the EU would facilitate a modernisation of the understanding of citizenship among Latvians. Furthermore, when Latvian becomes an official language of the EU, non-speakers in Latvia will have added incentive to learn it.

Professor Lakis remarked that the European Union had acted as a catalyst for domestic integration processes in Latvia. At the same time, Professor Lakis bemoaned the low priority given to culture in Latvia and noted that current policy amounts to putting out brush fires, rather than forging a long-term strategy. Noting the limited milieu of the Latvian language in Latvia itself, he urged placing culture at the top of the political agenda. Concluding the discussion, Ambassador Weiss reiterated that the European Union is not a melting pot and, opposed to the failed example of the Soviet Union, aims at preserving the variety existing in Europe.

V. Working Group I: "From Resident to Citizen"

Professor Rasma Kārkliņa facilitated working group I, which was entitled "From Resident to Citizen." A number of panelists explored the factors hindering more active popular involvement in social and political life, possible ways of rendering citizenship more attractive to both citizens and non-citizens, and the primary challenges facing Latvia in creating an integrated civil society. The discussion was rendered quite lively by the active participation of many youth and the wide spectrum of opinion expressed.

Several times during the discussion participants stressed the continued salience of divisions between "us" and "them" in Latvian society. One Latvian interlocutor noted that "We" are scared of losing our identity, but "They" are bitter about the course of government policy over the last few years. While some non-citizen participants expressed discontent with the citizen/non-citizen divide and the very term "non-citizen," one student suggested a more positive term – "candidate citizen," which was warmly greeted by the audience.

Several speakers noted that the citizenry is divided, that not all cherish the idea of an independent Latvia and many do not have a command of the Latvian language. Non-citizens, for their part, are stratified in terms of the resources they command: not all have the economic, cultural and symbolic capital at their disposal to successfully undergo naturalisation. While much of the discussion revolved around citizenship-related issues, sociologist Ilze Ostrovska reminded the audience that cleavages based on gender, age, and region are often more salient than those based on citizenship or ethnicity. The facilitator of the discussion sought to promote the transcendence of these other cleavages by giving the floor first of all to youth, women, and participants from outside the capital.

Another theme that recurred throughout the discussion was the dynamism of the situation in Latvia. The role of the state is diminishing, while that of the individual is becoming more pronounced. Demographic change has been quite significant over the last few years. Market forces are increasingly affecting the language situation and necessitating multi-lingualism, while difficult socio-economic conditions have contributed to negative attitudes towards the state and citizenship. The world-wide revolution in information has only recently entered almost every household, with far-reaching, but contradictory implications for cultural identities in Latvia.

A number of speakers stressed that a clear vision of Latvia's future has yet to be articulated. Public debate often revolves around the past, which is quite divisive. However, Professor Kārkliņa noted that all inhabitants of Latvia suffered under Stalinism and that, as has been the case until now, all want to avoid violence in the future. Regarding current and future processes of integration, there appeared to be a consensus that integration could only take place on the basis of the Latvian language, but that progress in this realm requires a positive stance towards those learning the language, individual initiative and considerable resources. Integration also must take place on the basis of democratic values and respect for Latvia's independence. The desire to join the European Union is also a unifying factor that cuts across lines of ethnicity, citizenship and other cleavages.

While numerous speakers stressed the importance of individual initiative, non-governmental organisations and participation, the role of government is critical. As Vitalijs Gavrilovs, the director of Aldaris and president of the employer's association, put it, the government must send a clear message that every person in Latvia is worth gold.

VI. Working Group II: "Education, Language, Culture: Means for Integration?"

Helēna Demakova, a lecturer at the New Academy, moderated the second working group, which was entitled "Education, Language, Culture: Means for Integration?" The core themes of the discussion were integration instead of assimilation, democratisation, loyalty, the importance of grass roots organisations, and individual responsibility.

Participants discussed in depth progress and problems in Latvian language training in the school system. While several participants suggested intensifying Latvian language training in kindergartens, others noted that the content of teaching in kindergartens was highly dependent on the desires of parents. While close to a decade has passed since Latvian was declared the state language, many teachers in minority schools have yet to master Latvian and the state has not promoted the emergence of a new corps of teachers to replace them. It was noted that being a Latvian language teacher in a minority school is not a prestigious profession and that changing this was

an important challenge for the government. Dzintars Ābiķis, the chairman of the parliamentary commission on education and culture, proposed granting special privileges to Latvian language teachers in Latgale and elsewhere.

