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***The Case for Diversity  
Mainstreaming in  
the National School  
System***

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# Introduction

The last few years have seen significant development of policy planning and impact assessment principles in the Latvian public administration system. Despite many shortcomings, the planning of general education policy has also received new impulses. The new Standards of Basic Education could be named as an example of significant innovations. There is now a need to carry these impulses further, and to create a more thorough system for assessing and improving the outputs of the national school system in all areas.

One such area, frequently debated in the media and in political fora since the late 1990s, is education for life in a multicultural society. While obvious progress has been made in the teaching of Latvian as a second language, the introduction of bilingual education in minority schools has received both praise and severe criticism from different groups in society, and an element of distrust towards government education policy makers is sometimes evident in ethnic minority media. Since the 1 September 2004 introduction of 60% of instruction in Latvian in the 10<sup>th</sup> form of schools previously teaching predominantly in Russian, no further immediate changes are foreseen in this area. This might be the right moment for taking a look at the question of linguistic and cultural diversity in the national school system from a different angle, emphasizing the mutually connected aspects of equal access to quality education and recognition of the positive value of diversity.

The concept of diversity mainstreaming, examined in this study both in the context of the policies and practices implemented in other EU countries and in the Latvian context, provides a useful framework for solving some of the problems of minority education, developing new perspectives for intercultural education and implementing the principles of inclusive education in practice.

One of the purposes of this policy study is to draw the attention of persons and organisations engaged in the planning and implementation of general education policy to the need to measure the gap between the principles of education defined in legal documents and everyday practice in the school system. In areas such as intercultural education and access to education in Latvian for students of other linguistic backgrounds, there is a need to conduct more thorough analysis of the current situation and to base the allocation of resources (such as funding for teacher training) on such analysis. There is also a need for systematic and rigorous assessment of the situation concerning equal access to quality education for all

children independently of linguistic and cultural background. Without such an assessment, statements that in Latvia equal access is by definition ensured to all groups, because it is guaranteed by law, are shallow and only partially evidence-based.

This study describes some of the instruments applied in other countries to achieve a greater recognition of diversity and to ensure equal access to education in national education systems. It also mentions some of the specific circumstances in the Latvian school system, which, according to the interviewed policy planners and education practitioners, have to be taken into consideration when looking at the possibilities of diversity mainstreaming in Latvia. The resulting recommendations are not a ready set of measures, but rather an inventory of areas where further assessment is necessary. Without such systematic assessment, and without an open discussion of its implications for the principle of equal access to education, no fully credible school system for a diverse society is possible.

*Maria Golubeva,  
August 2005*

# I. Diversity Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming can be broadly defined as an approach integrating equal opportunities principles into the everyday work of government – including policy planning and impact appraisal, organisational cultures and other aspects.<sup>1</sup> In the EU, the European gender mainstreaming strategy was accepted as a common objective in 1999, while a wider definition of mainstreaming (including mainstreaming racial and cultural diversity) has been adapted in some countries.

Diversity mainstreaming is a policy principle that is being implemented in several countries in the EU and outside it. It implies a move towards deep change in the major public administration institutions delivering government services. Mainstreaming consists of recognising cultural and ethnic diversity as a norm in society and transferring this recognition into practical action in the day-to-day work of government institutions. At the level of ministries and public agencies, this implies, first, more sophisticated assessment of new policies, addressing the needs of diverse groups in society, and second, a change from institutional culture addressing a monocultural society to institutional culture for a culturally diverse society. The same principles are valid for local governments. For individual institutions delivering public services, mainstreaming diversity implies both recognizing diversity as a positive value in day-to-day work and taking it into account in the planning of activities. So, in the case of education, schools are expected, on the one hand, to implement intercultural education and teaching methods reflecting diversity, and, on the other hand, to provide assistance to students with language difficulties or to plan teacher training in accordance with the needs of a culturally diverse target audience.

The term “mainstreaming” in the context of ethnic and cultural diversity has various uses in different countries, also outside the EU – from distributing the responsibility for minorities, including recent immigrants, among various government institutions (Norway) to strategies that aimed at changing essentially

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<sup>1</sup> Mackay, Fiona, and Kate Bilton. Learning from Experience: Lessons in Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities, *Research Findings No 4/2003, Social Justice Research Programme*, Scottish Executive. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/cru/resfinds/sjf4-00.asp> Last visited on 10.02.2005.

monocultural bureaucracies (Australia). In countries such as Australia, it has been implemented on the level of public agencies. The approach was legitimized by “a concept of citizenship for an ethnically diverse nation.”<sup>2</sup>

As with gender mainstreaming, also diversity mainstreaming is possible only if some prerequisites are observed: specific equality legislation and structures are put in place, necessary funds and human resources are allocated, and equal participation of diverse groups in public life and decision-making policies is a reality.<sup>3</sup>

The application of the principle of diversity mainstreaming in national education systems can be twofold: to improve the equality of access to education for different groups in society and to assert the positive value of diversity in society.

The principle of equal access to education is firmly established in UN goals (*Education For All* goals to which commitments were made by over 160 countries at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000). Three reports have been published so far on different countries' and regions' performance against EFA goals: *Is the World on Track?* (2002); *The Leap to Equality* (2003/4); and *The Quality Imperative* (2005). In Latvia, the principle of equal access to education independently of ethnic origin, gender, social situation and religious convictions is established in the Education Law.

The principle of positive recognition of diversity is central to liberal policies when applied to multicultural societies. Positive recognition of diversity in national education systems is required by a number of international agreements.<sup>4</sup> In Latvia, the positive recognition of diversity is one of the principles stated in the Integration of Society Programme.

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<sup>2</sup> Castles. Australian Multiculturalism: Social Policy and Identity in a Changing Society, pp. 184–201. In: Freeman, G., & J. Jupp (eds.), *Nations of Immigrants: Australia, The United States and International Migration*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Mackay, F., and K. Bilton. Learning from Experience, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Batelaan, Pieter, and Fons Coomans. *The International Basis for Intercultural Education*. IAIE, UNESCO and the Council of Europe, 1999.

## II. Integration and the Need for Diversity Mainstreaming in Latvia

*The approaches to ethnic and cultural diversity in current policies in EU countries can be subdivided into two broad categories: the integration approaches and the mainstreaming approaches. While integration approaches stress the need to integrate immigrants into the national labour market, education system and into society as a whole, the mainstreaming approaches stress the need to provide equal opportunities within the labour market, housing sector, and national education system to individuals of all ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds, and to prevent negative differential effect of social and education policies due to gender, ethnicity, race or disability.*

*Proceeding from different perspectives, the two sets of approaches reflect numerous alternative theories of citizenship in democratic societies. The social-liberal approach sees citizenship as an equal status and as a social right. This approach has for some time neglected the topics of immigration and ethnic diversity, leaving a gap for nationalistic perspectives contradicting the inclusive principles of democratic citizenship and the reality of growing numbers of ethnic minority residents in Western countries.<sup>5</sup> The civic-republican approach stresses the emancipation of citizens and their competent participation – making their voices heard in diverse forums and institutions. The communitarian approach claims that a broader, or “thicker” public culture, rooted in a historical community is necessary to promote solidarity and stability.<sup>6</sup> This concept demands much more adaptation on behalf of the immigrants.*

It is the communitarian approach that so far has had the upper hand in Latvian integration policies, presenting the minorities as Soviet-time immigrants and extending principles applied to recent-time immigrants also to the second- and third-generation residents of non-Latvian origin. In order to make the integration policies in Latvia more inclusive and participation-oriented, a certain balance between the liberal-social, the republican and the communitarian perspective is necessary. Mainstreaming ethnic and cultural diversity could be a step in the direction of this balance.

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<sup>5</sup> Fermin, Alfons. *Burgerschap en integratiebeleid*. Report for the Ministry of Interior, the Netherlands, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Between the integration and the mainstreaming approaches, the difference lies also in the choice of groups and institutions targeted by respective policies: e.g., while in integration approach immigrants and other minority groups are the main target of integration policies,<sup>7</sup> mainstreaming diversity suggests that *all groups in society* have to benefit from the recognition of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity and are defined as target audience for measures raising awareness of diversity in schools. This does not imply that measures aimed specifically at the integration of minority children cannot be combined, on a wider scale, with mainstreaming diversity in the national school system. Significant elements of mainstreaming diversity are present in many countries' integration policies – for example, in Sweden (Integration Report 2003: Agenda for Integration and Diversity) and in Estonia (State Programme Integration in Estonian Society 2000–2007). In fact, even in countries where no diversity mainstreaming measures have been implemented up to now, recent strategies aimed at integration of minority pupils combine elements of integration and mainstreaming – e.g., in Bulgaria (Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students of Ethnic Minorities, 2004).

In Latvia, current policies in the field of education fall for the most part within the integration category.

While the question remains, when will it be possible to implement the principle of mainstreaming cultural and ethnic diversity in the Latvian public administration system as a whole, the area where pressing demand for diversity mainstreaming is evident is the national education system.

The Soviet period in Latvian history left behind the legacy of institutional separation of ethnic Latvian pupils and pupils, whose native language was Russian. Since the regaining of independence in the beginning of the 1990s, the post-Soviet school system was subjected to substantial change which did not, however, challenge the principle of institutional separation itself. In the mid-1990s it was claimed that

'The new education model is based on a dialogue between Latvian and Russian schools, not blending... The merging of schools may bring a threat of assimilation, which will most negatively influence Latvian children, because of their mentality... Therefore, the basis of integration in education is: (1) a special national programme ["national" used here for "ethnic" – M.G]; (2) strengthened Latvian language instruction in minority schools; (3) Latvian language instruction in 10–12 grades.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the project *Educational Integration of Ethnic Minorities* (EIEM), <http://www.khs.dk/eiem/default.asp> Last visited on 28.01.2005.

<sup>8</sup> Hirša, Dzintra. Kad atnāks latviešiem tie laiki? [When will the time come for Latvians?], *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 08.03.1996, p. 3. Quoted here from Silova, Iveta. The Manipulated Consensus: globalisation, local agency, and cultural legacies in post-Soviet education reform, *European Educational Research Journal*, Volume 1, Number 2, 2002, p. 315.

Parallel to the introduction of bilingual education in minority schools (previously teaching in Russian) in the 1990s, the issue of education in Latvian only beginning with the 10th form of schools was raised. In 1998, the Latvian Parliament passed a new Education Law, according to which the language of instruction in the 10th form of all state schools from 1 September 2004 was Latvian. The clause about transition to Latvian as the only language of instruction was explained by the need to integrate an ethnically segregated society. This provision in the Education Law caused political protests, as a result of which the law was changed in February 2004, allowing 40% of classes in minority secondary schools to be taught in the language of the minority. This solution is still considered unsatisfactory by a large part of minority parents and students, who consider the minority school reform a step towards assimilation.

While the Integration of Society Programme (2000) mentions cultural diversity as an important aspect of Latvian society to be maintained and supported by the state, the meaning of “integration” itself is interpreted very differently by different actors. As Iveta Silova points out,

“...It is important to distinguish between the official rhetoric of integration and its interpretation by different ethno-linguistic groups of society. Overall, press analysis and expert interviews indicate that there exists no single understanding of the concept of integration among different groups of society in Latvia. Furthermore, data suggest that representatives of different ethnic and social groups use some components of the integration concept, while excluding others.”<sup>9</sup>

The transition to teaching mostly in the official state language in the schools where previously minority language was the medium of instruction is a government policy, based on the assumption that this is the only means to integrate ethnically diverse society on the basis of one state language. Since the thorough Latvian language acquisition by non-Latvian pupils is seen as the single most important instrument for achieving “integration” through school, there is no consistent policy aimed at mainstreaming cultural diversity and promoting inter-cultural competence within the national education system.

