



**Inese Šūpule**

**Active Civic Participation  
of Immigrants in  
Latvia**

## **POLITIS – a European research project**

### **Project information**

POLITIS is short for a research project with the full title: *Building Europe with New Citizens? An Inquiry into the Civic Participation of Naturalised Citizens and Foreign Residents in 25 Countries*. The European Commission funds the project that mainly seeks to improve our understanding of different factors that promote or inhibit active civic participation of immigrants. A unique project construction is developed that includes workshops with foreign-born students who are recruited as discussants and interviewers. National experts in all 25 EU countries have prepared country reports on the contextual conditions and state of research concerning civic participation of immigrants. These reports can be downloaded from [www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe/country-reports](http://www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe/country-reports)

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## Abstract

According to the analysis of the migration history in Latvia the biggest immigration flows to Latvia were in Soviet time. As the main migratory flows during the years 1951-1990 were with nearest Soviet Republics, particularly Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, as a result of the immigration was the decrease of the percentage of ethnic Latvians from 77% in 1935 to 52% in 1989 and increase of percentage of Russians, Belarussians and Ukrainians. Since 1991 net migration in Latvia is negative: in average more people leave Latvia than arrive. The main long-term migratory flows still are to and from CIS countries, with which the local people have kept family relations, acquaintances and do not face language problems.

The statistics about resident population of Latvia by citizenship shows that 78% of all residents in Latvia are citizens of Latvia, and 21% are non-citizens of Latvia. The group of non-citizens comprises the people who immigrated in Latvia during the Soviet time and their descendants: according to legislation of Latvia former USSR citizens who did not have Latvian or any other citizenship, in 1995 received the status of Latvian non-citizens. People who have citizenship of other countries and live in Latvia are termed as foreigners. Altogether the number of foreigners is very small (about 1,4%), including 1% of residents who are citizens of Russian Federation, and about 0,4% who are citizens of other countries. Due to the peculiarities of immigration history and legislative system in Latvia, the main focus of this study is on the civic participation of non-citizens.

Since the beginning of the naturalisation process in 1995 up until the beginning of 2004, the number of non-citizens has decreased, down from more than 29% to 20.8%. Non-citizens have no right to vote in parliamentary and local elections, and referenda, they also have no right to be a founder or a member of political parties. Consequently one-fifth of members of the society have a limited right to participate in the process of decision-making and feel rather alienated from the state.

On another hand during the last years a lot of effort has been done to encourage non-citizens to become citizens of Latvia. According to the Citizenship Law (1994, amendments in 1998) to become citizens of Latvia they have to pass naturalisation procedure. During the last years this procedure has been simplified several times. Besides since the establishment of the Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs minority organizations in Latvia have better chances and more grant opportunities than other organizations have.

Altogether the studies on third sector in Latvia indicate that NGOs in Latvia are rather small in terms of membership. Their financial resources and capacity tend to be notably restricted, therefore their potential to mobilize segments of society is rather weak. About 20% of all inhabitants have a membership in any voluntary organization. Members of other nationalities and non-citizens are slightly less involved in NGOs than ethnic Latvians. The reason why the participation rate among non-citizens is lower than among citizens can be sought in the alienation between the elite of state power and the inhabitants. According to the survey data the main fields of civic activities that immigrants, namely, non-citizens in Latvia, engage do not differ significantly from those of citizens.

The studies on political participation reveal that currently one can observe an increase of disenchantment with conventional political participation in Latvia. During the last two years

Russian speaking minorities (Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians) have been very active in different street protest actions. In 2000 politicized Russian speaking NGOs consolidated mutually for counteraction against language policy implemented in the state. In 2004 in Riga and other cities in Latvia, there were a number of protests actions by minority representatives, aimed against the changes which were planned for the minority education system in September 2004. This signalize about an increasing gap between the Russian speaking community and the state as the political elite.

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## PART I: UNDERSTANDING THE CONDITIONS FOR IMMIGRANT PARTICIPATION

### 1. Key events and demographic developments in the migration history of Latvia

#### *Migration flows*

According to statistical data on long term migration of Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (Demographic Yearbook of Latvia, 2004) since 1991 net migration in Latvia is negative: in average more people leave Latvia than arrive. The main long-term migratory flows are to and from CIS countries, with which the local people have kept family relations, acquaintances and do not face language problems.

The analysis of the migration history shows that the biggest immigration flows to Latvia were in Soviet time, for example, in the years 1951-1960 about 640 thousands people arrived in Latvia and about 460 thousands left it (Table 1). As the main migratory flows during the years 1951-1990 were with nearest Soviet Republics, particularly Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, as a result of the immigration was a decrease of the percentage of ethnic Latvians from 77% in 1935 to 52% in 1989 and increase of percentage of Russians, Belarussians and Ukrainians.

**Table 1. International long-term migration**

Year	Immigration		Emigrants		Net migration	
	total	average per year	total	average per year	total	average per year
1951-1960	639880	63988	459832	45983	180048	18005
1961-1970	476934	47693	335872	33587	141062	14106
1971-1980	548643	54864	428235	42823	120408	12041
1981-1990	506576	50658	423953	42395	82623	8263
1991-1995	30842	6168	168230	33646	-137388	-27478
1996-2000	12223	2445	47064	9413	-34841	-6968
2001-2003	4235	1412	12074	4025	-7839	-2613

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia 2004: Demographic Yearbook of Latvia. 2004.

Since regaining independence much more people leave Latvia than arrive, especially it was happening in 1991, 1992 and 1993. For example in 1992 about 60 thousands left Latvia (this can be explained with the Soviet Army troops leaving Latvia, too). The data on long-term migration in the last years shows that the high number of departures from Latvia observed in early 1990s has decreased.

Last few years long term international immigration to Latvia has not changed significantly – during 2000 1627 immigrants were recorded, while during 2003 – 1364. The statistics of migration shows that from all immigrants in 2003 the percentage of immigrants from Russian Federation was 26%, from Lithuania – 11%, from USA – 8%, from Ukraine – 7%, from Germany – 6%, from Estonia – 5%, from Belarus – 5%, from Israel – 4%, from other countries – 28%.

The analysis of the long-term migratory flows reveals that immigration from and emigration to CIS countries has decreased, but immigration from and emigration to other countries (particularly – “westwards”) has slightly increased. In 1995 more the 80% from all

immigrants were persons from CIS and less than 20% from other countries. In 2002 almost 50% were from CIS and a little more than 50% were from other countries.

The statistics about resident population of Latvia by citizenship shows that 78% of all residents in Latvia are citizens of Latvia, 21% have received the status of “Latvian non-citizen” and also the passport of non-citizen of Latvia<sup>1</sup>, 1% of residents are citizens of Russian Federation, and less than 0,5% are citizens of other countries (Table 2).

**Table 2. Resident population of Latvia by citizenship at the beginning of year**

	2003 Count	2003 %	2004 Count	2004 %
Total	2331480	100.00	2319203	100.00
<b>Citizens of Latvia</b>	<b>1796946</b>	<b>77.07</b>	<b>1804237</b>	<b>77.80</b>
<b>Latvian non-citizens</b>	<b>504558</b>	<b>21.64</b>	<b>481622</b>	<b>20.77</b>
Citizens of the former USSR with no other granted	14	0.00	13	0.00
<b>Russian Federation</b>	<b>21626</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>22464</b>	<b>0.97</b>
Lithuania	1792	0.08	2197	0.09
Ukraine	1907	0.08	2338	0.10
Belarus	1162	0.05	1459	0.06
Estonia	542	0.02	664	0.03
Poland	168	0.01	222	0.01
United States	319	0.01	476	0.02
Germany	221	0.01	305	0.01
Other countries	2223	0.10	3197	0.14
<i>Armenia</i>	200			
<i>Azerbaijan</i>	125			
<i>Denmark</i>	123			
<i>Georgia</i>	77			
<i>India</i>	66			
<i>Israel</i>	140			
<i>Kazakhstan</i>	85			
<i>Lebanon</i>	33			
<i>United Kingdom</i>	125			
<i>Republic of Moldova</i>	109			
<i>Pakistan</i>	28			
<i>Finland</i>	94			
<i>Sri Lanka</i>	9			
<i>Sweden</i>	113			
<i>Other</i>	715			
<i>Stateless</i>	181			
Not specified	2	0.00	9	0.00

Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia 2004: Demographic Yearbook of Latvia. 2004.

<sup>1</sup> According to legislation of Latvia former USSR citizens who did not have Latvian or any other citizenship, in 1995 received the status of Latvian non-citizens, and received the identity documents – passport of non-citizen of Latvia.



In this report following the principles of statistics collected by Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs people who have citizenship of other countries and live in Latvia are termed as foreigners. Altogether the number of foreigners is very small in Latvia (1,4 %), also large part of those people who are citizens of Russian Federation, chose to receive the citizenship of Russian Federation, although they were living at that time in Latvia for years. Namely, the immigrants in Latvia are rather adapted as almost all of them live in Latvia for at least 15 or 20 years, and this is true both regarding to the non-citizens and to the biggest part of foreigners. It should be added that both non-citizens and foreigners are termed as immigrants in this report.

### *Non-citizens*

The problem of Latvia is the big number of non-citizens (21%). The fundamental principles of the *Law on Citizenship* (1994) were based on the fact that Latvia's independence was renewed and all laws and the Constitution adopted during the period prior to Soviet and Nazi occupations remain in force. Consequently, holders of Latvian citizenship prior to 1940 and their descendants were granted citizenship automatically after 1991. The group of non-citizens comprises the people who immigrated in Latvia during the Soviet time and their descendants. According to the Citizenship Law (1994, amendments in 1998) to become citizens of Latvia they have to pass naturalisation procedure. Requirements of the naturalisation procedure are 5 years of residency in Latvia, a legal source of income, knowledge of the state language, Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, text of the Latvian anthem and Latvian history (pass rates achieved for naturalisation tests has been considered as high - more than 90% of applicants pass in their first attempt).

The admission to citizenship through naturalization in Latvia started in February 1995. According to a number of international experts, the naturalization requirements laid down by the Citizenship Law comply with generally accepted international standards and basic principles for the formation of an integrated society (Brands Kehre, Stalidzane 2003, 5), although the naturalization rate increases slowly and is settled on a rather low level. At the beginning of 2004, there were 481622 (21%) non-citizens in Latvia, and the tendency of the number of non-citizens to decrease is still largely attributable to the demographic situation and emigration rather than naturalisation.

Since the beginning of the naturalisation process in 1995 up until the beginning of 2004, the number of non-citizens has decreased, down from more than 29% to 20.8%. In total the number of non-citizens has diminished by 254000 persons, through naturalization – 69288 persons. The biggest number of non-citizens is age above 60 (27% or approximately 130000 persons).

