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**Third Report submitted by Latvia pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of  
the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities**

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**Third Report**  
**on the Implementation of the Framework**  
**Convention for the Protection of National**  
**Minorities**  
**by the Republic of Latvia**

Rīga, 2016

### **List of Abbreviations**

ANCAL	Association of National Cultural Associations of Latvia
ACNM	Advisory Council on National Minorities
CL	Criminal Law
EEA	European Economic Area
EMM	electronic mass media
LJTC	Latvian Judicial Training Centre
LLA	Latvian Language Agency
MC	Ministry of Culture
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MoI	Ministry of the Interior
NEMMC	National Electronic Mass Media Council
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OCMA	Office for Citizenship and Migration Affairs
PHARE	financial instrument of the European Union for financial and technical co-operation with Central and Eastern European countries
SIF	Society Integration Fund
SLC	State Language Centre
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## Introduction

### Procedure for drafting and adoption of the Report

1. On 26 May 2005, the Parliament of Latvia (the Saeima) ratified the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (hereinafter – the Convention), and it entered into force on 1 October 2005. The Second State Report on the implementation of the Convention (hereinafter – the Second Report) was submitted on 3 September 2012. The second cycle of monitoring the implementation of the Convention was concluded by the adoption of the Resolution of the Committee of Ministers (hereinafter – the Resolution) on 9 July 2014<sup>1</sup>.
2. An inter-institutional working group was established in order to draft the Third Report (hereinafter – the Report) on the Implementation of the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in Latvia.<sup>2</sup> Before approval by the Government, the draft Report was forwarded to the Ministry of Culture Advisory Committee of Representatives from National Minority Non-governmental Organizations to seek its opinion. For additional info on relevant activities please see Sections of this Report “*Participation of national minorities in democratic processes*” un “*Promotion of national minority participation in decision making processes*”.
3. The Report was adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 6 December 2016.<sup>3</sup>
4. The Report covers the time period from 2012 to August 2016 (in some instances – to November 2016).

### Scope of obligations of Latvia

5. Upon ratifying the Convention, Latvia declared that, within the meaning of the Convention, the notion ‘national minorities’ applies to “citizens of Latvia who differ from Latvians in terms of their culture, religion or language, who have traditionally lived in Latvia for generations and consider themselves to belong to the State and society of Latvia, who wish to preserve and develop their culture, religion or language.” The scope of application of the Convention was considerably expanded by providing that persons who are not citizens of Latvia or another State but who permanently and legally reside in the Republic of Latvia, who do not belong to a national minority within the meaning of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as defined in the declaration submitted by Latvia, but who identify themselves with a national minority that meets the definition contained in the declaration, enjoy the rights prescribed in the Framework Convention, unless specific exceptions are prescribed by the law. Latvia believes that the definition of national minorities it has chosen, as well as the declarations

<sup>1</sup>Information on the second monitoring cycle is available in Latvian, English, Russian on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ website : <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/policy/society-integration/integration-policy-in-latvia-a-multi-faceted-approach/ratification-of-the-council-of-europe-framework-convention-for-the-protection-of-national-minorities>

<sup>2</sup> The group included representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and their subordinate institutions, the National Electronic Mass Media Council and the Society Integration Fund.

<sup>3</sup> Cabinet of Ministers’ session on the 6th of December, 2016:  
<http://tap.mk.gov.lv/lv/mk/tap/?pid=40405114&mode=mk&date=2016-12-06>

submitted by Latvia upon ratification of the Convention are in line with the spirit and aim of the Convention and the established international practice in this regard.

6. The Convention leaves a broad margin of appreciation to States in the application of the rights and principles set forth therein, in order to take into account the specific nature of the constitutional system and historical and geopolitical situation of each State. Such an approach is in full conformity with well-established principles of international law and the existing State practice. The Convention does not require the States to change the aforementioned fundamental principles of democratic statehood enshrined in their constitutions.

### **The status of a non-citizen: clarification**

7. Latvia continues the legal personality of the Republic of Latvia which existed until the occupation by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (hereinafter – the USSR) in 1940 and, upon regaining independence in 1991, democratic institutions of the former Republic of Latvia have been reinstated, along with the body of citizens, legal system, property rights and international obligations as important core elements of State identity. Thus, within the meaning of international law, Latvia is not a newly established state or a successor to the obligations of the USSR).
8. As a result of the policy pursued by the USSR, which included deportations of the population of Latvia, russification and internal migration within the USSR, the ethnic composition of population in Latvia had been changed. According to the results of the 1989 population census, the share of ethnic Latvians in Latvia had decreased to 52% in comparison to 77% in 1935.<sup>4</sup> According to the census data, only 22% of people of other ethnicities in Latvia knew Latvian, while 68.7% of ethnic Latvians claimed command of Russian.<sup>5</sup> This reality predetermined adoption of special and long-lasting protection measures to ensure, preserve and develop fundamental elements characterising the State of Latvia, for instance, command and use of the Latvian language in the State. Many of the measures remain important even today, as Latvia continues reinforcing the elements of its State identity. This consideration must be borne in mind when evaluating measures undertaken by the Latvian State towards honouring its commitments vis á vis national minorities.
9. It should be explained that, upon restoring independence of the Republic of Latvia, the citizenship of the Republic of Latvia was also reinstated as part of the statehood. Due to this, persons who had settled in Latvia as a result of migration facilitated during the USSR occupation of Latvia could not automatically become citizens of the Republic of Latvia. Therefore, the status of a non-citizen was introduced<sup>6</sup>, as a temporary status for the period during which a person would acquire Latvian citizenship or choose another State to establish his or her legal connection with. On the development of the citizenship institution after the restoration of independence and the non-citizen status see Paragraphs 3, 32-37 of the First Report of Latvia on the Implementation of the Convention (hereinafter – First National Report).

<sup>4</sup> Demographic Yearbook of Latvia, Central Statistics Committee of Latvia, Riga, 1995, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Results of the Population Census on 1989 in Latvia: Statistical Bulletin Part II, State Statistics Committee of Latvia, Riga, 1991, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> Law “On the Status of those Former U.S.S.R. Citizens who do not have the Citizenship of Latvia or that of any Other State” of 12 April 1995.

10. It must be noted that Latvia's non-citizens is the only category of residents who, not being Latvian citizens, have *ex-lege* rights to reside in Latvia. Moreover, the status of non-citizen guarantees consular protection of the Republic of Latvia abroad as well as a broad range of civil and economic rights and freedoms. Meanwhile, non-citizens have the right to naturalise at any moment, acquire Latvian citizenship and enjoy the Latvian citizen's rights. The status of a Latvian non-citizen cannot be equated with any other status of a physical person laid down in international law: the scope of non-citizens' rights is broader than the scope of rights of any other existing and potentially comparable status under international law. Latvian non-citizens cannot be recognised as stateless persons in the meaning of the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.
11. It should be added that the status of non-citizen must not be mistaken for belonging to a specific ethnic group, and the non-citizen status does not by itself imply belonging to a national minority in Latvia.
12. Latvia emphasises that the goal of its integration policy is to facilitate naturalisation and increase the number of Latvian citizens, not to "freeze" the number of non-citizens. To this end, the naturalisation process has been made easier on a number of occasions (*See the chapter "Facilitation of the Naturalisation Process" of this Report*).

### **Information on the implementation of the Convention – article by article**

13. While appreciating the recognition by international institutions of the progress achieved since regaining independence, Latvia is aware that there is always room for further improvements. Therefore, Latvia confirms its preparedness to continue fulfilling the commitments under the Convention and remain engaged in a dialogue with the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention (hereinafter – Advisory Committee).
14. Further on, the Report presents detailed information, article by article, on the implementation of the Convention in Latvia from 2012 to 2016, including a special focus on measures taken to follow recommendations included in the Committee of Ministers resolution of 9 July 2014.

#### **Article 1**

15. Latvia wishes to refer to the information provided in Paragraph 38 of its First National Report.

#### **Article 2**

16. Latvia wishes to refer to the information provided in Paragraph 18 of its Second National Report.

#### **Article 3**

##### **Integration policy in Latvia**

17. Latvia would like to refer to the information it has provided in the context of Article 3 of the Convention in the framework of the first and second monitoring cycles and to underscore that under Article 114 of the Satversme (the Constitution) "persons belonging to ethnic minorities have the right to preserve and develop their language and their ethnic and cultural identity" while Article 102 thereof stipulates that "everyone has the right to form and join associations, political parties and other public organisations".

18. Historically, Latvia has always been a multi-ethnic country. Already when adopting the Constitution of 1922, Latvian legislators and legal scholars recognised that, beside ethnic Latvians, the Latvian people also include other ethnic groups (national minorities). Latvia has a number of historical national minorities, for instance, Jews, Russians, Lithuanians, Poles, Roma, and Germans<sup>7</sup>. There are ethnic groups in Latvia that do not correspond to all the required criteria<sup>8</sup> for them to be regarded as national minorities (for instance, long term presence); however, persons belonging to those groups are given a possibility to enjoy the rights guaranteed to national minorities. Therefore, certain sections in this Report also provide information on these ethnic groups.
19. Latvia indicates that an ethnic group is a broader term than a national minority. Members of one ethnic group can belong or not belong to a certain recognised national minority. Nevertheless, it would be impossible or even undesirable to draw a line between the members of one ethnic group in implementation of a national policy. Likewise, in a number of cases, the State carries out measures aimed at different ethnic groups or their representatives irrespective of whether or not they could be regarded as national minorities. Latvia calls for those considerations to be taken into account when evaluating the information provided in this Report.
20. Society integration has been the priority for the Latvian government since the early 1990s; therefore, the State continues to pursue its integration policy. As the result of reorganisation of a number of government institutions, and as from 1 January 2011, functions of the Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Social Integration have been assigned to the Ministry of Culture, which is responsible for the development and implementation of a common national policy on society integration, the development of civil society and inter-cultural dialogue.
21. Society integration is regarded a horizontal issue that continues to be addressed also by the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, the Latvian Language Agency, the Office for Citizenship and Migration Affairs, the Society Integration Fund, the State Employment Agency, the State Chancellery, local authorities and NGOs.

### **Ensuring public involvement**

22. The State Administration Structure Law adopted in 2002 stipulates that public administration institutions shall ensure the involvement of society representatives, by including such persons in working groups, advisory councils or by asking them to provide opinions. Both the Saeima and the Government<sup>9</sup> have established close co-operation with non-governmental organisations (hereinafter – NGOs). Representatives

<sup>7</sup> Ziemele I., Comments on the Constitution of Latvia, Chapter VIII on Fundamental Human Rights (co-authors), Official Journal, 2011, p.696, §§2.3, p.712, §41.

<sup>8</sup> See Paragraph 5 of the present Report.

<sup>9</sup> In 2014, a new Co-operation Memorandum was signed between NGOs and the Cabinet of Ministers <http://mk.gov.lv/content/informacija-par-nvo-un-ministru-kabineta-sadarbibas-memorandu> (in Latvian); Since the signing in 2005 of the first memorandum, 404 organisations have acceded to it, and the memorandum is still open for signing by NGOs. In 2006, the Saeima adopted a Declaration on Principles for Co-operation between the Saeima and NGOs <http://www.saeima.lv/lv/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/deklaracija/> (in Latvian).

from the government, the Employers' Confederation of Latvia and the Association of Free Trade Unions of Latvia participate in the National Trilateral Co-operation Council. In matters important to the society, public administration institutions have a duty to organise a public discussion. The society is informed about the drafting of planning documents and legal acts, and NGOs and social partners are ensured participation in the drafting process. Civil society representatives are given an opportunity to put forward their proposals, opinions on the draft legal acts and publicly express their view at any stage of drafting of the respective document; besides, the outcome of public involvement are reflected in the initial impact assessments (annotations) of draft legal acts. Meetings of the Cabinet and the Saeima are open to the public; video and audio broadcasts of the Saeima meetings are ensured.

23. On 25 August 2009, the Cabinet adopted Regulation No. 970 "Public participation procedures for the development planning process" that regulates participation in the development planning process undertaken by the Saeima, the Cabinet, direct administration institutions and other institutions. The aim of the regulation is to contribute to an efficient, open, inclusive, timely and responsible public participation in the development planning process, thus enhancing the quality of the planning process and compliance of its results with the needs and interests of the society.
24. All local governments have a duty to hold public consultations on any changes in administrative borders and on the local authority development programme and spatial plan. The local community and media representatives in the course of public discussions are guaranteed access not only to the document under discussion but also all the decisions by the local authority related to that document. Everybody has the right to express their opinion, verbally or in writing, on the matter under public discussion. The local authority has an obligation to publish a summary of the discussion results and the decision taken by the local council that incorporates the results of public discussion.

#### **Participation of national minorities in democratic processes**

25. To analyse opportunities for national minority participation and the activities of national minority NGOs, the Ministry of Culture commissioned the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (BISS) to carry out a study "National Minority Participation in Democratic Processes in Latvia". The study offers information on national minority organisations and on issues of significance for national minorities, which the Ministry of Culture will use when planning its future work<sup>10</sup>.
26. According to the findings of the above-mentioned study, in year 2015 the following entities were registered in Latvia: 426 associations and foundations the statutes of which include work with national minorities. Of those, 309 can be regarded as national minority associations, while 117 are related associations, including language training centres, folk dance studios, organisations for cooperation between Latvia and other countries, friendship associations promoting contacts between Latvians and other ethnicities etc. The study reveals that 157 out of 309 national minority associations and foundations are working actively, while 108 demonstrate medium intensity in their operations. 42 of the active minority organisations are involved in decision making at the local and national level (16 at the local authority level, and 26 at the national level).

<sup>10</sup> The study is available in Latvian, English and Russian :  
[http://www.km.gov.lv/lv/ministrija/sabiedribas\\_integracija.html](http://www.km.gov.lv/lv/ministrija/sabiedribas_integracija.html)

27. The study also found that 67% of Latvia's national minority representative's feel deep affinity with Latvia and 73% feel a close connection with their home city or town. By comparison, only 28% and 27% of them respectively feel affinity with Russia or Europe. There are more people among the members and activists of national minority NGOs who feel proud of being residents of Latvia, are positive of the Latvian national awakening period (*Atmoda*), and celebrate 18 November, the Day of Proclamation of the Republic of Latvia, and 4 May, the day when the Declaration on the Restoration of Independence was adopted, the study indicates.
28. The above findings were also corroborated by the results of a national -minority-related study "The Sense of Belonging to Latvia"<sup>11</sup> – almost two thirds (64%) of respondents identified themselves as Latvia's patriots.
29. For further information on the participation of national minorities in democratic processes see the present Report from Paragraph 209 onwards.

#### **Self-identification and indication of ethnicity**

30. On 1 April 2012 the Regulation No 134 of the Cabinet of Ministers On Personal Identity Documents entered into force providing for a possibility, upon a person's will, to include in the personal identification document, with the exception of EU citizens' identification cards and residence permits, the original form of a person's name transliterated into Roman characters or the historical form of a person's given name or family name. A person shall provide documentary proof to the distinctive spelling of his or her given name or family name, if this has not been indicated in the Population Register or in a previous personal identification document. Transliteration into Roman characters is performed according to the transliteration table provided by the International Civil Aviation Organisation's (ICAO). At the same time, a person's ethnicity will not be indicated in the identification cards (as well as in other personal identification documents).
31. Under amendments of 29 January 2013 to the said Cabinet Regulation No. 134, a person has the right to choose whether to indicate ethnicity in his or her personal identity documents thereby identifying themselves with an ethnic group, or not to specify such data. Under the Law on the Change of the Given Name, Surname and Nationality Record, a person is also entitled to the change of his or her ethnic background record.

#### **Article 4**

32. Latvia wishes to refer to the information provided by it in Paragraphs 47, 49, 51, 53 of its First National Report and emphasise that the equality of all the residents of Latvia before the law and the court is guaranteed by the currently effective Latvian legislation enshrining the principle of prohibition of any discrimination and the principle of equality. Thus under Article 91 of the Constitution, "all human beings in Latvia shall be equal before the law and the courts. Human rights shall be realised without discrimination of any kind". Identical norms have also been defined in Article 4 of the law "On Judicial Power" stipulating that all persons are equal before the law and the court, they have equal

<sup>11</sup> Study "Piederības sajūta Latvijai" ("Sense of Belonging to Latvia"): accessible at [http://providus.lv/article\\_files/2682/original/atskaite\\_piederiba\\_08\\_2014.pdf](http://providus.lv/article_files/2682/original/atskaite_piederiba_08_2014.pdf)

rights to the protection of the law, and a court shall try a case irrespective of the origin, social and financial status, race or nationality, sex, education, language, attitude towards religion, type and nature of occupation, place of residence, or the political or other views of a person. Under Article 92 of the Constitution, “everyone has the right to defend his or her rights and lawful interests in a fair court”.

### **Protection against discrimination**

33. On 19 June 2008, amendments were approved to the Law on Consumer Rights and to the Law on Social Security (*see Paragraphs 46-50 in the Second National Report*).
34. A new Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination against Natural Persons – Economic Activity Performers came into force on 2 January 2013 repealing the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination against Natural Persons – Economic Activity Performers of 21 May 2009. The new law was supplemented with provisions stemming from Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity.

### ***The Patient Rights Law***

35. The new Patient Rights Law is in force as from 1 March 2010. The Law prohibits differential treatment including on the grounds of a person’s race, ethnic origin, skin colour, national or social origin or other circumstances. Differential treatment includes direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or an instruction to discriminate.
36. Latvia wishes to underline that Section 4 Paragraph five of the Law on the Rights of Patients stipulates that a patient shall be provided with information in a comprehensible manner, explaining medical terms and taking into account the age, maturity and experience of the patient. The said regulation sets the objective to be achieved through using all the resources and means of conveying information that are available.