The actual existence of two parallel school systems – so-called “Latvian” and “Russian” schools – is in itself an obstacle to social integration and one of the causes for the existence of a split public sphere in Latvian society.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the reform implemented since the late 1990s and consisting in a gradual shift to teaching mostly in Latvian while maintaining minority schools as such, has been severely criticised by teachers and parents alike. Fears of assimilation and losing cultural identity are among the most frequently voiced concerns for

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<sup>9</sup> Silova, Iveta. The Manipulated Consensus: globalisation, local agency, and cultural legacies in post-Soviet education reform, *European Educational Research Journal*, Volume 1, Number 2, 2002, p. 315.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

those who oppose the reform. In this situation, mainstreaming cultural diversity within the national education system while critically re-evaluating the model of separate schools for ethnic minorities seems to be the solution that would benefit all groups.

One of the basic pre-conditions for applying mainstreaming principles to a national school system in a multi-ethnic society is the system's movement towards overcoming all traces of a previously existing segregation of schools. The term "desegregation" emerged in the USA during the Civil Rights Movement, and was initially applied to measures taken to overcome the racial segregation of schools.<sup>11</sup> In Israel since the 1970s, the same term was applied to measures taken to overcome the ethnic segregation of Arab and Jewish schools.<sup>12</sup> While in each case the power relations between racial or ethnic groups in respective societies were different, as were the social and political transformations they were going through, it can be argued that some variables are essential to understand the perspectives of school desegregation in any society. These are structural variables, variables of role behavior, affective variables, and variables relating to goals and values.<sup>13</sup> This paper will attempt to define the four categories of variables in relation to the school system in Latvia.

The challenge of mainstreaming cultural diversity in the Latvian school system requires a focus on two main aspects. The first is the need to overcome the dualism of the school system, inherited from the Soviet time and still maintaining two discrete streams of socialization for ethnic Latvians and for "others". Previous reluctance on behalf of the Ministry of Education to reconsider the existence of separate schools for ethnic Latvians and other ethnic groups was at least partly due to a fear of "mixing" ethnic Latvian students with minority students.<sup>14</sup> The second aspect is the need to change fundamental assumptions concerning culture, maintaining the positive value of cultural diversity in practice, not only in ethnic minority schools but in the entire national school system. This would include recognising the value of bilingual education for all (with a variety of models to choose from).

The following areas, addressed by diversity mainstreaming policies in other countries, could be targeted also in Latvia:

- intercultural education for all (not only in schools teaching in minority languages) and recognition of the value of diversity in the schools' institutional culture;
- review of education content (e.g., schoolbooks) in order to reflect the diversity of society;

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<sup>11</sup> Stave, S. A. *Achieving Racial balance. Case Studies of Contemporary School Desegregation*, Contributions to the Study of Education, Number 65, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Amir, Y., and S. Sharan. (eds.) *School Desegregation: Cross-cultural Perspectives*, Lawrence Erlbaum: Hillsdale, 1984.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Chapter 6.

<sup>14</sup> Silova, I. *The Manipulated Consensus*, pp. 316–18.

- monitoring of academic achievement of pupils with the help of disaggregated statistics (gender, ethnicity, language), in order to ensure more equal access to education;
- special measures needed to ensure access to mainstream education in majority language for minority pupils;
- special measures needed to ensure that all pupils' parents, independently of linguistic or ethnic background, get access to full information about the programmes according to which their children are being taught, as well as about the rights and duties of their children in the national education system.

An assumption is frequently made that the Latvian case is special because of its historical uniqueness (massive immigration from the Soviet Union since the end of World War II). Nevertheless, the challenges faced by the national education system, delivering services to linguistically and ethnically diverse population, can and should be resolved also by appealing to the experience and good practice of other countries, following the principles of equal opportunities and social inclusion valid for all EU member states.

### III. Diversity Mainstreaming in the National Education System: Examples from the EU

Examples of diversity mainstreaming strategies applied in the national education systems of some EU countries are described below:

#### Finland

In Finland, policies involving elements of diversity mainstreaming in the education system are included under the Government Action Plan to Combat Ethnic Discrimination and Racism:

**“19. The Ministry of Education** will ensure that ethnic, multicultural as well as religious and philosophical issues are included in education, training and learning material in all educational levels as of primary school. Teachers are in a key position in education, and thereby constant development and monitoring of teacher training is required. With regard to this, the Ministry of Education will supervise that all textbooks and other learning material used in education deal and describe the history and special features of the indigenous people of Finland, the Sami, established ethnic minorities and new immigrant groups and ethnic relations. It will also be ensured that their contents are up to date and in accordance with the emphasis used in promoting enlightened attitudes. In addition to this, the Ministry of Education and its subordinate administration will effectively intervene in ethnic school harassment and other discriminatory behaviour occurring in other training, ensuring that schools take the required action when necessary.<sup>15</sup>”

Working group for planning of research on Ethnicity at the Ministry of Education has been existing in Finland since the beginning of the 1990s.

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<sup>15</sup> Towards Ethnic Equality and Diversity. Government Action Plan to Combat Ethnic Discrimination and Racism. Adopted by the government plenary session on 22 March 2001.

## Sweden

In Sweden, integration policies in the recent years have been increasingly supplemented by measures aimed at the recognition of diversity and achieving greater equality for pupils of non-Swedish origin in primary and secondary school. As pointed out in Integration Report 2003, the confirmed existence of permanent difference between the performance of students with foreign background and students with Swedish background has led to new methods of monitoring, allowing for a larger differentiation of data about students of foreign origin. According to the Report, these differences can partially be explained by socioeconomic factors, but another factor to consider and cause of concern is the special treatment of students with foreign background as “immigrant children” in society in general and at school in particular.<sup>16</sup>

The Agenda for Integration and Diversity includes three general approaches for improving school as an environment for all students:

- 1) increasing the awareness of school staff regarding the institutional conditions at school, and the effects of these conditions on various categories of students;
- 2) increasing staff diversity and cooperation between school and the surrounding local community – which in turn can contribute to challenging the socially constructed notions that lead to unequal treatment of students with foreign backgrounds;
- 3) understanding of the methods to develop Swedish language proficiency should be disseminated to teachers other than “Swedish as a Second Language” teachers, and more integrated forms of instruction should be considered.<sup>17</sup>

## The UK

In the UK, a strong basis for anti-discrimination and equal opportunities principles in policy making had existed already before the European equality agenda became a driver for change. Unlike some other EU countries, the UK has been unwilling to pursue an equality agenda solely focused on gender equality. The UK chose a broader equality agenda focusing on gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age and social exclusion. This can in part be explained by the UK’s legislative base dating from the 1970s and recently updated by the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). The legislation requires to ensure that equality issues are fully considered in all policy developments, as well as the delivery of goods and services. Since 1996, mainstreaming diversity has been promoted horizontally throughout government departments, in policy development, service delivery and internal staffing matters.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Integration Report, Sweden, 2003, p. 16.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Booth, Christine. *Mainstreaming Diversity in the Planning Process*. University of Exeter, 2001. <http://www.planningsummerschool.org/papers/year2001/2001M1E02.htm> Last visited on 01.11.2004.

Elements of diversity mainstreaming in the national education system in the UK proceed from these more general policy principles, covering all areas of public services. In 1998, the Women's Unit of the Cabinet Office, the Home Office and the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) jointly produced guidelines – *Policy Appraisal for Equal Treatment (PAET)*. These guidelines aim to ensure that all government departments take full account of the needs and experiences of those affected by their policies. This necessitates an understanding of how a policy impacts on different groups in society. This process of discovering differential impacts and amending policy to produce fairer outcomes has been described as mainstreaming equality.

The underlying principle of PAET is stated as follows: “Government Departments must take full account of the needs and experiences of those affected by their policies. We must understand how policy can have a different impact on different groups in society.” (PAET, 1998). Particular groups to be considered as mentioned in the PAET are women, people from different ethnic minorities and disabled people. However, the PAET states that also “the question of unequal impact on those groups who do not enjoy specific legal protection” has to be considered as a matter of good policy.

PAET is a practical guide to policy appraisal. One of the crucial instruments of policy appraisal for mainstreaming equality, as understood in the PAET, is making full use of statistics, including statistics separated by gender, race, disability and age, as far as it is possible to do so (PAET, 1998).

A significant feature of PAET is the insistence that even in the cases when a policy's adverse differential impact cannot, for justifiable reasons, be fully avoided, it has to be expressly stated that an appraisal of this impact has taken place before the policy's implementation and the choice was made consciously. This principle is at the core of responsible policy making, and should be expressly implemented also in Latvia – first and foremost in the education system, which provides services with lasting impact on individuals' and groups' development and social and career opportunities, as well as with lasting impact on the economy as a whole.

The responsibility for ensuring equal access to and equal opportunities in the national education system in the UK is to a large extent shared by Local Educational Authorities (LEA). Some LEAs are more prominent in this field than others – e.g., Birmingham has been identified nationally as a leading authority in the field of race equality. At the same time, in practice, it has been stated that “Birmingham's improvement strategy is delivered by a multiplicity of discrete initiatives, many of them determined by national Government. The complexity of the delivery mechanisms, and the dispersal of responsibility between so many different people and agencies, is highly problematic.”<sup>19</sup> This example proves that

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<sup>19</sup> Warren, S., and D. Gillborn. *Race Equality and Education in Birmingham*. University of London, 2002.

the existence of both national and local strategies to improve the access of different groups to government services in the field of general education is not in itself a guarantee of success.

## Estonia

In Estonia, like in some other new EU member states, the policies aimed at mainstreaming diversity in the education system are so far visible at the level of planning. The National Action Plan on UNESCO goals of Education for All was adopted in 2004. The plan defines as one of the basic goals of the Estonian education system the equal access to good quality education for all persons irrespective of native language. It also stipulates the need for constant assessment and synthesis of best practices, and for a political agreement between different stakeholders on the directions of development of national education system. The plan recognizes the relevance of multicultural environment and participatory teaching model in policy planning.<sup>20</sup>

The plan points out the need to develop models for involving new immigrant students in the study process of ordinary Estonian schools, taking into account that “The Estonian school, likewise other European schools, is becoming more and more multi-cultural.” The following measures regarding diversity of pupils in Estonian schools are planned for the future:

- creating opportunities for study and preparing support programmes for non-national students who go to a school with Estonian as the language of instruction (2.3, point 7);
- developing a subject syllabus of the Estonian language and teaching materials for new immigrants (2.3, point 8);
- preparing materials for developing a subject syllabus (description of models and necessary resources for bilingual studies) for schools with other languages as the language of instruction and also for schools with Estonian as the language of instruction where the students with another native language study (2.3, point 9);
- training teachers for work in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural class (2.3, point 11).

*In some EU countries, no comprehensive diversity mainstreaming strategy has been developed to date. Situation concerning the value of diversity in the national education system varies from country to country, both in “old” and “new” member states:*

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<sup>20</sup> National Action Plan on UNESCO Goals of Education for All. Ministry of Education, Estonia 2004. Paragraph 2.2.

## Germany

In Germany, education policies of Federal Lands still often reflect a conservative attitude towards existing cultural diversity of German society. There is differentiated attitude towards gender diversity and ethnic related diversity: while policies towards gender mainstreaming have been developed in accordance with EU common objectives, failure to institutionalize measures preventing discrimination and marginalisation of immigrants in some policy areas has been evident. One suggested reason for this is that the immigrants are underrepresented as voters in Germany and do not have an effective lobby (Gütelkin 2002),<sup>21</sup> however, it has been pointed out that marginalisation of “new” minorities in the school system is based on the conservative perception of immigrant communities as “foreign”, i.e., not belonging completely to German society.<sup>22</sup> Despite the visible presence of Turkish minority (not defined as a minority for legal purposes in Germany), data about public education programmes with elements of Turkish language and culture is not available in the official profile on education and minority languages in Germany – in contrast to the data about, for example, education in North Frisian language spoken only by 6 to 9 thousand of German citizens.<sup>23</sup> For recognized historic minorities, bilingual and trilingual education is available at school in some regions. There is, however, no comprehensive policy for mainstreaming the existing diversity of German society (including the impact of immigration) in the obligatory education system. Germany is also one of the few EU countries where intercultural approach at school stresses predominantly the international dimension of diversity, not the European identity dimension.<sup>24</sup>

## Poland

In Poland, the value of diversity in the national education system is recognized mostly through a developed system of primary and secondary schools teaching in minority languages, or through minority languages taught as subjects in part of Polish schools.<sup>25</sup> The emphasis is on the recognition of historic minorities, their language and culture – not so much on mainstreaming diversity in the national education system.