**Table 3. Decrease of number of non-citizens in Latvia. 1995 - 2004.**

Year	Number of non-citizens	Decrease
1995	735000	13000
1996	722167	39202
1997	682965	36083
1998	646882	26911
1999	619971	31746
2000	588225	37161
2001	551064	27969
2002	523095	18818
2003	504277	22925
2004	481352	
	<b>Total:</b>	254000

Source: The Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia. [http://www.np.gov.lv/lv/faili\\_lv/gada\\_parskats\\_2003.doc](http://www.np.gov.lv/lv/faili_lv/gada_parskats_2003.doc), date of visit: 2004-12-07

Children born to non-citizens in Latvia after the restoration of Latvia's independence in 1991 are entitled to Latvian citizenship automatically. At the beginning of 2004 1312 children had been registered as citizens of Latvia, and more than ten times as many eligible children (17023) remained non-citizens.

If we analyze the ethnicity of non-citizens in Latvia, we can see that two thirds (67%) of them are Russians, 13% - Belarussians, 9% - Ukrainians, 3% - Poles, and 8% - others. Half of the non-citizens of Latvia (242000) live in Riga, the capital of the Latvia, where they represent a third of the residents (33%).

**Table 4. The breakdown of the permanent residents of Latvia as to ethnicity. 2004.**

	Citizens of Latvia	Non-citizens	Foreigners	In total	
Latvians	1 355 067	2 536	936	1 358 539	58.6%
Lithuanians	16 977	13 662	1 382	32 021	1.4%
Estonians	1 466	776	307	2 549	0.1%
Belarussians	25 939	62 148	1 829	89 916	3.9%
Russians	327 293	321 755	19 362	668 410	28.8%
Ukrainians	10 974	45 232	3 613	59 819	2.6%
Poles	40 209	16 488	495	57 192	2.5%
Jews	6 443	3 176	308	9 927	0.5%
Others	18 483	15 579	5 019	39 081	1.7%
<b>In total</b>	<b>1 802 851</b>	<b>481 352</b>	<b>33 251</b>	<b>2 317 454</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. Statistics, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/?\\_p=351&menu\\_id=117](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/?_p=351&menu_id=117), date of visit: 2004-12-04

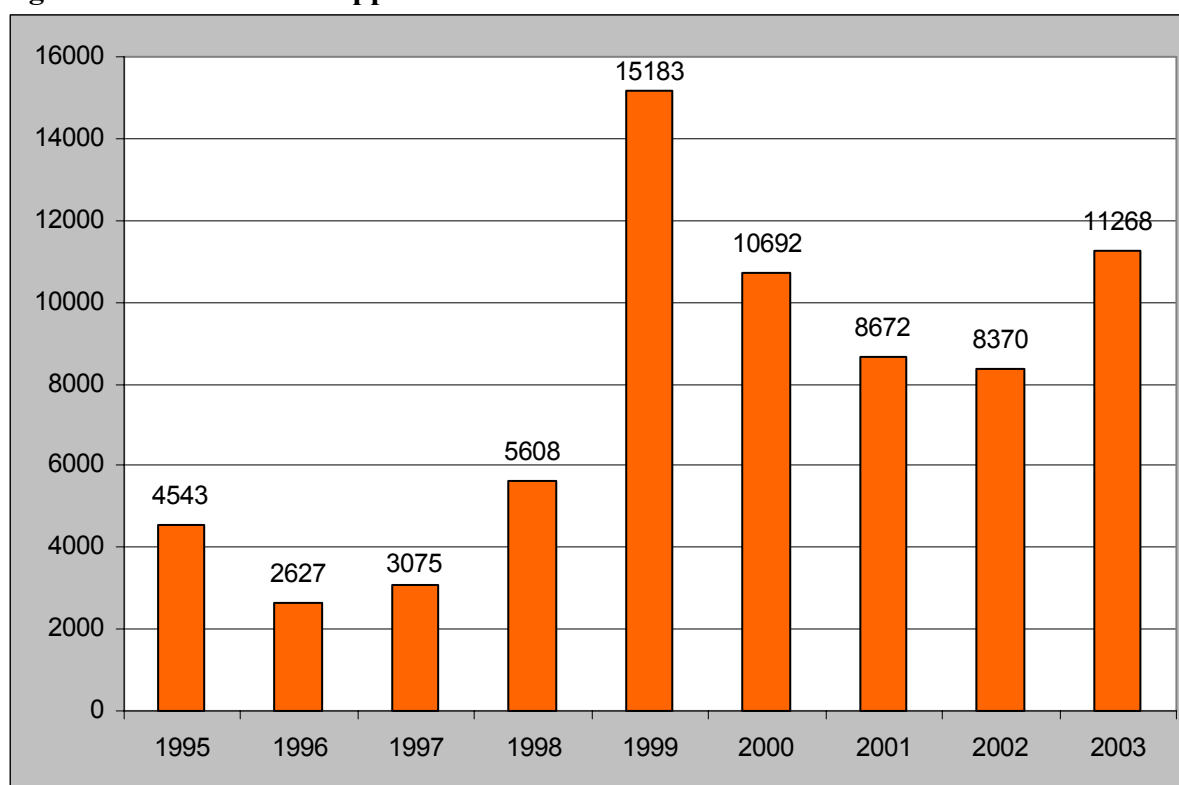
In the context of this study it should be noted that non-citizens has no right to vote in parliamentary and local elections, and referendums, consequently one-fifth of members of the society have a limited right to participate in the process of decision-making and feel rather alienated from the state.

### *Naturalised citizens*

Since the beginning of the naturalisation process in 1995, almost 70000 residents have acquired Latvian citizenship through naturalisation. During the first three years of the process the naturalisation was very slow due to the naturalisation windows – age group restrictions for naturalisation. The naturalisation pace increased rapidly after the 1998 referendum when naturalisation windows were abolished. Year 1999 still stands out as a year of naturalisation peak when a total 15 183 residents were naturalised (Figure 1). In 2003, 11268 naturalisation applications have been received. According to experts evaluation the number has increased if compared to 2002 due to the positive result of the referendum on Latvia's accession to the European Union and the Latvian language training courses (for persons who want to naturalise Latvian language courses has been provided free of charge).

As to their ethnic origin, 69% of naturalisation applicants were Russians, 11% - Belarussians, 9% - Ukrainians, 4% - Poles, but 2% - Lithuanians and Estonians.

**Figure 1. Naturalisation applications received. 1995 - 2003.**



Source: The Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia. [http://www.np.gov.lv/lv/faili\\_lv/gada\\_parskats\\_2003.doc](http://www.np.gov.lv/lv/faili_lv/gada_parskats_2003.doc), date of visit: 2004-12-07

### *Foreigners with temporary and permanent residence permits*

According to the statistics of Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs on 1 January 2003 33267 foreigners resided in Latvia, 7128 of them held temporary residence permits, and 26139 – permanent residence permits.

On 1 May 2003 the new Immigration Law came into force in Latvia, and according to new Immigration Law the circle of subjects who are entitled to apply for a residence permit has

expanded considerably, therefore in 2003 if compared to 2002 the number of issued residence permits has increased. This law applies to citizens of third countries. It protects the national interests of the state, and complies with international obligations and human rights instruments.

In 2003, 6820 temporary residence permits were issued and 7174 permanent residence permits were issued. Most of the foreigners enter Latvia for the purpose of family reunification (spouses and their minor children) or employment, and most of them enter Latvia from CIS countries.

### ***Asylum seekers and refugees***

The number of asylum seekers and refugees is very small in Latvia. Since 1998 only 138 persons have asked for the asylum in Latvia (36 from Russia, 14 from Armenia, 10 from Afghanistan, and 78 – from other countries), and only 8 persons have received the status of refugee according to the Geneva's convention. In 2003 only 5 persons have asked for the asylum in Latvia, but no one has received the status of refugee.

The law "On Asylum", which came into force on 1 September 2002, provides a subsidiary protection to the asylum seekers who cannot claim a refugee status, yet are in need of protection. Persons under subsidiary protection (for 9 or 12 months) are paid benefit in the amount of a minimum monthly salary. In 2003, 9 persons under subsidiary protection received benefit - 3 from Belarus and 6 from Russia. But in 2004 4 of the refugees and 5 of the alternative protection left Latvia.

According to the report on human rights in Latvia in 2003 (Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies 2004)<sup>2</sup>, the application review under accelerated asylum procedure at the border evokes serious concern and there also appear to be no clear and uniform criteria according to which asylum seekers are allowed to remain in Latvia: "If border guard deems the information provided by the asylum seeker to be contradictory or unrealistic in principle or if prior to the arrival in Latvia the asylum seeker has resided in a safe country, where he could also request and receive protection, the boarder guard can forward the information and the asylum application to the Department of Refugee Affairs that may, within two days, refuse to grant a refugee or alternative status. The asylum seeker can appeal the decision within one working day. The UN Human Rights Committee has called for the extension of time limits for the submission of an appeal, as it raises concerns regarding the availability of an effective remedy in cases of *refoulement*" (Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies 2004, 19)<sup>3</sup>.

According to the evaluation of experts (Indans 2004, 9)<sup>4</sup> the number of asylum seekers in nearest future will increase in Latvia but not so rapidly as in the European countries, because asylum seekers usually choose an economically stable, developed country with a high standard of living, a country where good social benefits are provided to those who have obtained an alternative status, but in Latvia they are minimal.

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<sup>2</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies 2004: Human Rights in Latvia in 2003.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Indans, I. 2004: The Impact of Immigration on Ethnic Relations in Latvia in the Context of Enlargement of EU. Latvian Institute of International Affairs 2004.

## ***Illegal immigrants***

According to the estimation of representatives of State Border Guards and experts from International Migration Organization in Latvia<sup>5</sup> the number of illegal immigrants in Latvia is small – some dozens and they try to enter Latvia mainly from Ukraine and Lithuania. Ivars Zālītis, Head of the Main Office of the State Border Guards considers that most often these immigrants try to enter Latvia with an aim to go further to the “old” countries of the European Union. In 2003 8 citizens of the Ukraine, 4 citizens of Lithuania, 2 persons from Georgia, Russia and Estonia, as well as people from Belarus, Moldavia, India and Iran tried to use Latvia as a transit country.

According to the new Immigration Law an illegal immigrant can be detained by the police for 3 hours before being handed over to border guards. The border guards may detain an illegal immigrant for up to 10 days. Further detention can only be authorized by court. The court may initially authorize the extension of the period of detention for up to 2 month, and then extend it for up to 6 month, while the total period of detention pending expulsion may not exceed 20 months. The old law did not foresee a time limit for detention pending expulsion. However, according to the report on human rights in Latvia in 2003 (Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies 2004)<sup>6</sup>, problems remain, because a person who is released after 20 months detention is not by law assigned any defined legal status. As a result, the person can repeatedly be detained for another 20-months period.

