

13th February, 2023

The Note to the Advisory Committee regarding the Fourth Report on the Implementation of the Framework Convention ('Convention') for the Protection of National Minorities by the Republic of Latvia ('Fourth National Report')

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The Note presents criticism of the information contained in the Fourth National Report. The comments on its contents are provided by paragraph. The Note does not purport to give an exhaustive summary of views expressed in the Fourth National Report.

Paragraph 10

The occupation by the USSR significantly altered the ethnic composition of Latvian population, following the deportations of Latvian population implemented by the USSR, russification and internal migration within the USSR. Following the restoration of state independence and democratic state system, a restructuring of public administration and education systems were carried out in order to preserve and develop essential elements characterising the Latvian state, e.g. the state (Latvian) language skills and use in the country.

The dominating legal paradigm in Latvia is the continuation of the legal entity of the Republic of Latvia that existed prior to annexation by the USSR. This paradigm paves the policy of the restoration of the national identity.

All branches of power in Latvia have kept to this policy more or less since the reestablishment of its independence in 1991. However, it became overwhelming in the last decade after nationalistic politicians increased their influence in the Saeima (parliament), fettered the initiatives of national liberals and achieved leading positions in the governments. "The state (Latvian) language skills and use in the country" became an essential element of this policy.

Although the restoration and maintenance of the national identity is a normal practise in a national state, the system of objectives and particular activities under the Latvian policy of the restoration of national identity is in direct conflict with the values and provisions of the Convention (namely, its preamble, Articles 5, 6 and 17), which prescribes the creation of conditions enabling a national minority to express, preserve and develop its identity.

From the Resolution CM/ResCMN(2021)9 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Latvia, adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on 3 March 2021:

Issues for immediate action (displayed as 'Urgent matters' in the Fourth National Report)

- a. Promote the integration of society as a two-way process, in particular encouraging active participation of all segments of society in all relevant fields, such as education, culture and employment, particularly in the public sector, and enhance intercultural contacts within society as a whole, beyond the promotion of proficiency in Latvian; consider the establishment of a dedicated structure whose functions would include co-ordination of social cohesion policies in all relevant sectors;
- b. Strongly encourage effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities including ethnic Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Polish, Lithuanians, Jews, Roma and others, in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them, in accordance with Article 15 of the Framework Convention.
- d. Ensure the continued availability of teaching and learning in languages of national minorities throughout the country with a view to meeting existing demand; representatives of national minorities, including parents, should be consulted closely to ensure that their interests and concerns with regard to the languages of instruction in minority language schools are effectively taken into account;

Paragraph 23

In order to promote the development of a cohesive society, the Latvian government has approved the "Development Guidelines for a Cohesive and Civil Society for 2021-2027". It involves promoting the development and sustainability of the civil society, encouraging civil inclusion among all social groups. The guidelines include the provision of support for the participation of ethnic minority NGOs to promote participation and the preservation and development of ethnic minority cultures. A draft of the "Development Guidelines for a cohesive and civil society for 2021- 2023" has been prepared and submitted for approval by the Cabinet of Ministers.

1. This is to draw the attention of the Advisory Committee that the recommendation of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers resolution ('Resolution') on the Urgent matter "a." concerning the promotion of the integration of society as a two-way process remains totally ignored.

The first attempt of liberal politicians dated 1999 to launch the integration of multiethnic society as "a two-way process" within the concept of multiculturalism and by means of intercultural education was later declared as unsuccessful. That attempt underwent three more iterations until it resulted in the Government Order "On the Guidelines for National Identity, Civil Society and Integration Policy 2012-2018" ('Guidelines') in 2011. The main objective of the Guidelines was "a strong, cohesive nation of Latvia – a national and democratic community, which ensures preservation and enrichment of its unifying foundation – the Latvian language, cultural and national identity (..)".(Ministru kabineta rīkojums Nr.542, Rīgā 2011. gada 20. oktobrī. Par Nacionālās identitātes, pilsoniskās sabiedrības un integrācijas politikas pamatnostādņēm 2012.–2018. gadam. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/238195-par-nacionalas-identitates-pilsoniskas-sabiedribas-un-integracijas-politikas-pamatnostadnem-2012-2018-gadam>)

An idea of two-way process was no longer mentioned in them. Accordingly, the State abandoned its previous intention to unite the cultures of peoples. A new objective directed

national minorities to their integration in an ethnic Latvian community rather than in the society of Latvia.

It also identified the main challenges faced in strengthening national identity. An “obvious” self-sufficiency of the Russian language in public space was among them. In order to contribute to these challenges, further action “National identity: Language and cultural space” was planned in order “to ensure the use of the Latvian language in the public space of Latvia”. The guidelines proceeded: “The motivation of minorities to use Latvian in the public sphere needs to be strengthened.”