A National Programme for Latvian Language Training has achieved some success through its gradualist approach, but the Ministry of Education has urged a faster approach and more far-reaching transformations in the system of minority education. A number of minority representatives stressed the necessity of a more regular dialogue with the government regarding the reasons for reforming minority education and the goals of changes, so that minorities are not confronted with unexpected changes. Reference was also made to the positive example of interwar Latvia in the realm of minority education policy, a precedent worth emulating now.

While the education system plays a key role in inculcating Latvian language skills, some participants noted the importance of individual initiative as well. Several participants remarked that knowledge of Latvian was not a guarantor of loyalty to Latvia, that much depended on the way in which history was taught in the schools. While some interlocutors bemoaned the lack of adequate history books, others stressed that the problem lay more with teachers. One participant suggested organising meetings and conferences between teachers of history from both Latvian language and minority schools.

Cultural policy, minority cultural autonomy and the funding of culture were also discussed at length. Dzintars Ābiķis stressed that state and municipal governments have subsidised not only minority education, but minority cultural institutions, such as the Russian Drama Theatre in Riga and Polish and Russian cultural centres in Daugavpils. Raffi Harajanan, chairman of the Association of National Cultural Societies, bemoaned low levels of funding for minority cultural events and attributed the blame to government as well as to the passivity and poor project-writing skills of minorities themselves. The moderator suggested that the future creation of a Cultural Capital Fund and planned changes in the methodology of public financing for culture might resolve some problems.

While much of the discussion revolved around the government's role in cultural policy, several interlocutors stressed the role of non-governmental organisations. Professional unions and other cultural organisations can play a critical role not only in setting the direction of cultural policy, but also in furthering integration. It was stressed that the government must pave the way for greater activism by removing the legal and fiscal hurdles faced by NGOs. Juris Rubenis, a Lutheran pastor, noted the unifying role of churches and the Christian values underlying broader European civilisation and remarked that mutual understanding prevails among Christian confessions in Latvia. He also noted that Latvia's primary task was to create a space in which each individual could fufil the meaning of his or her life, that forming an inclusive society was a means on the way towards that goal.

VI. Conclusions

A final panel discussion of prominent public figures attempted to sum up the insights acquired over the course of two days and explored the possible contours of a future integration programme for Latvian society. A number of participants noted that Latvia has always been multiethnic and multicultural – more so than most EU member states – and that there was no tradition of assimilation. Latvia's Russians, Belarussians, Ukrainians and other minorities have created unique subcultures that differ from those in their kin states. It was also stressed that processes of integration have continually taken place in Latvian society despite repeated attempts to provoke conflicts. Andris Bērziņš, the major of Rīga, suggested that diversity was Latvia's greatest strength and competitive advantage, as human networks create links between countries, cultures and economies.

Before proposing elements of an integration policy, a number of panelists highlighted the primary obstacles to integration. Aleksandrs Kiršteins and Juris Sinka, both members of parliament, mentioned Russia's recent demarche against Latvia, suggesting that the international environment was not always conducive to domestic integration processes. However, member of parliament Jānis Jurkāns and journalist Alla Petropavlovska both stressed that the atmosphere within Latvia over the last several years has not promoted integration. Editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Biznes i Baltija* Tatjana Fast pointed to the insidious impact of myths she claimed were propagated by politicians, for example, that non-citizens want to acquire citizenship to vote for union with Russia, that non-citizens are disloyal, and that Latvia can somehow escape geography and its Russian-speaking population. Sociologist Aivars Tabūns concurred, remarking that generalisations are often very injurious and create unnecessary tensions.

Several speakers highlighted the importance of articulating a clear vision of Latvia's future as "a national state with a multicultural society." Without a vision and a strategy, policy is inconsistent and contradictory and Latvia risks losing the younger generation of minorities. Mayor Bērziņš stressed that integration could be promoted if the government sent a powerful signal that it is not against identities and other languages, but that all in Latvia must know the Latvian language. At the same time, Ms. Petropavlovska urged that the emphasis in language policy be shifted "from repression to assistance." Ms. Fast suggested that the growing political influence of big business in Latvia augured increasing pragmatism in minority policy.

