

# **Integration policy in Latvia: theory and practice.**

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## **1. Introduction**

Public integration policies that are stated in political documents declare the involvement of all Latvia's residents in pursuit of the overall goals of the society. They refer to the guarantee that the Latvian nation will have the right to self-determination, as well as to the non-Latvians' right to preserve their native language and culture (Public Integration in Latvia, 2001). The Public Integration Programme states that public integration in Latvia involves partnership among various social strata, Latvians and non-Latvians, and citizens and non-citizens. All parties involved in integration must be active, according to the document (ibid).

Issues related to this research are based on the fact that there has been no harmony among those who are pursuing integration policies. On the one hand, the Public Integration Programme which was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2001 declares the state's official position vis-à-vis issues of public integration. On the basis of this document, the government approved a series of laws which relate to ethnic policy in Latvia, the aim being to ensure that the laws are in line with EU documents which regulate the rights of minorities. The policy is aimed at increasing the number of Latvian citizens, as well as at encouraging political participation by citizens and non-citizens alike.

On the other hand, there are quite a few politicians in Latvia who pursue a different position – one that could be termed a “nationalist political discourse.” These politicians oppose the official integration discourse of Latvia, as well as the positions which the EU takes vis-à-vis minority issues. The For the Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement party, for instance, has proposed amendments to Latvia's citizenship law which would limit the abilities of non-citizens to undergo naturalisation (Arāja). Nationalist radicals have written texts which are even more out of line with the official integration discourse. These texts are clearly intolerant and even hostile vis-à-vis Russians in Latvia (BNS news).

An “opposition discourse” which criticises both the Public Integration Programme and its implementation, meanwhile, can be found in

the Russian language mass media of Latvia (Zepa, 2005). The Latvian language mass media, by contrast, usually supports the official integration discourse (ibid). Previous studies show that local residents have the widest possible variety of opinions about these issues. Everyday experiences sometimes dictate a discourse of neutrality, while other survey respondents present an intolerant lack of understanding with respect to issues of ethnic policy along with a series of complaints about these issues. The study “Ethno-political Tensions in Latvia: A Search for a Resolution to the Conflict” shows that in discussions about ethnic relations, respondents differentiate between two levels – ethnic relations in society at large and ethnic relations in individual relationships. The dominant discourse among Latvians and non-Latvians involves a unique differentiation – the public at large claims that ethnic relations are poor (people say that relations are bad, conflict-based, harsh, etc.), while descriptions of individual relationships involve a wide range of statements, ranging from neutral to positive ones.

The existence of conflicting discourses among various agents of integration serves to support the goal of this study – to research processes related to public integration, as well as agents which have an effect on these.

## **2. The theoretical background of the research**

The national programme “Public Integration in Latvia” declares about the national context of the integration process – Latvia is a democratic, law-based nation state, one in which “there are no contradictions that cannot be resolved and that would not allow for the establishment of a nationally unified, nationally and socially integrated cohort of citizens” (Public integration in Latvia, p. 10). The integration programme also says that the government plans to design mechanisms aimed at guaranteeing the right of self-determination of the Latvian people, as well as at making sure that the rights of ethnic minorities are observed.

It is obvious that without referring to it specifically, the integration programme includes efforts to develop integration policies in two directions, the harmonisation of which is fairly complicated both in theory and in practice. On the one hand, there is the idea of strengthening the nation state, while on the other hand, the public integration programme stresses the idea that the people of Latvia are brought together by the desire to protect and develop their ethnic and cultural identity. Recognition of the development of identities and culture among various ethnic groups indicates that the programme includes certain elements of multiculturalism. Integrating the

ideas of a nation state and of multiculturalism in a single programme presents a complicated task and the one which may prove to be contradictory.

Similar conclusions were drawn by Estonian researchers who studied the Estonian public integration programme which was implemented during the period between 2000 and 2007. An Estonian integration researcher Raivo Vetik alleges that “the concept of public integration that is mentioned in the programme contains elements which can be contradictory under certain circumstances. Increasing the homogeneous nature of society and the preservation of ethnic differences is usually a contradictory process” (Vetik, 2002, p.59). Emphasising that it is important to justify the way in which unification of society is to be implemented and the kinds of differences among those who are integrated should be preserved, Vetik identifies three spheres of public integration in Estonia – the ones which establish a strict foundation for all groups of society. These include linguistics and communications (the Estonian language as the joint information space), legal and political issues (the community of loyal citizens and the need to reduce the number of non-citizens), and socio-economic issues (all ethnic groups must have equal social mobility opportunities). These elements are accompanied by cultural pluralism, which means that non-Estonians have the guaranteed right to preserve their language and culture (Vetik, *ibid*). At the same time, however, Estonian researchers also point out that there are differences in political and academic discourse when it comes to public integration in Estonia (Kalmus). This makes it distinct that implementation of the principles of multiculturalism is a fairly complicated task.

Before we present an analysis of Latvian practices in terms of public integration, let us take a quick look at such concepts as “nation state”, “national minorities” and “multiculturalism”. Interpretation of these has much to do with the way in which contradictory problems can be resolved – problems which relate to the establishment of a nationally unified and nationally and socially integrated community of citizens in a multi-ethnic country.

### **3. The nation state**

The concept of a “nation state” is internally contradictory, because in essence it means that territorial and legal boundaries coincide with the boundaries of a specific ethnic group by which the state is identified.

Usually the name of the ethnic group is included in the name of the country (Raanan). Given, however, that there are very few countries in which one ethnic group makes up nearly the entire community of residents, there are practical or theoretical issues about national minorities, immigrants, citizenship institutions, multiculturalism, etc.

Each of these concepts has been a subject of many volumes of academic texts, and there have been extensive debates among politicians when it comes to these ideas. In Latvia, for instance, discussions about the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities have involved a fairly harsh exchange of ideas about the way in which national minorities should be defined. People have asked, for example, whether Russians should be seen as a national minority.

Admitting that there are a few ethnically homogeneous countries in the world, representatives of various theoretical perspectives seek to find a term that would more precisely describe the community of citizens in an ethnically heterogeneous country. Anthony D. Smith, who defends the concept of primordialism, for instance, argues that in the case of poly-ethnic countries, the inclusion of various ethnic groups which preserve their special cultural heritage demands a specific process which usually emerges only over the course of several centuries – one which enables the emergence of a concrete “political culture” and “civic nationalism”. This allows the individual to feel right at home in two areas of loyalty and identity. Examples of this include Catalonians and Spaniards, Bretons and the French, and Scots and the British (Smith).

Rogers Brubaker, for his part, compares the emergence of feelings of nationalism in Germany and France, arguing that feelings of nationalism can emerge before or after the establishment of a nation state. In Germany, such emotions existed before the nation state was created, and they served as a stimulus for the establishment of the state. In France, for its part, nationalist feelings emerged after the state was set up, emerging from government institutions, the civic community, and the sense of civic belonging (Brubaker, p. 23). Brubaker emphasises the idea that differences are based on the principle under which society is unified – in France, the society is unified politically, and participation therein depends on citizenship. In that case, we can speak of civic nationalism. In Germany, the society is unified on the basis of ethnicity, and this is an example of ethnic nationalism (ibid, p. 4).