### ***Labour Law***

37. Section 7 of the Labour Law stipulates that everyone has an equal right to work, to fair, safe and healthy working conditions, as well as to fair work remuneration without any direct or indirect discrimination. These rights are to be ensured without any direct or indirect discrimination (*see also Paragraph 25 of the First National Report*).
38. Under Section 29 of the Labour Law, differential treatment based on the above mentioned grounds is prohibited when establishing the employment relationship, as well as during the period of existence of the employment relationship, in particular when promoting an employee, determining working conditions, remuneration or occupational training or increasing of qualifications, as well as when giving notice of termination of an employment contract (*for details see Paragraph 58 of the Second National Report*).
39. Amendments to the Labour Law took effect on 1 January 2015, and Section 32 was supplemented with Paragraph 2<sup>1</sup> prohibiting any indications as to proficiency of a particular foreign language in a job advertisement, except where such a requirement is justified on the grounds of performance of job duties.
40. See information on employment during the reporting period in Tables 1–3.



employees, there is still enough room for improvement in the implementation of diversity management measures, especially in small and medium -sized companies. In the context of the study, recommendations were developed on the introduction of and promotion measures for the diversity management approach in Latvia's companies.

## Article 5

### **Promotion and preservation of national minority culture and identity**

46. The Law on Unrestricted Development and the Right to Cultural Autonomy of National and Ethnic Groups of Latvia of 19 March 1991 was adopted to guarantee to all national and ethnic groups in the Republic of Latvia the rights to cultural autonomy and self-administration of their culture. Over twenty years, the legal system of Latvia has developed and evolved and, consequently, the majority of provisions contained in this Law currently overlap with the provisions of other normative acts.

### ***Support for national minority non-governmental organizations***

47. National minority non-governmental organisations have the same rights as all the other non-governmental organisations in Latvia to apply for grants through calls for proposals from specific financial instruments and receive support for the main operations and administrative capacity building.
48. The NGO Support Programme of the Ministry of Culture has been implemented since 2014 in all Latvia's regions as an NGO project competition offering funding to NGOs which carry out their projects to promote civil society and support national minority NGOs. In the framework of the programme, on a competitive basis, one coordinator has been appointed in each region who administers the funds allocated, ensures the management of regional project competitions and provides the required support and information to NGOs that intend to carry out their projects in the region. As part of the programme, a separate funding line has been designated for national minority organisations. After each programmatic period, assessment of the NGO Support Programme is arranged.
49. From 1 to 3 July 2016, the first National Minority Cultures' Festival took place in Daugavpils and the Latgale region. The festival is the initiative of the Committee of National Minority Non-governmental Organisations' Representatives of the Ministry of Culture, and aims at promoting, developing and enhancing the cultural heritage of national minorities living in Latvia, raising the awareness among national minority population of the significance of their culture in Latvia's cultural environment, and intensifying public participation in the exploration, practicing and transfer of intangible heritage. In 2016, the festival brought together more than 1300 participants, 600 of them being members of national minorities, and comprised more than 50 different cultural events – concerts, master classes, a festival procession, a youth forum and others. The organisation of the festival was funded by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia, the German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Daugavpils City Council. The institutions which took part in the organisation of the festival in partnership with the South Latgale NGO Support Centre association were the Cultural Department of the Daugavpils City Council, the Latvian National Culture Centre and the European Minorities Centre (Germany). The second festival of cultures has been scheduled for 2018 in Jelgava and will be included in the series of events to celebrate Latvia's centenary.

50. In 2016, having regard to the priority of “Human Security” set out in the National Development Plan (approved by the Saeima on 20.12.2012) and Measure 1.2.5. “Improve conditions for the operation of non-governmental organisations and promote cooperation” under *Action Line 1 “Civil Society and Integration”* of Chapter 6 “Planned Measures” in the plan for the implementation of the Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy for 2012–2018 (hereinafter – the Guidelines) for the period till 2016; having regard to the third version of a conceptual report “On the establishment of a state-financed fund for non-governmental organisations” (approved by Order No.79 of the Cabinet of Ministers of 16.12.2015); having regard to Paragraph 2 of the Protocol Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers session of 1 December 2015 ( Minutes No. 64, s. 41), the Ministry of Culture allocated financing of EUR 400 000.00 to the Society Integration Fund towards the implementation of an operational programme of a state financed fund for support of non-governmental organisations (*see paragraph 67 of the present Report*).

### ***The Association of National Cultural Associations of Latvia***

51. For a number of years, the Ministry of Culture has been providing financial support for Ita Kozakēviča Association of National Cultural Associations of Latvia (hereinafter – ANCAL) while delegating to the ANCAL the task of ensuring the preservation and development of ethnic minority cultures and promoting an inter-cultural through events of national minority organisations.
52. The ANCAL was established in 1988 and unites more than 20 cultural societies and associations of various ethnic groups living in Latvia. Since 1990, Dr.art. Rafi Haradžanjans has been the ANCAL Chairman of the Board. Since 2014, he has been representing the ANCAL at the Ministry of Culture Advisory Committee of National Minority Organisation Representatives. Under the Law “On the Hand-Over of Real Estate to Ita Kozakēviča Association of National Cultural Associations of Latvia” the ANCAL owns a building at Slokas iela 37, Riga.
53. The ANCAL’s activities are aimed at providing assistance to members of national minorities in making them aware of their ethnic background, exploring their culture, language and religious traditions. In receiving support from the Ministry of Culture, the ANCAL has committed itself to implementing a series of measures to preserve and develop national minority culture; to promote an inter-cultural dialogue; to promote integration in to the local community of people belonging to national minorities through concerts, exhibitions, festivals and other events, ensuring regularity, diversity and accessibility of these events for various target groups.
54. Since 2003, at the end of November and beginning of December, the ANCAL has been organizing a large scale art festival entitled “United in Diversity”.
55. The ANCAL co-ordinates monthly programmes (about 10 half-an-hour programmes each month) in national minority languages (incl. Polish, Estonian, Lithuanian, Georgian, Ukrainian, German, Belarusian, Tatar, Armenian) on *Latvijas Radio 4*, introducing audiences to the latest activities, plans, traditions, ethnic festivals, people and specific events of various national minority cultural societies. On average, the total audience of *Latvijas Radio 4* is 120,000-130,000 listeners per week<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> The ranking of radio stations according to their total weekly audiences in the winter and spring seasons 2016, TNS Latvia, <http://www.tns.lv/?lang=lv&fullarticle=true&category=showuid&id=4986>.

***National minority culture (theatres, museums, periodicals)***

56. *Mikhail Chekhov's Riga Russian Theatre*, established on 2 October 1883, is the oldest Russian theatre outside Russia offering a Russian language repertoire. The Daugavpils Theatre and the Latvian Puppet Theatre each have two permanent troupes – Latvian and Russian; the New Riga Theatre also includes Russian language productions in its repertoire. The number of amateur theatre studios, including those with Russian groups, has increased since 2011<sup>18</sup>.
57. Currently, 65% of the Latvian museum websites have their Russian language versions. Most of the museums also offer guide services in Russian. The Latvian National Symphony Orchestra runs a concert programme in Latvian and Russian. In 2014, 25% of magazines and 22% newspapers were published in languages other than Latvian.
58. Both *Mikhail Chekhov's Riga Russian Theatre* and museums receive annual subsidies from the Ministry of Culture.
59. In 2015, Latvian language publications comprised 93% of fiction, and 7% were in other languages. Of periodicals, 78% were issued in Latvian and 22% – in other languages. 80% of newspapers were in Latvian, 20% – in other languages<sup>19</sup>.

***Activities of the Society Integration Fund***

60. Since 2009, the SIF offered its seminar premises to NGOs free of charge as venues for holding various training events and meetings. This opportunity has been taken by seven national minority associations representing Ukrainians, Russians, Livs, Baltic Slavs, Georgians, and Germans. On average, two NGOs used the premises per week. Since 2015, premises for the NGO use in Riga are available in the “NGO House” opened by the Riga City Council.
61. In 2014, the SIF carried out a state budget support programme “Family exchange programme for Latvian and national minority children and young people”. The programme aimed at promoting mutual understanding and cooperation of ethnic groups in Latvia thereby building an integrated and inclusive society. The programme’s target groups were students in grades 5 through 9 and their families using Latvian or Russian in their daily communication. The programme supported exchange schemes when children from Latvian-speaking families were staying with national minority host families and vice versa.
62. In 2015, the SIF ran a state budget support programme entitled “Building Project Capacity Among National Minority NGOs”. The programme aimed at facilitating the inclusion of the members of national minorities in Latvia’s society and the enhancement of capacity for project development among national minority associations and foundations through providing them with training on the development of project ideas, preparation of project applications and project implementation. Leaders of national minority associations and foundations registered in the Republic of Latvia and the ir

<sup>18</sup> In 2011, there were 351 amateur drama groups in Latvia, 7 of them Russian (3 in Riga, 4 in Latgale); in 2016, there were 417 amateur drama groups, 9 of them Russian (2 in Riga, 7 Latgale).

<sup>19</sup> Source: Latvijas izdevniecības statistika 2015. Statistisko materiālu krājums. [Latvian publishing house statistics 2015. A collection of statistical materials] Latvijas Nacionālās bibliotēkas Bibliogrāfijas institūts [Bibliography Institute of the Latvian National Library]. Rīga, 2016/ see tables No.17, 19, 20, 21, and 22.

administrative staff involved in the daily operations were trained in the programme framework.

### ***Applying for project financing under the SIF***

63. In the context of each open call for applicants, SIF organises informative seminars in each region of Latvia. In these seminars, potential project applicants are explained about themes, opportunities and conditions of a respective call for proposals. After the approval of projects and signing of financing contracts, the SIF holds a project launch event where the contract conditions and other implementation-related topics are clarified, including in the Russian language. During project implementation, information on implementation-related issues is regularly provided on the SIF website, including links to binding legislation, report forms and reporting methodology prepared by the SIF, also in Russian, as well as FAQs and answers.
64. In order to engage civil society in reducing social and economic disparities, in the framework of the EEA Financial Mechanism, providing grants under the agreement between the Republic of Latvia and Iceland, the Kingdom of Norway and the Principality of Liechtenstein, an NGO Fund has been set up to provide financial support to NGO activities. The total funding under the programme “NGO Fund” is EUR 10 365 000 and has been available starting from the second semester of 2012.
65. NGOs have been able to apply for funding to implement societal integration activities and the development of culture, language, history and traditions, including those of national minorities. Eligible activities under the “NGO Fund” are also those that facilitate public participation (incl. national minority participation) in decision making and interest representation processes, innovative ways of implementing intercultural communication measures and NGO capacity building activities encouraging cooperation between organisations and facilitating establishment of interethnic NGO cooperation networks. 1045 project applications were submitted over the period from 2012 to 2015, and 207 of those were supported. Under the thematic area of “Development of a cohesive society”, 22 projects received support and were implemented, including several projects run by national minority NGOs. The results achieved by the projects are to be evaluated in 2016.

### ***“NGO Fund” programme financed by the State budget***

66. In February 2012, the Prime Minister tasked the relevant ministries with providing proposals for the promotion of society integration. Consequently, the State budget funding is envisaged for proposals in the following areas: maintaining a direct dialogue with national minority NGOs, civic education programmes, organising Latvian language training, accessibility of Latvian culture and education abroad, ensuring high-quality information space in the territory of Latvia.
67. In the context of the above-mentioned, 2016 saw the launch of implementation of the “NGO Fund” State budget programme. The programme aims at promoting sustainable development among civil society, enabling associations and foundations to drive and improve democratic processes at all levels of public administration, provide services seeking to improve living standards, organise events to raise awareness among, and educate the general public about the current processes in the country, thereby enabling a well-timed participation and involvement of the public in addressing the issues of current importance. The programme has already yielded 261 project applications, and 66 of those were approved, including several submitted by national minority NGOs.

***Support provided by the Riga City Council for the activities of national minority NGOs***

68. From 2012 to 2016, NGOs including national minority NGOs have received support for 139 of their projects in the field of society integration under project competitions organised by the Riga City Council. By involving national minorities, NGO members, people with disabilities, senior citizens, young people, children, young mothers, persons subject to the risk of social exclusion and others. The implementation of these projects promotes integration and consolidation of the society in the city of Riga and encourages participation and cooperation among local people.
69. Since 2011, a competition has been organized for institutions subordinated to the Riga City Council's Education, Culture and Sports Department and the Welfare Department for projects on societal integration. From 2012 to 2016, as part of 85 projects that have been supported, Riga's general education, pre-school education and interest education institutions, cultural institutions, structural units of the social service and others have carried out activities to promote cooperation within neighbourhoods, to engage with various ethnic and social groups, to explore culture of various peoples, to promote civic education and participation, cooperation between different generations, active lifestyles, support for parents, organisation of concerts and festivities, etc.

***Promoting tolerance towards Roma as a group vulnerable to social exclusion***

70. The Plan for the Implementation of the Guidelines until 2016 envisages capacity building among regional NGOs (including national minority and Roma associations) and promote their mutual interaction and cooperation with local authorities, businesses and cultural institutions (museums, libraries and cultural centres. In 2015, EUR 32,000 was made available for each planning region<sup>20</sup>, and 89 different projects were supported and carried out in the Riga, Vidzeme, Zemgale and Kurzeme Planning Regions, including seven initiatives by Roma NGOs covering all Latvia's planning regions and supported as part of the package of measures under the national policy on Roma integration. To take forward public initiatives, public participation and intercultural dialogue, including the work performed by Roma and national minorities, the assessment of results and achievements under the NGO Programme performed every year.
71. To promote the integration of Roma and civil society participation in policy implementation, support was regularly offered, under open competition, to projects by Roma NGOs (2 projects for EUR 5649 in 2013 and 4 projects for EUR 5000 in 2014). Roma NGOs also receive funding in open competition from other NGO support programmes, for instance, a project by the Roma Cultural Centre association "Organisation of an International Roma Cultural Festival" supported under a state-financed "NGO Fund" programme. Furthermore, the Roma Cultural Centre carried out a project entitled "Learn more about Latvian Roma – break the stereotypes and open for joint dialogue" and financed by the sub-programme "NGO Activity Support Measure" of the "NGO Fund" programme for 2009-2014 under the EEA Financial Mechanism. The project facilitated education and provision of information to the broader public (young people in particular) about Roma culture, life and history in Latvia so as to reduce preconceptions and negative stereotypes against the members of the Roma community.

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<sup>20</sup> See information on the NGO support programme run by the Ministry of Culture in regions in Paragraph 48 of the Report.

Historical documents, testimonies and materials collected during the project were used to prepare and present an exhibition “Roma-Gypsy Holocaust in Latvia (1941-1945)”.

72. It should be emphasised that parliamentary earmarked subsidies of EUR 13,000 in 2015 and EUR 36,718 in 2016 have been granted in support of the activity of the Roma History and Art Museum and the “Roma Cultural Centre” association.
73. Separate municipalities in Latvia (for instance, Jelgava, Daugavpils) with a large number of Roma population provide support for Roma NGOs.
74. See detailed information on the Latvian Government’s policy and a package of measures implemented with regard to Roma as a group vulnerable to social exclusion further in the Report (*paragraph 106*).

### ***Freedom of Religion***

75. Freedom of religion is fully observed in Latvia; individuals have the right to choose which religion they want to follow. According to Section 4, Paragraph one of the Law on Religious Organisations, “[t]he direct or indirect restriction of inhabitant rights or the creation of privileges for inhabitants, as well as violation of the religious sensibilities of persons or incitement of hatred in connection with the opinions of such persons towards religion is prohibited”.

### **Article 6**

76. Latvia would like to refer to information provided by it in the context of Articles 4 and 6 of the Convention in the framework of the first and second monitoring cycles and to highlight that Article 91 of the Constitution states that “[a]ll human beings in Latvia shall be equal before the law and the courts. Human rights shall be realised without discrimination of any kind”. This article is the legal foundation for the obligations of the Republic of Latvia to every individual resident and citizen of Latvia to respect the principle of anti-discrimination in national policy and all fields regulated by Latvian domestic law. Other Latvian legislation sustains and expands the anti-discrimination principle enshrined in the Constitution.

### ***Anti-hatred provisions in the Criminal law***

77. **Section 71 (Genocide) of the Criminal Law** (hereinafter – CL) criminalises intentional acts for purposes of the destruction in whole or in part of any group of persons identifiable as such by nationality, ethnic origin, race, social class or a defined collective belief or faith, by killing members of the group, inflicting upon them physical injuries hazardous to life or health or causing them to become mentally ill, intentionally causing conditions of life for such people as result in their physical destruction in whole or in part, utilising measures the purpose of which is to prevent the birth of children in such group, or transferring children on a compulsory basis from one group of persons into another. Such actions are punishable by life imprisonment or deprivation of liberty for a term of not less than three and not exceeding twenty years. Section of 71.<sup>1</sup> of the CL stipulates that public incitement to hatred is punishable by imprisonment for a term not exceeding eight years.
78. **Section 74.<sup>1</sup> of the CL (Justification of Genocide, Crime against Humanity )** criminalizes public glorification of genocide, crime against humanity, crime against

peace or war crime or glorification, denial, acquittal or gross trivialisation of committed genocide, crime against humanity, crime against peace or war crime, including genocide, crime against humanity, crime against peace or war crime committed by the U.S.S.R. or Nazi Germany against the Republic of Latvia and its inhabitants. Such actions are punishable by imprisonment for a term up to five years or a short-term deprivation of liberty, or community service, or a fine.

79. To enhance domestic legal framework related to any type of hate crime, a working group under the authority of the Ministry of Justice was established at the end of 2012, comprising representatives from law enforcement institutions, public administration, non-governmental organisations and the academic community. The activities of the working group resulted in the adoption, on 25.08.2014, of amendments to the Criminal Law, which took effect on 29.10.2014. The amendments involved the following sections:
- **Section 78 of the CL ( *Triggering of national, ethnic and racial hatred* )**, the scope of which was expanded to also criminalise acts directed towards incitement of religious hatred and discord, as well as specifying a number of qualifying features of the offence. In its amended wording, Section 78 Paragraph one criminalizes intentional acts directed towards triggering national, ethnic or racial hatred or enmity. The penalty for the offence is deprivation of liberty for a term of not exceeding three years or the short-term deprivation of liberty, or community service, or a fine. Paragraph two of Section 78 provides for deprivation of liberty for a term not exceeding five years or the short-term deprivation of liberty, or community service, or a fine, where the same acts are committed by a group of persons or a public official, or a responsible employee of an undertaking (company) or organisation, or by using an automatic data processing system. Paragraph three of Section 78 provides for deprivation of liberty for a term not exceeding ten years and probation supervisions for a term not exceeding three years or without probation supervision, where the acts specified in Paragraph one involve violence or threat, or are committed by an organised group. For statistical data on criminal proceedings in cases under Section 78 of the CL see Table 4.
  - **Section 149<sup>1</sup> of the CL ( *Violation of the Prohibition to Discriminate* )** – the new wording of the Section as amended criminalises discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality<sup>21</sup>, ethnicity, or religion, or for violation of any other prohibition of discrimination, if substantial harm has been caused thereby.<sup>22</sup> It should be emphasised that the wording of the Section has been drafted in a way so as to avoid covering only a narrow scope of the listed features, relating instead to all types of discrimination not

<sup>21</sup> The underlined text refers to supplements (Amendments of 25.08.2014).