While mentioning the self-sufficiency of the Russian language in public space the Guidelines did not mean the communication with public institutions, but also outside them. The Government Order of 2017 concerning the Implementation Plan for the Guidelines testified that “39% of residents with other native language use mostly or exclusively Russian on the street that proves the still high level of Russian self-sufficiency in the informal public space”. (Ministru kabineta rīkojums Nr. 268, Rīgā 2017. gada 31. maijā. Par Nacionālās identitātes, pilsoniskās sabiedrības un integrācijas politikas pamatnostādņu 2012.-2018. gadam īstenošanas plānu 2017.-2018. gadam. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/291179-par-nacionalas-identitates-pilsoniskas-sabiedribas-un-integracijas-politikas-pamatnostadnu-2012-2018-gadam-istenosanas>)

The last edition of the Guidelines issued in 2021 under the title “On the Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Civic Active Society 2021-2027” even more aims at further strengthening of the national identity and the everyday use of the Latvian language. Along with democratic values and human rights, the Latvian language and ethnic Latvian cultural space are declared as an overall goal of cohesive society.

The self-sufficiency of the Russian language in public space is not named in the last edition of Guidelines, but neither have they mentioned the multiethnic and multicultural nature of the society of Latvia in a way. The Guidelines refer to the Convention but make no comment on relevant obligations of Latvia.

2. Additionally, we inform that even those rare remnants of the two-way integration that has been established after the restoration of Latvia independence are going to be abolished.

It is under the initiative of the President of Latvia Mr. Levits, who on 10th December 2021 called for the abandonment of Russian as the second foreign language in the general education curriculum at schools, which are usually attended by pupils from ethnic Latvian families, and for the replacement of Russian with an official language of the European Union. “The State is shaping its future today, and it is a long-term action that sometimes has to be bold”, the President said. (delfi.lv. Levits rosina kā otro svešvalodu skolās izvirzīt kādu no ES oficiālajām valodām. <https://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/levits-rosina-ka-otro-svesvalodu-skolas-izvirzit-kadu-no-es-oficialajam-valodam.d?id=53856077>)

At present, children start learning a foreign language in the first grade at school. It must be one of the official languages of the EU and most often English is chosen. The second foreign language at schools, which implement educational programmes in Latvian, is taught from the fourth grade.

Normative documents do not determine which foreign language, such as French, Russian or German, should be offered to learn as a second foreign language. The choice shall be determined by the school itself in accordance with the development objectives of the institution and in cooperation with the school council. The wishes of parents and pupils, as well as the provision of school teachers with appropriate qualifications, also is important, when a second foreign language is chosen.

According to the press release of the Ministry of Education and Science ('MES') of 21st November, 2022, Russian as the second foreign language is taught at more than 300 schools, i.e. almost half of Latvian schools. (Otrajai svešvalodai vispārējā izglītībā jābūt kādai no Eiropas Savienības valodām. <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/otrajai-svesvalodai-vispareja-izglitiba-jabut-kadai-no-eiropas-savienibas-valodam>)

On 13th January, 2023 another press release of MES confirmed that “Over the coming years, there will be a gradual transition to a second foreign language in one of the EU languages.” The transition is planned to be included in the present Government Action Plan. (Ceļa karte pārmaiņu īstenošanā: IZM gatavo rīcības plānu izglītības kvalitātes pilnveidei. <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/cela-karte-parmainu-istenosana-izm-gatavo-ricibas-planu-izglitibas-kvalitates-pilnveidei>)

From the Resolution CM/ResCMN(2021)9 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Latvia, adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on 3 March 2021:

Issues for immediate action (displayed as 'Urgent matters' in the Fourth National Report)

d. Ensure the continued availability of teaching and learning in languages of national minorities throughout the country with a view to meeting existing demand; representatives of national minorities, including parents, should be consulted closely to ensure that their interests and concerns with regard to the languages of instruction in minority language schools are effectively taken into account;

Paragraph 28

The teaching of school subjects in ethnic minority languages is provided at a significantly higher proportion than in other European countries. Latvia continues to support bilingual education and to fund ethnic minority programmes in seven languages: Russian, Polish, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Estonian, Lithuanian and Hebrew. Ethnic minority students maintain their ability to learn school subjects in their first language as well as to preserve their ethnic minority identity.

1. The claim that Latvia continues to support bilingual education and fund ethnic minority programmes in seven (!) languages is defiantly misleading.