If we apply these concepts to Latvia, we find that the concept of ethnic nationalism is a good way of describing the efforts of Latvians to

restore their country's independence in the late 1980s. If we look at the people from minority groups who obtained citizenship only after the restoration of independence, however, we must speak of the concept of civic nationalism instead. We can say that both of these principles of unification – the political and the ethnic – co-exist in Latvia. This could be described as the dual nature of public integration in Latvia. On the one hand, it speaks to the possibility of integration, but on the other hand it poses the question of whether various groups in society can be integrated on the basis of different foundations – the principle of ethnicity or that of citizenship.

Will Kymlicka, the author of the concept of “liberal pluralism”, introduced a dimension of liberal politics when discussing the concept of “civic nationalism” (Kymlicka, 2001, p.16). Kymlicka argues that a liberal “civic nation” is different from an illiberal ethnic nation in that the most important duty for an ethnic nation is to reproduce a specific ethnic and national culture and identity, while a civic nation, unlike an ethnic one, is neutral vis-à-vis the ethno-cultural identity of its citizens. The latter society defines national belonging as the observance of specific principles of democracy and law. Michael Keating, for his part, stresses that language and cultural policies do not determine whether a nation is civic or ethnic. Instead he points to the ways in which language and culture are used either to establish a civic nation or to engage in ethnic alienation (Keating).

The ideas of the aforementioned authors suggest that the emergence of a “unified and nationally and socially integrated community of citizens” requires a precise understanding of several things. First of all, is the principle of public unity ethnic or civic in nature? Second, what policies can be implemented so as to enhance public unity on the basis of a single, specific principle, thus achieving a transformation in the orientations of various groups in society?

#### **4. National minorities**

In the academic literature, authors usually include two categories of minorities in the concept of national minorities. First, there are ethnic groups which have no country in which they represent the majority but which either used to have such a country or have yearned for one (Kymlicka, *op. cit.*, p. 25). This description applies to the Catalonians and Basques in Spain, the Flemish in Belgium, Scots and the Welsh in Great Britain, the Corsicans in France, and the Livonians in Latvia. Second, there are ethnic groups which lived in a territory before the arrival of an ethnic group which later

established a state in the territory and, through violence, forced the original residents to become a part of the new state – indigenous people, in that case, tend to consider the organisers of the state to be aliens (Kymlicka, *ibid*, p. 25). The Indians of the United States are such a group.

In defining various groups which represent a minority in a larger group, one usually uses the word “minority”. This applies to sexual minorities, religious minorities, those who cast fewer votes for one party than others do for another, a minority within a political party, or a minority in some other institution. Ethnic groups can also be called ethnic minorities. In the Latvian language, the concept of “mazākumtautības” or “minorities” is used. The term “minority schools”, for instance, refers to Polish, Ukrainian, Hebrew, Estonian and other schools where classes are taught in the relevant language. In describing the ethnic composition of Latvia during the Soviet period, the term “immigrants” is often used. This definition is usually applied to groups of people who left their native land voluntarily and moved to another country, usually for some political or economic reasons. Immigrants who arrive in a new country and observe its laws have the right to obtain citizenship in accordance with the country’s defined procedure for doing so.

The restoration of Latvia’s independence and the collapse of the Soviet Union created a situation in which the arrival of Soviet-era migrants from other Soviet republics was compared to international migration processes. The change in Latvia’s statehood led to a situation in which the fact of immigration was based on a new concept – the need to obtain citizenship in newly independent Latvia, the need to learn the official state language to become integrated into the labour market, and adaptation to the move toward greater use of the state language in education. This situation is one which can create extensive conflicts between the Latvian state and this group of immigrants. If the state’s goal is to strengthen the status of a nation state in which an important role is performed by a community of citizens who are loyal to the state, the state language and the state’s culture, then the immigrant group, like groups of immigrants in any country, wishes to support the preservation of its own ethnic identity and culture. It must also be stressed that the massive migration processes of the Soviet era created radical changes in Latvia’s ethnic composition. The percentage of Russians in Latvia increased from 9% in 1935 to 34% in 1989, while the proportion of ethnic Latvians dropped from 77% in 1935 to 52% in 1989 (Latvian State Statistical Committee). The mass immigration in Latvia was much different than immigration in Western European countries, where

immigrant groups tend to be proportionally smaller in comparison to the overall population.

## **5. Integration of immigrants, multiculturalism**

According to Will Kymlicka, Western democracies have had more than 200 years of experience in terms of integrating immigrants, and there have been a few cases in which immigrants who have arrived legally and have the right to citizenship have created threats against the stability of liberal democracy (Kymlicka, *op. cit.*, p. 32). At the same time, Kymlicka also admits that there have been cases when requests to learn the state language in order to obtain citizenship and requests for children to learn the state language in schools have been taken as an offence by immigrant groups. In evaluation of integration experience, Kymlicka acknowledges that until the 1960s, the countries which received the greatest number of immigrants (the United States, Canada and Great Britain) essentially implemented assimilation policies. Immigrants were expected to accept the local cultural norms. Eventually, immigrants began to be similar to local residents in terms of their speech, their clothing, the way in which they spent their free time, the foods that they ate, the size of their families, their identities, etc. In the 1970s, however, it was revealed that this model of assimilation is unrealistic, unnecessary and unjust (*ibid*).

Such policies are unrealistic because many groups can never be fully integrated with locals as a result of visual or emotional differences. Forced assimilation is unnecessary, because in the cases when immigrants have a strong sense of identity, they may never become loyal citizens. Forced assimilation is unfair, because it denies an equal attitude vis-à-vis all immigrants, and for many this can become a very oppressive process (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 33).

Since the 1970s, immigrants have increasingly been demanding a “multicultural” model of integration, one that would enable various integration strategies. Canada and Australia are two countries in which multicultural policies are being implemented. The two governments have undertaken to sponsor and to actively support multiculturalism as an official policy. Great Britain is also open to the idea of multiculturalism. France, Germany and Japan are most certainly not (Kivisto).

During the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, academics focused on theoretical research involving multiculturalism. The Canadian political philosopher Charles Taylor describes multiculturalism as “politics of

recognition”, which means looking for techniques whereby individual ethnic identities can be preserved while, at the same time, using citizenship as a compensating identity which allows different ethnic groups to become integrated into the state (Taylor). Taylor emphasises that “recognition” and “non-recognition” on the part of others are the foundation of identities. He also points to “recognition” as a vital human need. Taylor has spoken of two different kinds of “recognition” that are common in present-day politics – the politics of universalism and the politics of differences. In the first case, the equality of all citizens is recognised. In the latter case, the emphasis is on the special cultural and other identities of citizens.