**Table 5. Population of Latvia by status at beginning of year 2003**

Citizens of Latvia	1 796 946
Latvian non-citizens	504 558
Foreigners with permanent residence permits	26139
Foreigners with temporary residence permits	7128
Illegal immigrants	21
Asylum seekers	5
Refugees	8
Alternative protection	9

Source: Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. Statistics, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/?\\_p=351&menu\\_id=117](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/?_p=351&menu_id=117), date of visit: 2004-12-04

## **2. Major issues discussed with relation to immigration**

As the main migratory flows during the years 1951-1990 were with nearest Soviet Republics, particularly Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, and as a result of the immigration was the decrease of the percentage of ethnic Latvians from 77% in 1935 to 52% in 1989, the term “immigrants” has a bad meaning among Latvians in Latvia. Of importance is the fact that soviet policy did not promote social cohesion, settlers rarely learned the Latvian language (in 1989 only 23% of all non-Latvians knew Latvian) and remained ignorant of local history and

<sup>5</sup> Indans, I. 2004: The Impact of Immigration on Ethnic Relations in Latvia in the Context of Enlargement of EU. Latvian Institute of International Affairs 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies 2004: Human Rights in Latvia in 2003.

culture. In the cultural realm, Soviet policy promoted russification of non-Russian minorities. Therefore among Latvian nationalists term “immigrants” were used to assign Russian speaking population in Latvia. However it should be added that this was a topical question at the end of 80-ties and can not be attributed to the public discussion in general now.

During the last years the question of migration was rarely touched in public discussions, but the time when the discussion on Latvia’s joining the EU was topical. The problem of immigration arose as one of the most important objections and concerns regarding the joining the EU. (The content analysis of biggest newspapers in Latvia reveals that during the May – October, 2003 foreigners and immigrants were mentioned mainly within the joining the EU (Mediju Tilts 2004, 9)<sup>7</sup>).

The study on the impact of immigration on ethnic relations in the context of enlargement of EU gives an analysis of the case of a racist TV advertisement clip that was produced as Freedom party [“Brīvības partija”] election campaign material (Indans 2004, 45). This TV advertisement clip was broadcasted once before the parliament elections and referendum on joining the EU. The clip showed an African man dressed in Latvian military uniform in front of the Freedom monument, and then an image of a black man was kissing a blond girl in Latvian national costume, while the background text was “Today – a guard of Latvia, tomorrow – perhaps your son-in-law”. Finally there was a text that some 20 million economic migrants from Africa and Asia will come to the European Union within the next few years, and clip ended with question: how many of them will choose Latvia as a place of residence? The musicians Christopher Edjugbo from Nigeria and Peter Mensah from Sierra Leone, who were featured in the clip without knowing the purpose to which it would be put, won a civil case against the Freedom party in 2002. It should be added that this party was not successful in elections and did not get any seat in parliament. However according to the report on human rights in Latvia the racist TV advertisement clip continued to be available on the party’s home page in 2003 and early 2004 (Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies 2004, 30)<sup>8</sup>.

In the study on ethnic tolerance in Latvia (Zepa, Supule a.o. 2004) the authors touched upon the question on foreigners as well and used both qualitative (focus groups, in-depth interviews) and quantitative methods (a representative survey) for their research.

The focus groups showed that most views about the arrival of foreigners in Latvia is negative, based on people’s fear of the unknown and the alien, of competition and a loss of status. Immigrants in Latvia are usually seen as potential competitors, and that is true both with respect to wealthy Europeans (“they have money and experience”) and to people from less wealthy countries (“they’ll be ready to work for a lower salary”). In general participants of focus groups said that it would be acceptable if a few foreigners were to come to Latvia to invest their money in economic growth, but it would not be appropriate if there were mass migration or malicious use of Latvia’s relatively inexpensive labour force (Zepa, Supule a.o. 2004, 29).

According to the results of the quantitative survey in 2004 84% of ethnic Latvians and 78% of non-Latvians agreed with the statement „it would be terrible if lots off people from

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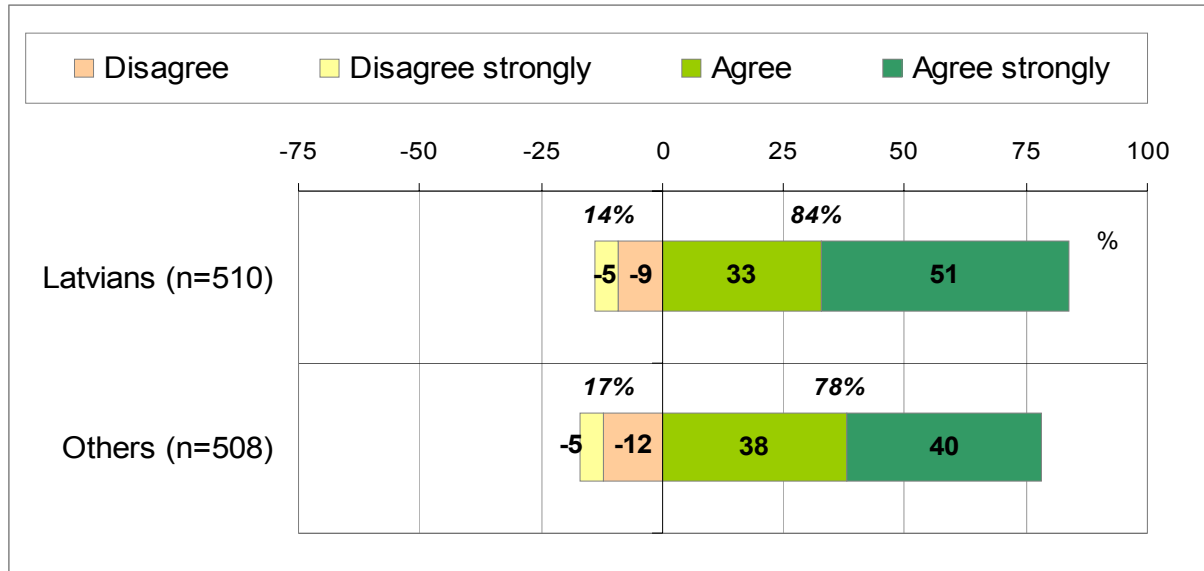
<sup>7</sup> Mediju Tilts 2004: Mediju kontentanalīze: neiecietības veicināšanas/ mazināšanas aspekti. [The content analysis of mass media: the aspects of tolerance/ intolerance]. 2004.

[http://www.integracija.gov.lv/doc\\_upl/prezentacijas\\_materials.doc](http://www.integracija.gov.lv/doc_upl/prezentacijas_materials.doc), date of visit: 2004-12-10

<sup>8</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies 2004: Human Rights in Latvia in 2003.

economically less developed countries were to come to Latvia” (Picture 2), although as we can see from statistics, Latvia do not suffer from immigrant flows, because during the last ten years much more people have left Latvia, than arrived.

**Figure 2. Attitudes towards statement: „It would be terrible if lots off people from economically less developed countries were to come to Latvia”**



Source: Zepa, B., Supule, I., Krastina, L., Penke, I., Krisane, J. 2004: Ethnic Tolerance and Integration of the Latvian Society. Riga: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences 2004, p. 58.

From the interviews with people of different appearance and religious belief (Arabic, African, people from the Caucasus region, Chinese and Roma origin) researchers concluded that people from visually different nationalities encounter very different attitudes in Latvia, starting with special favour and interest and ending with suspicions and scorn. Because they look different and are few, these people always attract particular attention - intense gazes, various remarks and, occasionally, physical violence. These are situations which most often occur late at night, when one encounters intoxicated young people on the street (Zepa, Supule a.o. 2004, 47).

Rather typical is Islam-phobia in Latvia. Although Muslims are very few (about 1500 people) and “invisible”, people hold negative attitudes toward them. 52% of ethnic Latvians and 59% of non-Latvians agreed with the statement: “The views and traditions of Muslims may be dangerous to Latvia’s residents” (Zepa, Supule a.o. 2004, 54). In focus group discussions some respondents even said that Islam should be banned: “*I favour religious discrimination specifically against Islam. This religion might even be banned in Latvia*” (Zepa, Supule a.o. 2004, 28).

In general authors of the study on ethnic tolerance in Latvia conclude that “attitudes and behaviour of people in Latvia sometimes have racist properties, which are often hidden - instead of distinctly negative behaviour, it is manifested through an absence of positive and favourable attitudes. Help is not given in an unclear situation; negative information about an ethnic group is accepted unquestioningly”. According to this study of importance in Latvia is the so-called “new racism”, defined as the view that the culture and lifestyle of certain nationalities are too different to be merged into one’s own society. Many people in Latvia still

believe that a culturally homogenous society is the norm and the ideal which should be pursued (Zepa a.o. 2004, 17).

Summarizing it up it should be noted that immigration is not a core issue in Latvia, because during the last ten years much more people have left Latvia, than arrived, nevertheless people hold negative attitudes towards the immigrants.

### **3. Institutional setting framing immigrant participation**

#### ***Legislation***

There are no legislative acts concerned directly with immigrant participation in Latvia. However in many legislative acts there are legal provisions which have relevance to it. Firstly, there are the legislative acts on **Latvian Citizenship**.

The 1991 Decree on the Renewal of Latvian Citizenship gave the legal basis for the identification of the Latvian citizenship population. According to it citizenship was granted to those people who were citizens of Latvia before 1940 and their descendents. The 1994 Citizenship law constitutes who are the citizens of Latvia and who are not, and the process of naturalisation. The 1994 Citizenship law was liberalised after referendum held on 3 October 1998, and most important amendments were regarding the procedure of naturalisation – abolishment of “window” system and simplification of the language test. The 1995 law on the Status of Former USSR Citizens Who Do Not Have Latvian or Any Other Citizenship states that among the rights and obligations of the subjects of this law is included the right of non-citizens to preserve their mother tongue and culture.

Secondly, there are the legislative acts on **Migration**. The 1992 law on Migration recommenced the regulation of the immigration of foreigners and their residence in Latvia. According to the evaluation of researchers (Vēbers 1997, 152) it stopped the practice adopted during the years of Soviet occupation of not regulated immigration from other parts of the USSR and at the same time gave a legal basis for the immigration of foreigners into Latvia and their ties to ethnic minorities. The 2003 Immigration Law applies to citizens of third countries and complies with international obligations and human rights instruments.

Thirdly, immigrant participation is affected by Laws regulating the **NGO sector and the cultural autonomy of different ethnic groups**:

1. The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (Articles 91, 99, 100, 101, 102, 104);
2. The Law on Associations and Foundations (AFL) of 30 October 2003, in force from 1 April 2004;
3. The Law on the entry into force of the Associations and Foundations Law of 22 January 2004;
4. The Law on Public Organizations and their Associations of 15 December 1992;
5. The Law on the Free Development and the Right to Cultural Autonomy of National and Ethnic Groups of 19 March 1991.

On 19 March 1991 a law was adopted on the rights of national and ethnic groups to free development (restoring and preserving their national identity) and cultural autonomy. The law does not define what is meant by “national and ethnic groups” although despite this they are guaranteed rights to cultural autonomy and cultural self-rule.



The 1992 Law on Public Organizations and their Associations states that “in accordance with the procedures set out in this law, several physical persons or legal entities can on a voluntary basis and based on common objectives, establish a common governing institution to coordinate work and achieve objectives set out in statutes. Public organizations can not have profit making as their objective, nor have business undertakings as their intention or character” (Article 1). Article 43 and 45 of this Law restricts that the founders and members of political organizations is limited only to those who are the citizens of Latvia. Accordingly non-citizens and foreigners have no rights to found a political party in Latvia.