A full-scale bilingual training is provided for Russian-speaking minority and for Polish minority. According to the answer of MES on 13.12.2017 to the question submitted by the five Members of Saeima (parliament) of Latvia in writing about the use of languages of national minorities as languages of instruction, Hebrew is used at two schools at the lessons of Hebrew, Religion teaching, Traditions of the Jewish people. Ukrainian, Estonian, Lithuanian and Belarussian are languages of instruction at the studies of appropriate languages themselves in every single school named after an appropriate ethnic minority. (The answer of MES to the question of Members of Saeima on the use

of languages of national minorities as languages of instruction (359/J12), 13.12.2017. https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS12/saeimalivs_imp.nsf/0/35617A4E1C9DE184C22581F500407FD0?OpenDocument)

According to State Education information system the breakdown of general education schools by streams of instruction language in the academic year 2021/2022 is as follows: the number of Russian stream schools is 24, the merged two-stream (Latvian-Russian) schools that implement education programmes in two languages for two separate streams of teaching – 107, the Polish school – 4, the Ukrainian school – 1, the Belarussian school – 1, the English schools – 4, the French school – 1, the German school – 1. (Vispārizglītojošās dienas skolas 2021./2022.m.g.; Vispārizglītojošo dienas skolu sadalījums pa plūsmām 2021./2022.m.g. <https://www.viis.gov.lv/dati/visparizglitajosodienas-skolu-skaitis>)

Ethnic minority programmes are thereby taught in Russian, Polish, Ukrainian and Belarussian, that is, in four languages. So, the number of schools with national ethnic minority programmes implemented in the languages different to Russian is 6 that amounts to 4,4 (!) per cent of the whole number of schools with minority programmes.

The breakdown of the number of minority programme students by language of instruction is as follows: Russian – 44027, Polish – 1146, Ukrainian – 214, Belarussian – 136. That is 96,71 (!) per cent of the whole number of minority programme students are instructed in the Russian language. (Izglītojamo skaita sadalījums pēc skolas plūsmas vispārizglītojošajās dienas programmās 2021./2022.m.g. https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.viis.gov.lv%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2F2022-06%2Fvs_plusmas_tipiem_2021_2022.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

Thus when speaking about the minority education in Latvia it need be kept in mind that its ideology and resources have been developed mainly concerning the Russian-speaking linguistic minority. Furthermore, the school education of minorities is agreed and protected in inter-government treaties with Poland, Ukraine, Israel, Estonia and Lithuania, as well as in inter-ministry treaty with Belarus. There is no such treaties with Russia. Latvia has always avoided signing such agreements with Russia. Consequently, the impact of any reduction in the use of a minority language in education is targeted and lays mainly upon Russian-speaking children.

2. Regarding “the ability of ethnic minority students to learn school subjects in their first language” this statement is dramatically outdated. According to the amendments in the Education Law of 25th October 2022 this ability will be entirely abolished in basic general education for ethnic minorities after 1st September, 2025.

In the meantime, the Fourth National Report already on the date of its origination was facing different reality. By that time the ability of learning subjects in the first language had been undermined and compromised by the previous amendments in the Education Law of 2nd April, 2018, which abolished the secondary general education programmes for ethnic minorities as of 2021. According to those amendments during 2019-2021 the ability of learning subjects in the first language was reduced to 50 per cent of the total lesson load in an academic year (including foreign languages) in grades 1 to 6 in basic educational programmes for ethnic minorities and to 20 per cent of the total lesson load in grades 7 to 9.

3. The statement that there is “a significantly higher proportion” of “teaching of school subjects in ethnic minority languages” in Latvia “than in other European countries” is not true.

In Romania, the right to education in the mother tongue is guaranteed by the Constitution and implemented in practice by Law on National Education. According to the Law, teaching in the mother tongue (at pre-university level) means that all disciplines are studied in the minority language except for the Romanian language and literature. The law provides that groups, classes and schools with teaching in the languages of national minorities can be established depending on the local needs and upon request from parents of the pre-schoolers or school pupils. A total of more than 2000 education units and sections with teaching in the languages of national minorities were operating in Romania in 2021. The higher education for national minorities is organized for the Hungarian minority (in 5 universities) and for the German minority (in 6 universities), respectively. (Letter of Embassy of Romania in Vilnius to Igor Pimenov of 10th March, 2022 on Education of national minorities in Romania)

In Slovakia, the language of instruction in Hungarian primary and secondary schools is Hungarian. The state language is taught as a second language as part of the subject Slovak language and literature. The vocabulary used for science subjects (mathematics, physics, biology and chemistry) is taught within these lessons. In 2018, there were 562 educational institutions using Hungarian as a language of instruction, including all levels of education from preschool to secondary education. Of these, 45 were private or church schools (8%). (The Hungarian language in education in Slovakia. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED612720.pdf>)