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<sup>21</sup> Gütelkin, N. *Mainstreaming in Multicultural Societies*. European congress “Implementation of gender mainstreaming in Europe – Challenge for Political Education.”

<sup>22</sup> Schiffauer, W., Baumann, G., Kastroyano, R., Vertovec, S. (eds.) *Civil Enculturation. Nation-State, School and Ethnic Difference in the Netherlands, Britain, Germany and France*. Berg-hahn Books, 2004, pp. 77–81.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www1.fa.knaw.nl/mercator/eufacts/germany.htm>

<sup>24</sup> Integrating Immigrant Children Into Schools in Europe. Department -General for Research, Education and Culture, EU 2004, p. 58.

<sup>25</sup> Winther, P. (ed.) *Lesser-used Languages in States Applying for EU Membership*. European Parliament. Directorate-General for Research. Education and Culture, 2001. Working Paper. Abridged edition, pp. 18–19.

## Hungary

National Base Curriculum, introduced in Hungary in 1996, was in 1998 supplemented by Directives on Minority Education. According to some researchers, serious shortcomings emerged in the gap between international obligations accepted by Hungary and the existing legislation and its application in practice. E. Szilassy particularly pointed out the need for a re-definition of quality in relation to minority education, ensuring that students belonging to minorities should have the same quality of education as their peers belonging to the majority. Discrepancy between the percentage of Roma children in the population and among the students of so-called catch-up programmes was also noted.<sup>26</sup>

This brief overview of some EU countries' practices in the field of diversity mainstreaming shows that the implementation of such practices is uneven, and some countries have achieved more than others in mainstreaming ethnic and cultural diversity in their school systems. In the following section, specific instruments of diversity mainstreaming are described.

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<sup>26</sup> Szilassy, E. *Minority Education in Hungary*. Policy paper, p. 3. <http://www.policy.hu/discus/messages/102/szilassy-policypaper.pdf> Last visited on 01.06.2005.

## **IV. Instruments of Diversity Mainstreaming**

Mainstreaming diversity is a policy which is only evident when stated explicitly and approved at the political level. Therefore instruments for mainstreaming diversity, described below, have to be defined in policy documents – preferably, with clear policy framework including situation assessment, targets and performance indicators. Broadly, these policy instruments can be divided into two categories: those aiming at the recognition of the positive value of diversity in the national education system and in society at large, and those ensuring equal access to education for various groups.

### **1. Recognition of the Positive Value of Diversity**

#### **1.1. Intercultural approach at school**

As pointed out in a recent study, “The intercultural approach should enable schools to manage the cultural diversity of different societies, which has expanded following the migratory movements of recent decades. It is an integral part of education or activities intended for all pupils, whether immigrant or native.”<sup>27</sup> At the same time, the ways of implementing these principles within national education systems differ from country to country. While almost all EU education systems have introduced elements of intercultural education in schools, the extent to which these elements are taken seriously by policy makers and educators vary widely.

The normative and legal basis for implementing intercultural education is in fact stronger than often assumed. As pointed out by Batelaan and Coomans, “The main requirement for the implementation of intercultural and human rights education as it is described in the various international documents, is that professionals working in education (i.e., teachers and school leaders) have developed appropriate professional knowledge, skills and attitudes. Article 33 of the UNESCO recommendation of 1974 (2.2) concerning education for international

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<sup>27</sup> Integrating Immigrant Children Into Schools in Europe, 57.

understanding, co-operation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the Council of Europe Recommendation R (84) 18 (2.9) provide concrete criteria for intercultural teacher education."<sup>28</sup>

In broad terms, intercultural approach can be implemented either *via academic content* (elements of academic knowledge relating to different cultures, diversity in modern and postmodern societies, social and economic contexts of cultural distinctions, migrations), through the teaching of arts and social sciences as well as history, or/and *through the acquisition by pupils of social skills* involving respect and recognition of other cultures and lifestyles. The first way involves teaching intercultural approach *through certain subjects*. The second way means teaching on a *cross-curricular basis*.<sup>29</sup> Neither of these ways, however, is likely to have a serious effect without an inclusive and open environment at school and in society in general teaching pupils to accept diversity.<sup>30</sup> Formal and informal interaction between teachers and pupils, pupils and non-academic school staff, and within the peer groups can either support or entirely undermine the message of tolerance conveyed through academic content.

In the case of Latvia, the first approach – elements of intercultural education integrated into the academic content – is predominant. The presence or absence of cross-curricular approach is entirely up to the school, and only some schools have introduced it with some consistency (e.g., Rainbow Secondary School, Riga Classical Gymnasium).

It is especially significant, to what extent different national education systems reflect the awareness of the link between intercultural education and equal access to education. According to Pieter Batelaan, ensuring equal participation opportunities in the classroom is one of the elements of intercultural education. This is achieved by creating conditions necessary for all children's participation in the process of education, and by taking into account the skills and knowledge levels of all children – including languages, culture competence, individual abilities.<sup>31</sup> A crucial role in achieving this goal is played by teacher training, with broadly defined criteria for intercultural teacher training specified both by UNESCO and the Council of Europe.<sup>32</sup>

## 1.2. Diversity in textbooks

In some EU countries, special regulations exist concerning the reflection of society's diverse character in textbooks. Thus, in Finland, the Government Action Plan to Combat Ethnic Discrimination and Racism states that "the Ministry of

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<sup>28</sup> Batelaan, P., and F. Coomans. *The International Basis for Intercultural Education*, p. 21.

<sup>29</sup> Integrating Immigrant Children Into Schools in Europe, p. 59.

<sup>30</sup> Nieto, S. *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*. Alpha Books, 1999.

<sup>31</sup> Batelaan, P. *Towards an Equitable Classroom*, International Association for Intercultural Education, 1998.

<sup>32</sup> Batelaan, P., and F. Coomans, p. 21.

Education will supervise that all textbooks and other learning material used in education deal and describe the history and special features of the indigenous people of Finland, the Sami, established ethnic minorities and new immigrant groups and ethnic relations.” (2001) In the UK, some Local Education Authorities have special policies on the inclusion of history and culture of locally present minorities in teaching materials. Thus, following a report by Birmingham Advisory Service on the negative effect of one-sided and racially biased syllabus on African minority students,<sup>33</sup> a number of teaching aids and other materials for teachers were created to support the incorporation of the history of Afro-Caribbean community of Birmingham into school syllabi.

Evaluation of textbooks from the point of view of intercultural education implies a number of criteria:

“Intercultural school textbooks assume that pupils command a diversity of referential frameworks. All pupils should be able to find their own cultural backgrounds and lifestyles reflected in the subject matter dealt with in class, in order that they can identify with the circumstances and characters presented. These possibilities for identification must be chosen so that they are attractive and challenging to pupils of all shapes and sizes.”<sup>34</sup>

This includes reviewing linguistic usage in textbooks in a way that would make teaching materials accessible also to pupils for whom the majority language is not their mother tongue. Another significant aspect is that the multicultural nature of the respective society should be presented in textbooks as a given fact, not as a deviation.

One of the most challenging aspect of including diversity in teaching materials is the balance between reflecting the complexity of social reality, with often existing patterns of inequality, and, the ideal of multicultural, tolerant society with equal opportunities for all groups. “Equality entails the discussion of cultural differences and social inequalities. Discrepancies and problems, potentialities and impossibilities in the multicultural society are recognized and explored in the classroom material.”<sup>35</sup>

In Latvia, a recent study shows that the textbooks in Latvian and the textbooks used in minority languages and published in Russian reproduce the pattern of separation of ethnic groups evident in society.<sup>36</sup> The guidelines for evaluation of textbooks in Latvia include a point on diversity, however, no specific criteria for measuring it are developed. There is no evaluation of the accessibility of linguistic usage in the textbooks.

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<sup>33</sup> Times Education Supplement, 6 February 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Mok, I., and P. Reinsch. (eds.) *A Colourful Choice*. 1999. <http://www.parel.nl/CCO.htm> Last visited on 30.04.2005.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.1.

<sup>36</sup> Krupnikova, M. *Diversity in Latvian Textbooks*. Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies: Riga, 2004.

## 2. Ensuring equal access to education for various groups

### 2.1. Performance monitoring: disaggregated statistics and special support measures

The use of disaggregated statistics to reflect the real situation concerning access of various groups in society to government services, such as education, is a tool particularly widely applied in the English-speaking countries. In the UK, disaggregated statistics (patterns of attainment by ethnic origin and gender) shows that some groups systematically perform better than others in the national school system (e.g., for both sexes, African Caribbeans are the least likely to attain five higher grade passes in the General Certificate of Secondary Education, and Indian pupils are the most successful).<sup>37</sup>

In the UK, legal requirements demanding schools to take action in order to eliminate “equality gap” along ethnic lines are based on The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Compliance is monitored by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and by Inspectorates of Education (in Scotland and Wales). Procedures and guidance on the inspection of schools have been reviewed to ensure that there is appropriate focus on evaluating and reporting on race equality issues.

The major financial instrument available to Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) for improving the situation of underachieving ethnic groups is Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG), distributed by the Department for Education and Employment on the basis of applications submitted by LEAs. The applications for EMAG submitted in 2000 showed that at that point about one-third of LEAs did not include attainment by ethnic group into their baseline assessments,<sup>38</sup> however, consistency of reporting has improved since then.<sup>39</sup>

While the existence of special policies in the UK has not succeeded, so far, in closing this “equality gap”, there can be little doubt that without disaggregated statistics and special attention paid to different groups, the obstacles to equal access to education cannot be addressed effectively.

In the case of Latvia, the current approach, stated in some official documents (e.g., the reply of MOES to an inquiry by opposition deputies, 2004<sup>40</sup>), is that requiring statistics according to ethnicity or native language about the students

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<sup>37</sup> Warren, S., and D. Gillborn. *Race Equality and Education in Birmingham*. University of London 2002, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Gillborn, D., and H. S. Mirza. *Educational Inequality: Mapping Race, Class and Gender*. University of London 2000.

<sup>39</sup> Warren, S., and D. Gillborn. *Race Equality and Education in Birmingham*, p. 19.

<sup>40</sup> MOES. Answer to the Saeima (Parliament) Deputies Pliners, Sokolovskis, Kabanovs, Aleksejevs, Tolmačovs and Buzajevs, Concerning Competitiveness of the Pupils of Ethnic Minority Schools Entering Higher Education, 29.12.2004.

in the national education system constitutes discrimination. This view is inconsistent with the actual practice of anti-discrimination policies in the EU.

Citing data protection laws as the main obstacle to collecting ethnic statistics is an argument used by many governments in response to the appeals of international bodies to provide in their reports economic, health, educational and other data broken down by ethnicity. It is, however, increasingly argued by human rights organizations that “our right to be free from racial or ethnic discrimination should be interpreted to imply a right to obtain statistical data broken down by ethnicity.”<sup>41</sup> The Directive implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, adopted by the Council of the European Union in 2000, by prohibiting also indirect discrimination implies the need for comparative data. The Race Directive in fact expressly authorizes the use of statistical evidence to fight indirect discrimination.<sup>42</sup>

The resolution to the tension between the need for ethnic statistics and the right of individuals to protect their personal data is increasingly emerging in the special guarantees and regulations for the processing and transfer of data.<sup>43</sup>

## 2.2. Inclusive environment at school

School environment is at least as important as the formal content of education in establishing the values of diversity and equal access to education within a school. The experience of other EU countries shows that “...there is an institutionalisation at school of a view of normalcy and deviation, with immigrant status being considered as a deviation, deficiency or burden. This acts as a significant obstacle to integration and equality.”<sup>44</sup>

The students’ capacity to acquire communication skills and capacity to act responsibly – also in the aspect of citizenship – depends on the ability of the school to create an inclusive environment.<sup>45</sup> In order to challenge assumptions about students of different racial and ethnic background and to create a more inclusive environment at school, special policies are developed in several countries.