According to expert evaluation (Vilka a.o. 2004, 24) the new Law on Associations and Foundations (2004) has resolved many previously unclear and problematic legal issues for public organizations (the new law also provides the opportunity for a single founder to establish a non-governmental structure; from a legal perspective, the establishment of NGOs in accordance with the new law is also quite a simple process), but included norms in new Law on Associations and Foundations have not expanded the rights of non-citizens and foreigners to found a political organization.

Fourthly, immigrant participation is affected by Laws regulating the **participation in elections and referenda**:

1. The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (Articles 8, 37, 80, 101);
2. The Law on Referenda and Legislative initiatives of 31 March 1994;
3. The Law on Register of Electorate of 29 January 2004.

According to these legislative acts the right to participate in elections of parliament, referenda, and elections of local government are only to the citizens of Latvia. In many countries non-citizens have the right to vote at local elections, but in Latvia non-citizens do not have these rights, and despite recommendations by several international institutions to grant them, the prevalent mood among majority politicians – including the President of the country – does not provide any indication that this would even be considered for discussion.

Beside legislative acts mentioned so far, of importance are also documents concerning the **Integration policy** in Latvia. In 1998 the government created a working group to draft a new policy document – a Framework Document for the Integration of Society in Latvia. In 2001 the government of Latvia adopted **the National Programme for the Integration of Society** in Latvia, a policy framework which lays out the goals and means for minority policy and promoting social cohesion in realms such as civic participation, education and culture. Also in 2001 parliament adopted a law creating a **Society Integration Foundation** to administer government and donor money in support of integration-related projects. In November 2002 a new ministerial portfolio responsible for integration was created: **the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs**.

### *Institutions*

At the end of 80-ties after some 50 years of repression began the development of national cultural societies in Latvia. Later it was called as the rebirth of ethnic minorities. In a very short time a number of associations of ethnic minorities were founded, and this paved the way for the establishment (1988) of an association of societies – **the Association of National Cultural Societies** in Latvia (LNKB). Since that time this organization was a leading

organization of all cultural associations of different ethnic groups, and therefore it received a certain support from state: premises at Slokas 37 in Riga, 10 000 LVL every year to maintain premises and for salaries, 14 000 LVL every year to support the activities of organizations forming association.

However during the last two years the support to the Association of National Cultural Societies has dropped, because the Association comprise only 21 organizations, but there are about 200 active minority NGOs in Latvia. To avoid the support of some kind of monopoly, since establishment in 2003 the secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs has developed a different support scheme to minority organizations.

Under the Regulations by the Cabinet of Ministers Nr. 612, **the Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs** has undertaken its activity on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003. The secretariat is being established on the basis of the Department of Social Integration, formerly under the Ministry of Justice, and the National Minority Affairs Department, formerly under the Naturalization Board.

The main aims and tasks of the Secretariat supposed:

- to elaborate the projects of legislative and other normative acts in the field of society integration and ethnic minorities rights;
- to implement and co-ordinate the State programs “Society Integration in Latvia” and “The Livs in Latvia”;
- to implement and co-ordinate activities aimed to exterminate discrimination;
- to promote the development of civil society;
- to implement and co-ordinate state support for cultural associations of ethnic minorities;
- to secure the implementation of international treaties signed by Latvia and to secure state participation in the activities of international programs and organizations;
- to inform and educate the society. (Regulations by the Cabinet of Ministers Nr. 612, date of visit: 2004-12-10)<sup>9</sup>.

During the 2003 the secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs has supported 67 minority organizations and societies (altogether 131 grants). In comparison with 2002, the total amount of grants has doubled. In the description of their activities the secretariat has mentioned that they have developed data base of minority organizations and communities in Latvia, they have supported minority organizations with information on state support programs, projects, legislative acts and other information, they have organize conferences on minority issues, and they have established the department of minority information and culture (Activities of the secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs, date of visit: 2004-12-10)<sup>10</sup>.

**Society Integration Foundation** was established on July 5, 2001, according to the “Law on Society Integration Foundation” that came into force on September 1, 2001. The law determines the establishment of Society Integration Foundation, its form of administration and supervision, as well as the order of resource accumulation and expenditure. The purpose

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<sup>9</sup> Regulations by the Cabinet of Ministers Nr. 612, <http://www.integracija.gov.lv/index.php?id=327&sadala=137>, date of visit: 2004-12-10)

<sup>10</sup> Activities of the secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs,<sup>10</sup> [http://www.integracija.gov.lv/doc\\_upl/prese\\_\(1\).doc](http://www.integracija.gov.lv/doc_upl/prese_(1).doc), date of visit: 2004-12-10

of the Society Integration Foundation is to support financially and promote society integration process according to the basic guidelines of the national programme on “Society Integration in Latvia” that were approved on February 6, 2001.

Society Integration Foundation works closely with the secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs. The latest is making the guidelines for the Society Integration Foundation.

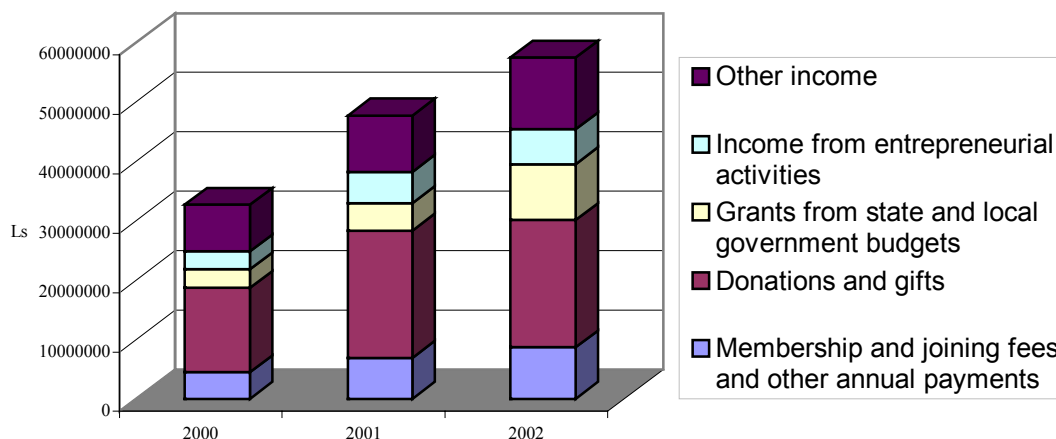
### **Finances**

According to Article 20 of the 1992 Law on Public Organizations and their Associations income of public organizations can be generated from:

- 1) membership fees;
- 2) donations from individuals and legal entities;
- 3) income from business activities and other entrepreneurial activities;
- 4) other income that is not prohibited by law.

The State Revenue Service data in 2002 reveals that donations and gifts made up 37% of all income of public organizations in Latvia. Grants from state and local government budgets made up 16%, membership and other annual payments - 15%, income from economic activities - 10%, other income – 21%. As we can see in Figure 3, during the last years the proportion of grants from state and local government budgets has increased.

**Figure 3. Income structure for public organizations**



Source: The State Revenue Service. In: Vilka, I., Strupiss, A., Strode, I., Balodis, O., Simane, M. 2004: The Development of Civil Society in Latvia: an Analysis. Riga: Consensus PR and Latvian Institute of International Affairs 2004, p. 26.

The Centre for Non-Governmental Organizations has identified the following foreign donors that provide funding in Latvia:

- The Soros Foundation – Latvia;
- The Baltic-American Partnership Program;
- The World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP);

- The Queen Juliana Fund (Oranje Foundation);
- The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (operating until 2003).

In last years the biggest grants to public organizations were made by the Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs. This includes its allocation of funds to the Society Integration Foundation and funds from the Phare ACCESS program.

In 2001 Society Integration Foundation had allocated 126 845 LVL (about 200000 USD) for 21 project, and 20 000 LVL (about 31700 USD) for projects providing language training for naturalisation.

In 2002 Society Integration Foundation administered 310000 LVL (about 515000 euro) for 121 projects, the part of amount provided by the European Union's PHARE program was 100 000 euro. The projects were chosen in specified areas, **including NGO projects in the field of ethnic integration, assistance programs to minority cultural societies and associations**, Latvian language training to naturalisation applicants, research into society integration process, and others.

In 2003 the Society Integration Foundation had allocated 1 354 723 LVL (about 2 260 000 euros). 940000 LVL (about 1570000 euro) were provided to projects of ethnic integration, of which almost 60% was EU PHARE funding, and just over 40% state funding.

The 2004 budget of the Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs and the Society Integration Foundation together was about €4.5 million. 51 000 LVL have been allocated to **national minority NGOs**. Budget allocations have been earmarked for 27 NGOs. For example, an agreement on funding was signed with the Latvian Jewish society "Shamir" which will publish a map "Latvia. Synagogues and Jewish cemeteries" in four languages. The Old Believers society of Ivan Zavoloko has planned to hold a series of events, including an exhibition on the history of Old Believer faith in Latvia, several remembrance events and a scientific conference. The Latvian Association in Support of Schools with Russian as the Language of Tuition plans to hold a festival of Russian culture and education in honour of the Tatyana Day, while the Latvian Ukrainians Society seeks to establish a Ukrainian information and culture centre in cooperation with the Latvian Academic Library.

According to the financial analysis of the non-governmental organization sector in Latvia (Vilka a.o. 2004, 36) many non-governmental organizations in Latvia do not have diversified sources of income – they rely on one funding source and shape their work and objectives based on those identified by the founder. At the same time although local philanthropy is still insufficiently developed in Latvia, upon Latvia's accession to the European Union several international funding organizations have terminated their support for Latvia's non-governmental sector. This means that a certain part of non-governmental organizations in Latvia face a difficulty to continue their work, because their values and objectives are alien to local funding sources.

As several international funding organizations have terminated their support for Latvia's non-governmental sector, NGOs will have to rely more on both local funding and funding from European Union programs. Following Latvia's accession to the European Union, from 2004 state and local government institutions, enterprises and organizations in Latvia have access to European Union Structural Funds (EU SF), and the EU Community initiatives INTERREG

and EQUAL. From 2004 to 2006, 830 million EUR will be available for Latvia under the structural funds (625 million EUR from EU structural fund and 205 million EUR from the Latvian Government).

Researchers indicate that non-governmental organizations may receive support under the following activities (Vilka a.o. 2004, 69):

*Activity 1.1.* Improvement of environmental infrastructure and promotion of tourism development (NGOs – in connection with tourism).

*Activity 1.4.* Development of education, healthcare and social infrastructure.

*Activity 3.1.* Promotion of employment.

*Activity 3.2.* Promotion of education and continuing education.

*Activity 3.3.* Reduction of social marginalization.

*Activity 4.1.6.* Development of local capacity (LEADER+ similar activities).