In Serbia, the right to education in minority languages in all kinds of educational institutions is defined in the article 79 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia and is reflected in a set of laws. The Law on the Foundations of the Education System states that national minorities can be educated in their native language or bilingually. Full education for national minorities in their native languages is provided in 8 languages: Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, and Slovak. Besides Serbian (1077), there are 12 Albanian, 8 Bosnian, 8 Hungarian, 4 Romanian and 4 Slovak monolingual schools. 122, or 10% of the schools are bilingual. Most of them provide classes in Serbian and Hungarian (68), and there are bilingual schools that, in addition to Serbian provide education in Bosnian (18), Romanian (12), Slovak (12), Croatian (5), Albanian (4), Bulgarian (2), and Ruthenian (2) languages. (Minority Education in the Republic of Serbia. Annamária Vicsek. Hungarian Journal of Minority Studies · Volume II, 2018. <https://bgazrt.hu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/6.Vicsek.pdf>)

Paragraph 30

The development of the reform involved consultations with representatives of ethnic minorities and discussions of proposed changes in the pre-school, primary and secondary education at the Advisory Council for Ethnic Minority Education at the Ministry of Education and Science. After the entry into force of the reform (following a transitional period until 2022), state/municipal and private ethnic minority schools will be able to continue teaching bilingual programmes. The proportion of the ethnic minority language used in them will be as follows: up to 50% of the content may be taught in the ethnic minority language to pupils up to Year 6, and up to 20%, to pupils

in Year 7–9; for Year 10–12 pupils, ethnic minority languages may be used to teach subjects linked to the corresponding ethnic minority language and culture. The reform will result in increased use of the Latvian language in pre-school education facilities; ethnic minority pre-school education programmes will continue to be taught.

1. The references to “consultations with representatives of ethnic minorities” and “discussions of proposed changes in the pre-school, primary and secondary education at the Advisory Council for Ethnic Minority Education at the Ministry of Education and Science” (‘Advisory Council’) are blatantly hypocritical, but the Advisory Council is a Potemkin village, which has been deliberately established to demonstrate the consultation with the public for deluding of international missions that inspect Latvia.

The Advisory Council consists of 22 members. (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrijas Konsultatīvā padome mazākumtautību izglītības jautājumos. <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/media/2167/download?attachment>) All of them are experts rather than representatives of interest groups or wide public. Nobody elected them. The majority of them were recruited by MES from the persons, which are administratively dependant on MES or local self-governments. The selection still was necessary in order to avoid deviations of Council decisions from the policy that MES pursues even on the part of experts in case of their voting.

The Advisory Council comprises 13 school masters, an officer of the Ministry of Culture, an officer of the local self-government Education Department, 3 university research fellows, 4 ethnic NGO representatives with only one among them from an NGO that was established in order to stand for the interests of Russian-speaking community, namely, our organisation – the Association for Support of Schools with Russian Language of Instruction in Latvia (LASHOR). Still, since the key issues, which were delegated by MES for consideration in the Advisory Council, specifically concern the tuition of Russian-speaking children, the alternative opinions or oral inquiries have been always objected and ignored in the Advisory Council.

2. The statement “After the entry into force of the reform (following a transitional period until 2022), state/municipal and private ethnic minority schools will be able to continue teaching bilingual programmes” with a subsequent explanation of the reform would look even proud on the part of the Fourth National Report unless the secondary general education for national minorities had been already abolished by the date of the Report and the statement were in a share contradiction with the later amendments in the Education Law of 25th October 2022. They are terminating basic general education bilingual programmes both for state/municipal and private schools as of 1st September, 2025. That is, no general education for ethnic minorities will be provided in Latvia, unless the destruction of minority general education is stopped.

The general education, which comprises the studies of subjects in the Russian language, will be completely terminated and substituted by the interest-related education. In contrast to the general education the interest-related education provides only language training and teaching of the history of minority culture. Since the basic education is compulsory in Latvia, the Russian-speaking children after the year 2025 should be instructed only in the official, that is, Latvian language at the general education school, but after the classes, if their parents want, they can attend the interest-related classes in the mother tongue.

The same wrong becomes the statement that “ethnic minority pre-school education programmes will continue to be taught”. The above mentioned amendments in the Education Law of 25th October 2022 replace teaching in minority languages in kindergartens with teaching in official (Latvian) language as of 1st September, 2023.

3. Moreover, here is the quote from the annotation to the Education Law that paves the Latvianisation of education: “The retreat of people belonging to different identities to each in their area of identity threatens the likelihood of the democratic discourse and common action in a single society.” So, the right of persons belonging to minorities to maintain their identity, which the OSCE recognised as unquestionable, is viewed by the State of Latvia as a threat to an integrated society.