In the UK, these policies are especially comprehensive, proceeding from the multicultural paradigm of the country’s education policies. There is a strong emphasis on anti-discrimination as well as an array of measures to encourage diversity in the school system, adopted, for the most part, by the schools themselves with

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<sup>41</sup> Kriszan, Andrea. (ed.) *Ethnic Monitoring and Data Protection*, CPS Books, CEU Press: Budapest, 2000, p. 10.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>44</sup> Integration Report, Sweden 2003, p. 20.

<sup>45</sup> Tilstone, C., Florian, L., and R. Rose. *Promoting Inclusive Practice*. University of Glasgow: Glasgow, 1998.

encouragement from Local Education Authorities. Those include leaflets giving information about the teaching programmes in different languages, as well as information about ethnic minority rights, ethnic food and religious diets which the schools themselves often guarantee to cater for.<sup>46</sup> The element of anti-racist education is present in the curriculum, with emphasis on practical applications of the duty to respect cultural diversity, including situations when a student displays racist attitude in class. This can imply intense rhetoric and readiness for structured conflict on behalf of the teacher:

**Researcher Sabine Mannitz describes an incident during an English lesson in a North London school (Year 10):**

The teacher heard a Somali boy calling another “Paddy”, which he had just explained to be a racist term for Irish people.

Teacher: “When you think you can call another person “Paddy” and consider that a joke, you are no better than the racists and fascists, with their stereotypes that people like you are subject to! Listen! If I called you a “nigger”, I would be sacked – and THAT WOULD BE RIGHT! We are in a multicultural society in multicultural London and in a multicultural classroom... and this is too serious an issue to let it pass like that! ... So this is important and I want you to keep it in mind. Sophisticated people, scientists and others, have dedicated their lives to fighting for human rights and racial equality. Martin Luther King died for this, and you think you can just remain little ignoramuses?”

After the lesson, the teacher took the opportunity to comment on the incident: he could not let it pass, especially since racism was the topic of the lesson anyway... Perceptions of the students were oriented towards the recognition of ethnic and cultural differences as often as possible, for the principles of tolerance and mutual respect can only be inculcated when translated into everyday situations.

From Schiffauer, W., Baumann, G., Kastroyano, R., Vertovec, S. (eds.) *Civil Enculturation. Nation-State, School and Ethnic Difference in the Netherlands, Britain, Germany and France.* p. 65.

In Latvian context, the issue of “normalcy” of minority students may be relevant in majority schools. Thus, the teachers and students of schools with Latvian language of instruction may be not used to students with accents or those speaking Latvian with grammar mistakes. At the same time, ethnic Latvian students in minority schools and Roma students in all schools may come across teachers and students equally unused to cultural diversity in the classroom. The study of acculturation models of students of different ethnic/linguistic background in the dualist system of schools still existing in Latvia is necessary in order to identify the obstacles to creating a more harmonious school system providing equal access to education to all groups and preparing citizens for a less divided society.

<sup>46</sup> Schiffauer, W., Baumann, G., Kastroyano, R., Vertovec, S. *Civil Enculturation*, p. 61.

### 2.3. Training teachers and school inspectors to address equality issues in diverse society

Including modules on intercultural education and inclusive education in required teacher training is a way to ensure that teachers are aware of the challenges and needs of creating an inclusive teaching/studying environment in school. Measures to supply adequate training for teachers working with ethnically diverse classes or classes with immigrant children are applied differently in different countries. In Belgium, special measures exist to ensure training for teachers in transitional classes (for immigrant pupils) under the equal opportunities policy.<sup>47</sup> In Slovenia, seminars for teachers are organized on different aspects of immigrant pupils' culture.<sup>48</sup> Finland has special study modules and courses, both during initial and in-service training, for teachers engaged in the education of immigrant teachers. On a more basic level, most countries in Europe provide training in teaching the state language as a second language for teachers working with immigrant pupils.<sup>49</sup>

Also school inspectors in some cases receive specialized in-service training on equality and diversity-related issues. Thus, in Britain, the inspectors fall under the scope of measures under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act.

In the UK, the training of school inspectors after The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 includes courses on race equality. Thus, the Inspectorate of Education in Scotland included the following activities in the ongoing training for staff and associate members in 2002:

- HM Inspectors inspecting in the school sector and education authorities completed three training sessions relating to tackling discrimination, the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) and its implications for education, and the evaluation of race equality within the inspection process.
- HM Inspectors inspecting in further education and in community learning and development completed two training sessions relating to tackling discrimination and the implications of the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) for education.
- Associate Assessors inspecting in the school sector completed three training sessions relating to tackling discrimination, the implications of the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) for education, and the evaluation of race equality within the inspection process.
- Lay Members involved in school inspections undertook two training sessions relating to awareness of race equality issues in schools and RRAA (2000) and the implications of the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) for the lay member role in inspections.

<sup>47</sup> DGEC. Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe. 2004. Figure 2.3.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

- Administrative and support staff completed one training session on diversity and promoting race equality.

**HM Inspectorate of Education Race Equality Scheme**

## **2.4. Measures ensuring access of minority pupils to mainstream education in the majority language**

Receiving education in minority language, or partly in minority language is an option that should not preclude the opportunity to make other choices – to receive mainstream education in the language of majority. Access of minority pupils to mainstream education in the majority language depends on a number of factors – from the availability of language assistance for children from families where minority language is spoken, or for children of recent immigrants, to the creation of an inclusive environment in the classroom and outside it, where cultural differences are recognized and valued as a sign of diversity. This cannot happen without putting some resources into teacher training, extra staff recruitment and other measures necessary for the achievement of these goals.

The experience of those EU countries where majority language has been taught to immigrant and minority children separately from other students, in “majority language as a second language” groups (e.g., Sweden), or “integration classes” (e.g., France), shows that in many cases this practice had led to some marginalizing effects. Thus, in Sweden, “this method of working had undesirable effects, since all the students who had a mother tongue other than Swedish, participated, without any individual assessment of language level... and since Sv2 teachers came to be regarded as the “immigrant experts” at school.” (Integration report 2003, 17) The way out of this situation was suggested through disseminating the methods of working with students for whom majority language is not the mother tongue among the teachers of all subjects at school.

## **2.5. Ensuring access to information about the national education system in immigrants’ and minorities’ languages**

Measures adapted specifically to assist newly arrived immigrants’ children to gain access to education in majority language can include: translating information about school system into immigrant communities’ languages (sometimes also about the education system in general). In some countries, special brochures published in immigrant communities’ languages explain about the rights and duties of pupils and their parents in the national pre-school education and school system (Belgium 2003, Norway 2004). Hungary and Estonia are currently developing websites with information about education opportunities for immigrants.

Other measures include providing newly arrived parents and children with interpreters and mentoring, provided by special coordinators for work with immigrant children.

# **V. Equal Access to Education and Diversity in the Latvian School System**

## **1. Equal access to education**

According to the Education Law of the Republic of Latvia, all inhabitants independently of ethnicity, race or gender have equal access to education. The provision of obligatory education as defined in the General Education Law and in the Standards of Basic (first-level secondary) Education is a duty of the state and local governments. The content of obligatory education in Latvia is the same for all state schools, independently of the language of instruction.

### **Monitoring performance and equal access to education**

At the same time, the policy-makers' capacity to monitor the access of different ethnic and linguistic groups to education is limited because of the lack of disaggregated statistics reflecting academic achievement and school attendance. While data on centralized final examination results are now sorted according to schools (implying differentiation by language of instruction), no disaggregated statistical data on the performance of students with different ethnic background and/or mother tongue are available. In a situation when a large part of society mistrusts the government's motivation behind the reform of secondary education in minority languages, and publications ascribing a wish to undermine the competitiveness of Russian-speaking students to policy-makers are not infrequent in the Russian-language press, the only way to re-establish the trust for the government and its education policies is to provide reliable data illustrating the dynamic of performance of students of different ethnic and linguistic groups – implying momentary action to compensate any major systematic inequality of performance connected with linguistic, geographical or ethnic factors, should such be in evidence. Special measures for closing 'equality gap' could include additional funding made available to local educational authorities, project funding made available to schools with a large percentage of target group students or extra methodological support for teachers working with target group students. Some cases in the UK prove that smaller scale, decentralised school- or community-based projects or projects with government funding channeled through

NGOs are more efficient in closing the “equality gap”. In Latvia, the multi-year NGO project “Roma Child at School: You are Welcome”, funded by the National Society Integration Foundation with support from the EC (Phare), is currently more successful in providing inclusion and equal treatment to Roma children in primary schools than any government policies have been before.

The arguments of the MOES against collecting disaggregated statistics about performance of different groups in the national education system refer to ethnic monitoring as discriminatory.<sup>50</sup>

This attitude was confirmed in interviews by policy planners working at the Ministry:

*“Te jau sākas ļoti liela problēma, likums par personas datu aizsardzību ... aizliedz jēdzienu tautība, tas ir tikai pēc paša gribas. Mēs neprasām aizpildīt šo aili skolas žurnālā, manuprāt, jaunajā žurnālā nav šīs ailes. Te rodas tāda problēma, ka tādu statistiku var tikai veikt tikai konkrētās aptaujās, ja cilvēks pats saka, ka viņš pieder konkrētai grupai.”* (Senior civil servant, MOE: “There would be a real problem with that. The Law on Personal Data Protection forbids to use the notion “ethnicity”, one can indicate it only if one wishes. We do not ask (the teachers) to fill out the “ethnicity” column in the class journal, I think there is no such column there now. There is this problem, that you can only collect such data in particular surveys if a person chooses to admit belonging to a particular group.”)

At the same time, interviews with municipal education authorities reveal that some comparison of academic record according to linguistic or ethnic groups is practiced, even though unsystematically, and that informally schools still keep record of students’ ethnicity:

*“Rīgā vadības un pārbaudes līmenī tomēr uzsvērām, ka mums nav šķirošana pa mācību valodām, mums ir skolas kā tādas un visām cenšamies sniegt vienlīdzīgu metodisku palīdzību. Bet, nenoliedzam, kad tiek apkopoti dati vai kad tiek analizēta situācija, nenoliedzami situācija tiek salīdzināta, gan pēc eksāmenu rezultātiem, gan pēc olimpiāžu rezultātiem. Es šeit nedomāju, ka pastāv tādi stereotipi, ka latvieši doma lēnāk vai tamlīdzīgi. Bet striktais nodalījums starp dažādu tautību skolu sekmēm nenotiek.*

*Tādas statistikas, kas ņem vērā, vai bērns mācās savā dzimtajā valodā, nav. Īstenībā dažreiz klašu žurnālā tomēr bērnu tautība ir norādīta, kaut gan pēc datu likuma tai nav jābūt. Ja mēs gribam apkopot informāciju un ja bērni ir mācījušies krievu valodā, tad krievu bērniem ir šādi rezultāti, ebreju bērniem, kuri ir mācījušies krievu valodā, un ukraiņu bērniem, kuri ir mācījušies krievu valodā, šādi rezultāti, un tā tālāk. Lai to varētu pateikt, pašai skolotājai tas ir jādara un, lai to izdarītu, jānorāda bērnu tautība.”*

(Municipal Education Authority official: “In Riga, at the level of management and at the level of evaluation we stress that we do not sort schools according to

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<sup>50</sup> See above.

languages, we try to provide the same methodological support to all. But certainly when data are analysed, or when we assess the situation, we compare the situation (in schools with different language of instruction), according to both the results of exams and the results of academic competitions... But there is no strict separation of academic record according to different ethnic groups' schools...