However, experts in the field warn (Vilka a.o. 2004, 73-74) that conditions and requirements to receive EU structural funds are difficult for Latvian NGOs to meet, because attracting EU funds requires language skills, the ability to prepare documents, and to develop projects. To implement EU projects co-financing is needed (10-20%, depending on the program). As foreign funding declines and as the ability of local donors to donate becomes restricted, it could be difficult for Latvia's organizations to generate such co-financing. Also EU procedures reimburse the full costs of projects only after the completion of the projects. This means that organizations may require bank loans. According to expert evaluation, very few Latvian NGOs have a credit history that would let them receive such loans, and even if a project is implemented using bank funds funding will still be required to repay loan interest.

To sum up the following restrictive and encouraging conditions can be revealed:

#### Restrictive conditions:

First of all it should be noted that non-citizens and foreigners in Latvia have no rights:

- a) to participate in elections of national parliament;
- b) to participate in referenda;
- c) to participate in elections of local government;
- d) to found a political organization (political party).

Otherwise the rights of ethnic minorities or non-citizens and foreigners are not restricted. If barriers arise in the process of self-organization, public rallies, establishing an NGO, the causes are probably in areas other than the legal sphere. A possible reason could be a lack of information, education, experience and confidence. According to the studies on civic participation (Zepa 1999; Vilka a.o. 2004) these are factors which hinder people in Latvia to participate in NGOs.

Secondly, as important restriction is a financial capacity of NGOs and the fact that local philanthropy is insufficiently developed in Latvia.

#### Encouraging conditions:

During the last years the biggest grants to public organizations were made by the Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs. Main aims and tasks

of the Secretariat are focused on development of minority organizations and support of minority rights. In the realm of minority policy, the secretariat is responsible for disbursing government subsidies to minority NGOs, helping minority NGOs build the capacity to implement projects, and promoting inter-cultural dialogue. During the 2003 the secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs has allocated 131 grants to minority organizations and societies, they have supported minority organizations with information on state support programs, projects, legislative acts and other information, they have organize conferences on minority issues, and they have established the department of minority information and culture. Summarising it all, one can find that minority organizations in Latvia have better chances and more grant opportunities than other organizations have.

## **PART II: ACTIVE CIVIC PARTICIPATION OF THIRD COUNTRY IMMIGRANTS IN LATVIA**

Inquiring about the active civic participation of third country immigrants in Latvia one can find that there are no studies targeting “immigrant” civic participation in Latvia. This can be explained, firstly, with the fact that immigration is not the issue of importance in Latvia (more people emigrate than immigrate to Latvia), secondly, due to the migration flows from Soviet republics in Latvia the term “immigrant” has a negative meaning in Latvia and social scientists try to be “politically correct” and avoid to use the term “immigrants”.

However, it is possible to find studies concerning the civic participation of non-citizens and newly naturalised citizens in Latvia, and studies on minority organizations in Latvia. In this regard one can say that the studies initiated and financed by state organizations reflect the main concerns of these organizations, accordingly Naturalisation Board initiated the studies on non-citizens and newly naturalised citizens in Latvia, and the Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs – the studies on minority organizations and the development of civic society in Latvia (It should be added that universities itself in Latvia have no capacity to finance any researches in social sciences and almost all funding for studies is attracted from state grants provided by the Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs and Society Integration Foundation, or from foreign donors).

Following the focus of the studies on civic participation conducted in Latvia and publications on civic participation, this chapter is divided in three parts:

- 1) **Civic participation in Latvia: an overview of studies in the realm.** In this part the most important studies in the general field of civic participation in Latvia is reviewed.
- 2) **Civic participation of non-citizens and newly naturalised citizens in Latvia.** As a number of non-citizens is big in Latvia (21% of all residents) and the naturalization rate increases slowly, a particular attention is devoted to the civic participation of non-citizens, in comparison with newly naturalised citizens and the total body of citizens in Latvia. It should be added that almost all non-citizens in Latvia (about 90%) can be regarded as third country immigrants or their descendents because they have immigrated mostly from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.
- 3) **Minority NGOs in Latvia.** Minority issue is one the core issues shaping public discussions in Latvia, therefore minority NGOs are rather important actors in public

policy, and also have more grant opportunities than other organizations have. Currently, there are more than 200 ethnic minority NGOs operating in Latvia, and a lot of them are working with third country immigrants or their descendents, for example, Russians, Belorussians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and others. Although it has to be noted that in respect to minority organizations in Latvia it is impossible to separate first and second generation migrants from those who live in Latvia for centuries. Only few organizations can be recognized as organizations targeting the first generation immigrants from third countries, and these are organizations targeting with ethnic groups settled in Latvia only in last decade, for instance, the Afro-Latvian Association, Latvian-Lebanon Club of Education and Culture, Latvian Foreigners and Refugees Association (not active any more) and others.

### *Civic participation in Latvia: an overview of studies in the realm*

Most important studies:

- Vilka, I., Strupiss, A., Strode, I., Balodis, O., Simane, M. 2004: The Development of Civil Society in Latvia: an Analysis. Riga: Consensus PR and Latvian Institute of International Affairs 2004
- Loftsson, E., Choe, Y. (ed.) 2003: Political Representation and Participation in Transitional Democracies: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Stockholm: Södertörns högskola
- Centre for Non-governmental Organizations 2002: NGO sector in Latvia. 2000/ 2001 [http://www.ngo.org.lv/files/6074\\_ngo\\_sector\\_2000-2001.doc](http://www.ngo.org.lv/files/6074_ngo_sector_2000-2001.doc), date of visit: 2004-12-14
- Karklins, R., Zepa, B. 2001: Political Participation in Latvia 1987 – 2001, in: Journal of Baltic Studies, Vol. XXXII, No 4 (Winter 2001), 334-346
- Zepa, B (ed.) 1999 Conditions of Enhancement of Civic Participation, Riga: Baltic Data House, 1999

During the period 1988-1991 participation especially in political organizations was growing fast, the level of “unconventional” participation (for example, protest actions) in Latvia was several times greater than the average level of activity in democratic countries. After the Latvian independence was restored, participation in different organizations diminished rapidly, since the network of the old Soviet organizations (mostly trade unions) broke down, while the new network was only started to be created. As the authors of the study “Conditions of Enhancement of Civic Participation” report in 1994, only 19% of the Latvian population were members of any non-governmental organizations (Zepa 1999, 11).

The study “**Conditions of Enhancement of Civic Participation**” gives an insight in the dynamics of participation during the period from 1990 till 1998, and an analysis of the effect of participation on the values and attitudes of individuals, as well as of conditions which facilitate the participation of inhabitants. Special attention was focused on participation of non-citizens. It was analysed on the basis of the study “Towards a Civic Society” (Baltic Data House. 1998: Towards a Civic Society: Survey Report).

To discover the role of civic participation of inhabitants in the democratization of society, authors mainly applied the pluralistic perspective (D. Truman, 1951; R. A. Dahl, 1961, 1982; A. de Tocqueville, 1969; C. Pateman, 1970; Verba and Nie, 1972; Parry, 1977; Milbrath, 1965 and others).

In their conclusions authors have find the following factors having had negative effect on the political participation of all inhabitants of Latvia:

- 1) lowered self-assessment of one's own political awareness;
- 2) dissatisfaction with the results of political activities;
- 3) low level of political trust;
- 4) deficit of positive expectations in regard to the result of participation.

Besides that participation in public activities is prevented by the low welfare level in society and pragmatic considerations which require people to prefer those activities which render some financial gains. The low standard of living prevents people from public activities, since they are engaged in providing for their primary needs (Zepa 1999, 54).

Authors have found out that in Latvia orientation toward social values (participation in passing national decisions, participation in problem solving at workplace and in the neighbourhood, progress toward a more humane society, freedom of speech) is very weak, and it is notably more pronounced among younger people.

At the same time, the results of study showed that “participation in NGOs give people new experience, knowledge, skills, it raises their self-confidence, faith in their abilities to change something, to benefit society, and all this promotes a positive outlook on the future. [...] participation in NGOs increases personal responsibility, destroys delimitation of individual and public sphere typical for totalitarian societies, and strengthens civic virtues in society” (Zepa 1999, 55).

Within the study “**Political Participation in Latvia 1987 – 2001**” (Karklins, Zepa 2001) authors have developed a concept of three stages of political participation in Latvia. According to it the first phase (1987-1991) is characteristic with grassroots social movements and unprecedented mass mobilization. The second phase began shortly after the restoration of independence in August 1991 and has been marked by a decrease of political activism, disappointment in the performance of elected officials, low political trust and efficacy (1991-1998).

The third phase, according to authors, currently underway in Latvia, is distinctive with increasing disenchantment with conventional political participation: “since more and more citizens distrust their elected representatives and the parliament, they have begun exploring alternative ways to influence government action” (Karklins, Zepa 2001, 340), for example referenda as alternative law-making and protest activities. Among other dissatisfied social groups (farmers, medical personnel, pensioners, and students) are also ethnic minorities.

The main focus of the authors of the study “**Political Representation and Participation in Transitional Democracies**” is a comparison between Baltic countries and Nordic countries – Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland. (Loftsson, Choe (ed.) 2003). It is based on a survey that Södertörns University College conducted in 1999 in the three Baltic countries.

In the chapter “Associational Voluntarism and Social Capital in the Baltic States (Ozolins-Supule, 2003, pp. 126 - 147) author reports that in Latvia **22%** of all inhabitants have a membership in any voluntary organization, 14% are active in their participation and 3% have a position within organization. According to the survey results more than one third (36%) of all involved in associations are those from trade unions, 21% - those from sports clubs and 15% – those from cultural, musical, dancing or theatre societies.



In all three countries people of original ethnicity of the Baltic States – Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians are more frequently involved in the work of voluntary associations, and particularly in Latvia **26% of Latvians** and **17% of the Russian speaking population** are members of voluntary associations. On average, the social and economic status of members of non-governmental organizations is higher than the status of those who are not NGOs' members: they have higher incomes, higher educational level, they are engaged in professions of higher qualification.

The study “**NGO sector in Latvia 2000/ 2001**” is a summary and analysis of the information available to the Centre for Non-governmental Organizations (NGO Centre). According to their information the general profile of a Latvian non-governmental organization is as follows: it is a new (exists less than 4 years), small (under 50 members), small budget (annual budget not exceeding LVL 1000) organization, whose activity relates to dealing with educational and social issues, or it acts as a youth support organization.

According to the research data of the NGO Centre, the majority of NGOs enlist from 10 to 30 members. 44% of the organizations asked belong to this group. 14% of NGOs have less than 10 members and only 4% have more than 500 members. These data show that there are comparatively few large organizations, which involve wide representation of some group or the whole of society.

Administrative capacity of NGOs is rather weak; this is witnessed by the fact that nearly 70% of NGOs do not have paid staff. 14% of NGOs claim to have one paid staff member and another 10% say they have 2-3 paid staff members. According to the conclusions of authors of the study it is an indicator of the absence of permanent financing for administrative expenses.