Another theorist in the field of multiculturalism is Bhikhu Parekh, who hails from India and points to a similar paradox in the area of multiculturalism. He argues that unity and differences are equally important, but at the same time they limit each other. The deeper the differences, the stronger the unity must be to keep a heterogeneous society together while, at the same time, maintaining that which is different. Referring to Taylor, Parekh argues that recent debates about multiculturalism have focused on these two alternatives – the state either recognises equal rights for everyone, or it chooses politics which can recognise the differences among various cultures.

Steven Vertovec argues that multiculturalism relates to many discourses which are both different and overlapping. The term “multiculturalism” is used to describe various situations and meanings, e.g., as a description of demographic diversity, political ideology, operating policies, goals related to institutional transformations, opportunities for cultural manifestations, overall moral challenges, new areas of political battles, or a manifestation of the phenomena of post-modernism (Vertovec).

Reviewing the cross-section of various interpretations of multiculturalism, Ralph Grillo proposes a border between “weak” multiculturalism and strict multiculturalism. Weak multiculturalism, according to Grillo, exists when differences in culture are recognised only in the private sector, and when immigrants and members of ethnic minorities are expected to take part in a high degree of assimilation in the public sphere, in relation to issues related to judicial affairs, the government, the market, education and employment. Strict multiculturalism, by contrast means that there is institutional recognition of cultural differences in the public sector, also including political representation (Grillo, Riccio and Salih).



## **6. Public integration policies and multiculturalism**

When analysing the policies aimed at implementing multiculturalism, Ralph R. Premdas has pointed to two versions or faces of multiculturalism (Premdas). The first version exists in those countries in which there are several ethnic groups and in which their co-existence has been institutionalised at the political and administrative level. Premdas points to the model of consensual democracy that has been defined by Arend Lijphart.

The second option is to take a formal approach vis-à-vis minorities, supporting the demand of the minorities to preserve at least some of their cultural traditions whilst simultaneously supporting the values and views of a nation state. Cultural pluralism in such countries has emerged thanks to processes of mass migration. Typically, immigrants in these countries seek to achieve legal equality and to become involved in the national community. Premdas argues that this duality in loyalty contains a certain amount of risk. Problems can arise if an ethnic group is not properly assimilated and encounters systematic discrimination. This can encourage the group to take a defensive position and to question its identity and its loyalty vis-à-vis the state as a means for demonstrating dissatisfaction. If conditions do not improve, such groups can eventually demand autonomy.

These two models can be seen as the extremes of the scale of multiculturalism policies. Other, more moderate models, of course, are also possible.

Writing about the politics of multiculturalism in Estonia, Raivo Vetik has explained that its essence can be understood if there is a comparison of four different models of democracy (liberal democracy, multicultural democracy, consensual democracy, ethnic democracy) on the basis of four considerations – recognition of the fundamental principles of democracy, recognition of group rights, institutionalisation of the policies of group rights, and the recognition of group privileges (Vetik, p. 61).

Liberal democracy recognises the main principles of democracy, promoting individual freedoms as the central value and, thus, denying the rights of groups. Multiculturalism recognises the rights of groups but does not provide for the political institutionalisation of same. In accordance with the principles of consensual democracy, group interests are politically institutionalised. In the case of an ethnic democracy, the privileges of a single group are recognised.

In describing the situation which prevails in Estonia, Raivo Vetik argues that there is a fairly fragile boundary between multiculturalism and ethnic democracy. He points out that the democracy of multiculturalism is similar to ethnic democracy in which both recognise the rights of groups. They differ, however, in that the democracy of multiculturalism does not recognise the institutionalisation of a certain group's privileges whilst, at the same time, recognising the rights of a substantial and titular national group – something that cannot be seen as discrimination against ethnic minorities and cannot be seen as support for the privileges of the specific national group (Vetik, *ibid*, p. 62). It has to be said that this explanation leaves many questions about minorities, about the rights of titular groups, and about the implementation of these groups with the help of specific policies. Presumably, a clearer link to politics could be provided by a view of multiculturalism in the light of liberalism – e.g., the approach of Kymlicka (Kymlicka, 1995), which emphasises that specific and collective rights aimed at minority cultures are compatible with the principles of democratic principles. We see that there can be many different manifestations of multiculturalism, but at the last time, it is important to make sure that the politics of multiculturalism is not empty declaration. Instead, it must be an organic component in the ideology which the state is pursuing.

The first country to announce the politics of multiculturalism officially was Canada, which did so in 1971. Canada established programmes and services in support of ethno-cultural associations so as to help minority groups to overcome their difficulties and to promote their full participation in public life. Canada granted constitutional recognition to multiculturalism in 1982, approving the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter>). The government approved special laws in accordance with that charter, stating that “multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of the Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of the Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage” (<http://lois.justice.gc.ca/en/c-18.7/226879.html>).

Western countries which preserve their status as nation states are, at the same time, trying to adopt various models for integrating minorities. Latvia's situation is one in which, on the one hand, there are efforts to strengthen the nation state, while at the same time, and on the other hand, there are demands which minorities make vis-à-vis the state (Table 1).

**Table 1. The politics of a nation state and the interests of minorities**

<b>Resources used to strengthen the nation state</b>	<b>Demands waged against the state by minorities</b>
Citizenship policies	Liberalisation of citizenship policies
State language policies	Liberalisation of the Language Law
Education policies	Liberalisation of the Education Law
Employment of citizens in government	Reduction in the employment-related limitations which non-citizens face
The national mass media, symbols, holidays	Greater opportunities to strengthen ethnic identity and culture
Migration policies	
Repressive resources (the police)	

Kymlicka argues that the politics of a nation state and the demands of minorities must be reviewed together, because the demands of minorities are often a reaction to a political step that has been taken in a country which seeks to strengthen the nation state (Kymlicka, 2001).

## **7. Models of integration and acculturation**

The concept of “acculturation” applies to processes which are a result of long-lasting and intercultural contacts among individuals, families, communities and societies. When people of various cultures develop contacts amongst themselves, they can transfer cultural behaviours, forms of language, views, values, products, technologies and institutions among themselves (Rudmin).

For the first time the word “acculturation” was used in a report prepared in 1880 by J.V. Powell, who worked for the American Ethnographic Bureau. He analysed local languages in America (Oxford Dictionary, 1989). It was only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, that researchers began to focus on acculturation issues in a scholarly way. The first serious acculturation theory was elaborated by Thomas and Znaniecki in their study of Polish immigrants in America.

A look at the development of acculturation-related research is provided in a table 2 designed by Floyd W. Rudmin, “The number of acculturation studies” (Rudmin, p. 2). We can see that the greatest number of studies in this area was conducted over the last decade.

**Table 2. The number of acculturation studies**

	PsycINFO (an index of psychology databases, including dissertations)	Dissertations (based on the international index of dissertation abstracts in all disciplines)
1900-1930	0	0
1931-1940	17	5
1941-1950	60	25
1951-1960	97	49
1961-1970	111	69
1971-1980	248	153
1981-1990	572	700
1991-2000	1,571	1,376

Source: Rudmin, F.W. (2003). Catalogue of Acculturation Constructs: Descriptions of 126 Taxonomies, 1918-2003.