There are no data whether the child is learning in their native language or not. In reality, even though according to Data Protection Law schools are not supposed to record students' ethnicity in class journal, in some cases it is indicated. If we want to collect these data and if the students have studied in Russian, then we will have to specify – these are the results for Russian children, these – for Jewish children studying in Russian, these – for Ukrainian children studying in Russian, and so on. The teacher would have to be involved in collecting such data, and to do it, the teacher has to ask for children's ethnicity.”)

The attitude of secondary education practitioners is less cautious, and some of them see the efficiency rationale behind collecting disaggregated statistics in schools:

*“Tas ir ļoti aktuāli, un ir nepieciešams monitorings – gan no valsts, gan no pilsoniskās sabiedrības puses. Valsts iestādēm jābūt pieprasījumam pēc šāda pētījuma. Jābūt iespējai redzēt, kur ir problēmas, redzēt dinamiku. Mēs daudz runājam par integrācijas kritērijiem – bet tieši tādi pētījumi palīdzētu redzēt dinamiku. Nenoliedzami, tāda statistika radītu konkrētākus uzdevumus politikas veidotājiem un ieviesējiem. Pašlaik datu trūkums vienkāršo politikas ieviešanu uzdevumu. Statistika par dažādām etniskām grupām nebūtu diskriminējoša, ja tiek ievērots brīvprātības princips.”*

(Minority school director: “This is very topical, and monitoring is necessary – both on behalf of the state and on behalf of civil society. Government institutions should have demand for such research. There should be a way to see, where there are problems, to see the dynamic. We talk a lot about integration criteria – but exactly this kind of analysis would help us to see the dynamic. Undoubtedly, this kind of statistics would create more clearly defined tasks for policy-makers and those responsible for implementation. At the moment, the lack of data makes the policy-makers' task easy. Statistics about various ethnic groups would not be discriminating if the principle of voluntary self-identification is observed.”)

The issue of equal access to education was raised in the Constitutional Court ruling on the claim of several opposition MPs that the reform of ethnic minority education introducing 60% of instruction in Latvian in secondary school was unconstitutional. While rejecting this claim, the Constitutional Court concluded that the current instruments for controlling education quality in schools are insufficient, and obliged the Ministry of Education and Science to adapt new and more efficient measures to control the quality of and equal access to education. The Court pointed out that “The state is obliged to provide such data that would ensure a basis for analysis, proceeding from which balanced choices can be made, as well as to supply society, students, and their parents with information concerning

the dynamic of education quality and the developments in the process of education.” (20.2.3)<sup>51</sup> This should provide sufficient basis for raising the issue of more sophisticated performance monitoring as a necessary prerequisite for education policy planning.

### **The case for specific programmes targeting equal access to education for ethnic groups: Roma education in Latvia**

Since there is no systematic data gathering and analysis taking into account the native language/ethnic background of students, there are no reliable data proving that all ethnic/linguistic groups in practice have equal access to quality education. In fact, some data suggest that at least one group – the Roma – have significantly lower levels of academic performance. The fact that in several Latvian cities and towns so-called remedial (catch-up) classes are composed for the most part of Roma students,<sup>52</sup> many of whom enter obligatory education at much later age than normal in the Latvian school system, speaks for itself. Census data indicate that the general level of education among Romany people in Latvia is below the average – many, especially among the older generations, never went to school, and even a greater number only attended a few classes. Many of those who are registered in school are often absent from class.<sup>53</sup> A number of NGOs have implemented education projects for Romany children over the recent years, using the support provided by Society Integration Foundation and European Commission (*Phare*), but there is no specific government programme targeting this group. Educators point out that there is a need for special government measures to target illiteracy and to raise the education levels of Romany people in Latvia.<sup>54</sup>

At the moment, no policy document produced by the Ministry of Education and Science indicates awareness of the need to target Roma education specifically. The lack of political commitment to equality of chances in the national education system is reflected in the attitude of MOES civil servants: “It is up to Latvia’s Romany people to decide, whether to found their own school or not. They founded it and then gave up. There are only three countries, where Romany ABC is published, and in Latvia the Ministry funded it already in 1996. I would like to know, where else, in which country where Roma are only 0.4 percent of the population, there is an opportunity for Roma to study their language?” (*“Latvijas čigānu izvēle ir, vai viņi dibinās savu skolu vai ne. Viņi ir nodibinājuši un atteikušies. Ir tikai trīs valstis, kur ir izdota čigānu ābece, un Latvijā ministrija to finansēja jau*

<sup>51</sup> Constitutional Court decision No. 2004-18-0106/Satversmes tiesas spriedums lietā Nr. 2004-18-0106, [http://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/LV/Spriedumi/18-0106\(04\).htm](http://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/LV/Spriedumi/18-0106(04).htm)

<sup>52</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies. *Čigāni Latvijā*. 2003, p. 24.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>54</sup> Nagle, G. *Aug nākamie čigānu inteliģenti*, Diena 21.03.05.

1996. *gadā. Es gribētu zināt, kur vēl kādā valstī, kur čigānu ir tikai kādi 0,4 procenti no iedzīvotāju kopskaita, ir iespēja mācīties čigānu valodu?*")

The fallacy of this argument lies in the assumption that the situation of Romany people in Latvia is to be compared to the situation of Romany in other countries, rather than to the situation of other groups in the Latvian education system. The assumption that the Roma are somehow a group of its own kind, to which general rules concerning the processes of education do not apply, leads to conclusions that no special measures aiming to compensate for the education-related systematic disadvantages (primarily social ones) are necessary. The lack of disaggregated statistics, confirming that access to quality education is in practice asymmetric, is thus an excuse justifying the lack of compensatory measures.

## 2. Structure and culture: towards a unified school system

The Latvian education policy discourse refers to current government policy as "integration" and not "desegregation" within the national school system. In no government document is the inherited separation of schoolchildren of different ethnic/linguistic groups admitted as a problem *per se*. At the same time, the actual practice of educating students from ethnic Latvian families (or at least from families with Latvian as their native tongue) separately from students whose native language is Russian is a reality of Latvian society. The institutional culture of respective schools is deeply influenced by this historically rooted separation that was maintained throughout the Soviet period, and had some parallels in the school system of pre-war independent Latvia.

Taking into account that creating a unified general education system has been a policy objective for the Ministry of Education and Science at least since the mid-nineties, it is important to see to what extent this policy was successful in overcoming the actual ethnic separation of schools that was part of the Soviet legacy.

According to Amir and Sharan, a number of variables have to be considered when striving to overcome a previous segregation of the school system. These are structural variables, variables of role behavior, affective variables, and variables relating to goals and values.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Amir, Y., and S. Sharan. *School Desegregation*. Chapter 6.

### Overcoming the inherited ethnic separation of schools.

Structural variables	Variables of role behaviour	Affective variables	Variables related to goals and values
1. Legal status (+)	1. Teacher-student relations model (?)	1. Attitude towards education reform in minority schools (-)	1. Society Integration Programme (+)
2. Public perception (-)	2. Linkages between language and social status (?)	2. Attitude towards desegregation (?)	2. Political embeddedness of policy-makers (-)

#### School desegregation model (Amir and Sharan) adapted to the situation in the Latvian school system.

(+) – factor positive for desegregation, (-) – factor negative for desegregation, (?) – research-based evidence is lacking.

In the case of Latvia, **structural variables** are relatively clear. Laws and regulations concerning schools in Latvia do not separate them into ethnic categories: instead, legal acts speak of schools implementing different programmes of basic or secondary education. The number of hours allocated to different academic subjects in the Programme for Minorities in some cases differs from the general Programme, however, the academic content of different programmes is fundamentally the same, with the exception of the number of hours devoted to native language and literature in minority programmes. It would be justified, therefore, to say that structurally, Latvian schools are for the most part desegregated. At the same time, the historic perception of schools as distinctly “Latvian” or distinctly “Russian” is still very much alive in society. As pointed out by an MOES official responsible for general education, “Unfortunately, we have inherited also two distinct education systems, which today are separate. Information spheres are separate, and also the very communities to some extent live separately.” (*“Diemžēl, mūsu mantojumā ir arī divas izglītības sistēmas, kas patlaban ir nošķirtas. Atšķirīgi ir arī informācijas lauki, un arī pašas iedzīvotāju kopienas savā ziņā dzīvo nošķirti.”*)<sup>56</sup>

**Variables of role behaviour** in school may differ according to cultural context. In the case of “Latvian” and “Russian” schools in Latvia, it could be claimed that the institutional culture is not fundamentally different because of similar historical context over the last half of a century, with an authoritarian model of teaching supplemented by more or less passive pupils in Soviet school hierarchy. There is, however, a lack of systematic anthropological research concerning the current role behaviour in schools in Latvia, that would allow to make informed conclusions concerning the possible obstacles arising from different

<sup>56</sup> G. Vasiļevskis, in a discussion concerning civic education at school. Ģ. Salmgriezis (ed.), *Pilsoniskā izglītība: varde krējuma podā*. <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=111137&lang=lv> Last visited on 14.04.2005.

understanding of students' and teachers' roles in school. One aspect of role behaviour which influences relations between students and teachers in the process of education independently of the language of instruction is the difference in social cognition structures of the generation that went to school in the Soviet period and the current students' generation. As pointed out by a MOES representative, "The average teacher in Latvia is 47 years old. Those people have grown and got their education in a completely different social system. It has to be said, they often have difficulties to adjust their thinking to the new circumstances, that is why young people today are ready to face new challenges more quickly. In the Soviet times, there was one truth, today many truths have equal validity. Now one has to develop to accept this new truth!" (*Latvijā vidējais skolotāja vecums ir 47,5 gadu. Tie cilvēki lielāko savas dzīves daļu auguši un izglītību ieguvuši pavisam citā sabiedrības sistēmā. Jāteic, ka viņiem bieži vien ir ļoti grūti pielāgot savu domāšanu jauniem apstākļiem, tāpēc jaunieši patlaban ir gatavi ātrāk mainīties jauniem izaicinājumiem. Padomju laikos bija viena patiesība, bet šodien līdzvērtīgas ir vairākas patiesības. Tagad ir jāizaug līdzī jaunajai patiesībai!*)<sup>57</sup>

A separate issue related to variables of role behaviour is the overlapping of social and linguistic marginalisation – be it in the case of Romany children and parents, or in the case of low-income Russian-speaking families in Latgale, the eastern region of Latvia. While some schools demonstrate awareness of this problem by developing individual projects targeting groups that often fall victims to social exclusion, the feedback from such projects itself demonstrates how deeply embedded are the social perceptions of marginality:

"Teacher of Latvian language and Health classes, Ilona Ignatoviča, is happy that with the support of the National Centre for Protection of Children's Rights, this autumn during the school holidays it became possible to fulfil a long-time dream: to organise a social integration day camp for children from at-risk families. In the morning the children worked, creating a fairy-tale garden by the primary school building, and in the afternoon they could relax together. Thanks to the donors, the school could also provide free meals for the children. Another teacher, Galina Skredele, tells about a child from her class, who took part in a similar camp in the summer. Before that his mother never came to school, probably, being ashamed of her poor clothes and lack of Latvian language skills [sic!]. After the camp, she came to school on her son's birthday, to bring tea, biscuits and sugar, so that also her son could celebrate his birthday at school." (*Latviešu valodas un veselības mācības skolotāja Ilona Ignatoviča priecājas, ka ar Valsts bērnu tiesību aizsardzības centra atbalstu šajās rudens brīvdienās izdevies īstenot senu sapni – sarīkot sociālās integrācijas dienas nometni sociāli nelabvēlīgo ģimeņu bērniem. No rītiem bērni strādājuši, veidot pasaku dārzu pie sākumskolas, bet pēcpusdienās varējuši kopīgi atpūsties. Pateicoties sponsoriem, izdevies*

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<sup>57</sup> G. Vasiļevskis, in a discussion concerning civic education at school. Ģ. Salmgriezis (ed.), *Pilsoniskā izglītība: varde krējuma podā*, <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=111137&lang=lv> Visited on 14.04.2005.