One of the most interesting findings of this study was that approximately 500 non-governmental organizations in 2000 in Latvia participated in the formation of state policy and in protection of their own interests in the state administrative establishments; this comprises less than 10% of all registered organizations. Analysis of these organizations showed that only 156 of them represent wider ranks of society, or the public benefit. Most of the organizations which had close and regular contacts with state administrative establishments in decision-making processes, were associations of enterprises in specific branches of the national economy, and unions of various professional groups. This indicates that businessmen appreciate the ability of NGOs to affect decision-making, and use it in order to represent their own interests.

The latest study on civic participation in Latvia “**The Development of Civil Society in Latvia: an Analysis**” gives an analysis of four areas (Vilka a.o. 2004):

- 1) on factors what promotes cooperation between individuals;
- 2) on factors what promotes the establishment and sustainability of formal cooperation networks (non-governmental organizations or NGOs);
- 3) on factors what promotes cooperation between individuals and NGOs for public policy development (i.e. development, implementation and evaluation);
- 4) on factors how Latvia's accession to the EU will affect cooperation/ collaboration.

Data reported within this study witness similar tendencies as previous studies. According to a survey conducted by the market research and public opinion centre SKDS members of other nationalities and non-citizens are less involved in social activities than Latvians.

When questioned about why people aren't more active in formal and informal social networks, those surveyed mentioned the following reasons:

- Lack of information, people don't know what NGOs are.
- A lack of education – schools do not teach students how to think critically, analytically.
- Personality traits – inertia, unwillingness, close-mindedness, introversion, not wanting to admit that they have problems. The basis for this could be that people don't believe in themselves, or their abilities.
- Poor communication skills.
- People are held back by negative experiences.
- Negative or skeptical attitude from others.
- The inherited Soviet tendency to rely on others - that more active people will resolve issues for them.
- The economic situation – low income levels, especially for rural residents. People are busy with their own lives and work.
- A lack of traditions, the baggage of the past.

According to this study on 1 January 2004 there were **7704** social organizations in Latvia. However one should not overestimate the level of activity of all NGOs. It seems appropriate to assume that slightly more than half of all NGOs are active as the number of organizations submitting their annual financial declarations is about 65% of all organizations. Although NGOs in Latvia operate in almost all spheres and throughout the country, their distribution is uneven. The biggest concentration can be found in Riga and other large cities.

**Table 6. Types of organizations (11.02.2004.)**

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion %</i>
Public organization	4956	63,7
Sporting organization	1343	17,3
Open social fund	1018	13,1
Trade union	136	1,7
Fraternity (professional society)	107	1,4
Sporting association	88	1,1
Political organization (party)	58	0,7
association	53	0,7
Professional artist organization	19	0,2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7778</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Lursoft. In: Vilka, I., Strupiss, A., Strode, I., Balodis, O., Simane, M. 2004: The Development of Civil Society in Latvia: an Analysis. Riga: Consensus PR and Latvian Institute of International Affairs 2004, p.21

Regarding the NGOs participation in policy development authors of the study conclude that although the law provides ways for being involved in policy development only a small proportion of residents and non-governmental organizations are involved in policy development with local governments, ministries and the Parliament. Although formal cooperation between the non-governmental and public sectors is open and laws regulating this area are very democratic, there is a lack of practical regulations that would make such cooperation effective. Of importance is a fact that participation in policy development requires resources that a majority of NGOs do not have. As a result, only a small number have influence on policy development.

## *Summary*

The studies on political participation tell us that currently one can observe an increase of disenchantment with conventional political participation in Latvia. As a result people seek alternative ways to influence government action, and of importance is the fact that ethnic minorities are among other dissatisfied social groups (farmers, medical personnel, pensioners, and students).

The studies on third sector in Latvia indicate that NGOs in Latvia are rather small in terms of membership. Their financial resources and capacity tend to be notably restricted, therefore their potential to mobilize segments of society is rather weak. About 20% of all inhabitants have a membership in any voluntary organization. Members of other nationalities and non-citizens are less involved in social activities than Latvians (on 2001 **26% of Latvians** and only **17% of the Russian speaking population** were members of voluntary associations).

The main reasons, why people aren't more active in formal and informal social networks, are lack of information, lack of education, lack of positive experience, negative or sceptical attitude and low standard of living – people are engaged in providing for their primary needs.

## *Civic participation of non-citizens and newly naturalised citizens in Latvia*

Most important studies:

- Brands Kehre, I., Stalidzane, I. 2003: The Role of Regional Aspects in Dealing with Citizenship Issues. Riga: The Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia 2003
- Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. 2001: Towards a Civic Society - 2000: Survey Report. <http://www.bszi.lv/downloads/resources/civicSociety/civicSociety2000.pdf>, date of visit: 2004-12-10
- Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. 2001: Survey of the New Naturalized Citizens. Survey Report, <http://www.bszi.lv/downloads/resources/newCitizens/newCitizens2001.pdf>, date of visit: 2004-12-10
- Baltic Data House. 1998: Towards a Civic Society: Survey Report. <http://www.bszi.lv/downloads/resources/civicSociety/civicSociety1997.pdf>, date of visit: 2004-12-10

Study “**Towards a Civic Society - 2000**” was the repetition of the survey “Towards a Civic Society” carried out in 1997 and covered a representative poll of two groups of the population – citizens and non-citizens. The objective of the survey was to find out the viewpoint of the population of Latvia, both citizens and non-citizens, concerning the course of democratic processes in Latvia, integration of the society, readiness to get involved in forming a civil society, as well as to characterize the changes taken place since 1997. A special attention was devoted to investigating the non-citizens' viewpoint and behaviour concerning naturalization matters.

According to this study citizens had more often participated in different political activities than non-citizens. 62% of citizens and 88% of non-citizens had taken no part in any of the political activities proposed in the optional answers (Figure 4). 26% of citizens and 5% of non-citizens had signed some petition (to hold a referendum or another appeal or request). 9% of citizens and 3% of non-citizens had tried to convince someone to vote for a particular

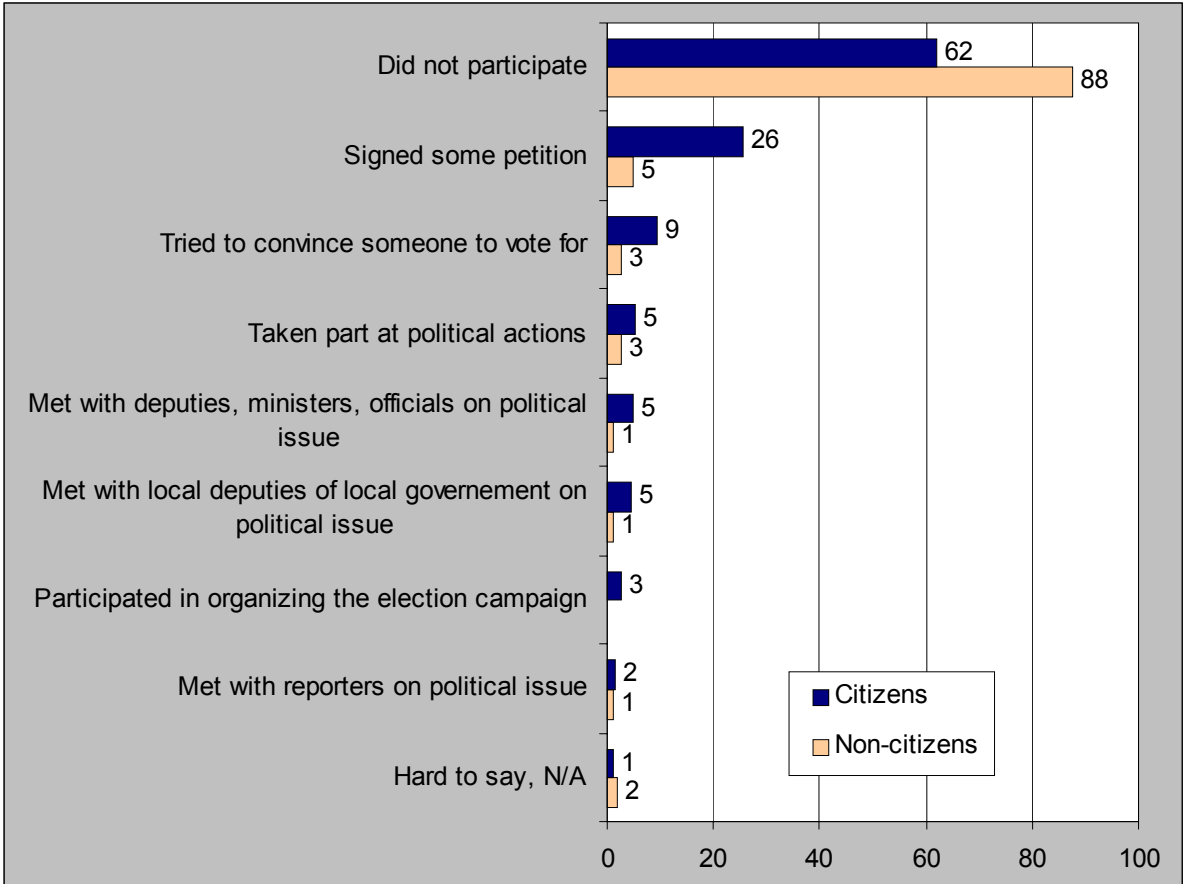
political party, 5% of citizens and 3% of non-citizens had participated in protest actions (pickets, demonstrations, strikes).

In 2000 27% citizens and 15% non-citizens were involved in any social or non-governmental organization. In comparison with the 1997 survey, both citizens and non-citizens have become slightly more active: in 1997, 24% of citizens and 10% of non-citizens were involved in some organization. Most often, citizens and non-citizens are involved in trade unions (7% and 5%, respectively), in religious and church organizations, in congregations (7% and 4%), in sports and recreational organizations (6% and 2%), in artistic amateur groups (5% and 1%) (Figure 5).

The study showed that people in Latvia have low self-appraisal: three fourths of citizens and non-citizens considered that “most people are better informed about politics and government than I am. Consequently authors of the study conclude that lowered self-assessment of political competency delays political participation and weakens belief in the ability of one’s power of political influence.