Generally speaking, the phenomenon of acculturation is a matter of interest in several areas of academic study, because theories about acculturation have been developed by sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, political scientists and linguists. In his analysis, Rudmin points to a certain problem – scholars have designed various taxonomies of forms of acculturation, and the same terms are sometimes used in slightly different meanings. For that reason, it is very important to provide precise information about the way in which a specific type of acculturation is understood within the framework of a specific theory.

The most widely used theory of acculturation is that of John W. Berry. He designed and updated this theory over the course of many years, and he has countless followers who have used the concept in empirical research. Some have supplemented his approach. According to Berry, the term “strategies of acculturation” includes actively expressed attitudes and behaviours. This is a strategy for existing in a society in which there are multiple cultures. Berry argues that we can speak of theories of acculturation in the cases when there is a key difference between an individual’s preferences (attitudes) and his or her lifestyle and activities.

According to Berry’s theory (Berry, 2001), there are four major types of acculturation strategies – assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation:

Assimilation – individuals do not want to preserve their cultural heritage, trying instead to maintain intensive contacts with another culture;

Separation – individuals attach a great deal of importance to the preservation of their own culture and avoid intensive contacts with another culture;

Integration – individuals attach a great deal of importance to the preservation of their own culture while trying to maintain intensive contacts with another culture;

Marginalisation – individuals do not wish to preserve their cultural heritage or have no opportunity to do so, while at the same time they have no contacts with representatives of another culture (often for reasons of social alienation or discrimination).

In our study, another possible type of strategy is fusion in establishing a new identity. This strategy of acculturation is proposed in the taxonomy of other researchers in this area. Some are the followers of Berry (LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton, for instance (LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton), along with Bourhis and others (Bourhis, Moise, Perrault and Senecal). This model involves the fact that the result of integration is the emergence of a new identity. In his work, Bourhis speaks of the emergence of a new identity, as well as a manifestation of the values of individualism (See Table 3).

Berry argues that acculturation strategies can only be called acculturation strategies if individuals have freedom of choice and the relevant opportunities. The selection of an integration strategy, for instance, is possible only if the other culture is open and inclusive with respect to the diversity of cultures. This means that the society is prepared to adapt many important institutions (related to health care, education, the law, labour, etc.) to cultural diversity, accepts the ideology of multiculturalism, has no distinct biases or discrimination, and favours good relations among ethnic groups.

Berry also speaks of a “multicultural assumption” which he has discovered in his research. This assumption says that **only the people who feel secure about their own cultural identity can accept those who are different.**

**Table 3. Selection of acculturation strategies and societal strategies as a whole. The theory of Berry, supplemented with the concepts of other researchers (LaFramboise, Coleman and Gerton, 1993; Bourhis, et al., 1997)**

		Preservation of one's ethnic culture and identity	
		+	-
Frequency of ethnic relations with another culture	+	Integration/multiculturalism	Assimilation/merger of cultures (the "melting pot")
	-	Separation/segregation	1) Marginalisation/exclusion 2) Emergence of a new identity (fusion) 3) Individualism

In this context, the study of acculturation-related attitudes over the last several years has increasingly emphasised the expectations of acculturation – i.e., the kinds of acculturation strategies that are supported by a dominant group. Depending on the extent to which the strategies chosen by immigrants coincide with the expectations of the dominant group, relations among those groups emerge (Montreuil and Bourhis).

If both groups prefer integration and assimilation as adaptation strategies, relations are good. Problems in relations occur if the dominant group only accepts the assimilation strategy, while immigrants prefer the integration strategy. Conflicting relations in relation to this typology also occur if the dominant group's attitudes promote segregation, or if immigrants choose to stay apart from the dominant group. In such cases, there is a full lack of positive communications, and the two groups ignore one another. Research shows that forced assimilation creates a counter-reaction and promotes the spread of the strategy of separation (Shamai, Ilatov).

## 8. Ethnic and civic identities

In order to help us to understand acculturation strategies, Berry also offers the concept of **cultural identity**. Here Berry refers to a set of views

and attitudes which people accept with respect to belonging to a certain group. Just as Berry's, the taxonomy of Berry's acculturation strategy is based on two dimensions, cultural identity is based on two dimensions – identification with an ethnic group (**ethnic identity**) and the subjective belonging to a country (**civic identity**). These dimensions can be independent of one another, and they are “nesting” in the sense that ethnic identity can be maintained within the confines of a broader civic identity (for instance, an ethnic Italian who lives in Australia) (Berry).

Strategies of acculturation are related to an individual's identity. In other words, when both identities are accepted, that represents integration. If the two identities are denied, that means marginalisation. If one or the other identity is dominant, then that refers to assimilation or separation respectively.

In accordance with the theory of social identity, it is extremely important for people to uphold a positive social identity, one part of which is belonging to various groups. Such people usually have good thoughts about themselves and the groups to which they belong, and this has much to do with their relationships with other groups. If one's own group does not seem better than other groups and the individual continues to identify with that group, then he or she seeks ways of maintaining the feeling that his or her group is still superior. This can be achieved by demonstrating increased trust in the group and shaping a more negative attitude vis-à-vis other groups or discriminating against them (Tajfel, Turner).

## **9. Results of study**

### ***9.1. The choice of acculturation strategies and acculturation expectations among the population***

Given how complex it is to integrate a society, this study reviews the existing experience of respondents in terms of contacts with society, looking also at civic and ethnic identity, as well as the behavioural models (and acculturation strategies) which are related to the same. Researchers have also looked at social agents who play an important role in shaping and implementing integration policy – politicians, the mass media and public organisations.

Research concerning integration practices is based on an enhanced version of John Berry's concept of acculturation strategy, one with the help of which support for and identification with five acculturation models was evaluated (Integrācijas..., 2006, pp. 13-15).

A quantitative survey of residents and focus group discussions held among local residents show that both Latvians and people of other nationalities most often support the selection of the integration strategy – 80% of Latvians, 83% of Russians, and 81% of the people of other nationalities. In accordance with this strategy, representatives of minorities attach a great deal of importance to the preservation of their culture, but at the same time they feel a sense of belonging to the Latvian state and its society and speak fluent Latvian.

According to Berry's theory, an integration strategy can be seen as the most optimal way of ensuring ethnic harmony in society, and it can be said that good conditions exist in Latvia for integration, because 80% of Latvians support the integration strategy, 65% of Russian speaking residents of Latvia identify themselves with it (Integrācijas..., 2006, pp. 26-55). At the same time, an equal percentage of Latvians support the idea that non-Latvians might select the assimilation strategy (81%), while among Russians, only 44% support that idea. Differing views vis-à-vis assimilation strategies indicate that there is a difference between the acculturation strategy and expectations, and to a certain extent this creates tensions between the two socio-linguistic groups in Latvia.

Expectations related to acculturation are also demonstrated vis-à-vis people's views with respect to this opinion: *“Latvians must understand and accept the fact that Latvia's society is made up of various ethnic groups, including Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, the Roma, Lithuanians and others.”* Among Latvians, 85% of respondents agree with the view, and 11% do not. Generally speaking, it can be concluded that most Latvians are open to an integration strategy with respect to Russian speaking residents of Latvia, while approximately one-ninth (11%) refuse to accept the multicultural situation which prevails in the country. They consider an ethnically homogeneous country to be more acceptable.