*arī bērnus paēdināt. G. Skredele pastāsta par kādu savas klases skolēnu, kurš vasarā piedalījies līdzīgā nometnē. Līdz tam viņa mamma nekad nav nākusi uz skolu, acīmredzot, kautrēdamās no savas nabadzīgā apģērba un latviešu valodas nemācēšanas. Pēc nometnes viņa atnākusi uz skolu dēla dzimšanas dienā, atnesusi tēju, cepumus un cukuru, lai arī viņas bērns skolā varētu to nosvinēt.)<sup>58</sup>*

From the structure of this text, it is obvious that not only the parent in question, but also the teachers, and the journalist of a national newspaper who wrote down the story, do not question the embedded inequalities of the situation: the labelling of some children as belonging to “at-risk” group through separate activities marking them off from the rest of the school community, rather than addressing the whole peer group, independently of social status, through integrating and “equalising” activities. Moreover, the implicit link between language/ethnicity and poverty is taken for granted, without analysing or challenging social perceptions of marginality in a given community.

**Affective variables** have not been substantially studied either, however, it is possible to identify potential areas of risk that would need careful handling in future policies aimed at further reducing the separation within the school system. Some researchers’ observations and many publications in the press confirm the intensification of negative attitude towards the national education system and towards “the state” at large in “Russian” schools since the beginning of minority education reform.<sup>59</sup>

Publications in the media suggest that the reaction of many ethnic Latvians to the idea of practical desegregation of the schools may be as negative as that of the self-styled defenders of Russian schools in Latvia. Thus, readers’ online reactions to an article by an ethnic Latvian teacher describing the attempts of a previously monoethnic school to adapt to the different linguistic levels of minority students, were for the most part negative.<sup>60</sup> The same attitude is shared also by the opponents of the reform of minority education – the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the Defenders of Russian Schools adopted an “Address to the (ethnic) Latvian nation”, stating that “one of the inevitable consequences of the “Reform” will be also the massive flow of non-Latvian children from *Ersatz*-schools to full-fledged Latvian schools, which will particularly painfully impact [ethnic] Latvians in the cities. The teaching process will be adapted to the least efficient learner’s capacity, but cosmopolitised [sic!] Latvian schools will no longer be able to serve as cradle of Latvian culture.” (*“Par vienu no “reformas” neizbēgamajām sekām kļūs arī cittautiešu bērnu masu pieplūdums no erzacskolām pilnvērtīgās latviešu skolās, kas īpaši sāpīgi skars lielpilsētu latviešu iedzīvotājus. Mācību process tiks pielāgots visnesekmīgākā bērna iespējām, bet kosmopolitizētās latviešu skolas nespēs kalpot*

<sup>58</sup> Rancāne, A. Diena, 01.11.2002. Quoted on the Rainbow Secondary School website, <http://www.varaviksne.lv/materiali/direktors/balva.htm> Last visited on 19.04.2005.

<sup>59</sup> Zepa, B. (ed.) *Cittautiešu jauniešu integrācija Latvijas sabiedrībā izglītības reformas kontekstā*. Baltijas Sociālo zinātņu institūts, 2004, pp. 20–8, 39–48, 59–68.

<sup>60</sup> Upeniece, I. *Mazākumtautību bērni “latviešu” skolās – jautājumu vēl daudz*.

*par latviešu kultūras šūpuli.”*)<sup>61</sup> If further practical steps towards the desegregation of schools are to be taken, a broad representative survey of parents’, teachers’ and students’ attitudes across different ethnic groups would be necessary.

**Variables related to goals and values** are the same at the level of approved political documents. Thus, National Programme “Society Integration in Latvia” states that “The goal of integration is to form a democratic, consolidated civil society, founded on shared basic values.” It also states that “Integration means broadening opportunities and mutual enrichment. It is better to know several languages than to know only one. Experiencing several cultures than being confined to only one. The integration process reinforces common values, interests, and knowledge both at the individual level and within society as a whole.”<sup>62</sup> Education policy is supposed to follow these guidelines – as it does through observing common standards for all schools independently of the language and ethnicity of students or teaching staff. At the same time, the messages sent to various public audiences by individual policy-makers (representing political parties) and by some education practitioners are more mixed. Experts have expressed concern about the nationalist aspect of some educators’ endeavours, especially those directed at patriotic education: “Speaking of stereotypes in the family and at school, I as a mother do not feel really convinced about the Ministry’s new idea, that school should be responsible also for moral education of children. If a teacher takes it into their head that they have to inculcate national patriotism and self-preservation instinct, then no matter how much I speak to my children at home about how nice it is to be open towards the other, at school they will have to say different things.”

*(“Runājot par stereotipiem ģimenēs un skolā, es kā mamma neesmu tik pārliecināta par ministrijas jauno ideju, ka skolai arī ir jāaudzina bērni. Ja skolotājs iedomāsies, ka viņam ir jāieaudzina nacionālais patriotisms un kaut kādi pašsaglabāšanās instinkti, tad es mājās ar saviem bērniem varēšu runāt krustām un šķēršām par to, cik labi ir būt atvērtam pret citādo, kamēr skolā viņam būs jārunā citas lietas.”)*<sup>63</sup>

The approved teaching aids for academic subjects such as Social Studies may reflect, in general terms, the official guidelines for integration, however, closer analysis demonstrates that many textbooks, too, reproduce ethnic and cultural divisions in society.<sup>64</sup> A more consolidated effort to project less conflicting visions of history and culture is needed in order to overcome the symbolic divisions within the education system.

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<sup>61</sup> Krievu skolu aizstāvju Otrais kongress. Aicinājums latviešu tautai. <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=111169&lang=lv> Last visited on 21.04.2005.

<sup>62</sup> National Programme *The Integration of Society in Latvia*, Foreword.

<sup>63</sup> I. Pāvula, University of Latvia lecturer, speaking in a discussion on intercultural education, <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=110607&lang=lv>

<sup>64</sup> Krupnikova, M. *Diversity in Latvian Textbooks*. Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies: Riga, 2004.

### 3. Diversity in the new Standards of Basic Education

Basic education (first-level secondary education) is obligatory for all in Latvia under current education laws, therefore the legal documents regulating it can have a particularly profound impact. A brief analysis of the new Standards of Basic Education (to be in force from 1 September 2005) is necessary in order to see whether the acknowledgement of diversity of society is reflected there in a systematic way.

According to the Standards, the purpose of basic education is the acquisition of basic knowledge necessary for social and individual life (*sabiedriskajai un individuālajai dzīvei nepieciešamo zināšanu un prasmju pamatu apguve*). Among the five fundamental principles stated in the Introduction, one – universality (*vispārīgums*) – presupposes that basic education “includes the essential experience and cultural values of humanity.” One of the main tasks of basic education is “to provide the opportunity to acquire knowledge necessary for a citizen of Latvia and to form the understanding of democratic values” (*nodrošināt iespēju apgūt Latvijas pilsonim nepieciešamās zināšanas un veidot izpratni par demokrātijas vērtībām*), as well as “to form a basic understanding of the cultural heritage of Latvian, European and world cultures” (*veidot pamatpriekšstatu par Latvijas, Eiropas un pasaules kultūras mantojumu*).

These principles already should provide a legal basis for a greater emphasis on intercultural education, however, several factors that may influence their implementation provoke concern.

In order to teach about the diversity of Latvia's, Europe's and the world's cultures, adequate textbooks and other teaching aids are essential. As demonstrated by Marina Krupnikova, some textbooks used in Latvia still project a limited, often Eurocentric view of the world's cultures, presenting non-European cultures in contexts that may suggest to the reader notions of their cultural and economic inferiority.<sup>65</sup> Publications in the press also suggest that some teachers present their students with a nationalist perspective on culture and history. This is an equally serious problem for “Latvian” and “Russian” schools. It is therefore very important that the general recognition of diversity stated in the Standards should be supplemented by guidelines for teachers promoting their interpretation in the light of principles advocated by UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

The “General didactic principles of basic education” (*Pamatizglītības vispārīgie didaktiskie principi*) include references to inclusive environment at school as a necessary prerequisite, as well as to the need to respect the individual social, ethnic, religious and family background and “gender specificity” of every student (*“Katrs skolēns nāk uz skolu ar savu iepriekšējo pieredzi (sociāli etnisko un*

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<sup>65</sup> Krupnikova, M. *Diversity in Latvian Textbooks*.

*reliģisko piederību, ģimenes tradīcijām, dzimuma atšķirībām)... skolotājam jāņem vērā šīs atšķirības...”). Individual approach is stressed along with the necessity to provide equal access to learning for students from different background. At the same time, recent studies show that it may be exactly the lack of individual approach at school that influences, among other factors, the high dropout rate in Latvian schools.<sup>66</sup>*

The principles stated for specific subject areas reflect good intentions which may or may not be implemented depending on the resources and expertise available to individual schools and individual teachers. The standard for Language subject area states that “the student should develop a positive attitude towards own national culture and other cultures” (*skolēns veido pozitīvu attieksmi pret savu nacionālo kultūru un citām kultūrām*). The Social Studies standard sees as one of its tasks the formation of “a tolerant view of cultural diversity and diversity of worldviews” (*izkopj tolerantu attieksmi pret kultūru dažādību un pasaules uzskatu daudzveidību*). The students are also expected to “acquire knowledge of the forms of civic engagement acceptable in democratic society” and to learn “to oppose all kinds of gender, racial, or religious discrimination and prejudices” (*skolēns apgūst demokrātiskā sabiedrībā pieņemamas pilsoniskās līdzdalības normas un mācās vērsties pret jebkura veida dzimumu, rasu, reliģisko diskrimināciju un aizspriedumiem*).

Interviews with civil servants responsible for the development and implementation of the Standards also reflect the role of individual schools and teachers:

“What concerns the new basic education Standards, practically each of them stresses diversity, its existence, and also stimulates teachers to work in this direction in order to form the understanding that people can be different, cultures are different, and to develop tolerant attitude. What happens at the school level, depends on concrete (person’s) work experience, how much they come across diversity in their everyday life; the more they see diversity, the more they respect it.” (Senior level civil servant, ISEC)

*(Kas attiecas uz pamatizglītības mācību standartiem, faktiski jebkurš no viņiem uzsvērtu dažādību, to eksistenci, un arī rosina skolotājus darboties šinī virzienā, lai radītu izpratni par to, ka cilvēki mēdz būt dažādi, kultūras lietas atšķiras, un radīt toleranci pret to. Kas notiek skolas līmenī, kas jau ir uz vietām, tas ir atkarīgs no konkrētas darba pieredzes, cik lielā mērā skolotāji saskaras ar daudzveidību savā ikdienā, jo vairāk viņi sastop daudzveidību, jo vairāk viņi to ciena.)*

This approach on behalf of policy-makers corresponds to the conservative understanding of policy planning when a more or less systematic needs assessment and creation of legal base are viewed as the main parts of the policy process, leaving behind systematic assessment of the resources available for the implementation of new policy and eventual impact assessment.

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<sup>66</sup> Dedze, I., Kruzmeņa, M., et al. *Savlaicīgu pamatizglītības apguvi traucējošo faktoru kopums*. Providus, 2004.

There seems to exist, also in the case of the new Standards, a gap between the principles stated in the policy document and the actual resources and methodological support available for the implementation of these principles. As far as the aspect of diversity in the new Standards is concerned, a systematic assessment of the teachers' familiarity with intercultural education principles is necessary, along with an allocation of resources for training those teachers, who are not sufficiently prepared.

## 4. Access to mainstream education in Latvian

The issue of access to mainstream education in Latvian for minority students became relevant in the mid-nineties. Since then, the percentage of ethnic minority students in Latvian schools has grown. The only study reflecting some aspects of this phenomenon so far is a research paper by Ina Druvietē and Margarita Gavriļina (2003). The study is not focused on the way schools react to the changing target audience in a new environment, but on the linguistic problems of minority students and on the recommendations for schools with mixed classes, based on international experience and typology of bilingual education.