<sup>22</sup> Section 149.1 of the CL:

“(1) For a person who commits discrimination due to racial, national, ethnic or religious belonging or for the violation of the prohibition of any other type of discrimination, if substantial harm is caused thereby, - the applicable punishment is deprivation of liberty for a term up to one year or temporary deprivation of liberty, or community service, or a fine.

(2) For the criminal offence provided for in Paragraph one of this Section, if it has been committed by a public official, or a responsible employee of an undertaking (company) or organisation, or a group of persons, or if it is committed using an automated data processing system, - the applicable punishment is deprivation of liberty for a term up to three years or temporary deprivation of liberty, or community service, or a fine.”

sorting them by feature. Liability under Article 149<sup>1</sup> of the CL will also apply if the following provisions are violated:

- i. Section 7 of the Labour law that stipulates the equal rights principle - everyone has an equal right to work, to fair, safe and healthy working conditions, as well as to fair work remuneration without any direct or indirect discrimination – among other things, irrespective of a person's race, skin colour, ethnic or social origin or other circumstances;
  - ii. Article 2<sup>1</sup> of the Law on Social Security prohibiting differential treatment when ensuring social services ( on the grounds of a person's race, ethnicity, skin colour, gender, ethnic or social origin or other grounds);
  - iii. Provisions of the Sentence Execution Code of Latvia stipulating that discrimination against a convicted person, *inter alia*, on the basis of race, ethnicity, language and other criteria shall not be permitted;
  - iv. Provisions of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination against Natural Persons – Economic Activity Performers prohibiting discrimination, among other things, on the grounds of race or ethnicity , against an economic activity performer during his or her economic activities, when offering goods or a service, selling goods or providing a service, and prohibiting differential treatment with regard to a natural person's access to economic activities;
  - v. Provisions of the Consumer Rights Protection Law prohibiting differential treatment based, among other things, on race or ethnicity of a consumer when offering goods or a service, selling goods or providing a service;
  - vi. Provisions of the Education Law stipulating that persons specified in Section 3 are entitled to the right to receive education disregarding their race, ethnicity, ethnic belonging, place of residence or other objective circumstances.
  - vii. Provisions of Section 3 of the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law stipulating that the State shall ensure the rights and freedoms of all children without any discrimination – irrespective of race, nationality, gender, language, political party alliance, political or religious convictions, national, ethnic or social origin, place of residence in the State, property or health status, birth or other circumstances of the child, or of his or her parents, guardians, or family members.
- **Section 150 of the CL (*Incitement to Religious Hatred*)** in its new wording criminalises acts directed towards triggering hatred or discord on the grounds of a person's gender, age, disability or any other features, if substantial harm has been caused thereby (the penalty for the offence is the short-term deprivation of liberty, or forced labour, or a fine). Paragraph two of Section 150 of the CL provides for deprivation of liberty for a term not exceeding three years or the short-term deprivation of liberty, or community service, or a fine, where the same offence is committed by a public official or a responsible employee of an undertaking (company) or organisation, or a group of persons, or by using an automatic data processing system. Where the actions specified in Paragraph one involve violence or threat, or are committed by an organised group, Paragraph three of Section

150 of the CL provides for deprivation of liberty for a term not exceeding four years or the short-term deprivation of liberty, or community service, or a fine.

80. The Latvian Judicial Training Centre (hereinafter – LJTC) updates its training programme for judges on an annual basis, providing for a possibility of including new issues of current relevance. No special Convention-related training has been held so far; nevertheless, matters related to the Convention are dealt with in lectures and workshops on the current judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, international law and human rights, identifying human rights violations, as well as other similar training sessions periodically organised by the LJTC for all groups of judges. For instance, in 2014, the centre carried out a training course for legal professionals (judges, prosecutors, lawyers) “*Me and society – our opportunities and rights*”. The training covered the following topics: learning to recognise stereotypes in the society, professional and personal life; exploring one’s ethnic identity and the opportunities it provides; enhancement of one’s personal competencies through contacts with the different, the foreign, the diverse to become more successful in one’s profession; the connection between public well-being and the principles of equality and prohibition of discrimination in the context of international and national law. A total of 120 people took part in training.
81. Observance of equal treatment and prevention of discrimination in Latvia is also being conducted by the human rights institution – the Ombudsman's Office. From 2012 to 2016, the Ombudsman's Office has conducted investigation in 24 cases on possible violations of prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnicity<sup>23</sup>.

### **Promotion of society integration, tolerance and intercultural dialogue**

82. Latvia wishes to refer to the information it has provided in Paragraph 69 of its First National Report.
83. The first government policy document on society integration was the national programme "Society Integration in Latvia" approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2001. The programme was produced as an open-ended document and a number of society integration directions defined therein have evolved into separate policies (life-long learning, social inclusion, culture, the national language).
84. In 2011, the Ministry of Culture developed the National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy Guidelines for 2012–2018 (hereinafter – Guidelines)<sup>24</sup>. The Guidelines also comprised measures outlined in the National Programme for the Promotion of Tolerance. The Guidelines define measures aimed at the development of civic education and participation, improvement of proficiency in the Latvian language and its position in the society, strengthening the Latvian cultural space as the foundation for society integration, development of the sense of belonging to Latvia and Europe etc. During the process of drafting and updating the Guidelines, a wide public outreach and public

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<sup>23</sup> Please see more detailed information on the activities, including investigations and given opinions, by the Ombudsman’s Office in the field of anti-discrimination here in English: <http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/en/research-and-publications/gadazinojumi>

<sup>24</sup> Approved by Order No.542 of the Cabinet of Ministers of 20.10.2011, amended by Order No.596 of 12.12.2012 and Order No.207 of 22.04.2015.

discussions were ensured, including the engagement of advisory mechanisms set up by the Ministry of Culture. In 2016, the Ministry of Culture started work on the Guideline Implementation Plan for 2017–2018.

85. The Guidelines define society integration as the inclusion of all people living in Latvia into society irrespective of their national identity and self-identification. The common ground for integration is the Latvian language, the sense of belonging to the State of Latvia, respect for the unique cultural space of Latvia, formation of a common social memory, civil participation. At the same time, integration means the openness of the constituent nation<sup>25</sup> and respect for the uniqueness of national minorities, as well as their rights to preserve their distinct identity. The purpose of integration is also to facilitate the inclusion of immigrants into society by offering incentives and possibilities to master the basics of an inclusive society.
86. The fundamental principles of national identity, civil society and society integration policy are the belonging to Europe and preserving the identity of national minorities. It has also been stressed in the document that identities are mutually complementary, not excluding, and that the free choice of each person is respected and human rights are observed.
87. The following priorities for action have been defined: developing civic education; enhancing forms of civic participation; reducing discrimination of socially marginalised groups and promotion of their inclusion into society; increasing the role of the media in integration through support for diverse, modern and quality journalism; enhancing the Latvian language skills among national minorities, non-citizens, recent immigrants and the Latvian diaspora abroad.

***Promotion of society integration, tolerance and intercultural dialogue: projects  
The Ministry of Culture***

88. The concept of a digital cultural map of Latvia was developed in 2005 under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. The map, launched in 2006,<sup>26</sup> is a public database containing detailed information on the diversity of cultural processes and cultural institutions in Latvia's regions, their geographical coverage, public access to culture, as well as the technical condition of cultural infrastructure and the trends of prospective development. The Cultural Map also contains information on national minority NGOs.
89. **Projects implemented (or launched) in 2012 by the Ministry of Culture include:**
  - i. To reinforce the activity area aimed at strengthening the official language, a reading promotion programme entitled “Children and Youth Jury” is being carried out since 2012 bringing together, on a yearly basis, 600 libraries and more than 200 educational institutions, 10% of those being national minority schools.
  - ii. The “Cultural Ambassadors” training programme supported by the Ministry of Culture has been implemented since 2012 under the auspices of the Latvian National Culture Centre. The training model for Latvia's Cultural Ambassadors is based on two international programmes run by the British Council: Intercultural Navigators, and Active Citizens. Ambassadors for the Latvian cultural space are trained with a view to their cooperation

<sup>25</sup> See Comments of the Latvian Government on the Second Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the implementation of the Convention.

<sup>26</sup> The Digital Cultural Map of Latvia <http://www.kulturaskarte.lv/>.

with communities of various ethnic background on Latvian culture and its interaction with national minority cultures in Latvia. Participants in training expand their knowledge on cultural diversity, identity and social integration, which serves as a basis for establishing and enhancing various partnerships between Latvians and members of ethnic minorities and draw inspiration for future work. Having completed the training course, Cultural Ambassadors apply their newly -acquired knowledge in organizing training sessions for members of local communities and non-governmental organisations which are set out to contribute to the improvement of living standards and creation of more favourable environment in their rural or urban communities. In 2015, a programme for “Young Cultural Ambassadors” was organised targeting young people in particular and gathered 20 participants. They are currently active in the youth steering committee established by the Ministry of Culture to make preparations for the centenary celebrations of the Latvian state.

**90. Projects implemented (and launched) in 2013 include:**

- i. In 2013, preparations took place for the participation of the amateur performing art groups of national minorities in the Song and Dance Celebration movement. Competitions were held in Latvia’s cities and rural municipalities, as the result of which 96 national minority performing art groups were selected as participants for the XXV Nationwide Latvian Song and XV Dance Celebration in 2013, which is considerably more than in the Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration of 2008.
- ii. After the participation of the national minority performing art groups of in the XXV Nationwide Latvian Song and XV Dance Celebration in 2013, the issue was raised on the role of cultural exchange in the consolidation of Latvia’s multinational society. The Latvian National Cultural Centre, with support from the Ministry of Culture, has been organizing creative camps to educate the leaders of national minority performer groups with the aim of enhancing their capacity and artistic standards in preparations for the next Nationwide Song and Dance Celebration in the context of Latvia’s centenary. The training programme includes lectures by invited experts (including those from abroad) on the aspects of Latvian and National minority cultures, their common and differing features. Master classes and demonstration sessions are organised offering the participants to learn about stage culture and Latvian folk traditions in a creative and democratic manner. The Latvian National Cultural Centre cooperates with national minority folklore groups within the “Baltica” International Folklore Festival.

**91. Projects implemented (and launched) in 2014 include:**

- i. A project for national minority students entitled “Europe’s Footprints in Latvia” has been carried out since 2014 and aims at promoting, in a modern and interactive manner, cooperation between children and young people, especially members of national minorities, as they explore the contribution of the present -day European Union member states to the cultural space of Latvia. In 2015, the project brought together programmes from more than 22 schools (compared to five in 2014). In 2016, regional forums were organised with participation of several hundreds of students.
- ii. Since 2014, the Ministry of Culture has been bringing together members of national minorities, non -governmental organisations and public institutions, experts and other interested parties for an annual national minority forum traditionally organised to observe the International Day for Tolerance on 16 November. The forums gather about 200

participants and seek to promote cooperation between members of national minorities, especially of minority NGOs, and raise their awareness of latest developments and vital societal processes. Experts, the representatives of national minorities and public institutions, and other stakeholders join working groups to raise issues and seek solutions to matters of importance for national minority communities in Latvia – for instance, national minority education, preserving culture, ensuring NGO operations and others.

### ***Libraries as centres for promoting the use of national minority languages***

92. Libraries function as centres for society integration and social communication by meeting the needs for reading and cultural interaction in national minority languages and promoting national minority literature and culture among a broader public. At the same time, libraries facilitate a systematic and thorough learning of the Latvian language and culture both individually and during various events and interest groups (many libraries host Latvian language courses). Via internet, libraries also enable access to information resources of the ethnic homeland of a particular national minority and; via international online library subscription, provide an opportunity to subscribe to national minority publications from libraries in the ethnic homeland.
93. Library collections in Latvia traditionally contain books and other publications in national minority languages. Publications in Russian have traditionally represented the largest share constituting around 40 per cent of the total holdings ; 33 per cent of holdings in the National Library of Latvia are in Russian and 2 per cent – in other minority languages . Public libraries working in local authority territories in the border areas of Lithuania, Estonia and Russia provide a broader offer than elsewhere of books in the languages of the respective neighbouring countries.
94. In areas with Roma population, libraries have become centres for popularising the Roma language and culture, for instance, through activities such as an event for Roma pupils of the primary grades of the Ventspils Evening School as part of the Children’s Jury reading promotion programme in the Ventspils Library. The Ventspils Library also holds events for other national minorities, for instance, “The Liv Week” event, and various activities as part of the German, Ukrainian, Belarusian and Russian Culture Days.

### ***Activities of Society Integration Fund***

95. Since its establishment in 2001, SIF has been recurrently accredited and has gathered experience in implementing financial instruments of the European Union, PHARE Programme and Transition Facility programmes, the European Social Fund (2004 -2006, 2007-2013), the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Bilateral Financial Mechanism, the Latvia-Switzerland Co-operation Programme and others.
96. Until the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2016, the SIF had supported more than 2500 projects for the promotion of society integration, strengthening of civil society, and support for the activities of the public and non-governmental sector. The main beneficiaries of SIF support are NGOs, municipalities and their institutions, and central government institutions.
97. Since 2002, the SIF has been awarding the Society Unity Prize to individuals or organisations which deserve recognition for their work in the field of society integration. At the award ceremony for the Society Unity Prize, the public can learn about persons

who help others to develop the feeling of belonging to our diverse community and ensure equal opportunities for its every individual member.

98. Since 2008, the SIF has been promoting a Goodwill Memorandum. The memorandum calls on organisations and individuals to be tolerant, to accept and respect diversity, prevent discrimination and differential treatment, thus fostering a consolidated and integrated society. The Goodwill Memorandum can be joined at events and online, on the SIF website at [www.sif.gov.lv](http://www.sif.gov.lv) (in Latvian). More than 500 organisations and individuals have joined the memorandum so far.
99. Several projects took place in 2011 and 2012 to develop and implement a high quality stimulating programme of current relevance for representatives from public administration and municipalities – “Intercultural Communication”. The materials of the training programme in Latvian and English have been disseminated for competence building; more than 80 specialists have been trained and can use their newly-acquired knowledge not only in their daily work to inspire their co-workers but also to pass that knowledge on to their colleagues and friends; a number of culturally sensitive analytical articles have been published.
100. In support of the “Civil society and integration” line of action under the Guidelines, 12 projects have been funded within the “Extracurricular measures programme”. 17,344 pupils have been involved in the projects as the direct target group, comprising 55% Latvians and 45% members of national minorities (Russians, Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Roma, etc.). Various educational events have been held, promoting knowledge of Latvian and national minority culture and history; creative sessions and camps, art and erudition competitions, culture and sports events and other activities took place.
101. Five projects have been carried out as part of the “Family exchange programme for ~~children and national minority~~ children and national minority”. Host families were from Rīga and the regions of Latgale, Kurzeme, Vidzeme and Zemgale. The exchange programme involved 100 students in Grades 5 through 9, including 50 Latvian children who were hosted by national minority families, and 50 minority children who stayed with Latvian families. 72 families hosted children, and 85 families sent their kids to stay with other families. Taking part and contributing to the exchange programme were 633 members of families – parents, grandparents and others.
102. In 2013/2014 and 2015, under delegation from the Ministry of Culture, the SIF implemented two projects funded by the European Commission PROGRESS programme aimed at providing contribution to raising public awareness on the need for discrimination prevention and ensuring equal opportunities in the private and public sector. During both projects, more than 300 employees of public institutions and local authorities, media representatives and legal professionals were trained on the issues related to diversity and intercultural communication; studies were undertaken on the matters of discrimination prevention, diversity in Latvia’s companies, and integration of the Roma community; a number of awareness raising campaigns were run, including producing of adverts for public space and shooting seven video stories on discrimination issues.

103. From 2013 to 2015, the SIF foundation carried out a project entitled “National Integration Centre” under the Third Country Nationals Intergation Fund . Its main target group was third country nationals and Latvia’s non-citizens, who were offered individual consultations on legal issues , received career counseling and advice in psychology and other fields. Representatives from public institutions, municipalities and NGOs were trained for work with thirdd country nationals (courses and seminars in intercultural communication), discussions on Latvia’s history, culture, tradisio ns, economy, education, state were held, as well as educational seminars at Latvia’s schools; a postcard collection “A Guide to Latvia’s Treasures” was produc ed presenting Latvian Cultural Canon; 40 hour programme was developed on integration matters , including topics on Latvian history, statehood, economy and geography, education and healthcare system, social security, and civic participation; a book “History of Latvia” was published in three languages, and other public awareness raising measures were implemented. The total number of individual clients – 1300.
104. On 13-14 January 2015, a seminar entitled “The Power of the Word on the Internet. To Inform, Inspire or Humiliate?” was held on the SIF premises for media experts and students of journalism, a s well as active young people and all others interested in the subject. The seminar aimed at providing an insight into what hate speech means and how it manifests itself, and give examples of cases of hate speech in the media and on the web in general, bot h in Latvia and abroad. Discussions also addressed the legal and moral responsibility of the media; specific examples of case law were given, and the participants were invited to share their practice and expereince. The seminar had 42 participants.