Those, who object the elimination of minority education in Latvia, are accused of self-segregation, of ethnic self-closure. Therefore, the attack on the education rights of Russian-speakers in Latvia limits their rights to preserve and develop their identity, puts it under threat and pushes Russian-speakers into assimilation.

3. But the last nail in the coffin of bilingual education of national minorities and unfortunately, this Fourth National Report was scored by the President of Latvia Mr. Levits, speaking at the first meeting of the new Saeima on November 1, 2022. He praised the decisions of the Saeima of the previous convocation, which adopted the law on the liquidation of bilingual education, and said: “From 2025, all children must go to school in a single state language. This decision, after 30 years of long and cowardly dodging, has finally been made and I think historians looking back at the work of the 13th Saeima will certainly say that from a sustainability perspective this was the most important decision of the 13th Saeima.” (The transcript for the First meeting of the 14th Saeima of the Republic of Latvia Autumn Session on 1st November 2022. <https://www.saeima.lv/lv/transcripts/view/2416>)

Article 13 of the Framework Convention

1. Within the framework of their education systems, the Parties shall recognise that persons belonging to a national minority have the right to set up and to manage their own private educational and training establishments.
2. The exercise of this right shall not entail any financial obligation for the Parties.

Paragraph 111

In Latvia there are no restrictions on establishing and managing private education and training institutions. Out of the 66 pre-school education institutions that implement pre-school education programmes in an ethnic minority language, 16 (24.24%) are private education institutions implementing their programmes in Russian. Out of the 25 general education institutions implementing an educational programme in Russian, 5 (20%) are private. Out of the 115 general education institutions implementing educational programme in Latvian and in an ethnic minority language, 12 (10.7%) are private.

According to the amendments in the Education Law of 25th October 2022 “(Article 9, part 1¹) In private educational institutions general education and vocational education at the level of basic education and secondary education shall be acquired in the official [state] language.” The general education in Russian language will be gradually discontinued at private schools within two years: from 1 September 2023 until 1 September 2025.

The provision clearly equates private educational institutions with public educational institutions in determining the language of instruction that radically reduces the autonomy of private educational institutions.

A constitutional complaint had been submitted to the Constitutional Court following the amendments to the Education Law passed in 2018, which already at that time significantly reduced the opportunities for private educational institutions to carry out teaching in minority languages. The Constitutional Court judgement agreed that the contested norm restricted the fundamental rights of a person, which arise from the Constitution. However, the Constitutional Court found this restriction proportionate and consistent with the Constitution.

The Constitutional complainant has lodged a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights, which opened a case.

In June 2020, Latvia received the opinion of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe regarding amendments to Latvian legislation on minority education. The Venice Commission advised Latvia in an articulate manner to comply with its international obligations, and the Commission recommended that the private school be excluded from the amendment package. That opinion has been ignored by Latvia.

The Law of 25th October 2022 has finally ruined the minority education at private schools of Latvia.

Article 14 of the Framework Convention

1. The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to learn his or her minority language.
2. In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if there is sufficient demand, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible and within the framework of their education systems, that persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for being taught the minority language or for receiving instruction in this language.
3. Paragraph 2 of this article shall be implemented without prejudice to the learning of the official language or the teaching in this language.

Paragraph 112

The education policy in Latvia is based on two main considerations: the need to strengthen the status of the Latvian language as the only official language specified in the Constitution and to promote the cohesion of Latvian society. In strengthening of the official language and the integration of society, Latvia respects the principle of proportionality, ensuring that the education reform does not infringe on the right of ethnic minorities to the preservation and pursuit of their identity, which includes their language.

Please see the comments in this Note on Paragraphs 10, 23 of the Fourth National Report.

The principle of proportionality, which the Fourth National Report insists on, serves the priority of strengthening of the state (Latvian) language that means extension of its use in the country. The preservation and pursuit of identity including language of ethnic minorities remains subordinate to this priority. Yet, while strengthening of the state language

has to be respected and provided in the legislation of the national state, a far-reaching reduction of minority language education is “a stark departure from (..) academic consensus regarding the overriding importance of education in the mother tongue, as opposed to the mere study of languages, for both the right to education and the integration of diverse societies”, as the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Mr. K. Abdrakhmanov stated in his letter of 20th June, 2022 to the Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia in connection with the proposals in the Education law abolishing general education programmes for national minorities of Latvia. (The letter of OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Mr. K. Abdrakhmanov to the Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia Ms. I. Mūrniece, 20th June 2022. <https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS13/saeimalivs13.nsf/0/7CC001A86C841D7CC225889A00221B53?OpenDocument>)

As to the proposed possibility of additional special “interest programmes on minority languages and culture”, the High Commissioner expressed concern that they “may not in themselves be sufficient to equip children with an adequate toolbox to gain proficiency in both their mother tongue and the State language at the same time.”