Druvietē and Gavriļina, quoting Baker, refer to the necessity for teachers, independently of the subject they teach, to observe certain routines when working with a class where not all students have the same linguistic competence in the language of instruction – primarily, in order to adapt linguistic information to the existing comprehension levels.<sup>67</sup> They also point out the lack of systematic, research-based methodological support in Latvia for teachers working with linguistically heterogeneous classes, leading to situations when teachers demand the same level of linguistic competence from students with native-speaker status and those going through the process of second language acquisition.<sup>68</sup> “Basic principles for educating minority children in Latvian-language schools,” recommended by Druvietē and Gavriļina, include the recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity as resource rather than an obstacle, the necessity of active in-class and out-of-class interaction of minority and majority students, the significance of interactive and cooperative methods of teaching and learning, and the responsibility of all teachers, rather than just Latvian language teachers, for the linguistic development and socialization of minority students at school.<sup>69</sup>

At the same time, the researchers adopt an asymmetric approach to the situation of minority children in Latvian-language schools, referring to the children themselves (their linguistic skills and background), but not so much to the imperfect education system as the cause of the “problem”. This approach corresponds

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<sup>67</sup> Druvietē, I., Gavriļina, M. *Minoritātes bērni latviešu mācībvalodas skolās*. Puse, 2003, pp. 31–2.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35–6.

to what Stacy Churchill defines as *deficiency theories* in the education of minorities. According to Churchill, the deficiencies attributed to minority children may be different – *L-2 related* (children have insufficient command of majority language/language of instruction), *social* (children’s families are categorised as socially marginal), *cultural* (minority culture is described as the cause of education failures – e.g., stating that in the minority culture the prestige of formal education is lower than in the majority culture), *L-1 related* (the children do not know their native language well enough, that is why they cannot learn the target language sufficiently).<sup>70</sup> All of these claims, however, have one feature in common – they see the minority children themselves as a problem, without adopting a more critical outlook on the national education system. Some of these deficiency theories are fully reflected in the attribution of “problems” in Druviete and Gavriļina’s study. Thus, they point out that according to a survey, among “the biggest problems in ethnically and linguistically mixed classes are:

- misunderstanding of different aspects of mentality (40%), especially in Zemgale and Kurzeme;
- lack of methodical preparation (38%), especially in Vidzeme and Rīga;
- lack of special textbooks and other teaching aids (33%);
- difficulties in communication with the parents.”<sup>71</sup>

Out of the four mentioned problems, two – lack of methodology and lack of teaching aids – can be clearly attributed to the system, whereas “misunderstanding of mentality” and “communication with parents” place responsibility for the “problem” outside the system, with minority children and their parents. It is not clear what exactly is meant by “different aspects of mentality”. The formulation of the problem suggests that both the authors of the survey and the respondents (especially in Kurzeme and Zemgale, the regions where the presence of minorities is historically and currently less “visible”) imply that there is a clear and obvious difference of “mentality” between Latvian and non-Latvian students, and that is in itself a potential cause for problems – more so than lack of methodological training for teachers.

The discursive construction of “problem of minority children in Latvian schools” in Druviete and Gavriļina’s study is reinforced by a statist bias – e.g., “Now, gradually implementing the state’s language and education policy, ethnically mixed families more often choose Latvian as the language for their children’s instruction.”<sup>72</sup> In this passage, families’ choices are expected to be guided by state policy, not state policies guided by observing the interests of different members of the community. Druviete and Gavriļina also express reservations concerning the choice of ethnic minority families to send their children to Latvian-language schools, in view of the effect this may have on their ethnic identity:

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<sup>70</sup> Churchill, S. The Decline of the Nation-State and the Education of National Minorities. *International Review of Education/Revue internationale de pédagogie* 42 (4), 1996, pp. 265–90.

<sup>71</sup> Druviete, I., Gavriļina, M. *Minoritātes bērni latviešu mācībvalodas skolās*, p. 31.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

“Next to the global, regional, local and country component, also the ethnic component is important. It is necessary for the student to feel and be aware of their belonging to a certain ethnic group. It consists of national culture (native language, people’s history, literature, art, national lifestyle and life-lore [*dzīvesziņa*]), as well as the national outlook on universal human values... So it is to be remembered that minority student in a Latvian-language school will only partly acquire the so-called ethnic element of education, or will not acquire it at all. That is why submersion method of education will not be the mainstream practice recommended by the state.”<sup>73</sup>

The insistence on each student’s obligation “to feel aware of belonging to a certain ethnic group” is contrary to one of the aims of educating citizens in a multicultural society as formulated by James Banks: education should provide students not only with the opportunity to freely affirm their cultural (or racial, ethnic) identity, but also provide students with the freedom to function beyond their ethnic and cultural boundaries.<sup>74</sup>

## Teacher training

One of the crucial factors in ensuring access to mainstream education in Latvian to linguistic/ethnic minority children is appropriate **teacher training**. The minimum necessary to ensure that teachers in Latvian-language schools are prepared to teach students from different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds would include **LSL (Latvian as a Second Language) teaching skills** and **intercultural education** skills. LSL teaching qualification is not a mandatory requirement for Latvian-language school teachers. Therefore, the acquisition of such skills is a matter of choice for the teachers. The status of LSL teaching course in (higher education) teacher training programmes reflects this condition – everywhere, it is an optional part of pedagogical training. Currently, the University of Latvia and Liepāja Pedagogical Academy teach LSL methodology to Latvian Language and Literature teachers in the pedagogical qualification diploma programme, and Daugavpils University offers an optional course in Bilingual Education to students in primary school teachers’ professional BA programme, “bilingual education” being a term applied in Latvia only to minority education programmes, not to mainstream Latvian-language programmes. To teachers already in the profession, National Agency for Latvian Language Training offers LSL teaching methodology courses. Between 1997 and 2003, 63 groups of teachers have taken the 120 hour LSL methodology course with NALLT, 24 of those in Riga.<sup>75</sup> To date, there is no unified database that would allow to identify the percentage of Latvian language teachers in mainstream (Latvian-language) schools who have received professional training in LSL teaching methods.

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<sup>73</sup> Druviete, I., Gavriļina, M. *Minoritātes bērni latviešu mācībvalodas skolās*, p. 34.

<sup>74</sup> Banks, J. *Educating Citizens in a Multicultural Society*. 1997.

<sup>75</sup> NALLT, [www.lvavp.lv/user\\_images/documents/stat\\_lat2met\\_grup\\_eng.xls](http://www.lvavp.lv/user_images/documents/stat_lat2met_grup_eng.xls) Last visited on 01.05.2005.

Training in **intercultural education skills**, likewise, is not mandatory for teachers in Latvia. Currently, courses on intercultural education are available to teachers through the Education Development Centre in Riga, however, the trainers report low interest on behalf of Latvian-language school teachers.<sup>76</sup>

## 5. Attitudes towards the perspective of mainstreaming among professionals

In order to clarify the attitude of Latvian policy makers, education practitioners and experts towards the possibilities of mainstreaming cultural diversity in the national school system, semi-structured interviews were conducted between February and May 2005. The interviews testify to a very broad spectrum of attitudes concerning the need for mainstreaming, as well as a lack of consensus on the extent to which diversity in the national education system is already “mainstreamed”. The interviews can be divided into 3 broad categories: 1) Ministry of Education and Science and related institutions, 2) Local Education Authorities, and 3) school directors.

### MOES and related institutions

As a consequence of the normative bureaucratic institutional culture still dominant in the public sector, representatives of government institutions responsible for policy planning and implementation for the most part attach greater importance to those priorities which are clearly outlined in policy documents having the force of normative acts.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, civil servants in MOES and related agencies tend to attach greater importance to those aspects of education policy, which are clearly outlined in terms of functions and inputs and included in normative documents such as regulations, standards, or laws.

As described above, many of the measures used in some EU countries to ensure the mainstreaming of diversity in national education systems – from “hard” measures such as disaggregated data for analysis of academic achievements of different ethnic groups or special funding targeted at closing the “equality gap” between groups, to “soft” measures such as training of teachers in intercultural education and review of textbooks in order to reflect the diversity of society – are not included in normative policy documents in Latvia. The system, however, is currently evolving, and the recent concern with monitoring of education quality, reflected in the Constitutional Court’s ruling on the minority education reform

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<sup>76</sup> Golubeva, M. (ed.) *Starpkultūru izglītība: jāizlien no segas apakšas*. <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=110607&lang=lv> Last visited on 03.05.2005.

<sup>77</sup> Golubeva, M., and I. Reinholde. *Government efficiency and accountability*. In: J. Rozenvalds. (ed.) *How democratic is Latvia?* Riga 2005.

and in the proposed amendments to the General Education Law, allows to hope that this may be the right time for proposing new measures.

A series of interviews conducted at the MOES and some of its agencies in the spring of 2005 reveal the following about the attitudes of civil servants towards the possibility of mainstreaming diversity in the national education system:

1. There is little awareness of the measures adopted in some EU countries to ensure equal access of different ethnic or racial groups to quality education within one national system. The emphasis is much more on special programmes for the education of ethnic minorities. Most interviewees demonstrated awareness of the practices in other countries concerning separate education of ethnic minorities. Higher level policy planners made a point of setting minority education aside as something to do with the connections between Latvia and the country where the minority originated, or with the particular definitions of national minority in legal acts:

“Small ethnic groups have huge advantages... Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles, Jews... also Roma. With some countries we have cooperation agreements about teacher training, teaching aids, in-service training, e.g., with Lithuania and Estonia, teachers can go to Lithuania for in-service training in Lithuanian, we have wonderful cooperation with Poland... The governments of Poland and Lithuania have invested money in renovation of schools. Another ethnic group are those who speak Russian, they are offered the same conditions for education as smaller minorities, perhaps this provokes some debate, but in principle we observe all conventions – of course, with some reservations, which any state can do... If we look at Germany, the definition of national minority provoked long political debates, which I do not wish to go into.” (Senior MOES civil servant) *(Mazām etniskām grupām ir milzīgas priekšrocības... ukraiņiem, baltkrieviem, poļiem un ebrejiem... tai skaitā arī čigāņiem, pie tam ar dažādām valstīm mums ir starpvalstu līmenī sadarbības līgums gan skolotāju sagatavošanai, gan mācību līdzekļu, gan kvalifikācijas celšanai, piemēram, ar Lietuvu un Igauniju, skolotāji var braukt no lietuviešu skolas stažēties lietuviešu valodā Lietuvā, ar Poliju ir brīnišķīga sadarbība... Polijas, Lietuvas valdības ir ieguldījušas naudu skolu renovācijā. Otrā etniskā grupa ir mazākumtautību grupa, krievu valodā runājoša, viņiem tiek piedāvāti tādi paši izglītošanās nosacījumi kā mazajām mazākumtautībām, varbūt tas izraisa īpašas diskusijas, bet pēc pamatprincipiem tiek ievērotas visas konvencijas, protams, arī ar atrunām, kuras katra valsts var veikt... Ja mēs paskatīsimies uz Vāciju, tad mazākumtautību jēdzienu definējums ir izraisījis garas politiskās debates, kurās es negribu iesaistīties.)*

2. Attitude towards the possibility of mainstreaming diversity within the national education system, when described in general terms, varies from reserved to interested. No interview showed a negative reaction to the suggestion that more measures should be adopted for the positive recognition of diversity in schools. More open attitude was demonstrated by those who are involved in organizing informal education: “It is the reality that demands this approach... We need more exchange of experience.” (Senior civil servant, *Valsts Jaunatnes iniciatīvu centrs.*)

3. The specific measure that provoked very cautious and sometimes negative reaction was the suggestion that MOES should introduce disaggregated statistics to monitor the performance of different ethnic/linguistic groups within the national school system (the same argument, that collecting data of this kind would constitute discrimination, was repeated in several interviews).
4. There is a cautious and in many cases negative attitude towards all possible “hard” measures aimed at establishing equal access/overcoming discrimination of persons from minority groups. On the other hand, there is little awareness that the same could be achieved by “soft” measures such as information campaigns or training seminars. Several interviewees understood the question whether measures could be adapted to ensure representation of minority parents on school councils in Latvian-language schools as a suggestion to introduce quotas – and therefore disapproved of it.