Analysis of the extent to which ethnic Russians identify themselves with other strategies for acculturation shows that 30% identify with the strategy of fusion, and 29% identify with the strategy of assimilation. In terms of support, these two strategies are in the second and third place behind the strategy of integration when it comes to Russian respondents. The strategy of fusion is supported by 47% of Russians, and the strategy of assimilation is supported by 44% (as was noted before, 81% of Latvians support the assimilation strategy, while 44% support the fusion strategy).

Among Latvians and Russians alike, the most negatively rated strategy is that of marginalisation – the situation in which non-Latvians do



not wish to preserve their ethnicity and cultural heritage, but also do not feel any sense of belonging or interest in the Latvian state. Only 10% of Latvians and 13% of Russians support this strategy.

Differing attitudes among Latvians and Russians are seen when it comes to the strategy of separation – a situation in which individuals attach a great deal of importance to the preservation of their own culture whilst avoiding contacts with Latvians and failing to develop a sense of belonging to Latvia. Among Latvians, this strategy is supported only by 9% of respondents, while 27% of Russians do the same. One-fifth of Latvia's Russian speaking residents (20%) feel that they can largely or completely identify themselves with this strategy.

Those who support the strategy of separation are the people who insist that Russian culture is superior to Latvian culture, people who do not wish to speak or learn the Latvian language. These are the people who do not agree with this view: *“Russians must understand that the state language in Latvia is the Latvian language, and so in order to live in Latvia, one must speak the Latvian language”* (11%). They feel that *“the Russian culture is superior to the Latvian culture, and for that reason, Russians in Latvia do not need to learn the Latvian language”* (21%). It is important that fewer people who identify with the strategy of separation are found among those who are 31 to 45 years old. These apparently are the people who have done better in merging into Latvian society. They have established families, and in civic terms they feel a sense of belonging to the country. A negative trend, however, is that young people choose the strategy of separation more often than the average among all age groups (26%).

All in all, the study shows that both Latvians and Russian speakers in Latvia are often subject to various stereotypes that are maintained in society and reproduced in the mass media. Among Russians stereotypes about Latvian nationalism, which alienate and offend Russians, are commonly held. Latvians, for their part, often hold stereotypes about Russian chauvinism and about the refusal of Russians to learn the Latvian language. Although the survey results show that the trends of Latvian nationalism and Russian chauvinism are supported only by a small segment of society, focus group discussions prove that these stereotypes are very strong and that they affect both the choice of acculturation strategies and the expectations of acculturation.

## ***9.2. The political aspect of integration***

The political aspect of integration is both extremely important and complicated. It is important because politicians control the construction of models related to the future of society, and they also control the implementation of those models. It is complicated because among the authors of policies there are different views about integration. Also the terminology, upon which ethno-policy is based, is interpreted in different ways, even though such policy is the cornerstone for public integration. Terminology used on an everyday basis requires a theoretical explanation, but Latvia has not had sufficiently broad and explanatory discussions about the concept of “national identity”. The debates, which began in the early 1990s about the kind of nation that was being shaped in Latvia and the kind of model of nationalism which prevails in the country – an ethnic or a civic model, have diminished.

Various social agents have different levels of influence when it comes to public integration processes. Many experts in the area of the civil society emphasise that the lack of effectiveness in national integration policies can be blamed on political parties and the politicians who, in the struggle over political power, make vast use of ethnic and linguistic belonging as an effective form of political capital, thus polarising society.

This is confirmed through analysis of election results. In comparing the dynamics of the electorate of political parties during the last four parliamentary elections, one can see that among the parliamentary parties, the ones which have a heterogeneous electorate – the ones which receive support from Latvians and Russian speakers – are disappearing. With each election, the trend of each party’s range of voters being more and more homogeneous is becoming more distinct, with parties attracting only Latvians or members of ethnic minorities. For the Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement could be mentioned as the most typical example. Since the 1993 parliamentary election, it has always been supported almost exclusively by Latvians, with no more than 2-3% of Russians voting for the party. The electorate of other influential and more recently established parliamentary parties also tends to be homogeneous. Among those who voted for the People’s Party in the 2002 election, for instance, 94% were Latvians. The Latvian Alliance of the Green Party and Farmers Union, too, received 95% of its votes from Latvians. 91% of the supporters of the New Era party and the First Party of Latvia were Latvians. These are, with a good reason, called Latvian parties

as a result of the ethnicity of their supporters. The party alliance For Human Rights in a United Latvia is the greatest representative of minority interests, and 72% of its supporters are the members of ethnic minorities.

Despite the ethnic polarisation of the electorate, experts still believe that ethnic conflicts in Latvia are unlikely, because problems which would occur, if the conflict were to develop more deeply, are not of the interest to public or to politicians. At the same time, however, many social agents, including politicians, are interested in upholding a certain level of tension in the society so as to gain specific benefits as a result of that.

If we analyse the position taken by Latvian politicians on ethnic policies, we can see that these positions tend to be ambivalent. A survey of the views of the political elite shows that the positions of the Latvian and the Russian speaking elite are most diverse when it comes to the issues related to the rights of minorities – 60% of non-Latvians and only 5% of Latvians admit that this is a serious problem. This shows that on the one hand, Latvian politicians do not think that issues of minority rights are of importance among other problems. On the other hand, ethnic policy is the specific issue that is used to manipulate with the viewers' votes and to polarise their choices.

It is true, the statements made in the party documents about the policies related to public integration are quite diverse among Latvian parties, and that is also true when the statements of those parties are compared to those which are presented by minority parties. For the Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement is a conservative and nationalist party, and typically it argues that when it comes to the issues which apply to public integration – learning the state language, minority education reforms, enhanced requirements with respect to naturalisation – are the ones which minorities have to deal with. However, the party's programme defines no obligations which Latvians must accept in order to enable integration – tolerance and openness towards those who wish to become integrated. According to Berry, strategies of acculturation can be called strategies of acculturation only if individuals have freedom of choice and the relevant capacities. The selection of an integration strategy, for instance, is possible only if the other culture is open and has an inclusive orientation with respect to cultural diversity. An integration programme which only states the obligations of minorities and does not have anything to say about tolerance vis-à-vis various nationalities and cultural values is one which can be compared to assimilation policy. The Alliance of the Green Party and Farmers Union has a similar position. The only statement in its

programme which has to do with ethnic policy is: “We will shape Latvia as a nationalist, pretty and powerful country, with Latvian as the only state language and Latvian culture as the dominant culture. We support the idea that only the Latvian nation has the right to determine the future of the Latvian state” (Central Election Commission, 2006).