A number of themes from the working groups reappeared in the final discussion, including the necessity of facilitating the resolution of integration challenges outside the confines of government policy by facilitating the dynamism of civil society. Political scientist Daina Bleiere, rapporteur for working group II, reiterated the importance of generational change and cited a working group participant who claimed "our generation cannot resolve these problems." Several panel participants echoed earlier

calls for the creation of a government institution or ministry charged with overseeing integration policy.

Asked by moderator Ainārs Dimants if integration was a utopia, Geoffrey Barrett, First Counsellor of the Delegation of the European Commission in Latvia, noted that no country in Europe has a similar share of non-citizens and as heavy a burden of history. Professor Kārkliņa replied that full integration in all realms is utopian. According to Ms. Petropavlovska, integration without dialogue on terms dictated by only one side is utopian. Several panelists suggested that integration was a long-term challenge and that much depended on socio-economic circumstances and the stance of Latvians.

Ambassador Weiss of the European Commission in Latvia concluded with a metaphor about Spring and expressed the hope that the conference had served as "fertiliser" for thinking about the future of Latvia. He stressed the importance of EU membership for Latvia's sustainable future and noted that the EU welcomed this and wanted to assist in identifying the key characteristics of a democratic, independent, European Latvia. An inclusive Latvia, he said, will have a peaceful future. Atis Lejiņš, director of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs and co-organiser of the conference, remarked that 10 years ago, when the Popular Front held its founding congress in that same conference hall, few could imagine that ten years later Latvia would be an independent country applying for membership in the EU. He expressed the hope that in a gathering after another ten years, people would have only a distant memory of a Latvia outside the European Union.

Rasma Kārkliņa

The People of Latvia in this Century

I have been asked to speak about the demographic changes in Latvia during this century and to pinpoint recent trends. Past demographic processes affect Latvia's situation today and form the basis of ethnodemographic issues to be discussed at this conference. The scientific method is to compare, and the first thing to be pointed out is the highly unusual demographic fate of Latvia that one can ignore only at the risk of misleading conclusions. With the partial exception of Estonia, no other country in Europe has had a similar fate, especially during the Soviet era. In a nutshell, this fate can be summarized as the demographic weakening of the indigenous people and the organized influx of settlers.

My topic refers to the "people of Latvia". Usually this concept is used to refer to the community of citizens of Latvia, as it is understood in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, but here I use it to refer to all longtime inhabitants. This means that we speak of the Latvian people as well as historical and new minorities. Both these ethnodemographic communities have experienced tremendous change during this century, and as a political scientist I wish to emphasize that these huge and often dramatic changes have been linked to politics. Latvia's demographic landscape mirrors all the big political events of this century: two world wars, the totalitarianism of Hitler and Stalin, and the expansion as well as collapse of the Soviet Union. There is much one can say about all of this, but here I can touch on only those events with the greatest impact on the contemporary situation. I shall do so first in regard to the Latvian people, then in regard to the minorities and mutual relationships.

The highly unusual demographic situation of Latvia in this century is characterized by the fact that the size of its population has not changed as one would expect by comparison with other peoples: thus, in 1912, the size of Latvia's and Norway's populations was more or less equal, e.g. around two and a half million, but while Latvia's population today remains roughly the same size, the Norwegian population has grown to four and a half million. Using the prism of comparative demographics it is even more unusual that there were more Latvians in Latvia in 1935 than there are today. These numbers together with the disproportionate number of migrants who settled in Latvia during the Soviet era have caused Latvian anxieties about the survival of their nation.

A short reminder of the main losses in human lives experienced by the Latvians during this century includes losses through military action and refugee flows in World War I as well as the loss of life during the Struggle for Independence at the end of the war. During World War II it includes the victims of the terror and deportations during the

first Soviet occupation in 1940–41, the victims of terror during German occupation, and the disproportional loss of life through military action at various fronts. Demographic losses continued as circa one tenth of the Latvian people fled abroad at the beginning of the second Soviet occupation period in late 1944, others fought a desperate guerilla war, and thousands of rural inhabitants were deported to Siberia in 1949. All in all about one third of all Latvians were annihilated or pushed into exile by these events, but one could also add the losses entailed by the very low birthrates that typically occur at times of war and oppression. It is indicative that Latvian birthrates started to rise for the first time after the mid–1980s, when hopes for the restoration of an independent Latvian state were reawakened.