### ***Activities of the State Police***

105. From 2012 to 2016, the State Police has been putting in place a broad range activities for capacity building among police officers and raising their awareness in the context of hate crime, including the following events:
- In 2013, with financial assistance from the Council of Europe, and in cooperation with “Mozaika” association, as seminar was held on “Identification and Prevention of Hate Crime”.
  - On 23.12.2013, the State Police and and the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE) signed a memorandum on the inclusion of training against hate crime in training programmes for law enforcement institutions.
  - The State police College, with financial support from the United S tates Embassy in Latvia, has organised two seminars on “Identification and Prevention of Hate Crime”. The seminars brought together 60 participants from the State Police, the Ombudsman’s Office, the Supreme Court, the P rosecution Office, the Ministry of th e Interior, the State Inspectorate for the Protection of Childrens’ Rights , the National Centre for Education, and non-governmental organisations.
  - In June 2015, the State Police College ran a tree-day seminar “Training for Trainers in the Field of Hate Crime”. Officers of the State Police, the State Police College and the Prison Administration and members of NGOs took part in the seminar.
  - In September 2015, the second seminar was held for heads of the State Police structural units. All participants of the seminars received handbooks in the Latvian language.
  - In 2016, the State Police College in association with the Security Police, devised an infomal adult education programme on “Identification and Investigation of Hate Crime”, which has been included in the study plan.

## ***Promoting tolerance towards Roma as a group vulnerable to social exclusion***

### ***Demography***

106. As of 1 January 2016, there were 7654 Roma registered in Latvia – seven of them were registered as stateless persons and two – as refugees.<sup>27</sup> 94.4% of all Roma living in Latvia are Latvian citizens.

### ***Roma integration policy and its coordination***

107. In 2011, the Ministry of Culture, in partnership with the co-responsible ministries, developed a package of national policy measures for Roma integration in line with the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. The package of measures has been included in the Guidelines the action plan for which sets out an objective to ensure support measures for Roma integration, raising their education and employment levels and the accessibility of health care, social care and housing services. After 2014, the current tasks and measures under the Roma integration policy have been reflected in the Plan for the Implementation of the Guidelines for the period until 2016.

108. In 2015, a large scale research was carried out entitled “Roma in Latvia”<sup>28</sup> with the aim of identifying the current situation and circumstances that hinder the access of Roma people to education, employment, health care, housing services, and developing recommendations for measures to eliminate those hindering circumstances. As part of the study, 365 members of Roma community from various Latvia’s cities, towns and regions were interviewed, discussions were arranged among the focus group participants, and 197 in-depth interviews were undertaken with professionals, the staff of local authority institutions, experts and the representatives from Roma community. The outputs and recommendations produced during research will be used as the basis for further action to develop more effective Roma integration policy measures. The study was undertaken as part of the project “*Different People, Various Experiences, One Latvia II*” funded by the European Commission’s Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS 2007-2013.

109. Since 2012, with the aim of providing transparent and detailed information both to the Roma Council and the broader public, the Ministry of Culture has been compiling and publishing an annual report on the implementation of Roma integration measures. The reports are accessible (in Latvian) at <http://www.km.gov.lv/lv/ministrija/romi.html>. The reports provide information on the measures undertaken and results obtained in the fields of education, employment and healthcare, as well as statistical and research data.

110. In 2014, the “Papardes Zieds” association undertook a study entitled “The needs assessment report of the ethnic minority (Roma) teenagers and young adults” to ascertain the habits of abuse of dependence-causing substances (tobacco, alcohol and others) and the related health risks and preventive factors in the young Roma population as well as to identify obstacles for the said group of society in accessing public health and healthcare services.

<sup>27</sup> Breakdown of the population of Latvia by ethnicity and citizenship status, 2016, available here:

<http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/sakums/statistika/iedzivotaju-registrs/>

<sup>28</sup> The study is accessible on the SIF website at:

[http://www.sif.gov.lv/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=9836%3ARomu-socialekonomiskas-situacijas-izpete-Latvija&catid=2%3Afonds&lang=lv](http://www.sif.gov.lv/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9836%3ARomu-socialekonomiskas-situacijas-izpete-Latvija&catid=2%3Afonds&lang=lv).

***Cooperation with local authorities in the implementation of a set of Roma integration measures at the regional and local levels***

111. A positive trend has been observed in the implementation of the Roma integration policy at the local level, especially in municipalities with a large share of Roma population.
112. With a view to the promotion of a regular information and experience sharing between experts on Roma integration issues and development of cooperation between the Ministry of Culture, local authority institutions and Roma communities for a more effective implementation of the Roma integration policy, a Regional Experts Network on Roma Integration was established in 2014. The expert network involves representatives delegated by 14 local authorities and is tasked with the following:
- coordinate information sharing on best practices in the field of Roma integration at the national and EU level;
  - inform, advise and consult local authority institutions on the opportunities for the usage of structural funds and financial programmes available at national and EU level for the promotion of Roma integration;
  - facilitate cooperation between local authority institutions and the Roma community, including Roma NGOs;
  - involve local authority specialists in making improvements to and implementation of the set of measures under the national policy for Roma integration.
113. From 2011 to 2013, two projects were carried out within the second round of the sub-activity 1.4.1.2.4 “Development in the regions of social rehabilitation and alternatives social care services” of the European Social Fund (hereinafter – the ESF) to facilitate the social inclusion of Roma (*see below*).
114. From 2011 to 2013, the Health and Social Care Centre ‘Sloka’’, a limited liability company owned by Jūrmala City municipality, carried out a project “Elaboration and implementation of a social rehabilitation programme in the day centre for Roma living in Jūrmala City” (total EU funding – EUR 130,000), aimed to, by means of the development and putting in practice of a social rehabilitation programme for the Jūrmala residents of Roma background, encourage revitalisation of their social functions, acquisition of knowledge and social skills through providing opportunities to spend their spare time actively and in a meaningful manner, thereby reducing Roma social exclusion and facilitating their successful integration into society and inclusion in the labour market.
115. After the completion of the project, from 2013 onwards, the operation of the Roma Day Centre was supported by the Riga City Council (funding of EUR 53,418 in 2013; EUR 52,284 in 2014; and EUR 39,200 in 2015). The Day Centre provides support services to approximately 300 Roma from low income and poor families every year. The visitors of the Roma Day Centre can discuss and receive advice on various matters, use a computer classroom, engage in leisure activities such as singing, dancing and sports, and take part in cultural events.
116. From 01.01.2012 to 21.12.2013, the Jelgava City Council jointly with a municipal institution – the Jelgava Social Affairs Authority – carried out a project entitled “Social rehabilitation programme for Roma families with children of pre-school or school age residing in Jelgava” (funding of EUR 112,150). During the project, a number of social

services were provided in the Jelgava City to reduce the social exclusion of Roma, involve them in activities for the promotion of education and employment, and integrate them in the community. Social rehabilitation services were received by 20 Roma families (60 persons in total) living in Jelgava.

117. Follow-up to the project has been ensured: Roma families with children have been provided with rehabilitation services and a social worker's advice at the "Atbalsts" ("Support") day centre of the Jelgava Social Affairs Authority.
118. In 2015, the social home of the Daugavpils City Social Affairs Authority hosted a social rehabilitation programme entitled "Social Integration of Roma", aimed at creating of a healthy integrational climate and mutual dialogue between members of the Roma community and the city population.<sup>29</sup> The programme sought to increase motivation for the Roma families in socially unfavourable situation to return to active life and improve their living standards.
119. In 2016, "Strategic principles and lines of action for the implementation of the integration process and support for the Roma children and young people in Jelgava Municipality" were developed to underpin the formulation and implementation of the local authority policy in Roma integration.
120. Roma has been identified as an indicative target group in the specific objectives and activities for support under the EU Structural Funds Operational Programme "Growth and Employment" (2014-2020).

***Promotion of tolerance and challenging stereotypes and prejudices against the Roma people***

121. With the view to raising public awareness of the culture, history and social issues of Latvia's Roma people, and the impact of prejudices and stereotypes on their position, the Latvian Human Rights Centre has carried out a number of activities in 2015 and 2016 in the framework of the Council of Europe's campaign DOSTA! ("Enough!"), "Go beyond prejudice, meet the Roma": the Roma Culture Days "Roma in Latvia – Between the Past and the Future"; the analysis of the media content and a round table on the practices of reflecting Roma in Latvian media; a training seminar for students of journalism and communication, "Anti-Romanism and its manifestations in the public space", aimed at raising the students' awareness of stereotypes about the Roma. The activities were funded by the Ministry of Culture under the political goal of the Guidelines – to facilitate the inclusion of socially marginalised groups and prevent discrimination against them.

**Article 7**

**Article 8**

122. Article of the Constitution stipulates that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion, consciousness and religious conviction. Under Section 4 Paragraph one, "the direct or indirect restriction of inhabitant rights or the creation of privileges for inhabitants, as well as violation of the religious sensibilities of persons or incitement of hatred in connection with the opinions of such persons towards religion is prohibited. For

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<sup>29</sup>Further information:

[http://www.soclp.lv/Media/Default/SOC\\_REHAB\\_PROGR/Soc\\_rehab\\_progr\\_2015/INT.PROGRAMMA%20CIGANU.pdf](http://www.soclp.lv/Media/Default/SOC_REHAB_PROGR/Soc_rehab_progr_2015/INT.PROGRAMMA%20CIGANU.pdf)

violations of this Law, the persons at fault shall be held liable in accordance with the procedures prescribed by law". Under Section 5, paragraph two of the said law, "[t]he State shall protect the rights of religious organisations provided for in the Law. The State and local governments and the institutions thereof, as well as public and other organisations shall have no right to intervene in the religious activities of religious organisations". Section 14, Paragraph six of the Law on Religious Organisations stipulates that "[t]he activities of religious organisations and believers shall only be restricted in those cases when the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Latvia are violated". Section 7, Paragraph one of the Law provides that "[a]ny inhabitant of Latvia has the right to join a congregation and operate therein".

## Article 9

123. Latvia would like to refer to information it has provided in paragraphs 111 and 112 of its First National Report and emphasises that under Article 100 of the Constitution, "[e]veryone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right to freely receive, keep and distribute information and to express his or her views. Censorship is prohibited", and that freedom of the press is guaranteed by a law of 1990<sup>30</sup>, which does not impose any restrictions on the national minority press.

### *National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEMMC)*

124. The National Electronic Mass Media Council (hereinafter – NEMMC) is an independent, autonomous institution, which, within its competence, shall represent the interests of the public in the field of electronic mass media and supervise the latter so that in their operations the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, the EMM Law and other regulatory enactments are observed.

### *Electronic Mass Media Law*

125. The Electronic Mass Media Law (hereinafter – EMM Law) was adopted in 2010 to supersede the Radio and Television Law of 1995. Paragraphs two and three of Article 32 prescribe the minimum share of audio-visual works in the official language:

- (2) National and regional electronic mass media shall ensure that in the television programmes produced by them, at least 40 per cent of the transmission time of European audio-visual works, except for the games, advertising, teleshopping and teleshopping windows, is provided for audio-visual works in the official language.
- (3) National and regional electronic mass media shall ensure that in the programmes produced by them at least 65 per cent of all broadcasts, except for the advertising, teleshopping and teleshopping windows, are in the official language and that such broadcasts in the official language take up at least 65 per cent of the transmission time.

126. Article 24 of the EMM Law stipulates that the electronic mass media are free and independent in the production and distribution of programmes and broadcasts, as well as in the editorial activity. The EMM Law also stipulates that the electronic mass media respects the plurality of opinions, protects the idea of an independent and democratic State of Latvia that respects the rule of law, observes human rights and operates in the interests of the society of Latvia.

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<sup>30</sup> The Law "On the Press and other Mass Media" of 1990.

127. Article 28 of the EMM Law lays down detailed provisions regarding the language of broadcasts and advertisement. For instance, it prescribes that films to be demonstrated shall be voiced-over, dubbed or subtitled in the State language. The dubbed and voice-over text together with the original soundtrack and subtitles in the State language shall be made in quality that ensures sufficiently precise understanding of the text of the original language. Films intended for children shall be dubbed or voiced-over in the State language. TV broadcasts in foreign languages, except for live broadcasts, the news and language learning broadcasts, shall be provided with subtitles in Latvian language. This provision does not apply to retransmission as well as to the programmes which, in accordance with the broadcasting permit and principal conditions of activity of the relevant electronic mass medium submitted to the National Electronic Mass Media Council, are transmitted for the target audience other than inhabitants of Latvia.
128. One of the purposes of the EMM Law is to promote the integration of society on the basis of the Latvian language; while fulfilling the requirements of the Official Language Law, to promote the full implementation of the constitutional functions of the Latvian language as the official language of Latvia, paying special attention that it should serve as the common language of mutual communication of all inhabitants of Latvia; to ensure its preservation and use, determining the procedures appropriate for the public interests whereby the electronic mass media under the jurisdiction of Latvia shall use the official language during their broadcast time and concurrently envisaging the right to use languages of minorities and other languages in the electronic mass media (Section 2, Paragraph two, Clause 4 of the EMM Law).
129. Electronic mass media are free to allocate at least 35 per cent of their transmission time to broadcasts in other languages, including those of national minorities. Section 66 of the EMM Law ensures that a part of the transmission time of the second programme of Latvian Television may be reserved for broadcasts in other languages, including films and theatre performances subtitled in the official language.
130. Under Section 71, Paragraph one, Clause 18 of the EMM Law, one of the tasks of the public service remit is to envisage broadcasts for minority groups and individuals with special needs. Thereby matters concerning the rights of national minorities fall within the competence of the NEMMC.
131. The NEMMC, taking into account, *inter alia*, recommendations rendered by the Advisory Committee, will continue implementing the following measures:
- in respect of the principle of freedom of speech, promote a more diverse media environment with appropriate possibilities of access to quality media contents in their languages for persons belonging to national minorities;
  - ensure an electronic mass media policy that takes into account national minority interests through the involvement of members of national minorities in the development of these policies;
  - ensure the participation of the public, representatives of the mass media industry and educational institutions in the preparation of the public service remit and supervision of

its fulfilment, as well as in the drafting of the national strategy for the development of the electronic mass media sector (Section 60, Paragraph one, Clause 14 of the EMM Law).

132. It should be stressed that in accordance with the provisions of the EMM Law (Section 63) and the recommendation contained in Paragraph 80 of the Second Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Latvia, a Public Advisory Council has been established. The Public Advisory Council shall be an advisory institution established by the National Electronic Mass Media Council with the task of ensuring the participation of the public in the process of elaboration of the public service remit and the national strategy for the development of the electronic mass media sector. Representatives of associations, foundations, professional institutions and other organisations active in the field of the mass media, education, culture, science and human rights shall be included in the composition of the Public Advisory Council.

133. Latvia would like to emphasize that non-commercial newspapers and magazines of the following national minorities are published in Latvia:

- *Rīgas armeniešu kopienu kopiena* (Riga Armenian Community), assisted by local businesses, publishes a newspaper “*Ararat*” 7 to 10 times per year with a circulation of 1000 copies.
- A Ukrainian newspaper “*Visņik*”, published since 2001.
- A Belarusian newspaper “*Pramen*” is being published since 1994. The publishing of the paper is ensured by private funds and support from local businesses.
- A Polish magazine “*Polak na Lotve*”, published since 1991, is supported by “*Stowarzyszenie Wspólnota Polska*”, a Polish foundation. The magazine is issued four times a year.
- An Old Believers’ magazine “*Поморский вестник*” and “*Меморандный*” have been published from 1999 and 2000 respectively. From 2006 to 2008, they were published three to four times per year with a circulation of 1000 and 2500 copies respectively. During the period from 2009 to 2011, publication frequency decreased to 1-2 times per year. Both publications are funded by the community and separate issues were financed by the SSAMSI, the SIF and the Riga City Council.

134. The 4th Channel of the public service broadcasting network Latvijas Radio (“Radio of Latvia”), which is regarded as a society integration channel, broadcasts mainly in Russian. However, it also presents programmes created for the national cultural associations in 12 languages, including Estonian, Lithuanian, Polish, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Hebrew, Georgian and German. The thematic scope of the association programmes covers cultural issues, national traditions, association news and contacts with their members’ ethnic homeland. Latvijas Radio 4 airs the national cultural association programmes three times a week – on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 20.15 to 20.45. The total average weekly audiences of Latvijas Radio 4 amount to 164,000 listeners<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> The rating of radio stations according to their total weekly audiences in Latvia in summer and autumn 2011, TNS Latvia, <http://www.tns.lv/?lang=lv&fullarticle=true&category=showuid&id=3675>.

## Article 10

### Language policy of Latvia

134. Under Article 114 of the Constitution, “persons belonging to ethnic minorities have the right to preserve and develop their language and their ethnic and cultural identity”.

135. Latvia would like to refer to the information provided by it in the framework of the first two monitoring cycles in the context of Articles 5 and 10 of the Convention and emphasise that the basis for the language policy of Latvia is the willingness to ensure equal rights for people in Latvia in education, employment and other areas. The policy is based on the following principles:

- i. the Latvian language is the official language in Latvia,
- ii. the State guarantees that national minority languages can be preserved, developed and used for certain functions.

136. Section 3 of the Official Language Law stipulates that the official language in the Republic of Latvia is the Latvian language. In the Republic of Latvia, everyone has the right to present submissions and communicate in the official language in institutions, public and religious organisations and undertakings (companies). Under Section 6 of the Official Language Law, employees of State and local government institutions, courts and institutions constituting the judicial system, State and local government undertakings, as well as employees of companies in which the greatest share of capital is owned by the State or a local government, shall be fluent in and use the official language to the extent necessary for performance of their professional duties and duties of office.

137. It has been emphasized in Section 2, Paragraph three of the Official Language Law that “this Law does not apply to the use of language in unofficial communication of the inhabitants of Latvia, in internal communication of national and ethnic groups, or in services, ceremonies, rituals and other kinds of religious activity of religious organisations”.

138. The underlying principles of the official language policy enshrined in legislation and also set out in the Official Language Policy Guidelines are to preserve, protect and develop the Latvian language as the official language, while safeguarding the right to use national minority languages for definite functions. Latvia emphasises that the diversity of languages and cultures of all residents is respected and the preservation and development of national minority languages is ensured.

139. Although Section 9 of the Law on Education stipulates that, in State and local government education institutions, education shall be acquired in the official language, education can also be acquired in other languages, including those of national minorities, in private education institutions as well as in State and local government schools in which educational programmes for ethnic minorities are implemented. It must be emphasised in this context that Latvia has a unique education system: State funded national minority education programmes can be acquired in seven languages: Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian, Estonian and Hebrew. In addition, optional classes are offered to promote education concerning ethnic identity and culture and learning of a national minority language. The diversity of cultures and languages in the society is also protected through support for national minority events.