**Figure 4. Political participation**

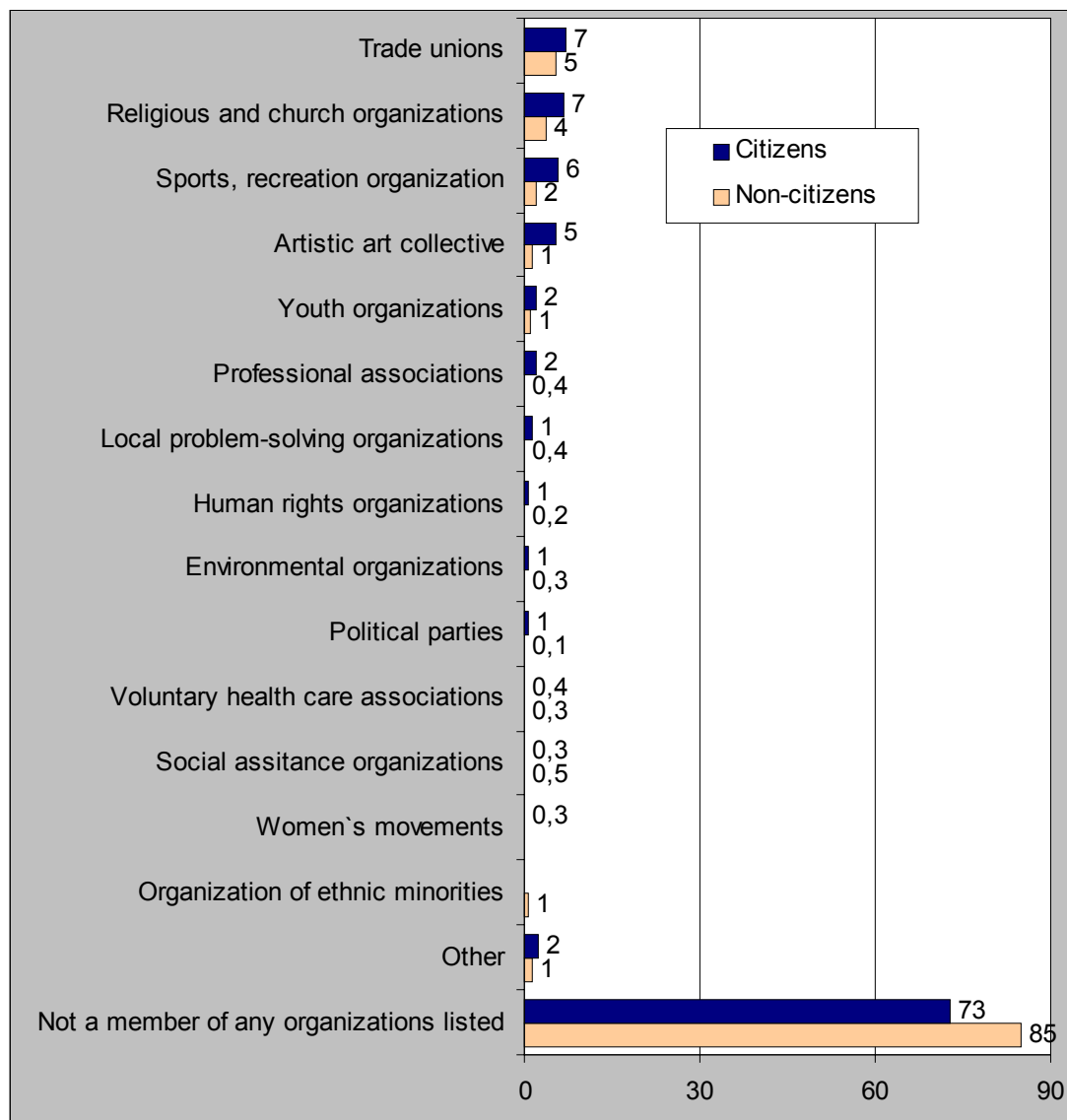
*During last three years have you done anything listed in this card?*  
 (Question with multiple answers. % of citizens of Latvia, n=1004; % of those who are not citizens of Latvia, n=1005)



Source: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. 2001: Survey of the New Naturalized Citizens. Survey Report, <http://www.bszi.lv/downloads/resources/newCitizens/newCitizens2001.pdf>, date of visit: 2004-12-10, p. 69

### Figure 5. Participation in non-governmental organizations

*In the work of which of the mentioned organizations are you involved or are a member of?*  
 (Question with multiple answers. % of citizens of Latvia, n=1004; % of those who are not citizens of Latvia, n=1005)



Source: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. 2001: Survey of the New Naturalized Citizens. Survey Report, <http://www.bszi.lv/downloads/resources/newCitizens/newCitizens2001.pdf>, date of visit: 2004-12-10, p. 70

Generally, authors conclude that both citizens and non-citizens have low participation rates in various organizations, which means that their range of communications usually is limited to that of their family, friends and colleagues at work and this is a typical feature of a weakly organized society.

In the “**Survey of newly naturalised citizens**” researchers have questioned the inhabitants of Latvia who had gained citizenship of Latvia from 1995 to 2001 when going through the naturalization. According to the results of survey new citizens in Latvia can be characterized as a group of population with higher social and economic status. These people are more economically active, with higher education, users of modern information technologies, managers, self-employed, students; their income is also higher.

The survey reveals that this group feels less alienated from the state and society, it is characterized by higher trust in the main state power institutions as well as higher self-evaluation of political competence, which in general in society is low. Thus, analyzing the group of naturalised citizens, authors have found the connection: if people can successfully solve their professional, career, problems important in their life, the attitude towards the state power and other institutions becomes more favourable, feeling of alienation decreases, people feel able to solve their own problems as well as the ones vital for society.

Regarding the political participations survey revealed that there is more interest in politics among new citizens than on average in the country: two thirds of them are more or less interested in politics (in comparison with 47% of non-citizens, 60% citizens). A little bit more new citizens (72%) than citizens of Latvia on average (62%) have participated in the local municipality elections in March 2001.

The last study on non-citizens in Latvia “**The Role of Regional Aspects in Dealing with Citizenship Issues**” (Brands-Kehre, Stalidzane 2003) is focused on differences between Latvian regions in terms of the naturalisation process and societal integration. The following issues were dealt with in the course of the survey: the process of naturalisation, Latvian language skills, interest about the citizenship and willingness to acquire it, trusts in municipalities and others. Among others there was also a question about participation in life of municipality. Survey results revealed that 22% of all non-citizens questioned willingly take part in the events organized by a municipality. 43% of non-citizens very rarely participate in the life of municipality, but 26% do not take part at all and are not interested in what takes place in municipality. As the percentages participating in such activities are higher in small municipalities, rather than in the large towns, authors of the study conclude that a small municipality is positioned closer to its residents than larger municipalities or state institutions in general.

### ***Summary***

Studies about the civic participation of citizens and non-citizens reveal that citizens had more often participated in different political activities and NGOs than non-citizens. 62% of citizens and 88% of non-citizens had taken no part in any of the political activities proposed in the optional answers. 73% citizens and 85% non-citizens were not involved in any social or non-governmental organization.

Generally, both citizens and non-citizens have low participation rates in various organizations, their range of communications usually is limited to that of their family, friends and colleagues at work and this is a typical feature of a weakly organized society. The reason why the participation rate among non-citizens is lower than among citizens can be sought in the alienation between the elite of state power and the inhabitants. Several aspects of the conflict between power and people are strictly marked: one of them is the feeling of lack of social fairness. The inhabitants of Latvia are dissatisfied with the authorities’ attitude towards them: dissatisfied with the fact that they “cannot influence the work of the government”, that they do not feel that “the government treats every individual equally and fairly”.

People most often perceive themselves as subjects to power, not seeing any possibilities to influence the power. People lack belief in their political efficacy: about two thirds of the inhabitants of Latvia (67% citizens, 70% non-citizens) do not believe that they could do anything to change the decision taken by the government. Similarly, 60% citizens and 67%

non-citizens do not believe in *the possibility to influence the decisions at the municipality level*.

Naturalised citizens in Latvia can be characterized as a group of population with higher social and economic status. This group feels less alienated from the state and society, it is characterized by higher trust in the main state power institutions as well as higher self-evaluation of political competence, which in general in society is low.

### ***Minority NGOs in Latvia***

Most important studies:

- Apine I., Dribins L., Jansons A., Vebers, E., Volkovs V., Zankovska S. 2001: Ethnopolitics in Latvia. Rīga: Elpa, 2001. (Available only in Latvian)
- Racko, G. 2004: Survey on aims of establishment of national minority NGOs in Latvia. Riga: Rīgas Stradina Universitate. Eiropas Studiju fakultate 2004. (Available only in Latvian)
- Zepa, B., Klave, E., Jeruma, L., I., Krisane, J. 2004: Integration of Minority Youth in the Society of Latvia in the Context of the Education Reform. Riga: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences 2004

During the process of restoring an independent state of Latvia from 1988 to 1991, minority education and cultural life began to witness a rebirth. In a very short time a number of associations of ethnic minorities were founded. Currently, there are more than 200 national minority NGOs operating in Latvia.

In their analysis of non-governmental sector and its role in the process of society integration, authors of the study „**Ethnopolitics in Latvia**” (Apine a.o. 2001) provide a description of minority NGOs and their activities. As the biggest minority in Latvia are Russians, the biggest amount of minority NGOs are Russian. The authors of the study „Ethnopolitics in Latvia” provide the information about **the most important Russian NGOs**:

Russian Community in Latvia (RCL) was established in 1993. This organization more actively than other Russian organizations has entered in political life, and it is intercommunicating with Russian politicians, too. RCL is fighting for retaining of previous status of Russian language and Russian schools in Latvia, and is fighting for non-citizens' suffrage at municipality elections. RCL is against *State language law*. It was one of organizers of meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> march in 2000 what was set against language policy in Latvia.

Russian Societies Association (RSA) was founded in 1994. It unifies several Russian organizations: Russian culture centre “Uļej”, Balto-Slavic society, several orthodox organizations, professional (Russian lawyers', historians', scientists') organizations, artists' unions. Association is issuing newspaper “Russkoje slovo”. Russian Societies Association offers its own version about Russian national school – it should be based on orthodox and Russian cultural values, and study process at school should be in two languages. In September of 2000 the association strictly dissociated from opposition campaign against State Language Law proclaimed by Union of Political organizations "For Human Rights in a United Latvia".

Russian Society in Latvia (RSL) protects request about non-citizens' suffrage at municipality elections. It is the second Russian NGO by importance, and as Russian community defines

itself as representative of Russian society in Latvia. Although in documents of RSL as the main direction of activities is mentioned the promotion of development of Russians' spiritual life, it is politically active organization.

Citizens and Non-citizens Union tries to find solution for non-citizens rights to participate at municipality elections since February of 1999. Union planned to collect 10 000 signatures of citizens (confirmed by notary), but signatures' collection campaign failed as just 122 signatures were collected.

Latvian Human Rights Commission (LHC) see itself as a defender of human rights of non-citizens and non-Latvians. LHC employs and involves professional lawyers in its work. It has processed 11 petitions in European Human Rights Court and in UNDP Human Rights Commission. LHC denies integration policy implemented in Latvia and defends the idea about two-community state.

Latvian Association for Support of Schools with Russian Language of Instruction (LASSRLI) is active defender of interests of schools with Russian language of instruction and tries to obtain retaining of previous status of these schools. Association actively participated in discussions about *Society Integration Conception*. It has continuous contacts with teachers from schools with Russian language of instruction.

Association of Russian language and literature teachers (ARLLT) stands for Russian language as a language of instruction in previous Russian schools after 2004, too. ARLLT organizes different Russian cultural activities – Russians' education day, Russian Cultural festival, discussion about cultural societies' contacts.

Latvian Youth Club mostly unites Russian youth. It rejects current *Law of citizenship* and thinks that zero variant of Law of citizenship should be accepted. The club rejects inclusion of Latvia in EU and NATO.

Initiative. Hope. Assistance. Main aspects of activities of the society are seminars, language courses, lawyers' consultations, and social assistance. Society unites approximately 340 women (mostly Russians, non – citizens, unmarried mothers), who have problems in family and other social problems.