The historical minorities of Latvia also have experienced huge politically motivated traumas in this century. As a result of the Hitler–Stalin Pact and the German occupation, Latvia's Baltic German and Jewish communities disappeared nearly entirely: Hitler's government forced the Baltic Germans to resettle in Germany and annihilated the Jews in an organized genocide. Other minorities suffered as well, especially Gypsies. Just as the Latvians, the minorities also suffered in the Stalinist terror and deportations. Thus, a significant number of Latvia's Jews were also deported to Siberia on June 14, 1941. The historical Russian minority suffered as well, especially its religious and cultural representatives.

All this meant that at the end of World War II the number and composition of Latvia's historical minorities had changed, yet soon new and unusual demographic movements began, namely the Soviet state–sponsored resettlement of Slavs, especially Russians. As noted by Soviet demographers, of the entire USSR Latvia experienced the highest proportional rate of immigration. What's more, if we try to compare this population influx with countries in western Europe, we see that none has experienced anything even closely comparable. While Russians constituted just 9% of Latvia's population in 1935, they made up 34% in 1989 (compare Figure 1).

During the postwar Soviet occupation of Latvia the influx of Russian and other Slavic settlers increased from year to year. When the Berklavs group of nationalcommunists tried to stop this movement of people in the late 1950s, Krushchev removed them from office and sanctioned them. This underlined once more that Latvia had lost its sovereign power over its borders and territory. The Soviet regime pursued a policy of "internationalization" according to the model of the communal apartment, where people are forced to live together involuntarily. Such an approach is directly opposite to the European model of integration which is based on voluntary agreements and the reconciliation of interests of all participants.

During the Soviet era the Latvians increasingly came to be a minority in their own

homeland, and this applies both if we speak of a minority in numerical terms or in terms of cultural and political power. Today the situation has changed, especially in the political realm, but one needs to recognize that demographically many environments persist where Latvians form a minority, especially in the large cities and Latgale, as well as at specific places of work. Every environment influences ethnic processes, for example in the language sphere. Since many Russians still do not know any Latvian, or know it only poorly, there still are innumerable instances when Latvians have to speak Russian whether they want to or not, in order to be able to communicate. That is an abnormal situation characteristic of a language minority rather than a language majority.

If we look at trends during the past decade one notes that since the restoration of Latvia's independence, the direction of several demographic trends has been changed. Most importantly, we not an absolute as well as proportional decrease of the number of Soviet era settlers: in absolute numbers there is a decline by circa two hundred thousand people and proportionally by circa five percent of Latvia's population (compare Figure 1). Parts of the settler population have returned to their countries of origin, as could be expected in light of changed political circumstances. Yet one also needs to point out that many of the cadre sent to Latvia never expected to stay there permanently since there was a perpetual rotation of — especially the higher — Soviet military and administrative cadre, who stayed in one place for a certain time, and were then replaced by others. Recently there has been a drop in the rate of outmigration from Latvia, but this outmigration is likely to continue to some extent throughout the next decades. Again much depends on political contexts, as comparative experience shows many precedents of people returning to their historical homelands, for example in the case of Germans from Russia.

The other big change during the last decade relates to the proportion of Latvians in Latvia's population. Ethnodemographic trends show that although today Latvians constitute 57% of the entire population, they constitute 64% among schoolchildren. Similarly, 64% of newborns are Latvians. In other words, although birthrates have decreased among all ethnic groups in recent years, the drop has been most pronounced among non–Latvians, which is understandable as outmigration has involved mostly younger people. If these processes continue, one can expect a further gradual proportional increase of the number of Latvians. Their number may also increase in absolute terms if there should be a rise in birthdates, as could be expected if the economic situation improves. The number of Latvians in Latvia is also growing due to the repatriation of close to a thousand Latvians from the East and West every year.

In conclusion I again want to point out the links between ethnodemographics and other ethnic processes, such as language use. During the Soviet era the hegemony of the Russian language in Latvia increased from year to year. At the beginning of the

self–liberation struggle in 1987/88 the Latvian language had been nearly entirely pushed out of the public realm. Therefore, reclaiming a normal role for the Latvian language became a core demand of the national reawakening and a prime policy issue after the restoration of independence in 1991. The resulting state language laws and new programs have had considerable success, yet much still needs to be done. It is a success that today Latvians can use their native language in nearly all public offices and shops in Latvia, but in a comparative perspective it is altogether abnormal to find that nearly half of the non–Latvian students in Latvia graduate from school with a poor knowledge of Latvian. In sum, ethnodemographic normalization in Latvia is proceeding, but it does so at a slow pace.

Population of Latvia by ethnicity