***On the declarations submitted by Latvia upon ratification of the Convention (with regards to Article 10, Paragraph two and Article 11, Paragraph three of the Convention)***

140. The Official Language Law and the implementing legislation has been developed in 2000 in close cooperation with experts from OSCE and the Council of Europe and have been recognised as compliant with international standards. It is to these laws and regulations and the Constitution that Latvia has referred to when attaching to the Instrument of Ratification the declarations on the implementation of Article 10, Paragraph two and Article 11, Paragraph three of the Convention. The declarations are without prejudice to the aim of the Convention to preserve and develop the national minority culture and linguistic identity. The Official Language Law provides for the preservation, protection and development of the Latvian language, while ensuring the integration of national minorities into Latvia's society honouring their rights to use their native language or any other language.

***On the Latgalian written language and the Liv language***

141. Latvia would like to refer to the information provided by it in Paragraphs 73 and 74 of the comments of the Latvian Government on the Second Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention (hereinafter – Comments on the Second Opinion).

***State language requirements for the performance of professional and job duties***

142. The number of positions and professions which require the highest level of the official language proficiency has been specified by amendments of 3 January 2012 to the Cabinet Regulations No.733 of 7 July 2009 “Regulations of the Level of Proficiency in the State Language and the Procedure of Testing the Level of Language Proficiency for Professional Duties and Duties of Office for Receiving of Permanent Residence Permit and Obtaining the Status of Permanent Resident of the European Community, and State Fee for the State Language Proficiency Examination”. The official language requirements are reasonable and in full compliance with the Latvian language policy objectives, namely, to ensure the right to freely use the Latvian language in any field in the entire territory of Latvia.

***On language use in public administration institutions***

143. In accordance with the Official Language Law, public administration institutions use the Latvian language as the official language for communication. At the same time, exceptions have been clearly defined when a person has the right not to use Latvian in applying to institutions. Under Section 10, paragraph two of the Official Language Law, the possibilities to use national minority languages involve submissions of persons to police and medical institutions, rescue services and other institutions in cases of urgent calls for medical aid, commission of crimes or other violations of law, or calls for emergency assistance in cases of fire, accident or other emergencies. Documents from foreign countries may be accepted and examined without a translation into the official language.

144. In regard to language use in medical institutions, Latvia notes that under Section 4, Paragraph five of the Law on the Rights of Patients, a patient shall be provided with information in a comprehensible manner, explaining medical terms and taking into account the age, maturity and experience of the patient. The said regulation sets the goal to be achieved through the use of all the available resources and means of communicating information.

145. Section 3 of the Law On Local Governments stipulates that the working language of a local government city or municipality council and the authorities and institutions established by it shall be the Latvian language. Where a resident having problems with understanding Latvian wishes to speak his or her native language, then depending on the local government bylaws, this person by him or herself or the local government should provide an interpreter. Only Latvian must be spoken at the meetings. Under Section 10, Paragraph two of the Official Language Law, submissions from persons are received and examined by public administration institutions only if submitted in the official language. It should be noted that, in municipalities with a high share of national minority population, local governments provide free interpretation services to persons who do not speak Latvian.
146. Latvia would like to refer to information it has provided in the course of the first and second monitoring cycle concerning the use of language in administrative and criminal procedures and emphasise that Section 11 of the Criminal Procedure Law provides that “the criminal proceedings shall take place in the official language”; however, “a person who has a right to a defence, a victim and his or her representative, a witness, specialist, expert, auditor, as well as other persons who a person directing the proceedings has involved in the criminal proceedings does not speak the official language, such persons have the right to use the language that such persons understand during the performance of procedural actions, and to use the assistance of an interpreter free of charge, whose participation shall be ensured by the person directing the proceedings. In the pre-trial proceedings, the investigating judge or court shall provide for the participation of an interpreter in the hearing of issues that fall within the jurisdiction of the investigating judge or court”.
147. Under Section 321.<sup>1</sup> Paragraph two of the Criminal Procedure Law (the 25.03.2013 version of the CPL as amended by the law of 18.02.2016), “the court shall provide the victim with a possibility to become familiar with the judgment using the assistance of an interpreter”. Where a victim who does not know the official language and resides permanently in a foreign state has requested a written translation of the judgement, a person directing the proceedings shall send a written translation of the said judgement to the victim. Under Section 321.<sup>1</sup> Paragraph three, the court shall provide the accused with a written translation of the judgment in a language comprehensible to him or her without delay. A written translation shall not be provided, where:
- a judgment of conviction has been rendered in a case that has been examined in the court of first instance without verification of evidence;
  - a judgment of conviction has been rendered in the event of settlement between the victim and the accused;
  - a judgment of conviction has been rendered under the proceedings of agreement;
  - a decision by the court of cassation is being rendered.
148. Under Section 321.<sup>1</sup> Paragraph four of the CPL, “the accused for whom a written translation of the judgment in a language comprehensible to him or her is not provided in the cases referred to in Paragraph three of this Section shall be provided by the court with a possibility to become familiar with the judgment using the assistance of an interpreter. Persons who have been applied a security measure related to deprivation of liberty shall be provided with a possibility to become familiar with the judgment using the assistance of an interpreter by the relevant place of imprisonment. Under Section 321.<sup>1</sup> Paragraph

five, “the day of availability of a court judgment for an accused person who is being held under arrest, house arrest or in a social correctional educational institution shall be the day on which a copy of the judgment is issued to him or her in a language comprehensible to him or her or he or she is familiarised with the judgment in accordance with the procedures laid down in Paragraph four of this Section”.

***Language policy in Latvia. Institutional framework.***

149. The following institutions are responsible for the development and implementation of the State language policy in the Republic of Latvia:

- i. The State Language Commission – an advisory institution established under the auspices of the President's Chancery in 2002 and consisting of experts in the field of linguistics, culture and education (12 members at present). Its aim is to assess the situation with the official language and elaborate specific proposals for strengthening positions of the Latvian language and enabling its sustainable development;
- ii. The State Language Centre – a governmental authority established in 1992 under supervision of the Ministry of Justice. The primary function of the institution is to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Official Language Law and relevant Cabinet of Ministers regulations. Since 2009, when the State Language Centre (hereinafter – SLC) was merged with the State agency “Translation and Terminology Centre”, the SLC is also in charge of translating international legislation into Latvian and translating laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia into official languages of the EU, as well as maintaining the largest terminology database in Latvia. The centre also ensures the operation of the Latvian Language Experts Commission;
- iii. The Latvian Language Agency (hereinafter – LLA) was established on 1 July 2009 by reorganising the State Agency for Latvian Language Learning and the State Language Agency. The LLA is directly subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Science and its aim is to promote the strengthening of the status and sustainable development of the Latvian language and to organise and administer projects of various scale and type in order to facilitate the learning of Latvian as the official language through enabling equal opportunities for national minorities to receive education and learn the official language.

***Promotion of acquiring knowledge of the Latvian language***

150. Latvia has undertaken vast-scale measures in teaching of the official language. Besides, socio-linguistic research is carried out in Latvia on a regular basis on various aspects of language use, the process of testing the official language skills is being continuously improved, active work is ongoing for the inclusion of third country nationals into the society by offering learning materials and methodological aid needed in learning of the official language and improving language skills. However, the enforcement of liability for the violation of current provisions is an integral part of implementing an effective national language policy.

151. A successful language policy and education reform have led to considerable improvements to the Latvian language skills among the members of national minority communities. According to the outcomes of the study entitled “Sense of Belonging to Latvia”<sup>32</sup>, already more than 94% of people belonging to national minorities have mastered the Latvian language to a certain level. Especially positive tendencies are

<sup>32</sup> The study “*Piederības sajūta Latvijai*” (The Sense of Belonging to Latvia) is accessible at: [http://providus.lv/article\\_files/2682/original/atskaite\\_piederiba\\_08\\_2014.pdf](http://providus.lv/article_files/2682/original/atskaite_piederiba_08_2014.pdf)

observed among young people: 77% of young people in the age bracket of 18 to 24 years have “excellent” or “good” knowledge of Latvian.

152. In addition to the above, it should be noted that, as the study reveals<sup>33</sup>, Latvia has one of the highest rates of multilingualism in the European Union: 95% of the residents of Latvia from 15 to 74 years of age know at least one language beside their native tongue. More than a half of the residents of Latvia (54%) know at least two foreign languages, which is considerably more than the EU average.

### ***Activities of the State Language Centre***

153. The SLC carries out inspections to examine peoples’ applications regarding alleged violations of the State Language Law, and also in the framework of the quarterly control programme. Latvia would like to draw attention to the fact that the SLC has discontinued the practice of preventive inspections, which was mentioned in Paragraph 72 of the Second National Report of Latvia.

154. The number of penalties imposed by the SLC has decreased over the recent years: 1062 penalties in 2011; 1127 penalties in 2013; and 671 penalties in 2015. Latvia would like to emphasise that administrative penalties for violations of the Official Language Law are adequate and effective, which is evidenced among other things by the insignificant number of recurrent violations within a year. For instance, the following number of persons were penalised repeatedly for not using the State language to the extent necessary for performance of their professional duties: in 2010 – four out of 429; in 2011 – 13 out of 583; in 2012 – 11 out of 545, in 2014 – seven out of 423; and in 2015 – 14 out of 479. The number of persons punished repeatedly for failure to provide translation into the official language of information contained in the labels of goods or instructions for their use has been as follows: in 2010 – three out of 229; in 2011 – eight out of 293; in 2012 – five out of 320; in 2013 – two of 385; in 2014 – seven out of 423; and in 2015 – none of 156 persons punished.

155. The number of public institutions which have received punishments for spreading information in foreign languages has not increased either. For the violation of provisions of Section 201.35, Paragraph seven of the Latvian Administrative Violations Code – the use of a foreign language and the official language concurrently when providing public information in public space in the case when legislation stipulates the provision of that information only in the official language – penalties have been imposed four times in 2010, once in 2011, four times in 2012, four times in 2013, and five times in 2015, which cannot be regarded a significant increase.

156. In order to avoid cases when the same sanctions are applied for infringements of different gravity or a disproportionate penalty is applied for minor violations, the SLC has elaborated and made publicly accessible the “Guidelines on the principles of application of administrative penalties for violations of the Official Language Law”. These guidelines are observed by all inspectors in their daily work, and the legitimacy and validity of their decisions can be appealed against.

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<sup>33</sup> A Eurobarometer study of 2012, “*Europeans and their Languages*”.

157. See Tables 5 to 7 for data on the checks carried out by the State Language Centre, submissions received and examined concerning violations of the Official Language Law and the substance of cases of administrative violations.

### ***On Article 11***

158. Latvia would like to refer to the information included in Paragraphs 83 to 87 of its Comments on the Second Opinion:

### ***Personal names in national minority languages***

159. Each country is entitled to adopt regulations on the use of its official language in personal identification documents and other official documents. The Latvian legislation (The State Language Law, the Law on Personal Identification Documents, Cabinet of Ministers regulation No. 114 of March 2, 2004, “Regulations on the transcription and use of personal names in the Latvian language, as well as their identification”, as well as the Cabinet of Ministers regulation No. 134 of 21 February 2012, “Regulations on the personal identification documents” – see the *First and Second National Reports and Comments on the First Opinion* ) provides clear procedures for the rendering of the personal names of other languages into Latvian and their identification in personal documents. The Latvian legislation ensures the implementation of Article 11, Paragraph one of the Convention and guarantees the right of national minority representatives to use their name and surname in a national minority language.

160. Latvia would like to refer to Paragraph 30 of the present Report and Paragraphs 84 to 86 of the Comments on the Second Opinion.

### ***Language use in place-names***

161. Latvia would like to refer to the information it has provided in Paragraph 178 of its Second National Report.

### ***Language use in publicly accessible information***

162. Latvia would like to refer to the information it has provided in Paragraph 152 of its First National Report.

### ***Article 12***

163. Latvia supports equal access to education for all national minorities and emphasises that a uniform approach to the education system is pursued in Latvia.

164. In addition to the in-depth overview that was provided by Latvia in the course of the first two monitoring cycles on the national minority education policy pursued by Latvia and its development, Latvia would like to provide information in the present Report on what has been accomplished in the field of national minority education from 2012 to 2016. The overview includes tasks set out in the Cabinet of Ministers Decree Nr.331 of 29 June 2015 “On the plan for the implementation in 2015 –2017 of the Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020”<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Available at: <http://likumi.lv/ta/id/274936-par-izglitiba-attitiba-pamatnostadnu-2014-2020-gadam-istenosanas-planu-2015-2017-gadam>; source document: <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266406>.

### ***Implementing national minority education programmes (models) in schools of general education***

165. In the 2015/2016 school year, the State funded national minority education programmes in seven languages: Russian, Polish, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Estonian, Lithuanian and Hebrew; State funding was provided to 104 education institutions implementing national minority education programmes (including 94 schools running education programmes in Russian) and 71 so-called *two-flow* schools (providing both Latvian and national minority language programmes). See detailed statistics for the review period in Tables 8-11.

166. During the period starting from the 2012/2013 school year, education institutions implementing national minority education programmes have provided a study process in accordance with the lesson and subject plan:

- **Model One:** students who have acquired pre-school education in Latvian, who have Latvian language skills and use experience – *approximately 3% of the total number of national minority education programmes;*
- **Model Two:** students who have acquired pre-school education in a national minority language, who speak Latvian at an intermediate level and have experience of the use of the Latvian language – *approximately 41.6% of the total number of national minority education programmes;*
- **Model Three:** students who have acquired pre-school education in a national minority language, who speak Latvian at an intermediate level and do not have experience of the use of the Latvian language – *approximately 34.8% of the total number of national minority education programmes;*
- **Model Four:** students without background knowledge of the Latvian language – *approximately 5.6% of the total number of national minority education programmes;*
- **Model Five:** a plan of subjects and lessons developed by the education establishment itself in accordance with the lesson load per week defined in the General Education Law – *approximately 13% of the total number of national minority education programmes.*

### ***Improvement of the regulatory framework***

167. In 2014, additions were made to Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 468 of 12 August 2014 – Regulations on the State Basic Education Standard, Basic Education Subject Standards and Sample Education Programmes, by specifying the order of implementing national minority education programmes in relation to a model formed by an education institution (Model Five). These Regulations prescribe the learning of a national minority language as compulsory. As before, the standard lays down the compulsory content of basic education, including the learning of a national minority language in Grades 1 to 9, as well as procedures for the application of the five models (as chosen by the school, specifying procedures for putting in practice the national minority education programmes in relation to the historically pre-determined model (Model Five) devised by the education institution.

168. By implementing Model Five of the national minority basic education programme, national minority education institutions are entitled to independently form a plan of lessons and subjects in accordance with the lesson load per week set in the General Education Law. Model Five is closely related to the possibilities of students to study ethnic culture in depth. At the same time, the education institution, by implementing Model Five, is obliged to ensure such preparation level of students, so that they may successfully continue their education in the state language after acquiring basic education,

both in general education programmes and in the first year of professional schools. Therefore, in Model Five a restriction is set to education institutions that, in Grades 7 to 9, the proportion of subjects taught in a national minority language or Latvian and a national minority language shall not exceed 40% of the total lesson load.

***Planned activities to improve the regulatory framework***

169. According to task No 1.1.1 of the Guidelines developed by the Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter – MES): “Development and Testing of Competence -based Content of General Education”, it has been planned to develop new pre -school education guidelines and national standards in basic education (subsequently in secondary education as well) by 2018. It is planned to ensure these activities within the ESF project (specific support objective No. 8.3.1 “ To develop a competency -based general education curriculum”), by providing development, approbation (including development of study aids, including in the context of incorporating education implementation; development of diagnostics instruments, etc.), and gradual implementation of the study content. It is also planned to develop samples of education programmes, including national minority education programmes for ensuring early acquisition of the Latvian language.
170. On 27 September 2016, amendments to the Education Law were prepared and included in a package of draft budgetary legislation, including amendments to the Law “On State Budget for 2017”, which would delegate authority to the Ministry of Education and Science to allocate larger funds to the implementation of programmes for national minority education. The aim is to ensure that the national minority schools which operate on the basis of agreements of EU states and/or bilateral intergovernmental agreements on the teaching of a national minority language and culture, while ensuring the teaching of the official language and culture of Latvia (to enable integration), could exist with a lower number of pupils.

***Measures to ensure early acquiring of knowledge of the Latvian language***

171. In order to evaluate the possibilities of improving pre-school education study content and to develop a national minority education programme for ensuring the early acquisition of the Latvian language, the MES formed a work group on 4 July 2014, in which specialists from municipalities and private pre -school education institutions, as well as representatives of the National Centre for Education, Latvian Language Agency, Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy participated . The work group has developed proposals for ensuring the early acquisition of the Latvian language in pre -school education programmes. The aforementioned proposals are as follows:
- i. To improve the legislation, by providing for seven targeted Latvian language lessons for 1.5–4 year old children, including five integrated lessons through play per week, and 10 Latvian language lessons per week for 5–6 year old children.
  - ii. To ensure improvement of the professional competence of the management and administration of the pre -school education institution in forming a Latvian study environment.
  - iii. To foster a supporting and developing environment, ensuring a physical, social, pedagogical environment for learning the official language, by providing the implementation of an integrated study programme in the form of play.

***State exam results of the students who are receiving education in national minority education programmes***

172. Results of the centralised examination of the 2014/2015 school year, according to the language used in taking the exam, show that 79% of national minority students provided answers in Latvian while taking state exams in Grade 12, and 21% – in a minority language. In the 2013/2014 school year this proportion was : 76% in Latvian, and 24% in a minority language. In the 2012/2013 school year – 72% in Latvian, and 28% in a minority language. In comparison with the previous school years, the average results of centralised exams for students who have studied in national minority programmes, have improved in mathematics, history and biology.

***Support for teachers in teaching the Latvian language***

173. The contribution by the state to improving the Latvian language skills of teachers are characterised by the long-term support from the Latvian Language Agency: 10,367 teachers improved their Latvian language skills from 1996 to 2004; 1508 teachers – from 2005 to 2009; and 960 teachers – from 2010 to 2014. An average of 300-400 Latvian language teachers are educated from state budget funds per year.