Other Latvian parties recognise the right of minorities and their culture to survive in their programme documents. The First Party of Latvia declares its support to a multicultural Latvian society but with the Latvian language as the only state language. The First Party of Latvia supports integration and naturalisation, and in these processes, the Latvian language is stressed as a key instrument. The party’s programme emphasises the need to preserve minority cultures: “Minorities are a part of the Latvian people, and their culture belongs to Latvia’s culture. For that reason, we support the establishment of conditions which allow *national minorities* to preserve and develop their culture and to protect their identity, religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage” (Programme of the First Party of Latvia).

Similarly, the Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party states in its programme that the Latvian language must be the only state language. The programme also stresses the need for all of Latvia’s residents to be loyal towards the country: “Every citizen of Latvia must understand that he or she is first and foremost a citizen of the Latvian state, and only then does he or she represent his or her ethnic group.” The party also supports the principle which says that there must be respect for each language and culture of a minority nationality: “Not just Latvians, but also non-Latvians wish to preserve their ethnicity. For that reason, we must support the efforts of people of other nationalities to preserve their ethnic identity.” Latvia’s Way defines Latvia as a “nation state with a multicultural society.” New Era and the People’s Party also speak of the recognition of minority cultures in their programmes.

Minority parties underline the right of minorities to preserve their identity. The views of the People’s Harmony Party with respect to ethnic issues are based on the idea that the right of Latvians to communicate only in their own language in their country must be unlimited, but the situation of Russian speakers must be made easier. The party argues, for instance, that local government institutions must offer assistance to people in the Russian language, and schools must be allowed to choose how best to achieve the nationally specified level of Latvian language skills. The People’s Harmony Party stresses that the Russian language in Latvia must be given the status of

a minority language. The party alliance For Human Rights in a United Latvia argues that Latvia is “democratic and multicultural.”

The fact is that the language of party documents is much more “sterile” than the things which politicians say in Parliament and in the media, but these documents display a broad spectrum of positions. The poles of this spectrum are held by conservative nationalist parties on the one hand and by minority parties on the other. The former parties do not refer to recognising minorities in their documents, while the latter parties avoid using terms such as “nation state.” An analysis of party documents indicates that centrist parties are more open to the establishment of successful integration policies.

Typically, the programmes of various parties use different terms and different interpretations of those terms when it comes to political integration. The context of problems related to integration is defined in diverse ways. There is a particular split between the minority and Latvian parties, but it can also be seen that there is a great diversity in the use of terminology among Latvian parties and in the views of parties when it comes to various problems. For the Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement the discourse of requirements vis-à-vis those who obtain naturalisation through naturalisation mostly deals with terms such as “a Latvian Latvia” and “repatriation.” The Latvia’s Way party, by contrast, uses the terms “nation state and “multicultural society” – terms without which the emergence of public integration policies cannot be imagined, because they point both to the model of the state and to the role of minorities therein. The programmes of minority parties, by contrast, are dominated by the “discourse of defence,” speaking to the special status of Russian as a language of minority communications as a method for preserving the identity of Russians.

Another problem, which keeps political forces from having a unified understanding of integration policy, should be discussed here - the fact that the understanding and interpretation of terms is based on the influence of the different languages and cultures. It has to be admitted that the difference in interpretation affects the most important terms which have to do with public integration – “national minorities” and “national identity.” At the same time, however, it must also be stressed that the interpretation of terms differs not only between Latvian and Russian texts, but also in the context of a single language. The interpretation of terms such as “nation” and “nationalism” is very different.

### ***9.3. Differing understandings about the term “national minorities”***

One of the terms which raises debates from time to time, particularly in the context of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, is the concept of “national minorities.” The Latvian translation of the title of this convention does not really use the term “national minorities” precisely, instead speaking of “minorities” – a broader term and the one which does not differentiate between national and ethnic minorities. In this case, that is very important. In English, the convention applies only to national minorities. There have been debates in many European countries about what exactly that term means. The result has usually been that the term “national minorities” is applied to those ethnic groups which have historically lived in the territory of the relevant state. Migration during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is usually not included in this definition.

According to Kymlicka, for instance, the concept of national minorities must also include those ethnic groups which do not have a state in which they would represent the minority but used to have such a state, as well as those which yearn for such a state. He adds that the term must also cover those ethnic groups which lived in a territory before the members of the ethnic group, which arrived in the territory later, established a state, and forced others to become a part of the new state. The indigenous people consider such people to be “aliens” (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 25).

The situation in Latvia is made all the more complicated by virtue of the fact that in Russian, the term “нацменьшинства” is used extensively. This word is closest to the concept of “minorities” in Latvian. The terms cover both ethnic and national minorities. The idea of „этническая группа”, by contrast, has entered the Russian language only in the last several decades, and it is used only in the academic literature. The term “нацменьшинства” is used far more often in the public arena. (For instance, an exhibition which Latvian minorities staged at the European Parliament was called “Latvian Minorities in History and Today”, but in Russian the title was “Выставка о латвийских нацменьшинствах.” *Час*, 12 June 2006).

We can say that language in this case lags behind the development of socio-political processes such as the collapse of the USSR, the establishment of independence in the formerly occupied countries, and the introduction of new norms of democracy which dictate the general processes in terms of relations between the indigenous population and the national minorities.

The aforementioned convention has no norms which regulate the relationship between the titular nation and the majority with various minorities which have arrived in the relevant country in the recent future. Usually it is the case that each country organises its policies individually with respect to immigrant groups. Here, too, we see different approaches. Canada, for example, has established policies of multiculturalism, while the labour market in Germany still involves the definition of “guest workers”.

#### ***9.4. Ethnic and civic nationalism***

Other important terms that are cornerstones for integration policy include the concepts of “nation” and “nationalism”. A nation, as a community of citizens, is the most important resource for a state. There are two ways of interpreting the term “nationalism”, however – “ethnic nationalism” and “civic nationalism.” These terms reveal the framework within which the nation is formed. Rogers Brubaker compares the emergence of emotions of nationalism in Germany and France and argues that such emotions can emerge both before and after the establishment of a nation state. In Germany, such emotions existed before the establishment of the nation state, and this served as a stimulus for establishing the state. In France, emotions of nationalism emerged after the state was established, emanating from national institutions, the political community and the sense of civic belonging (Brubaker, 1992, p. 23). French society is unified in political terms, and participation therein is determined by citizenship. Here we can speak of civic nationalism. Society in Germany is unified on the basis of ethnicity, which is an example of ethnic nationalism (ibid, p.24). If these terms are applied in Latvia, then it is clear that ethnic nationalism describes very well the efforts of Latvians to restore national independence in the late 1980s. If, however, we look at the minorities which gained Latvian citizenship only after the restoration of independence, the concept of civic nationalism must be used. The fact that political and ethnic principles exist in parallel in Latvia poses the question of how public integration policies are to be developed.

#### ***9.5. Nationalism and citizenship***

One of the main issues in terms of public integration is the issue of citizenship. Latvia still has lots of non-citizens – some 418,400 in all. This

issue is still on the public agenda, and it is the basis for the questions about the procedure for awarding citizenship, the expansion of the non-citizens' political rights (e.g., allowing them to vote in local government elections), etc. If the process of people becoming citizens via naturalisation is approved, politicians must answer the question of what kind of civic community is being established – is it based on ethnic or civic nationalism?