The academic consensus regarding the overriding importance of education in the mother tongue has been stipulated in the OSCE Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities. The Recommendations are not binding for Latvia, whereas the Convention, which has been signed and ratified by Latvia, certainly is. Therefore, Latvia cannot and should not shirk this duty hiding behind the principle of proportionality as it does in the Fourth National Report.

Paragraph 113

Latvia wishes to emphasize that the provisions of the international law and case-law binding to it do not create any subjective rights of people to an education in a language that is not the official state language (i.e. in a language that is an ethnic minority language); such education is to be considered in relation to either the preservation of ethnic minority identity, or the necessity to prevent the impending extinction of an ethnic minority language.

This paragraph is the essence of the Fourth National Report demonstrating the intent to sneak out from an international obligation that Latvia pledged to implement.

As per the provision 14 (2) of the Convention the key precondition of adequate opportunities for receiving instruction in minority language that the state should endeavor to ensure is sufficient demand. The sufficient demand is a measure that indicates the limit, when the opportunity becomes the necessity.

The data of the Central Statistical Bureau (of Latvia) and MES demonstrates that the use of the Russian instruction language has matched the demographic statistics until recently, which proves sufficient demand.

Latvia is a multi-ethnic state. In the beginning of 2022, the number of Latvia residents accounted for 1 million 876 thousand. (Population at the beginning of year. https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/en/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IR_IRS/IRS010/table/tableViewLayout1/)

National minorities of Latvia have amounted to from 38 to 37 per cent of the population during the period of the last five years. (Population by ethnicity at the beginning of year. https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/en/OSP_PUB/START_POP_IR_IRE/IRE010)

Still, the whole of the population falls into two major linguistic groups, namely, those who speak Latvian at home and those who speak Russian at home. Results acquired in 2017 show that 61,3 per cent of the country's population spoke Latvian at home, while the share of population speaking Russian accounted for 37,7 %. Please see the breakdown of the resident population of Latvia by ethnicity (Chart 1) and by language spoken at home (Chart 2) in 2017.

The proportions of languages spoken at home have not changed notably since 2011, when statistics for the language mainly spoken at home was acquired in the Population and Housing Census. Neither it could considerably change after 2017 till 2022 as the number of residents, belonging to all major ethnic groups has reduced proportionally (Chart 3).

According to State Education information system the breakdown of the number of students of general education daytime schools of Latvia by language of instruction in the academic year 2017/2018 before the reduction of instruction in Russian later was as follows: Latvian – 147032, Russian – 55797, other languages including minority languages as well as English, German, French – 2284 (https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.viis.gov.lv%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2F2022-06%2Fvs_plusmas_tipiem_2021_2022.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) (Chart 4).

The composition of students of general education daytime schools of Latvia by languages of instruction (Chart 4) was close to the linguistic composition of population (Chart 2) in 2017.

Parents have rights to demand that from their taxes the state provides education in the language, in which they raise their children. Their choice must be met and ensured by the state.