174. From 2012 to 2015, various study aids have been prepared, including electronic study aids, for learning the Latvian language. From 2012 to 2015 an electronic study aid was prepared and is available online (<http://www.sazinastilts.lv/language-learning/vocabulary/>) – *Electronic Dictionary of Terms* in history, biology, chemistry, geography, physics and mathematics.

175. Measures for educating the teaching staff, including by fostering high quality of teaching of the Latvian language in pre-school education institutions for national minorities, are regularly conducted by the LLA with a broad offer of courses for the life-long education of pre-school teachers, as well as with varied methodic materials for working with national minority children.

***Measures for educating the teaching staff***

2013/2014 school year	2014/2015 school year	2015/2016 school year
Improvement of Latvian language skills is ensured to 418 teachers of pre-school education institutions.	Improvement of Latvian language skills is ensured to 185 teachers of pre-school education institutions.	160 teachers of pre-school education institutions have been educated.

176. In accordance with the policy task No. 1.4.8 “Support for enhancing the pre-school, elementary school and high school teachers' professional competence”, it has been planned to enhance the professional competence of pre-school, elementary school and high school teachers by 2017, to ensure a modern Latvian language learning process and the implementation of bilingual studies, by educating 550 teachers per year.

***Cooperation with the Republic of Poland in education and culture***

177. In cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Poland, the MES is ensuring support for guest-teachers from Poland in general education institutions of Latvia.

178. In providing students with the opportunity to learn the Polish language, literature and history of Poland, the MES has cooperated with the National Ministry of Education of the Republic of Poland and ensured the work of guest teachers at Ita Kozakēviča Rīga Polish Secondary School, Józef Piłsudsky Daugavpils State Polish Gymnasium, Count Plater's Krāslava Polish Elementary School, and Rēzekne State Polish Gymnasium.

***Number of Polish guest teachers in education institutions***

<b>2012/2013 school year</b>	<b>2013/2014 school year</b>	<b>2014/2015 school year</b>	<b>2015/2016 school year</b>
12	8	9	8

***Support for national minority education institutions***

179. Due to funding from the state of Latvia, the European Social Fund and foreign donors, national minority schools receive significant assistance. The Ministry of Education and Science highly appreciates support from Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine, Belarus and Israel for supplying national minority schools with teaching aids, organising summer camps, providing guest teachers and contributing to the renovation of schools.

180. While introducing the financing model of “money follows the student” (*see Paragraph 228 of the Second National Report*), and to ensure the existence of national minority schools (Riga Lithuanian Secondary School, Riga Ukrainian Secondary School, Riga Ita Kozakeviča Polish Secondary School, Š.Dubnovs Riga Jewish Secondary School, Riga Belarusian Basic School, Riga Estonian Basic School), the Riga City Council has increased, compared to other schools, the funding for teachers' salaries at the national minority schools since 2009 by means of reallocating earmarked subsidies from the state budget.

181. The Ukrainian state offers financial support for repairs of classrooms at Riga Ukrainian Secondary School, landscaping the school grounds and purchasing equipment for computer classrooms, as well as providing a guest teacher.

182. In 2010, Riga Belarusian Basic School was relocated to premises suitable for an education institution. Before that the premises had been repaired by the Riga City Council's funds and equipped with support from the Belarusian Government. The school continues receiving support from Belarusian Government for purchase of equipment.

183. In 2010, Š.Dubnovs Riga Jewish Secondary School was relocated to new premises repaired and equipped by the Riga City Council's funds. The State of Israel has provided a guest teacher, “World ORT” - technical equipment for classrooms.

184. In 2009, Riga Lithuanian Secondary School opened an Interest Education Centre, and one third of its renovation costs were financed by the Lithuanian Government. Lithuania is also providing teaching materials and a guest teacher.

185. Since 1994, Riga Belarusian Basic School has been receiving books and school supplies through the mediation of the Belarusian Embassy. Teachers attend professional development courses at Belarusian universities.

186. Since 1989, the Estonian Secondary School has been receiving support from Estonia for the purchase of computers and teaching aid as well as for a guest teacher's work.

187. Starting from 1 September 2016, Riga Classical Gymnasium (a school with a national minority language of instruction) has begun implementing an education programme with Latvian as the language of instruction. The students who joined this programme had been studying at the national minority programmes before that.

#### ***State Education Quality Service***

188. The State Education Quality Service performs the accreditation of general education institutions and programmes.

189. In the 2014/2015 school year, 152 education institutions were accredited, including four education institutions (secondary schools) with a national minority language as the language of instruction, and six education institutions (one gymnasium, four secondary schools and one basic school) with Latvian and a national minority language as the languages of instruction; 580 education programmes were accredited.

190. In the 2015/2016 school year, 158 education institutions have been accredited, including two education institutions (secondary schools) with a national minority language as the language of instruction, five education institutions (secondary schools) with Latvian and a national minority language as the languages of instruction; 545 education programmes have been accredited.

#### ***Equal access to education***

191. In regard to the right to education laid down in the Law on Education, see Paragraph 139 of this Report. Section 12 of the Law on Education stipulates that fees for the acquisition of pre-school, basic and secondary education at an institution established by the State or local governments shall be covered from the State budget or local government budgets in accordance with the procedures laid down by the Cabinet, but a private educational institution may determine fees for the acquisition of education.

#### ***Education opportunities for Roma pupils***

192. In 2015/2016 school year, there were 960 Roma pupils in education institutions, which is 0.4% of all children receiving education in Latvia's schools. This is an increase compared to 2014, when 940 Roma pupils were registered.

<b>School year</b>	<b>Number of Roma pupils</b>
<b>2011/2012</b>	<b>1213</b>
<b>2012/2013</b>	<b>1043</b>
<b>2013/2014</b>	<b>1032</b>
<b>2014/2015</b>	<b>940</b>
<b>2015/2016</b>	<b>960</b>

*Source: MES, 2016*

193. In order to ensure information on the number of Roma pupils who are obtaining basic and general secondary education and on the scope of support measures for educating Roma pupils offered by education institutions, the MES, since the 2008/2008 school year

and jointly with education authorities of cities, towns and rural municipalities, compile detailed data on Roma pupils who have studied at schools of general education and on the quality of education received by Roma pupils. The Ministry is monitoring the Roma pupils who:

- *acquire general education programmes, including special education programmes in institutions of general education, and acquire vocational education programmes;*
- *are involved in the compulsory preparation of children from age five for primary schooling*
- *have not obtained a document on receiving compulsory basic education;*
- *by the decision of the teachers' council of an education institution, have been involved in support measures for improving their academic performance.*

194. In the 2013/2014 school year, general education programmes covered 922 Roma pupils, and support measures were provided to 332 of them. 26.8% of Roma pupils received additional assistance in learning the Latvian language and natural sciences. The work of four teacher assistants of Roma background was ensured in schools of general education in the 2013/2014 school year. At the end of 2016, there are plans to launch a new monitoring cycle on Roma students.

195. As part of a SIF project “Various people. Different experiences. One Latvia” in 2013/2014, five regional-scale discussions took place on the issues of Roma inclusion in education. As the result, a brochure entitled “Roma Community in Latvia: Situation and Best Practice in Education” was produced<sup>35</sup>.

196. In 2015, in interviews held as part of a study “Roma in Latvia” (see Paragraph 108 of the present Report), 99.4% of the Roma people interviewed, who have children of 7 to 16 years of age, indicated that their children attend school; besides, the attendance among Roma children at basic school (Grades 1 to 4) has increased, and the number of children who do not start school has decreased in comparison to the previous years. What's more, the results reveal a positive change of attitude among the Roma in regard to the importance of obtaining education: 97.5% of Roma parents recognise that it is important to ensure that their children obtain primary education; 81.5% are aware of the importance of their children attending a kindergarten to involve them more effectively in the further process of education; 88.5% believe that it is important to receive secondary education, and 70.1% – that it is vital to obtain higher education. The reasons behind these positive trends are: the initiative of school leaders; local authorities' access to information on truancy; the work of Roma assistant teachers; regular home visits by social educators to Roma children; the parents' initiative and interest in the academic achievement of their children; motivation and support measures for Roma children and their parents; and inter-cultural training programmes for teachers.

197. In 2012, an association “The Centre for Education Initiatives” continued its project “Preparation of teachers for the inclusion of Roma pupils” funded by the The Soros Foundation – Latvia (EUR 14,000). The project activities were aimed at preparing teachers for work with Roma pupils and the fostering of access to inclusive education. Programmes for three seminars for further education of teachers were devised as part of the project: “Education for social justice”, “Multicultural education: a Gypsy child at school”, and “Teacher's work in a classroom with Gypsy (Roma) children”. At six

<sup>35</sup> Further information is accessible at: <http://ej.uz/uqn4>.

seminars in various places across Latvia, 150 pre-school and school teachers were trained to prepare them for work with Roma children and families. Teachers and heads of education institutions also received advisory support to facilitate inclusive education for Roma children. In 2012, in the framework of the project, 16 seminars for further education of teachers were held in Latvia's municipalities. A methodological material for assistant teachers of Roma background has been produced during the project – “A handbook for Roma assistant teachers”, which offers information on specific features and tasks of a Roma assistant teachers' work as well as requirements and duties of a person working in an education institution. Best practice in building cooperation between the school and the Roma families was also presented in the handbook. In addition, an informative guide entitled “Inclusion of Roma pupils” was published under the “Integration measures 2011” open project competition financed by the State budget.

198. From 2013 to 2015, “The Centre for Education Initiatives” association in partnership with Latvia's municipalities (Jelgava City Council, Daugavpils City Council, Tallinn Municipality Council and Valmiera City Council) carried out a project “Integration incubator for Roma children and young people” financed by the “NGO Funds” programme for the 2009 -2014 period under the EEA Financial Mechanism. The grant awarded was EUR 107,698.

199. A broad range of activities was implemented during the said project:

- Training was organised for teachers and municipality administrative staff on diversity management and non-discrimination in education (12 practical sessions for local authority staff and Roma young people and parents, lead by Roma lecturers with relevant education; more than 80 teachers, social workers and other specialists in Latvia's regions have improved their knowledge of inclusive multicultural education);
- Training was organised and jobs at schools were provided for five mediators of Roma background;
- Four resource centres for Roma children and young people were established. The centres, the equipment of which has been financed by local authorities, continue operating due to local authority support and host practical events for Roma children and young people and their parents. At the resource centres, Roma people receive consultations from a mediator of Roma background who is coordinating communication between the Roma community, local authorities and central government institutions;
- Innovative cross-cultural events – four “Holiday Academies” for Roma children and young people and their peers of other ethnic backgrounds encouraging them to learn about the diversity of each other's cultures and promoting cooperation (93 participants) ; and a contest “Let's build an inclusive society together!” to present the cultures of various ethnic groups;
- Informative materials have been developed;
- Regular consultation by professionals were provided.

200. In 2015, two new projects were launched in support for Roma education – “Improvements to support system for Roma children and young people” in Jelgava, and “Support for Roma children: Prepared for studies!” in Daugavpils. The projects are implemented by an NGO “The Centre for Education Initiatives” with financial support from The World Childhood Foundation established by Queen Sylvia of Sweden and from municipal budgets.

201. In conclusion, Latvia would like to refer to the information provided by it in Paragraph 95 of its Comments on the Second Opinion of the Advisory Committee.

### ***Article 13***

202. In Latvia, no restrictions have been imposed on persons belonging to national minorities to establish and run private educational and training institutions.

203. In the 2015/2016 school year, out of 54 private education institutions implementing day programmes, 12 private schools ran education programmes in national minority languages and five education institutions provided parallel programmes in the official language and a minority language.

204. The total funding received by minority schools from the state budget has been increasing in recent years:

- in 2014 – EUR 1 448 675;
- in 2015 – EUR 1 686 907;
- in 2016 – EUR 1 668 350.

### ***Article 14***

205. See Paragraph 165 and onwards of the present Report.

### ***Article 15***

206. Latvia wishes to refer to the information provided by it in the context of Article 15 of the Convention in the framework of the first and second monitoring cycle.

## **Promotion of national minority participation**

### ***Representation of persons belonging to national minorities in elected bodies***

207. Latvians of various ethnic backgrounds hold high-ranking political posts. There are members in the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia whose native languages are Lithuanian, Arab, Russian. Chairmen of the Riga City Council and the Ludza Town Council are persons belonging to national minorities. Persons belonging to Russian minority are also members in the European Parliament.

### ***Promotion of national minority participation in decision making processes***

208. Advisory mechanisms for promoting national minority participation in decision making processes have been set up both at the national and local levels. Three national level advisory councils are working in Latvia: the President's Minorities Advisory Council; the Ministry of Culture Advisory Committee of National Minority Organisation Representatives and the Advisory Council for the Implementation of the Roma Integration Policy; and the Advisory Council to the Ministry of Education and Science on the National Minority Education Affairs, all of which ensure a broad representation of national minorities. Two of these bodies are chaired by national minority representatives.

### ***The Advisory Committee of National Minority Organisations' Representatives***

209. A previously established advisory mechanism – the Committee of National Minority Organisation Representatives (hereinafter – Minority NGO Committee) – continues its operations at the Ministry of Culture with the principal task to promote the participation of non-governmental organisations in the formation of civil society, the development of ethnic policy, the area of the national minority rights and culture.

210. On 13 March 2014, the Minority NGO Committee was approved in its new composition, including representatives from the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and from among candidates nominated by non-governmental organisations. Since 2014, the committee has been chaired by the Minister of Culture. All the largest national minority communities and inter-ethnic organisations in Latvia have been represented on the Minority NGO Committee. The Minority NGO Committee convenes for meetings at least three times per year.

### ***The President's Minorities Advisory Council***

211. As from 22 December 2008, the Minorities' Advisory Council (hereinafter – MAC) has resumed permanent activities under the President's Chancery. The aim of the council is to promote dialogue on issues related to ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities, as well as supporting national minorities towards socio-political participation. Representatives from 18 national minority NGOs are engaged in the MAC, currently headed by the Chairman of the Council of the Latvian Centre of Azerbaijani Culture.

212. The functions of the MAC are as follows:

- i. to promote dialogue among policy makers, implementers, and the society in the fields of national minority interests;
- ii. to inform the President about current issues and problems of national minorities, their organisations and operation of education establishments;
- iii. on the President's request, to provide opinions on the current national minority-related issues;
- iv. to evaluate and provide opinion on the fundamental principles of national minority ethno-cultural autonomy in legal acts;
- v. to review national minority related proposals by individuals, NGOs and public institutions;
- vi. to elaborate proposals for development of cultural autonomy of national minorities and integration of national minorities into Latvian society;
- vii. to ensure public connection with society, the media and other stakeholders.

### ***The Advisory Council on Minority Education Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Science***

213. The MES Advisory Council on Minority Education Affairs (hereinafter – ACMEA) was established in 2001 to intensify an exchange of views on national minority education policy and to facilitate democratic inclusion of national minorities in Latvia's uniform educational system. The Advisory Council is composed of 30 representatives delegated by educational institutions established by the state and local authorities, NGOs, the National Centre for Education and other institutions.

214. Since 2012, a representative from the "International Romani Union" representation has also been working on the ACMEA.

215. ACMEA meets four times a year; during the period since 2012, its members and experts have been introduced to the results of centralised exams, opportunities for professional competence development for teachers and amendments to legislation<sup>36</sup>, as well as offering

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<sup>36</sup> For instance, the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 468 of 12 August 2014 "Regulations Regarding the State Standard in Basic Education, the Subjects of Study Standards in Basic Education and Model Basic

proposals to the MES working group “ Ways of improving educational content in pre - school education” and exchanged views on parents’ participation in decision -making in educational institutions and at the national level.

216. Since 2012/2013, ACMEA has engaged representatives from the Ombudsman’s office, the Ministry of Culture, “Parents for Education” association and other non -governmental organisations in, totally, 14 rounds of discussions on opportunities for receiving quality education.

217. In addition, the ACMEA has been planning the following:

- i. to put forward proposals for amendments to the Advisory Council’s statute and the engagement of new participants and experts in the council’s work;
- ii. to put forward for submission an opinion on proposals developed by the MES working group “Ways of improving educational content in pre -school education” on how the learning environment and early learning of the Latvian language can be improved at educational institutions for national minorities.

#### ***Advisory mechanisms on Roma affairs***

218. To enable the implementation of activity area 1.3.6.7. of Chapter 9 in the Guidelines and facilitate carrying out the package of measures under Latvia’s national policy on Roma integration, the Ministry of Culture has established an Advisory Council for the Implementation of Roma Integration Policy. The aim of the council is to promote Roma integration and assess its progress, strengthen cooperation between the Roma community and public administration institutions, and intensify civil participation of the Roma community. The Council performs the following functions:

- ensures an effective review and assessment of results of the Roma integration policy, especially the implementation of the package of measures under Latvia’s Roma integration policy;
- offers consultations and recommendations to the Ministry on Roma integration policy and related subjects;
- promotes cooperation between public administration institutions and the Roma community on the implementation and development of the Roma integration policy;
- provides support for the Ministry in the implementation and development of the package of measures under Latvia’s Roma integration policy, and in preparation of the required information for the European Commission on the national Roma integration policy.
- The Council’s meetings address the matters of Roma integration in the areas such as education, employment, health care and housing, and offer its recommendations for the development of a more effective policy.

219. The Council membership includes representatives and experts from the co -responsible ministries, the SIF, the Society Integration Authority of the Jelgava City Council Administration, six Roma NGOs and other associations. The members of the Roma Council received information on a regular basis on the current developments in the area

of Roma integration both at the national and EU level, for instance, situation reports and recommendations, international level events, best practices, open calls for project applications, and others.

220. In the section on Roma on the Ministry of Culture website, the public can have access to the national and international documents of current relevance, the minutes and other papers of the Roma Council meetings, informational reports on the measures taken in previous years, research findings and other materials. This section also offers specialised materials for local authority staff on the features of Roma culture, the work of Roma mediators, best practice in the usage of funding under the EU Structural Funds and other relevant information.