Interviews with politicians reveal a wide spectrum of views about these issues, and researchers have been able to develop a conditional scale to provide a look at the way in which politicians interpret the community of citizens, the expansion of the community, and the political rights of non-citizens.

Radically right wing and nationalist parties tend to focus on ethnic nationalism, which is manifested through their desire to limit the number of non-Latvians who receive citizenship. These parties argue that naturalisation reduces the proportion of ethnic Latvians among citizens. This indicates that politicians in nationalist parties cannot accept civic nationalism, which speaks to the emergence of national emotions via one's belonging to the political community and one's obtaining of citizenship.

Minority parties, by contrast, have completely different views about the process of obtaining citizenship, insisting that naturalisation requirements must be made easier and that anyone who was born on Latvian territory should be recognised as a citizen. In future, according to these politicians, the rights of non-citizens should be expanded, particularly emphasising the non-citizens' right to vote in local government elections.

A series of parties which are centrist in relation to issues of ethnic policy insist that the process of naturalisation must continue and that it should continue at its present pace or even more rapidly so as to promote people's participation in political processes. (This is not a completely clear classification, and borders cannot be strictly drawn. Among the Latvian political parties which are classified as moderate here, there are party members who are radically nationalist in their thinking, and their views are not really in line with the positions which are taken in party programmes.)

The positions of national minorities and of centrist party politicians can be compared to the orientation of civic nationalism.

The politicians' different thinking, when it comes to the establishment of a community of citizens, points out that there are fundamental problems in shaping and implementing integration policies even if a policy programme has been established.



Interviews with the representatives of public organisations showed that there are parallels between the orientation of politicians and NGO activists when it comes to citizenship issues. It must be stressed that among NGOs, which are actively involved in ethnic policy, issues are even more distinctly polarised. There are radically nationalist Latvian movements such as the Latvian National Front and Club 415, as well as radical minority movements such as the Centre for Defence of Russian Schools. The latter group argues that the process of naturalisation is humiliating for those people who have lived in Latvia all their lives, and so the process is unacceptable in terms of creating doubts about the basic principle in establishing a community of citizens in Latvia – the process of naturalisation. It is true that one finds more public organisations than political parties which express concerns and desires vis-à-vis the strengthening of the sense of civic belonging.

If we look into the future, we see that one trend that might split up the society might be collaboration between radical political organisations and political parties, or the development of these organisations into parties. Among minorities, this process is suggested by close co-operation between The party alliance For Human Rights in a United Latvia and the Centre for Defence of Russian Schools. This causes The party alliance For Human Rights in a United Latvia positions to become more radical. Among radically nationalist Latvians, meanwhile, the same can be said about the fact that the organisation “Everything for Latvia” has become a political party.

#### ***9.6. The state language and public integration***

We can speak of contrasts between ethnic and civic nationalism when it comes to the state language, as well. All of the Latvian political parties emphasise the Latvian language as the most important resource for integration in Latvia, which means that the most important cultural value among Latvians is chosen as the resource which could help to unify the society. People from minority parties and public organisations, by contrast, admit that everyone needs to learn the Latvian language and that the Latvian language is important in Latvia, but at the same time they argue that it is important for minorities to preserve their native language skills. They add that if harmony in society is to be realistic, the important issues include people, culture, knowledge and contacts. Radicals among Latvians and minorities promote more radical ideas. Latvians want to make sure that the

linguistic environment is entirely Latvian, while minorities sometimes call for the Russian language to be declared officially as the country's second state language.

It must be stressed that there are many public organisations in Latvia – the ones which deal with culture, education, analysis or the civic society – which directly or indirectly affect public integration. Representatives of minority NGOs admit that the Latvian language must be the state language and the language of communications among ethnic groups, but they also stress that the Latvian language, as a value, is perceived differently among various ethnic groups. Whilst recognising the Latvian language as the state language, it is important to maintain tolerance vis-à-vis other languages and cultures, say these people. Otherwise, there could be a negative counter-reaction among those who belong to other cultures. NGO representatives admit that the Latvian language is a resource for promoting understanding and contacts, but they also insist that the Latvian language and culture cannot serve as a cornerstone for integration: *“The role of the Latvian language in the integration process is only a positive role, because given that Latvia's indigenous population is made up of Latvians, it is a positive thing if members of all nationalities begin to understand the Latvian language. That, accordingly, breaks down barriers, reduces distrust and everything else. That is a good thing. At the same time, however, this must not be exaggerated. Integration cannot be based on the Latvian language and culture.”* NGO leaders stress the role of the Latvian language in establishing a civic society: *“The Latvian language is absolutely important for the integration which is known as ‘participation in shaping policy’, and this is not possible without the Latvian language. Without the Latvian language, no minority group can take part in the process of planning or influence, and that means that the group is marginalized. I think that in the process of shaping national or statehood-related identity, the Latvian language is extremely important.”*

According to the representatives of minority parties, the Latvian language is just one factor in promoting integration. The Latvian language must be learned and spoken, but Latvia's is a multicultural society, and that means that other ethnic groups must have the right to speak their own language – this will strengthen Latvia as a country and will not threaten the Latvian language. Latvian politicians, for their part, stress the state language as a fundamental element in integration: *“The Latvian language is one of the basic elements, and without it, ethnic integration is not possible.”*

When it comes to the views of Latvians and minorities with respect to the state language as a resource which promotes contacts and understanding among ethnic groups, both sides stress that Latvian language skills help the minority representatives to take part in public life and feel a sense of belonging in Latvia. Latvians, however, emphasise the substantial meaning of the state language which, as an element of Latvian culture, serves as a foundation for integration. Minorities, for their part, recognise Latvian language skills only as a resource whilst, at the same time, stressing the importance of their own cultural and linguistic identity.

### ***9.7. Minority education reforms and public integration***

Views about the reform of education in Latvia are crassly diverse. The representatives of centrist parties feel that the reforms have been very positive and normal, while the representatives of minority parties say that the reforms have brought more bad than good, because the effect has opposed integration. There is a third view, too – radical nationalists and conservative nationalists say that the pace of reforms is correct, but even more intensive changes are needed.

As far as Latvian politicians are concerned, the main benefit from reforms at minority schools is that non-Latvian young people will become more competitive in the labour market – something that will also have an effect on social integration. At the same time, however, minority politicians say that not all students are capable of studying materials that are presented in Latvian, which means that their educational level is declining and their inclusion in to the labour market is becoming a problem.

Both minority politicians and NGO representatives argue that these problems could have been avoided if the school reforms had been more gradual and if preparations had been more careful. Several respondents thought that the reforms were too swift and careless, no proper methodology was prepared, and teachers were not trained sufficiently to use a bilingual approach to their teaching. The parents were also not sufficiently informed about the planned reforms which might have promoted a positive attitude vis-à-vis the introduction of the reforms.