Chart 1.
Resident population of Latvia
by ethnicity, 2017

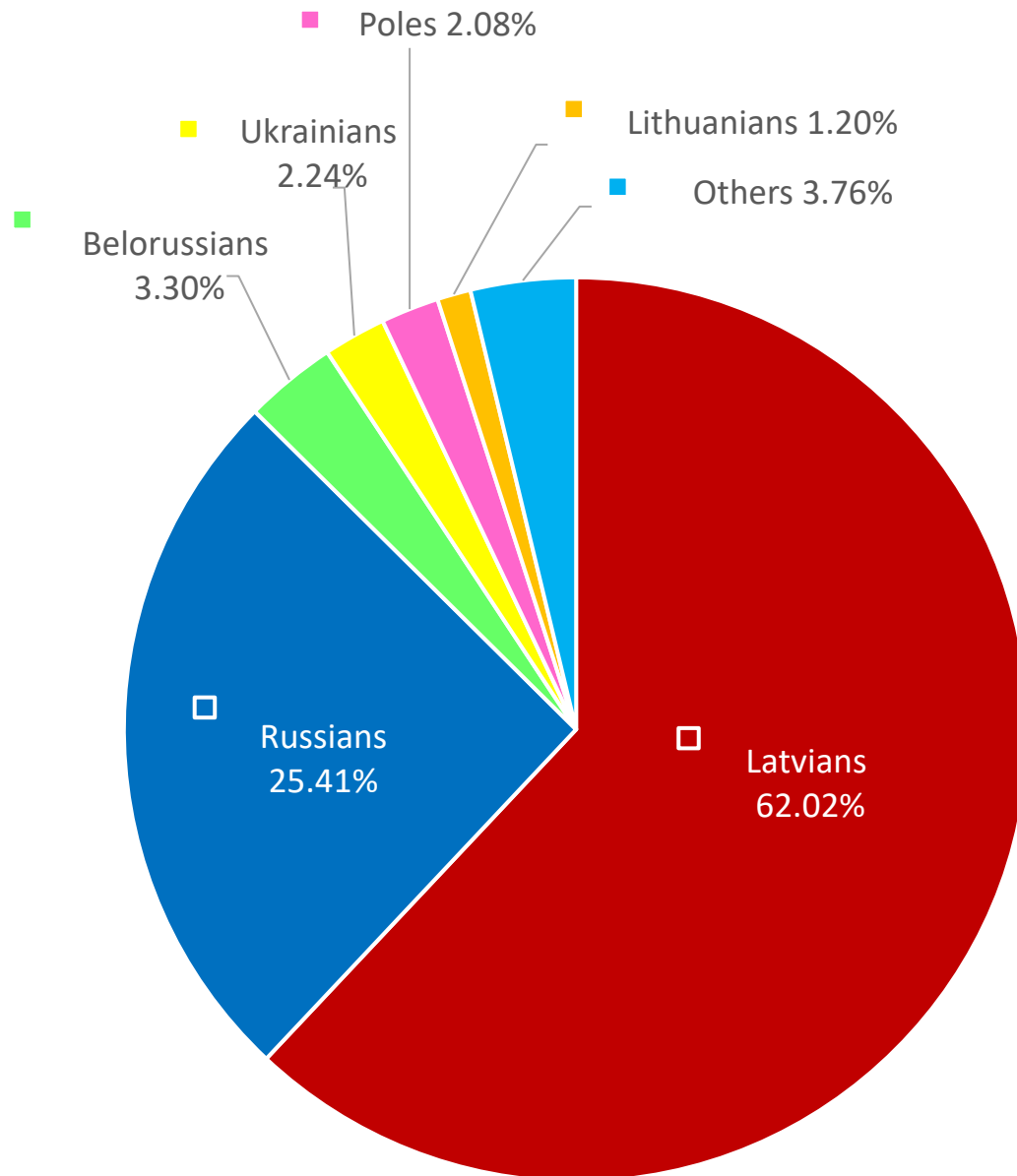


Chart 2.
**Resident population of Latvia by language
spoken at home, 2017**

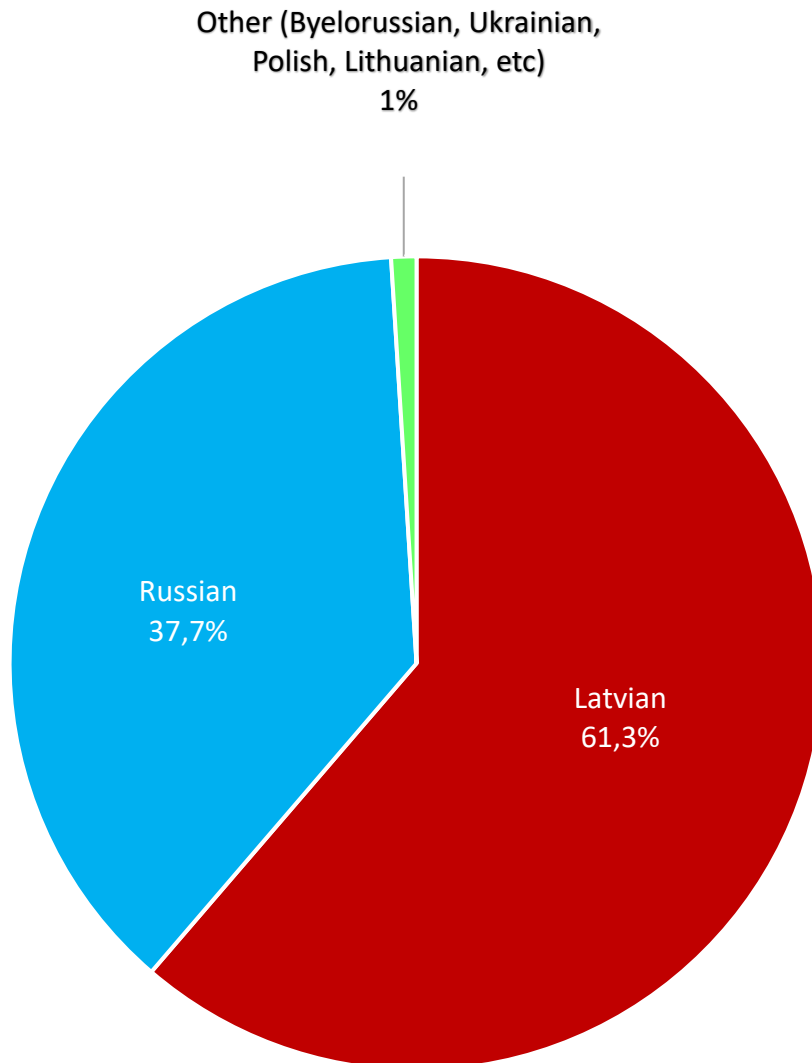