#### ***Opportunities for cooperation at the local government level***

221. To ensure participation of the non-governmental sector in the planning, implementation and assessment of the society integration policy, the Riga City Council's Advisory Committee on Society Integration Affairs was established in Riga in 2010. The council has 21 members, including members of the City Council, representatives from the Riga City Council's Education, Culture and Sports Department, the Welfare Department and the Public relations Division, and ten NGOs. Through analysing the work accomplished in the field of societal integration, the Council is monitoring the implementation of the Riga City Programme on Society Integration (approved by the Riga City Council Decision No. 5252 of 25.09.2012) and its Operational Plan for 2015 -2017 (approved by the Riga City Council Decision No. 3014 of 22.09.2015). The evaluation of the results of the Programme and its Operational Plan and drawing up a new programme for the next period has been scheduled for 2017.

#### ***On granting voting rights to Latvia's non-citizens at the local level***

222. Latvia wishes to refer to the information contained in the Introduction of this Report on the status of a non-citizen as well as the information contained in Paragraphs 227 and onwards concerning the naturalisation process and emphasize that the national position on granting voting rights to non-citizens in local government elections remains unchanged.

223. The right to vote is an integral part of citizenship. Latvia's non-citizens have the right to acquire citizenship; the State is making every effort to improve and facilitate the naturalisation process.

224. The goal of Latvia's integration policy is to facilitate naturalisation and increase the number of Latvian citizens. Granting non-citizens the rights to vote in local elections would bring the non-citizen status even closer to the citizen status, thereby reducing the motivation of non-citizens to naturalize and only extending the indeterminate situation and the non-citizens' special legal status.

225. In addition, it should be emphasised that conditions for acquiring citizenship are both knowledge of the official language and the understanding and knowledge of the country's history, which is also a necessary and logical prerequisite for full participation in public life.

#### ***Promotion of the naturalisation process***

226. The Latvian state has created all prerequisites so that persons who have been granted the non-citizen status would be motivated to acquire Latvian citizenship. Besides, the

naturalisation process has been made easier on a number of occasions, to remove all obstacles to the persons' rights to naturalise.

227. To promote the naturalisation process, the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (hereinafter – the OCMA) holds monthly information days at its exam centres in Riga, Liepāja and Daugavpils. Information days in other Latvia's towns and cities are held when needed<sup>37</sup>. On information days, persons seeking naturalisation can get acquainted with the requirements for obtaining Latvian citizenship and the procedures of testing as set out in the Citizenship Law. In 2015, nine cities and town in Latvia (Bauska, Dobele, Jēkabpils, Daugavpils, Liepāja, Rīga, Saldus, Valmiera and Ventspils) hosted 86 information days. In 2016 (*data on 1 November*) seven cities and towns in Latvia (Rīga, Daugavpils, Liepāja, Venstpils, Jūrmala, Tukums, Valmiera) hosted 76 information days. Regional media in the respective town or city are being notified about the information day. The announcement is published on the OCMA website at [www.pmlp.gov.lv](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv), as well as the OCMA social network accounts: Facebook.com (@IeM.PMLP) and Twitter.com – (@IeM\_PMLP). The success of Information Days is evidenced by the fact that almost one half (47%) of the persons who have attended the events file naturalisation applications.
228. The OCMA has a free of charge telephone line, where everybody interested in the subject can also obtain information on the acquisition of Latvian citizenship through naturalisation. In 2015, the information phone in the answering machine mode registered 174 calls related to naturalisation.
229. On the OCMA web site [www.pmlp.gov.lv](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv), everybody interested can receive answers in Latvian, Russian and English languages to queries regarding the acquisition of Latvian citizenship through naturalisation and put queries online in the Forum section to competent officials concerning the possibility of acquiring Latvian citizenship through naturalisation and receive answers.
230. In 2015, the web site [www.pmlp.gov.lv](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv) was visited 1 263 555 times; in 2016 (*data on 15 November*) the website has been visited 4 813 044 times. In 2015 the website section on information for citizenship applicants concerning naturalisation exams was viewed 11 237 times, in 2016 (*data on 15 November*) – 7152 times. The forum section in 2015 had 56 entries on naturalisation and obtaining of citizenship, in 2016 – 64 entries (*until 15 November*). The questions are for the most part related to the wish of the citizenship applicants to find out the requirements and facilitations for naturalisation.
231. In 2015, both national and regional media were sent 121 press releases on latest activities by the OCMA, including naturalisation issues. To promote the work of the institution, the Head of the OCMA, his deputies and the Head of the Naturalisation Board have given interviews and comments on television and radio and to the media working with the target group of Latvia's non-citizens and stateless persons. Several broadcasts aired in 2015 directly reflected the subject of naturalisation and latest developments, for instance, an interview with the Head of the Naturalisation Board at the “900 sekundes” programme on the LNT television channel in July 2015, a number of interviews on Latvijas Radio 1, Latvijas Radio 4, Radio Baltcom, and other channels. In April 2015,

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<sup>37</sup> If there is interest in naturalisation issues in any other town or city, the OCMA also organises information days in other Latvia's towns or cities where there are no exam centres.

the Naturalisation Days were held when anybody interested in the subject could receive individual consultations on the opportunities of obtaining Latvian citizenship through naturalisation. A Twitter Session was organised during the campaign, when answers could be received via the OMCA Twitter.com account (@IeM\_PMLP). In 2016 (*data on 15 November*) both national and regional media have been sent 85 press releases on latest activities by the OMCA, including naturalisation issues

### ***On the amendments of 2013 to the Citizenship Law***

232. Amendments to the Citizenship Law came into force on 1 October 2013, not only defining more precisely certain provisions on acquiring citizenship but also providing a number of facilitations, for instance, simplified requirements concerning the period of permanent residence for naturalisation applicants, and more specific rules of and exemptions from a language test. Thereby Section 21 of the Citizenship Law stipulates the following exemptions from naturalisation exams:

- i. *The following persons shall be released from tests on fluency in the Latvian language and of knowledge of the basic principles of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, the text of the National Anthem, the basics of the history and culture of Latvia:*
  - a. *a person with Group I disability;*
  - b. *a person with Group II disability that was determined due to a developing mental disease;*
  - c. *a person with Group II or Group III disability that was determined due to deaf-mutism or bilateral deafness;*
  - d. *a child for whom disability has been determined ;*
  - e. *a person who has acquired basic education in the Latvian language by acquiring more than half of the basic education programme in it;*
- ii. *Such a person who has confirmed his or her fluency in the Latvian language shall be released from testing the fluency in the Latvian language:*
  - a. *in the centralised examination in the Latvian language (in the accredited educational programme for Grade 9), by acquiring therein a total assessment expressed in per cent that is not less than 50 per cent, or in the centralised examination in the Latvian language (in the accredited educational programme for Grade 12) by acquiring therein a total assessment expressed in per cent that is not less than 20 per cent;*
  - b. *with a document that confirms the completion of the higher education study programme in the Latvian study language.*

233. Under the amendments to the Citizenship Law, a child of non-citizens or stateless persons who is born in Latvia after 21 August 1991 shall be recognized a citizen of Latvia upon the registration of the fact of the birth of the child, on the grounds of the wish expressed by one of the parents. Children born before the amendments to the Citizenship Law who have not reached 15 years of age, shall be recognized a Latvian citizen upon an application of only one of the parents. Since the amendments to the Citizenship Law have come into effect on 1 October 2013, the number of newborns that are registered as non-citizens has considerably decreased. In the time period between 1 October 2013 and 15 August 2016 721 newborns, whose both parents are non-citizens, have been registered as Latvian citizens upon birth; 167 have been registered as non-citizens (including only 32 newborns in the first half of 2016). In order to raise awareness in the public and amongst non-citizens on possibilities to register into the Latvian citizenship, the OMCA carries out targeted activities, for example - the OCMA on its own initiative identifies non-citizens that might be eligible for the acquisition of

the Latvian citizenship by means of registration, and addresses these persons directly, inviting them to register as a Latvian citizen at the OMCA's premises.

234. In addition to facilitations to the knowledge test laid down in Section 21 of the Citizenship Law, the Cabinet of Ministers regulation No.973 of 24 September 2013 "Regulations on the testing of the Latvian language skills and knowledge of the basic principles of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, the text of the National Anthem, the basics of the history and culture of Latvia" (hereinafter – Cabinet Regulations No.937), provide for the following exemptions from the naturalisation exams:

- i. *the following persons shall be exempt from testing*
  - *applicants with Group II and III vision disability;*
- ii. *the following persons are exempt from the written part of the language skills test:*
  - *with Group II and III disability, missing the right arm or the right hand (for a left-handed person, the left arm or left hand respectively);*
  - *with Group II and III vision disability;*
- iii. *persons with Group II and III speech disability are exempt from the part of the language skills test that includes a conversation on daily subjects;*
- iv. *persons with Group II and III hearing disability are exempt from the parts of the language skills test that include listening comprehension and a conversation on daily subjects.*

235. In addition, Paragraph 33 of the Cabinet Regulations No.937 grants the right for the head of the OCMA or his or her authorised person, in compliance with legislation in the area of language skills testing, to prescribe facilitated procedures for testing the language skills of an applicant who has been recognised as disabled and who has submitted a certificate issued by the State Commission of the Health and Working Ability Expertise Doctors on impairments that can be regarded as grounds for granting a facilitation.

236. From 2012 to 2015, the number of persons who have passed the language skills test has increased: 52% of persons who took the Latvian language test passed it in 2012, while the respective rate for 2015 was 60% (and, in 2016, up until 1 November, it has been 61%).

237. From 2012 to 2016, exemptions from the language skills test and the test on the knowledge of the basic principles of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, the text of the National Anthem, the basics of the history and culture of Latvia were granted to 3,2% of persons applying for naturalisation, while 28% were exempt from the language skills tests.

***On possibilities to appeal against an administrative act issued by an official of the Naturalisation Board of the OCMA***

238. An appeal against an administrative act issued by an official of the Naturalisation board of the OCMA shall be filed to the Head of the OCMA, while an appeal against a decision of the Head of the OCMA shall be filed to a court. From 1995 to 31 December 2015, there have been 71 instances of filing an appeal, out of which 40 were deemed unfounded.

239. The Naturalisation Board continuously gathers information on its target audience. In 2011, 2012 and 2014 surveys were carried out to learn the opinion of non-citizens as well

as impediments and impetus that could hinder or facilitate obtainment of citizenship.<sup>38</sup> 3 167 non-citizens (aged 18 to 86), 752 applicants for citizenship (aged 15 to 82) as well as new citizens (aged 16 to 82) took part in the surveys. The data was acquired through questionnaires handed out to clients at the OCMA regional branches. The surveys provided information about the attitude of non-citizens in Latvia towards the citizenship of Latvia, the possibility of dual citizenship being permitted in Latvia, the knowledge of Latvian language as well as the habits of its use and about the availability of information on obtaining citizenship, including the process of naturalisation. In October 2016 the Naturalisation Board has initiated a new survey to learn the opinion of non-citizens as well as impediments and impetus that could hinder or facilitate obtainment of citizenship.

240. In addition, in 2013 the OCMA commissioned an inquiry “Opinion of Latvia’s Non-citizens and Third Country Nationals on the Citizenship of Latvia and Causes that Hinder or Facilitate Obtainment of Citizenship”, carried out by the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences<sup>39</sup>. It was found, that the causes that discourage people to apply for citizenship have remained unchanged – some “are waiting for easement in naturalisation process”, others are “content with being a non-citizen”, while “ease of travelling to the Commonwealth of Independent States” and “not feeling confident about their proficiency in Latvian language” are other reasons mentioned by respondents. The respondents recognised that there is sufficient information provided on how to obtain citizenship.
241. From 2012 to 2016 multiple informative pamphlets illustrating the naturalisation process have been issued. In 2013, under the project “Provision of Informational Support to Third Country Nationals about the Opportunities to Obtain Citizenship”, a guide for obtaining the citizenship of Latvia was created and is now available in the homepage of the OCMA at [www.pmlp.gov.lv](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv).

### ***The naturalisation process: statistics***

242. Detailed overview of data on obtaining the citizenship of Latvia through naturalisation is available in the homepage of the OCMA at [www.pmlp.gov.lv](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv), section “Statistics”.
243. Since the start of the naturalisation process on 1 February 1995 until 1 July 2016, 144,093 persons have obtained citizenship, including 14,030 underage persons naturalised along with their parents<sup>40</sup>. Through this process, people of more than 80 different ethnic backgrounds have become citizens of Latvia. The majority are Russians, making up more than 68 % of the total. From all 561,854 Russians residing in Latvia, 62.8 % are citizens of Latvia (*see Table 12*).
244. On 1 July 2016, there were 247,104 non-citizens registered in Latvia. The overall percentage of non-citizens has decreased from 29 % to 11.6 % since 1995. By 1 July 2016, 84.3 % of the population are citizens of Latvia.

<sup>38</sup> Survey „Opinion of non-citizens on obtaining the Citizenship of Latvia”, OCMA, 2011, <http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/sakums/jaunumi/publikacijas/petijumi/>. Survey “Impediments and Impetus for obtaining the Citizenship of Latvia”, OCMA, 2012., <http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/sakums/jaunumi/publikacijas/petijumi/>. Survey “Attitude of Latvia’s Non-citizens towards obtaining the Citizenship of Latvia”, 2014., <http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/sakums/jaunumi/publikacijas/petijumi/>.

<sup>39</sup> Survey available: <http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/sakums/jaunumi/publikacijas/petijumi/>

<sup>40</sup> Statistics of the naturalisation available at: <http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/Naturalizacija.html>.

245. Regarding the current share of Latvia's non-citizens, it must be noted that on 1 January 2016, according to the register, 65.54 % (168 164 persons) of non-citizens were older than 50. 76.89 % from them were born outside of Latvia. Out of all registered non-citizens 57.07 % (146,434 persons) were born outside Latvia (*see Table 13*).
246. Latvia will continue to carry out awareness raising campaigns on the topic of naturalisation in order to reach all potential applicants. It must also be added, that the Guidelines on National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy also envisage the speeding up of naturalisation through a range of untraditional participation forms and outreach activities.

***Engagement in social and economic processes and language requirements for fulfilment of professional duties***

247. Latvia would like to refer to the information included in its Comments on Paragraph 139 of the Second Opinion of the Advisory Committee and would like to emphasize that Latvia's welfare system ensures equal opportunities for all people residing in Latvia, regardless of their ethnicity or citizenship, to access social services.
248. Under Section 3, Paragraph one of the of the Law On Social Services and Social Assistance, the right to receive social services and social assistance laid out in the Law shall be enjoyed by Latvian citizens and non-citizens, aliens who have received a permanent residence permit or been granted a status of a permanent EU resident in the Republic of Latvia, citizens of the countries of the European Economic Area and citizens of the Swiss Confederation as well as the family members of those people regardless of their ethnicity.

***Provision of Latvian language classes***

249. The Latvian Language Agency (LLA) provides free Latvian language courses for various target audiences (teachers, kindergarten teachers, the police, medical personnel, enlistees, the unemployed, etc.). As of 2006, the LLA has been providing Latvian language lessons for parents and teachers (from 2006 to 2010, the classes have been attended by 5576 teachers and parents of minority pupils). In 2010 the Centre provided 38 adult educators throughout Latvia with professional development courses and created an online Latvian language learning course for beginners ([www.valoda.lv](http://www.valoda.lv)). As from 2010, about 50 teachers working with adults at the Latvian language courses are being educated every year. Since 2000, more than 100 different learning and teaching materials for adults have been issued. Furthermore, since 2015, the LLA has been devising a series of new generation teaching aids "Laipa" (A1-B1) in compliance with joint European guidelines. Preparations are currently under way for the development of a unified platform (2017-2019) to enable support for teaching Latvian as a foreign language in Latvia and abroad (children 6-14 years of age) with teacher support via distance learning in the lva.classflow.lv environment and a freely accessible self-learning programme for young people over 15 and for adults at the levels of A1-B1.
250. The LLA has a significant and long-term experience in the implementation of projects on teaching the official language and societal integration. All projects included activities to ensure sustainable results of the successful acquisition of the Latvian language through producing learning and methodological materials, educating teachers and organizing language courses.

251. From 2009 until 2011 the LLA implemented an EU Structural Fund project “Support for Learning the Official Language and Bilingual Education”, which aims to develop learning and teaching materials, including study clips, to provide digital equipment and materials for interactive whiteboards as well as ensuring project’s implementation from Grade 7 to 12 in minority schools and in schools, where teachers operate in linguistically heterogeneous environments.
252. In 2010-2012, the LLA implemented a project under the European Social Fund entitled “Enhancing professional competence of Latvian language, literature and bilingual learning teachers”, which, in compliance with modernised contents of, and present-day demands to the learning process, raised the professional competence and skills of pre-school and elementary school teachers who teach Latvian language and literature and work bilingually.
253. Since 2012, the LLA has carried out five projects under the European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals: “Accessibility of Latvian Language Learning for successful communication, integration and naturalisation”, “Provision of support for teachers who teach Latvian to national minority children in pre-school institutions”, “Provision of support for teachers working in a cross-cultural environment”, “Support for third country nationals before entering the country and during the adaptation period”, and “Support for third country nationals before entering the country and during the adaptation period 2”. The language learning and integration-related materials are accessible on the LLA website at [www.valoda.lv](http://www.valoda.lv) and the portal [www.sazinastilts.lv](http://www.sazinastilts.lv).

#### ***Activities of the Society Integration Foundation***

254. The “Latvian Language Learning Programme for Adults”, administered by the SIF, aimed to raise the proficiency of Latvian amongst adult population of Latvia and provided an opportunity for every Latvian adult regardless of their age, profession or social situation to apply for government support for attending professional Latvian language lessons in order to raise their Latvian language proficiency to B2 level. Each project that was supported increased the language proficiency of at least 70% of the participants by one level. Since 2012, intensive Latvian language courses have been supported under the programme in the Latgale region (especially at Cibla, Zilupe, Ludza, Daugavpils, Dagra, Krāslava), in the Riga region and in other locations in Latvia, where needed. The target group are adult residents of Latvia, except the unemployed, job seekers and students. Young people under 25, who are not students, unemployed or job seekers were identified as a target group in need of special support.
255. A SIF project “National Integration Centre” ensured Latvian language courses for third country nationals and non-citizens from 2013 to 2015. In addition, as from 2014, official language courses are made available for re-emigrants and their family members.