### Local education authorities and school directors

The attitude of general education system practitioners – from local education authorities to school directors – towards the possibility of mainstreaming diversity in the national school system appears to be more open. The following similarities and difference from the discourse of MOES representatives emerge:

1. Similarly to MOES civil servants, professionals involved in the implementation of education policies tend to speak of diversity in terms of separate education of children from different ethnic groups, even though there is a greater awareness of the relativity of such “boundaries” in the school environment:

“It is also interesting that such schools are not separated from other schools, in the sense that in those schools about one half, sometimes more than half of the students are Latvian or Russian children, who integrated into this educational environment, which is offered by a particular minority school. For example, in the Estonian school more than half of the students are (ethnic) Latvians, same in Lithuanian school. In the Lithuanian school it is interesting that there are three categories of children: Russians, who have no connection to Lithuanian identity, Latvians, and Lithuanians, who have a connection to their ethnic country of origin.” (Riga education authority representative)

*(Interesanti ir arī tas, ka šīs skolas nav nodalītas no pārējām skolām, jo šajās skolās apmēram puse vai pat vairāk nekā puse dažos gadījumos ir latviešu tautības bērni vai krievu tautības bērni, kuri ir integrējusies izglītības vidē, kura tiem piedāvāta konkrētajā mazākumtautību mācību iestādē. Piemēram, Igaunijā skolā vairāk nekā puse ir latviešu bērni un lietuviešu skolā tas pats. Lietuviešu skolā ir interesants tas, ka tur ir pārstāvētas trīs tautības: krievu bērni, kuriem nav nekādas saistības ar Lietuvas identitāti, latviešu un lietuviešu bērni, kam ir saite ar etnisko dzimteni.)*

2. Local educational authorities' representatives and school directors are more ready to describe the challenges of overcoming inherited separation of schools:

“On the one hand, progress has to be made for society to accept this integration. At the same time, this happens naturally; if we speak of Russian schools, every year this boundary disappears, because the number of children in Russian schools in Riga is decreasing and it is possible that they go to Latvian schools. But I do not think that now Latvian schools, Latvian language teachers are happy, because this creates problems for them and they have to change their teaching style, their traditions, and to review their methods if there are several children in the class, who speak Latvian poorly, or do not speak it at all. Teachers themselves have to change and this is not an easy process.” (Riga education authority representative)

*(No otras puses, jāiet šo ceļu, lai sabiedrība pieņem šo integrāciju, taču tas notiek dabiskā ceļā, ja runājam par krievu skolām – ar katru gadu mums robežas mazinās, jo krievu skolās, it īpaši Rīgā, samazinās bērnu skaits, un, iespējams, ka viņi pāriet uz latviešu skolām. Bet nedomāju, ka pašlaik latviešu skolas, latviešu valodas skolotāji ir priecīgi, jo tas rada viņiem problēmas un viņiem jāmaina savs mācīšanas stils, tradīcijas un jāpārskata savas darbības metodes, ja klasē atrodas vairāki bērni, kuri vāji zina latviešu valodu, vai nezina nemaz. Skolotājiem pašiem ir jāmainās, un arī tas nav vienkāršs process.)*

“Diversity as a norm in the education system is topical for Latvia, I hope we are going in this direction. There are resources for this – such as the programme licensing procedure, but few (schools) are using it. There is low capacity for changing organizational culture... At the same time, the existence of variants provides the possibility of choice. A child with special needs can study in a general school with integrating programme... But also separate socialization is a choice.” (Minority school director)

*(Daudzveidība kā norma – tas ir aktuāls jautājums Latvijai. Es ceru, ka mēs ejam šajā virzienā. Licencēšanas procedūra – tas ir resurss dažādu pieeju realizācijai. Šo resursu vāji izmanto, gatavība mainīt organizācijas kultūru ir zema... Tanī pašā laikā, variantu esamība nodrošina brīvības izvēli. Bērns ar īpašām vajadzībām var mācīties arī normālā skolā ar integrējošo programmu... Bet arī nošķirtā socializācija ir izvēle.)*

It is important to involve local education authorities and school directors in the development of new diversity mainstreaming measures for Latvia from the very beginning, as their readiness for change and awareness of actual challenges appears to be less overshadowed by political rhetoric and more centred on the students as the purpose of educational effort.

## VI. Conclusions

The case for mainstreaming diversity within the national education system is based on three major sets of arguments: 1) the interplay of ethnic and political factors that has dominated education policies since the early 1990s caused deep mistrust for government policies in a significant part of the population, including Russian-speaking school staff and parents; 2) the general tendency towards greater accountability, transparency and performance management in the public administration system requires a more efficient and transparent approach towards the ensuring of equality in access to government services, such as public education; 3) the tendency towards positive recognition of cultural and ethnic diversity within national education systems has been growing in Europe throughout the 1990s, and is part of Council of Europe guidelines and many EU countries' government policies.

At the political level, the area of "ethnopolitics", as it is sometimes described in Latvia, will probably remain a field of severe disputes for some years to come – therefore, any radical measures aimed at overcoming the inherited ethnic separation of schools would present a great political risk.

The need for ensuring reliable measurement of equal access to education, including the measurement of outputs, is increasingly recognised by education policy planners, even though the progress in introducing new instruments of data gathering and data analysis about the performance of the school system is almost entirely owing to external actors (World Bank, OECD) and not all of the available sets of data and analytical instruments are put to use in the planning of new policies.

There is a reluctance at the policy planning level to introduce performance measurement instruments that would provide disaggregated data on the academic performance of different linguistic and ethnic groups – even though the political situation and distrust towards national education policies in the Russian-speaking part of the population calls for a demonstration of commitment to ensure equal access to quality for all.

In the present situation, it can be claimed that the current integration policies in the national school system have reached a limit where an assessment of the achievements and failures of measures taken so far is necessary, and a new paradigm for future policies – the mainstreaming of diversity – would help to achieve positive motivation of all actors involved in the process better than a simple

mechanical reproduction of previous measures (predominantly increasing the scope and efficiency of Latvian language acquisition in minority schools).

In order to achieve a greater degree of “practical” integration, implying greater social and political inclusion and positive orientation towards the members of other (than one’s own) ethnic and linguistic groups living in Latvia, it is necessary to adopt a set of policy guidelines or a strategy leading to the mainstreaming of diversity in the Latvian school system. Such strategy should be a result of broad consensus among the school system stakeholders (parents, teachers, students, school administrations, local education authorities, government and policy planners), and should be adapted after extensive consultations with the stakeholders. It should by no means be based on “hard” measures such as rapid reduction of the number of “Russian” schools or further increase of the proportion of hours to be taught in Latvian in minority education programmes. On the contrary, a gradual “liberalisation” of the regulations concerning the micro-management of the teaching and learning process at school, providing the opportunity of choice between different models – from completely integrated to relatively segregated – is a necessary pre-requisite for successfully overcoming the inherited ethnic separation.

The diversity mainstreaming policies could include (but not be limited to) the following sets of measures:

### **1. Research and data gathering in order to identify diversity-related needs and problem areas in the current school system:**

- 1) a study on **the inclusion of ethnic/linguistic minority children in Latvian-language schools** (identifying factors that have positive and negative influence on the development of inclusive education environment), to be supplemented by a study on the situation of students with linguistically/culturally different background in Russian-language schools;
- 2) a national **survey of teachers’ intercultural education skills** is necessary in order to see where additional in-service training resources are needed;
- 3) creating a national **database of teachers who have acquired LSL (L2) teaching skills** (this would enable policy planners, in the short term, to see which schools have need of more teachers with LSL skills, and in the long term, to plan the LSL teacher training courses according to the actual needs of schools in each region);
- 4) establishing a system of data gathering that would make possible the analysis of **disaggregated statistics** on the performance of different ethnic/linguistic groups in the national school system (while observing the laws and regulations on individual data protection);
- 5) case studies of the situation in education of groups with special needs, or groups suffering from “equality gap” (after disaggregated statistics analysis).

Such case studies could be more useful if conducted within specific communities (by a local education authority in consultation with schools and parent associations);

- 6) MOES-conducted **surveys of best practice in intercultural education** (projects, teacher training seminars, etc.) with the aim of disseminating and multiplying successful models.

## **2. Adjusting the MOES agencies' and local education authorities' structure and organisational culture to the needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse society:**

- 1) the newly created General Education Quality Agency should include, among its functions, **the collection and analysis of data on the performance of different ethnic/linguistic groups in the national school system** (while observing the laws and regulations on individual data protection);
- 2) **in-service seminars on intercultural communication** and on inclusive education for school inspectors and representatives of local education authorities would provide greater awareness of the needs and values of inclusion and equality in diverse society;
- 3) a unit responsible for the inclusion of the children of families recently settled in the country in the Latvian education system should be established at the MOES in the near future, reflecting the slowly but surely growing need for providing education to children whose native language is neither Latvian nor one of the traditional minority languages in Latvia. The responsibilities of such unit would include the assessment of the current situation in view of Latvia's membership in the EU and future perspectives of labour market and migration, and development of adequate measures to meet the emerging needs – such as intensive Latvian language courses for students entering the national education system from outside the country.

## **3. Adding new priorities to teacher training agenda (both teaching qualification and in-service training):**

- 1) **LSL teaching methods** should be included among obligatory (A part) courses for teaching qualification in all professional teachers' education programmes. This would enable all subject teachers to teach linguistic minority students – a situation most teachers are eventually going to face as classes become more mixed;

- 2) **intercultural education methods should be increasingly included in the curricula of teacher training institutions**, both in BA programmes leading to teaching qualification and in in-service training courses. For this purpose, special government funding should be made available to universities and organisers of training courses;
- 3) in view of the proposal to introduce **bilingual education in languages other than Latvian and Russian**, it is necessary to provide adequate methodological and linguistic training for future teachers in these programmes. As this requires considerable funding and identification of available teaching resources, a special policy document outlining the principles of planning, implementation and funding for this priority is necessary.

**4. A series of “soft” measures aimed at the step-by-step practical desegregation of the school system.** These could include (but not be limited to):

- 1) **information campaigns** to address new target audiences and attract potential students from ethnic/linguistic groups that were not traditionally served by respective school. Schools could be encouraged to engage in such campaigns by special funding provided via local education authorities. The need for such measures would be greater in Riga and Daugavpils (and possibly Ventspils and Liepāja), where the segregated school system is more in evidence than in the smaller towns and rural regions of Latvia;
- 2) in-service seminars on inclusive education environment are necessary to provide the background for a **change of institutional cultures in schools that previously viewed themselves as monoethnic**, but which now have a mixed target audience of students from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Such seminars could be funded by local education authorities, and organized by education NGOs such as the Centre for Education Development (*Izglītības attīstības centrs*);
- 4) regulations concerning the exact proportion of languages of instruction in minority schools, already made more relative and needs-based by the ruling of the Constitutional Court, should be further relaxed in the long term, parallel to the measures to attract minority students to schools teaching in Latvian;
- 5) the proposal to introduce **more bilingual classes, also in Latvian-language schools**, and in languages other than Russian, should be pursued as a concrete policy planning goal with funding attached to it. The new amendments to the General Education Law make it possible to implement such changes in schools, but without methodological backup and special support, and in view of very limited human resources, the proposal will remain only a good intention. As a first step towards providing analytical tools for this

policy, a **database of subject teachers with foreign language skills** sufficient for teaching should be created;

- 6) approval of new textbooks should not become more centralized, but rather include **more criteria ensuring that textbooks reflect the diversity of society in positive terms**, while not disregarding the problems and challenges some groups are facing or were facing historically.

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5. Civil servant, VJIC (State Centre for Youth Initiatives).
6. Local Education Authority representative (Riga).
7. Local Education Authority representative (a city in Latvia).
8. Director of a secondary school implementing programme for minorities (Riga).
9. Director of a secondary school implementing programme for minorities 2 (Riga).