The members of ethnic minorities stress that the great speed at which the reforms were implemented and the way in which they were put into place have created a lack of trust in the government. It is obvious that Latvians and minority representatives have radically different views about educational reforms, their goals, their implementation and their results. In

the context of public integration, it will be possible to judge the effectiveness of the reforms only in the long-term future, but given the current situation, minority politicians and NGO representatives feel that the reforms were forced upon them, while Latvian politicians and NGO representatives usually say that the reforms helped to improve the overall situation.

### ***9.8. Analysis of Russian and Latvian press publications***

Media discourse has an important role to play in reflecting political events and in shaping public opinion. Discourses shape the knowledge of social participants, the prevailing situations and social roles, as well as the identities and mutual relations among various social levels (the political, social and everyday arena). It must be stressed that there are differences among the discourses that are offered by the media and by politicians. This is also true with respect to everyday discourses about identity, knowledge and social relations (Wodak).

It is of key importance to point out the complicated relations among civic, political and ethnic identity, as analysed in media discourse. Linguistically constructing the gap between Latvians and Russians, the media usually make use of various signs of ethnic identity (language, mentality, cultural personalities, the cultural heritage), as well as signs of political identity – the political history which the whole group has experienced, figures in politics (including historical ones), political problems from the past, present and future, and political goals which participants and groups have in common.

Analysis of press publications focused on media discourses and their possible influence on the shaping of identities as events which are important in terms of ethno-policy have been discussed between 1990 and 2005. These include the approval of the declaration of independence in May 1990, the restoration of Latvia's independence in August 1991, the approval of the Law on the State language in 1999, the referendum on EU accession in 2003, and ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 2005, among others.

Generally speaking, the discourses used in Latvian and Russian language newspapers are radically different, and they shape different collective identities among those who read Russian language newspapers and those who read Latvian newspapers. The gap between the media spaces promotes a separation between the two ethno-linguistic groups, making it

difficult to ensure mutual discussions, exchanges of views, and the shaping of unified identities. The gap is closely linked to the polarisation of political identities, because political parties, also, represent the interests of one or the other group. The ethnic interests of parties dominate over ideological differences related to economic, social and other issues. Both the Latvian and the Russian language press those who think differently are marginalized in terms of discourse, depicting them as individuals who do not represent the majority views of the public and discrediting them as being selfish, criminal or radically nationalist.

A review of Latvian newspapers during the aforementioned period shows a clear orientation towards the readers who are Latvians. In the early 1990s, Latvian newspapers were dominated by attempts to actualise and strengthen the ethnic identity of Latvians, comparing that identity to that of the Soviet person and to the internationalism which was propagandised at that time. At the same time, the media sought to establish a civic identity for Latvians, separating them from the Soviet Union and encouraging a sense of belonging to the independent Latvian state. A confluence of the ethnic, civic and political identities of Latvians was typical during this era, because in Latvian newspapers Latvians were reflected as a very much unified group – the one which was powerfully identified with everything Latvian, a group which wanted to live in an independent Latvian state. Thus the Latvian newspapers also shaped a very powerful political identity, which contributed to the Latvian People's Front and other organisations which supported Latvia's efforts toward independence.

After the restoration of independence, the discursive attempt to activate ethnic identity diminished a bit in the Latvian press. The attempts were actualised only when important issues related to ethno-policy were considered. Also, a split between political identities on the one hand, ethnic identities on the other hand, and differentiated political identities among Latvians have been noticeable. Still, there has always been a powerful focus on Latvian readers, and a unified political identity has been shaped with respect to issues that are sensitive in ethno-linguistic terms. Latvian newspapers reproduce a civic identity which excludes non-Latvians from the community of people who belong to the Latvian state. The Latvian press has very little content which refers to issues that are of importance to the Russian speaking residents – minority education reforms, for instance.

In the Russian language press in the early 1990s, by comparison, not much attention was devoted to ethnic identity. The content of these newspapers was dominated by the establishment of a political and civic

identity. The discourse in Russian language newspapers promoted the confluence of political and civic identity, activating links between people's sense of belonging to the USSR and their support for the Latvian Communist Party and the Interfront (the main anti-independence umbrella organisation in the late 1980s and early 1990s). Later, the newspapers increasingly sought to develop the ethnic identity of Russian speakers, referring to the historical roots of Russians on Latvian territory, the wealth of Russian culture, and the elements of Russian mentality. Ethnic identity was promoted with the goal of strengthening the political identity of non-Latvians. The discourse about civic identity became weaker in Russian language newspapers, and that promoted a greater gap between Russian speakers and the Latvian-governed institutions of government. During the aforementioned period, the Russian language press increasingly used the rhetoric of open conflict and battle. This was particularly evident when protests against minority education reforms were discussed.

In the formation of collective identity the Latvian and Russian languages as the most important criteria for marking out boundaries between ethno-linguistic groups are of decisive importance. Competition between the two languages actualises and increases the sense of endangerment which is found in both groups. That is why issues concerning language have created the harshest debates in the media, ensuring much more active ethnic discourse with respect to issues such as approving the law on the state language and pursuing minority education reforms.

The fact that in the media there is a gap in the discourse between the two ethno-linguistic groups is also made evident by the virtue that there is still no word in the Latvian language that would offer a positive description of all of the residents of Latvia, including both Latvians and non-Latvians.

## **10. Conclusions**

In the case of Latvia, it is important to establish and implement a specific integration policy, because Latvia's situation differs from that in other European countries. Latvia has a large minority group which is not a national minority. Only Latvia, its politicians and its people can decide on how to shape relationships between the majority and the minorities in Latvia. For that reason, a legally and institutionally supported public integration policy is justified.

A key requirement for a successful integration policy is the selection of terminology which is perceived and interpreted more or less equally

among participants in integration policy, assuming that full unanimity about the terminology is impossible. In the current situation, the term “нацменьшинства”, which is extensively used in the Russian press, is interpreted to mean “national minorities”. At the same time, the Russian language does not contain a term which refers to the entire set of ethnic minorities. In the Latvian press and in Latvian documents, meanwhile, there is no precise difference among the concepts “minorities”, “ethnic minorities” and “national minorities”. The media texts which are quoted in the study “Practices and Prospects for Integration,” as well, include expert statements which indicate an inconsistent use of the aforementioned concepts. (The terms used in party documents, by experts and in the mass media have not been edited, they are presented exactly as they were cited in the original text.)

The practice of imprecise use of terminology not only explains the reason why discussions among politicians are fruitless, it also allows one to think that problems related to political debates are becoming deeper, and tensions in the public space are becoming increasingly exacerbated. The imprecise use of terminology also makes it possible for politicians to manipulate society to a greater degree.

The fact that the politicians and political debates create the desire for separation both among people who are members of minorities and among Latvians, thus promoting the emergence of the society with two parallel communities, is mentioned by experts, representatives of public organisations, and ordinary people from various ethnic groups.

At the same time, it is important to stress, that according to survey of the residents - both Latvians and people of other nationalities most often support the selection of the integration strategy – 80% of Latvians, 83% of Russians, and 81% of people of other nationalities. In accordance with this strategy, representatives of minorities attach a great deal of importance to the preservation of their culture, but at the same time they feel a sense of belonging to the Latvian state and its society.

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