#### ***Activities of the Riga City Council***

256. Free Latvian language learning courses are also provided by some local governments. ~~Riga~~ Riga City Council has been very active in this field.
257. Since 2011, the Riga City Council has been organizing a project competition “Organisation and implementation of the Latvian language courses for the residents of Riga”. From 2012 to 2016, financial support has been provided to 55 projects (total funding of EUR 718,000) providing an opportunity for 7650 adult residents of Riga

(except the unemployed and students), who are legally residing in Latvia and whose native language (first language) is not Latvian, to learn the language or improve their knowledge of Latvian free of charge.

### ***Activities of the State Employment Agency***

258. In order to facilitate employment and active involvement in further educational activities, as part of ongoing support measures for job market, the State Employment Agency provides Latvian learning courses for the unemployed whose mother tongue is other than Latvian. Besides, printed informative and methodical materials on the rights and duties of the unemployed, and on services provided by the State Employment Agency, are issued not only in Latvian, but also in Russian (*see Table 14*).

### ***Latvian language proficiency among national minorities***

259. The most recent survey by the Latvian Language Agency “The Language Situation in Latvia: 2010-2015” reveals<sup>41</sup> that more than 90% of respondents whose native language is Russian know Latvian (cf. 23% in 1989; 53% in 2000; 90% in 2009). Almost half of the respondents rate their knowledge of Latvian as good. Figures for the group of national minority young people (aged 18 to 24) reveal especially positive trends, as almost everybody knows Latvian: 39% rate their skills as excellent, very good; 39% – as good; 20% – as satisfactory, elementary. The people who have learned the official language at school (85%) and in informal environment – in communication with friends (58%) and in daily situations (54%) – have the highest proficiency level and have rated their language skills as very good or good.

260. The above mentioned study demonstrates that the use of the official language has increased in all socio-linguistic areas over a longer time period. Although this was influenced, for the most part, by instrumental mechanisms – requirements of legislation in education in the labour market, etc., the importance of the so called integrative language use has also increased, namely, recognition that the Latvian language is needed by everyone who resides in the country. Attitudes in the society towards the official language are positive: it is being recognised the most important language in Latvia and proficiency in Latvian is increasingly recognised as a necessity not only for obtaining a language certificate and respectively – a job. The respondents’ replies to the question “Why should all people in Latvia know Latvian?” were as follows: 45% – because they live in Latvia; 37% – because it is the official language; 13% – to make communication easier etc. The majority of the residents of Latvia regardless of their ethnic background (70%) consider that children should learn Latvian as early as possible (at pre-school or primary school). The majority of persons who have arrived to Latvia recently (residing in Latvia less than 5 years) also readily learning Latvian and wish to continue doing so in future: 83.5% of these respondents have learned some Latvian, and almost all of them wish to continue language classes.

### ***Protection of children’s rights, involvement of young people***

261. With regards to the information on the protection of rights of all children residing in Latvia provided in the first and the second national report, Latvia wishes to inform, that in years 2013, 2014 and 2015 multiple amendments have been made to the “Protection of the Rights of the Child Law”. The aim of the amendments were to perfect the terminology used in the Law, to raise the quality of child care services and to enhance

<sup>41</sup> Survey “Language situation in Latvia: 2010-2015”, Latvian Language Agency, 2016

the system for protecting children's rights. The amendments to the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law provide for the strengthening of measures that would enable isolating the perpetrator instead of the victim from the family environment. The Law has also been augmented with principles of children's rights protection, and the circle of officials dealing with children's rights protection has been expanded, meaning that more people will acquire the necessary skills and knowledge for protecting the rights of children.

Table 1

## Ethnic composition of the population in Latvia and number of the registered unemployed by nationality

Nationality	Ethnic composition of population in Latvia as of January						Number of the registered unemployed as of January					
	2013		2014		2015		2013		2014		2015	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Latvian	1237463	61.1%	1229067	61.4%	1223650	61.6%	58723	54.6%	53184	55.0%	47050	54.6%
Russian	530419	26.2%	520136	26.0%	512400	25.8%	30206	28.1%	25821	26.7%	22605	26.2%
Belorussian	70273	3.5%	68695	3.4%	67318	3.4%	3294	3.1%	2764	2.9%	2341	2.7%
Ukrainian	46335	2.3%	45282	2.3%	44709	2.3%	2212	2.1%	1922	2.0%	1633	1.9%
Polish	44457	2.2%	43365	2.2%	42466	2.1%	1991	1.9%	1604	1.7%	1473	1.7%
Lithuanian	25593	1.3%	25025	1.3%	24485	1.2%	1414	1.3%	1301	1.3%	1106	1.3%
Jewish	5761	0.3%	5402	0.3%	5185	0.3%	74	0.1%	65	0.1%	65	0.1%
Roma	5906	0.3%	5594	0.3%	5388	0.3%	793	0.7%	684	0.7%	674	0.8%
Other or not specified	57 618	2.8%	58 902	2.9%	60 495	3.0%	8781	8.2%	9417	9.7%	9299	10.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 023 825</b>		<b>2 001 468</b>		<b>1 986 096</b>		<b>107488</b>		<b>96762</b>		<b>86246</b>	

Source: CSB, NEA

Table 2

Percentage of job seekers by nationality aged from 15 to 74, %			
	2013	2014	2015
Latvian	9.7	9.7	8.6
Other	15.6	13.0	12.1

Source: CSB

Table 3

**Rate of urban and rural economic activity, level of employment and unemployment by gender and ethnic background (Latvian, other)  
among people aged 15–74, %**

	2013						2014						2015					
	Latvian			Other			Latvian			Other			Latvian			Other		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
<b>Latvia</b>																		
Economic activity	67.3	70.4	64.6	64.1	70.6	58.5	68.1	72.1	64.5	63.4	69.6	58.1	69.4	73.7	65.5	64.5	70.1	59.6
Employment	60.8	63.0	58.8	54.1	59.2	49.7	61.5	64.4	58.9	55.2	59.9	51.1	63.4	66.5	60.6	56.7	60.7	53.2
Unemployment	9.7	10.4	9.0	15.6	16.2	14.9	9.7	10.7	8.6	13.0	13.9	12.0	8.6	9.7	7.5	12.1	13.5	10.7
<b>Urban</b>																		
Economic activity	69.6	72.1	67.6	64.7	71.0	59.5	70.1	74.1	66.8	64.2	70.1	59.3	71.6	75.8	68.2	65.2	70.8	60.5
Employment	63.8	65.0	62.8	55.1	60.0	51.0	64.2	67.1	61.7	56.2	60.8	52.5	66.3	69.4	63.8	58.0	62.1	54.6
Unemployment	8.4	9.8	7.1	14.9	15.6	14.3	8.4	9.3	7.6	12.3	13.3	11.4	7.4	8.5	6.4	11.0	12.2	9.8
<b>Rural</b>																		
Economic activity	63.9	68.1	59.8	61.2	69.2	53.0	65.0	69.4	60.6	60.4	68.0	52.7	66.2	71.0	61.3	61.3	67.5	55.4
Employment	56.4	60.5	52.4	49.7	56.1	43.1	57.5	60.7	54.2	50.8	57.0	44.7	59.2	62.8	55.4	50.8	54.8	47.0
Unemployment	11.7	11.3	12.3	18.8	18.9	18.6	11.6	12.6	10.5	15.8	16.3	15.3	10.6	11.5	9.6	17.2	18.9	15.2

Source: CSB

Table 4

**Statistics on criminal proceedings and legal processes related to hate crimes; Number of criminal proceedings initiated /decisions of refusal to initiate criminal proceedings under Article 78 . (incitement to national, ethnic and racial hatred) of the Criminal Law (CL) from 2012 to 2016.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Instances of possible criminal offence under Article 78 of the CL reviewed</b>	<b>Criminal proceedings initiated</b>	<b>Decisions on refusal to initiate criminal proceedings under Article 78 of the CL</b>
2012	32	16	16
2013	33	19	14
2014	27	13	14
2015	24	10	14
2016 (6 mos.)	15	6	9

*Source: Ministry of the Interior*

Table 5

**Inspections by the State Language Centre\***

2006	2 308
2007	3 803
2008	5 400
2009	4 700
2010	3 940
2011	4 775
2012	3 722
2013	4 580
2014	4 830
2015	5 781

*\*Differences in the number of inspections are directly related to the Centre's funding and the number of inspectors*

Table 6

**The applications received and reviewed by the State Language Centre on violation of the Official Language Law**

2006	414
2007	579
2008	810
2009	812
2010	815
2011	825
2012	1 141
2013	1 194
2014	980
2015	867

*Source: Ministry of Justice*

Table 7

**Number and substance of cases of administrative violations (1 January 2005 to 31 December 2015)**

Section of the Latvian Administrative Violations Code	2005-2009	2010-2014	2015	Total
<b>201.<sup>26</sup> (1)</b> Failure to use the official language in the required amount for performance of professional or office duties	2645	2543	479	<b>5667</b>
<b>201.<sup>35</sup> (1)</b> Failure to provide printing, signboards, posters, placards, notifications in the official language	113	330	29	<b>472</b>

<b>201.<sup>35</sup> (2)</b> The use of the official language in public information intended for public notification, not complying with the official language norms in force	62	249	11	<b>322</b>
<b>201.<sup>35</sup> (4)</b> Marketing of goods without ensuring a full and accurate translation into the official language of the information indicated on goods labelling, instructions for use, guarantee documents or technical documentation	686	1458	156	<b>2300</b>

*Source: Ministry of Justice*

**Table 8**

**Breakdown of children in preschool education institutions implementing general preschool education programme for minorities (classes held in native minority languages)**

<b>School year</b>	<b>Percentage of children educated in preschool education programme for minorities</b>
2015/2016	36% or 28 884 children of the total number educated in preschool education programme
2014/2015	36% or 28 469 children of the total number educated in preschool education programme
2013/2014	36% or 28 872 children of the total number educated in preschool education programme
2012/2013	36% or 29 274 children of the total number educated in preschool education programme

*Source: Ministry of Education and Science*

Table 9

**Number of preschool education institutions (incl. those founded by natural or juridical entities) implementing a general preschool education programme for minorities**

<b>School year</b>	<b>Number of preschool education institutions implementing general preschool education programme for minorities, %</b>
2015/2016	29 % or 188 preschool education institutions
2014/2015	29 % or 184 preschool education institutions
2013/2014	29 % or 180 preschool education institutions
2012/2013	29 % or 181 preschool education institutions

*Source: Ministry of Education and Science*

Table 10

**Number of general education institutions (incl. night schools and part-time education) by flows as of the beginning of the 2012/2013 school year**

<b>School year</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Latvian</b>	<b>Russian</b>	<b>Two-flow</b>	<b>Polish</b>	<b>Ukrainian</b>	<b>Jewish</b>	<b>Belorussian</b>
2015/2016	783	620	94	60	4	1	2	1
2014/2015	796	627	97	63	4	1	2	1
2013/2014	807	633	100	65	4	1	2	1
2012/2013	807	634	99	65	4	1	2	1

*Source: Ministry of Education and Science*

Table 11

**Pupils by language used in class incl. night schools and part-time general education establishments**

<b>Pupils</b>	<b>2015/2016</b>	<b>2014/2015</b>	<b>2013/2014</b>	<b>2012/2013</b>
Total number of pupils educated in:	<i>213357</i>	<i>209686</i>	<i>209130</i>	<i>212433</i>
Latvian	15 3353 <b>72%</b>	150832 <b>72 %</b>	150690 <b>72 %</b>	153725 <b>72 %</b>
National minority language	59025 <b>28%</b>	58002 <b>28%</b>	57640 <b>28%</b>	58016 <b>28 %</b>

*Source: Ministry of Education and Science*

**Table 12**

**Composition of population in Latvia by nationality and citizenship as of 1 July 2016**

	<b>Population</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Citizens</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Non-citizens</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Latvian</b>	1 281 315	<i>60</i>	1 279 654	<i>99.87</i>	590	<i>0.05</i>
<b>Russian</b>	561 854	<i>26.31</i>	352 863	<i>62.80</i>	162 102	<i>28.85</i>
<b>Belorussian</b>	69 960	<i>3.28</i>	29 682	<i>42.43</i>	33 934	<i>48.50</i>
<b>Ukrainian</b>	51 372	<i>2.41</i>	18 451	<i>35.92</i>	24 058	<i>46.83</i>
<b>Polish</b>	45 964	<i>2.15</i>	35 618	<i>77.50</i>	8 667	<i>18.86</i>
<b>Lithuanian</b>	26 745	<i>1.25</i>	17 507	<i>65.46</i>	6 188	<i>23.14</i>
<b>Jewish</b>	8 659	<i>0.41</i>	5952	<i>68.74</i>	2 075	<i>23.96</i>
<b>Roma</b>	7 545	<i>0.35</i>	7 124	<i>94.42</i>	360	<i>4.77</i>

<b>German</b>	5 171	0.24	2 149	41.59	1012	19.57
<b>Other</b>	77 182	3.61	50 803	65.82	8 118	10.52
<b>Total</b>	2 135 767	100	1 799 803	84.27	247 104	11.57

*Source: Ministry of the Interior*

**Table 13**

**Non-citizens in Latvia by age and place of birth at 1 January 2016**

<b>Age</b>	<b>born in Latvia</b>			<b>born outside Latvia</b>			<b>Total</b>
	<b>residing in Latvia</b>	<b>residing outside Latvia</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>residing in Latvia</b>	<b>residing outside Latvia</b>	<b>Total</b>	
0-18	7 271	342	7 613	97	51	148	7 761
19-20	1 108	73	1 181	14	3	17	1 198
21-49	60 763	1 706	62 469	16 383	577	16 960	79 429
50 and older	38 511	344	38 855	127 870	1 439	129 309	168 164
<b>Total</b>	<b>107 653</b>	<b>2 465</b>	<b>110 118</b>	<b>144 364</b>	<b>2 070</b>	<b>146 434</b>	<b>256 552</b>

*Source: Ministry of the Interior*

**Table 14**

**Participation in the informal education programme “Learning the Latvian language” (incl. participation in the Youth Guarantee scheme)**

Nationality	2013			2014			2015		
	completed	found job in 6 mos, after completing the programme		completed	found job in 6 mos, after completing the programme		completed	found job in 6 mos, after completing the programme	
	Total	Total	%	Total	Total	%	Total	Total	%
Latvian	445	105	23.6	237	51	21.5	171	41	24.0
Russian	4071	1069	26.3	2395	693	28.9	1713	512	29.9
Belorussian	377	108	28.6	229	75	32.8	150	33	22.0
Ukrainian	332	75	22.6	243	64	26.3	159	60	37.7
Polish	199	48	24.1	90	22	24.4	99	20	20.2
Lithuanian	71	21	29.6	56	20	35.7	34	9	26.5
Jewish	13	3	23.1	4	0	0.0	6	0	0.0
Roma	40	1	2.5	22	5	22.7	11	0	0.0
Other	140	41	29.3	95	31	32.6	68	28	41.2
Not specified	1088	325	29.9	665	221	33.2	629	208	33.1
Total	6776	1796	26.5	4036	1182	29.3	3040	911	30.0

Source: Ministry of Welfare

Table 15

## Number of members of religious organisations 2011-2015

No.	Denomination	Number of members of congregations (2011)	Number of members of congregations (2012)	Number of members of congregations (2013)	Number of members of congregations (2014)	Number of members of congregations (2015)
1.	Catholics	-	-	389 670	407 018	<b>415 440</b>
2.	Lutheran	708 773	714 758	712 891	717 407	<b>700 465</b>
3.	Augsburg Confession Lutheran	581	561	582	608	<b>596</b>
4.	German Lutheran	308	315	310	310	<b>310</b>
5.	Russian Orthodox	370 000	370 000	370 000	370 000	<b>370 000</b>
	Orthodox (autonomous)	-	240	340	220	<b>220</b>
6.	Old Believer	2 373 (34 517)	2 345 (51 330)	2 355 (41 877)	2 338 (39 514)	<b>2 393 (41 042)</b>
7.	Baptists	6 930	7 029	7 026	6 533	<b>6 888</b>
8.	Seventh Day Adventist	4 046	4 034	3 943	3 989	<b>3 935</b>
9.	Methodists	751	760	502	509	<b>526</b>
10.	Judaism	416	378	327	367	<b>387</b>
11.	Muslims	319	340	343	320	<b>337</b>
12.	Vaishnavas (Krishna devotees)	146	145	145	145	<b>145</b>
13.	New Apostolic	1 268	1 273	1 276	1 280	<b>1 295</b>
14.	Pentacostal [Vasarsvētku]	3 268	3 200	4 736	3 237	<b>3 187</b>

15.	Christians of Evangelic Faith	3 171	3 201	3 187	3 138	<b>3 175</b>
16.	Young Generation Church	3 020	3 020	3 020	3 000	<b>3 000</b>
17.	Evangelical Christian	1 471	1 519	1 769	2 206	<b>1 717</b>
18.	Evangelical Followers of the Messiah	86	62	63	67	<b>63</b>
19.	Buddhists	155	158	161	158	<b>162</b>
20.	<i>Dievturi</i> [God Keepers]	663	670	691	696	<b>697</b>
21.	Jehovah's Witnesses	290	461	721	721	<b>721</b>
22.	Latter Day Saints (Mormons)	852	815	838	902	<b>972</b>
23.	Old Eastern Apostolic	287	297	305	318	<b>432</b>
24.	Reformed Church	145	138	80	96	<b>100</b>
25.	Bahaian	42	33	33	31	<b>32</b>
26.	Presbyterian	18	26	24	25	<b>20</b>
27.	Vissarionites	37	37	37	37	<b>37</b>
28.	Salvation Army	464	391	409	408	<b>264</b>
29.	Anglican	50	54	55	57	<b>61</b>
30.	Apostles	65	58	74	64	<b>82</b>
31.	Branhamism	27	27	27	27	<b>29</b>
32.	Sūkyo Mahikari	65	74	71	75	<b>72</b>
33.	Evangelic God's	-	-	-	-	<b>-</b>

	Congregation					
34.	Hinduism	44	51	21	21	<b>21</b>
35.	Christian Science	23	24	24	24	-
					<b>Altogether</b>	<b>1 517 781</b>

*Source: Ministry of Justice*