Chart 3.
Population by ethnicity, 2017-2022

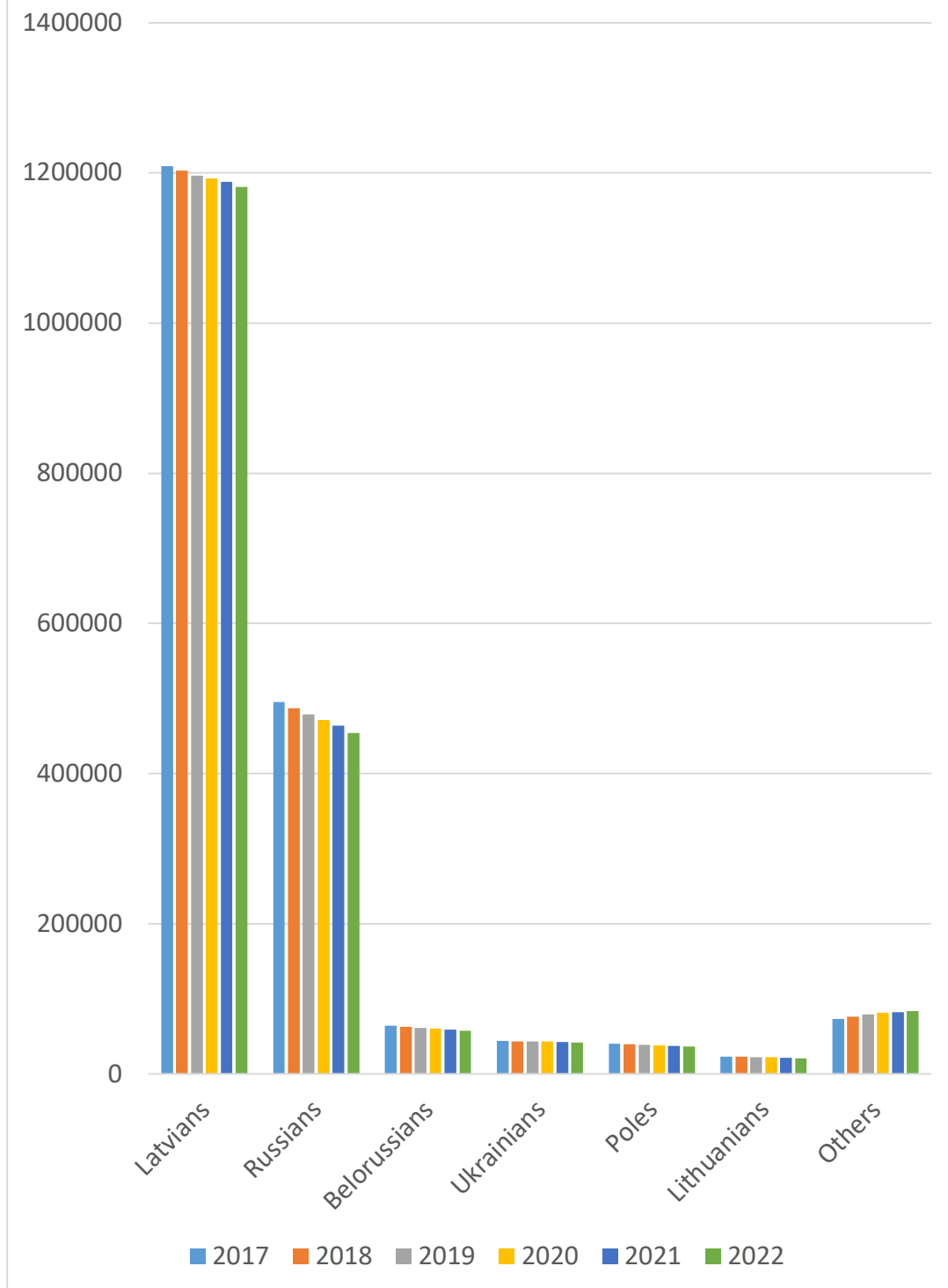


Chart 4.
Students of general education day-time
schools of Latvia by languages of
instruction %, total 205113,
Academic year 2017/2018