Extreme Russian youth organizations (National Bolsheviks, etc.) are functioning in Latvia, too. National Bolsheviks was registered with the name "Uzvara" ["Victory"] in April of 2000. It issues newspaper "Tribunal" (editor V. Lindermanis). Directions of National Bolsheviks' activities are mad anti-capitalism, cultivation of the hate against foreign companies (Lattelekom etc.), as well as against Latvian authorities, which, as it was asserted in "Tribunal", had sold themselves to foreign capital. National Bolsheviks admit that they are close to organizations of similar type in Russia (e.g., limonovci).

In 1999 several Russian organizations united for reaching political aims. Coordinating Board of Public Organizations (CBPO) is functioning since the August of 1999. It was established by 15 organizations, but in the august of 2000 it consisted of 23 organizations. CBPO has established continuous contacts with fraction "For Human Rights in a United Latvia" in Saeima.



**Activities of Byelorussians organizations.** Interests of Byelorussians' national minority in Latvia are represented by such organizations as *Svitanak* (founded in 1988), *Pramen* (founded in 1990), *Uzdim* in Daugavpils (founded in 1994), *Spadchina* in Ventspils (founded in 2000). Starting with 1994 there are Byelorussians' school, folklore ensemble, and newspaper is issued.

**Activities of Ukrainians organizations.** Ukrainian minority in Latvia is represented by several organizations – society *Dnipro* and Latvian Ukrainian Union (LUU). LUU, which unites people of different nationalities coming from Ukraine, emphasizes its political solidarity with Russian speaking community. In LUU there is a big influence from persons that appeal to boycott naturalization and procure equalization of non-citizens and citizens rights.

**Activities of Jewish organizations.** Jewish community in Latvia exist from 1988. It is occupied with charity, gives social assistance to old and sick people. Jewish community is not committed to any of political parties and emphasize its loyalty to Latvia state.

At the time of the survey (2001) public organizations mentioned above were the most important Russian organizations in Latvia. They all are active and each of them has support among certain Russian or Russian speaking inhabitants. Although it should be mentioned that in March 2003 a new organization was established– **Headquarters for Defence of Russian Schools**. This organization comprises both Russian politicians, NGOs, and other active citizens who are dissatisfied with Education reform in schools of Russian language as a language of instruction: political party "For Human Rights in a United Latvia", Latvian Human Rights Commission, Russian Community in Latvia, Russian Society in Latvia, Citizens and Non-citizens Union, Latvian Association for Support of Schools with Russian Language of Instruction, Latvian Youth Club, Belorussians society "Pramen", Latvian Ukrainian Union and others.

Headquarters for Defence of Russian Schools was a main organizer a number of protest activities aimed against the changes which were planned for the minority education system in September 2004.

Authors of the study „**Ethnopolicy in Latvia**” (Apine a.o. 2001) reveal that during the events in 2000, which happened because of language politics, politicized Russian speaking NGOs consolidated mutually for counteraction against language policy implemented in the state. Because of lack of possibility to make a dialog with state institutions, they joined to politics implemented by Union of Political organizations "For Human Rights in a United Latvia" and adjusted their aims and tactics of activities with it. Politicized Russian speaking NGOs for reaching their aims have chosen radical ethnopolitical activities – street actions and meetings oriented to confrontation.

The events in 2004 signalize that this process of consolidation in protest actions has become stronger and even escalated.

In the study „**Integration of Minority Youth in the Society of Latvia in the Context of the Education Reform**” the main focus is not on the minority NGOs or minority civic participation, but on minority youth, their attitudes and activities, including civic participation (Zepa, Klave a.o.2004).

In studying structural integration, the authors made use of the latest theories about political participation - theories which make it clear that the role of traditional political organizations is

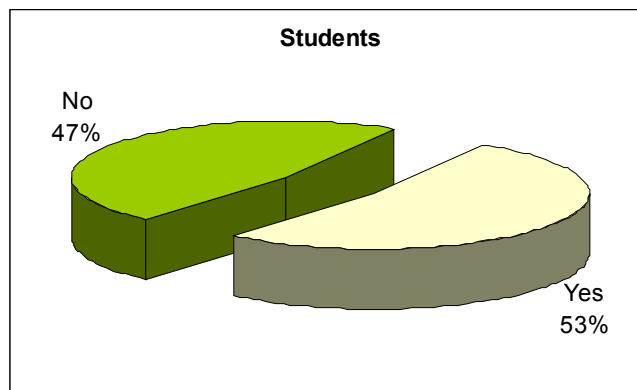
deteriorating in the face of new types of social activities such as demonstrations and unsanctioned strikes (Dalton 1996).

Because of the socio-political events which took place in Latvia in 2004 in the context of education reform, both in the quantitative and qualitative part of the research, the authors included questions about the relevant events and participation in protest actions. In the context of civic participation it should be noted that in 2004 in Rīga and other cities in Latvia, there were a number of protests by minority students and parents, aimed against the changes which were planned for the minority education system in September 2004.

**Picture 6. Minority students' participation in protest actions.**

*Have you taken part in any protest action in the previous six months?*

*BASE: Students of the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, giving certain answer, n=1182*

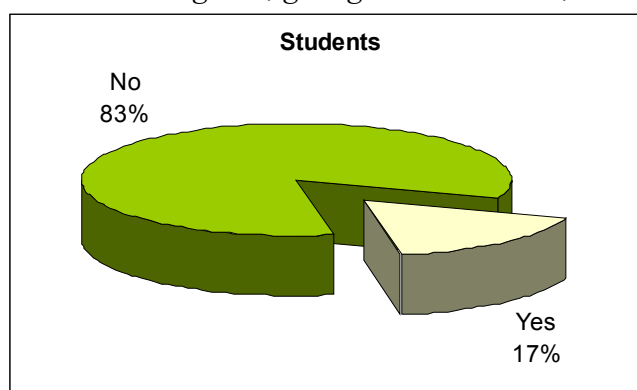


Source: Zepa, B., Klave, E., Jeruma, L., Krisane, J. 2004: Integration of Minority Youth in the Society of Latvia in the Context of the Education Reform. Riga: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences 2004, p.68

**Picture 7. Minority students' participation in NGOs.**

*During past 6 month, have you been involved in any organization or association in order to deal with public or political issues?*

*BASE: Students of the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, giving certain answer, n=1182*



Source: Zepa, B., Klave, E., Jeruma, L., Krisane, J. 2004: Integration of Minority Youth in the Society of Latvia in the Context of the Education Reform. Riga: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences 2004, p.68

In their evaluation of survey results and conclusions authors report, that “results of the student survey indicate that over the last six months (i.e., during the period that began in January

2004), the issue of education reforms has significantly affected the political participation of minority young people, particularly in Latvia's larger towns and cities. One-half of all surveyed students reported having taken part in one of the protests against education reforms. More than one-half of those who had not done so said that they were sorry that they couldn't take part" (Zepa, Klave a.o.2004, 11).

One of the most important conclusions from focus group discussions is that the arguments, which students used to support or oppose the protests, witness that they did not see themselves as a part of the political decision making process. In the context of discourse analysis differentiation between themselves ("us") and the political elite ("they") signalize about an increasing gap between the Russian speaking community and the state as the political elite.

**In the survey on aims of establishment of national minority NGOs in Latvia** the most attention is paid to organizations established in 1993 and 2003, when more national minority NGOs were registered in Latvia than in other years (Racko 2004).

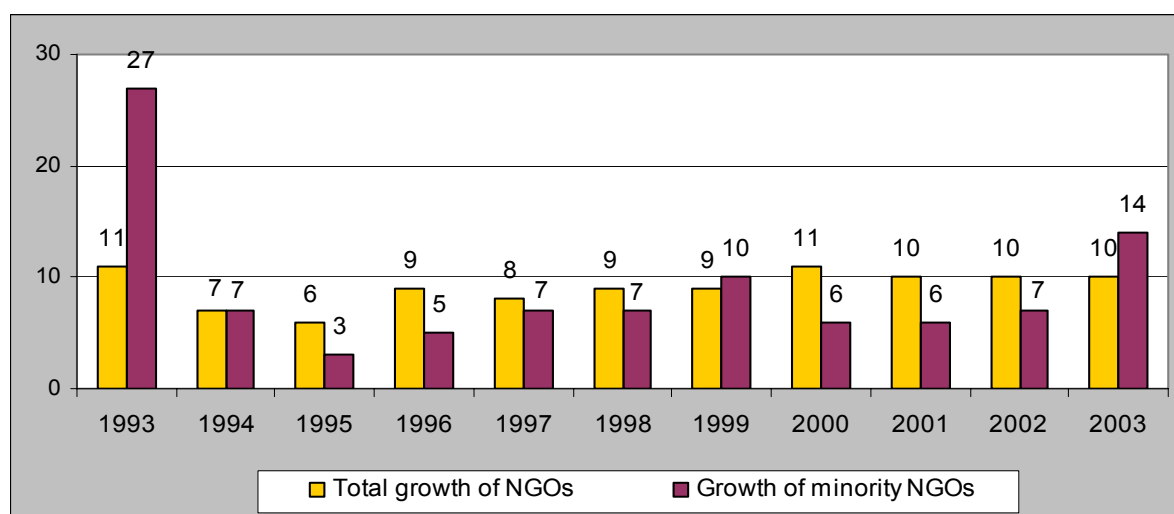
In the course of analysis of minority NGOs establishment aims the attention was paid to the degree of organization capability to enclose themselves in social surroundings and induced systemic transformation changes along the participation in social and political processes. Therefore the research concerns the correspondence of organizations' aims with communal values (uniting the ethnic group, support to the contacts with country of origin), vs. individual values stressing the necessity of professional interests of individual conforming to the pace of changes. According to the objectives of the study, the hypothesis was that establishments of year 2003 are more individualistic in their aims than those of year 1993.

On account of theory the researcher referred to value studies (Hostede, 1984; Inglehart, 1997; Triandis, 1991; Weiss, 2003; Zepa, 1999) and described participation in NGOs in societies, where mutual relations are set by collectivism and those where society is based upon individualism.

After analysis of overall growth of number of NGOs in Latvia in general and minority NGOs, author concluded that notwithstanding the growth is constant, growth ratio of years 1993 and 2003 was the biggest. Lesser still outstanding was the growth ratio of year 1999 (Figure 8).

Author explains the activity of 1993 by pointing to the law on NGOs and their associations adopted in 1992. Influenced by it, as NGOs were registered many ethnic organizations of "awakening" time (Indans, Kalnins 2001; Apine a. o. 2001).

**Figure 8. The proportion of all NGOs and minority NGOs according to the year of establishment. % of total amount.**



Source: Racko, G. 2004: Survey on aims of establishment of national minority NGOs in Latvia. Riga: Rīgas Stradina Universitate. Eiropas Studiju fakultate 2004, p.9. (Available only in Latvian)

While the reason of activity of 2003, according to the author of the survey, was the growing government support to ethnic minority NGOs, including the establishment of the Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs in 2002.

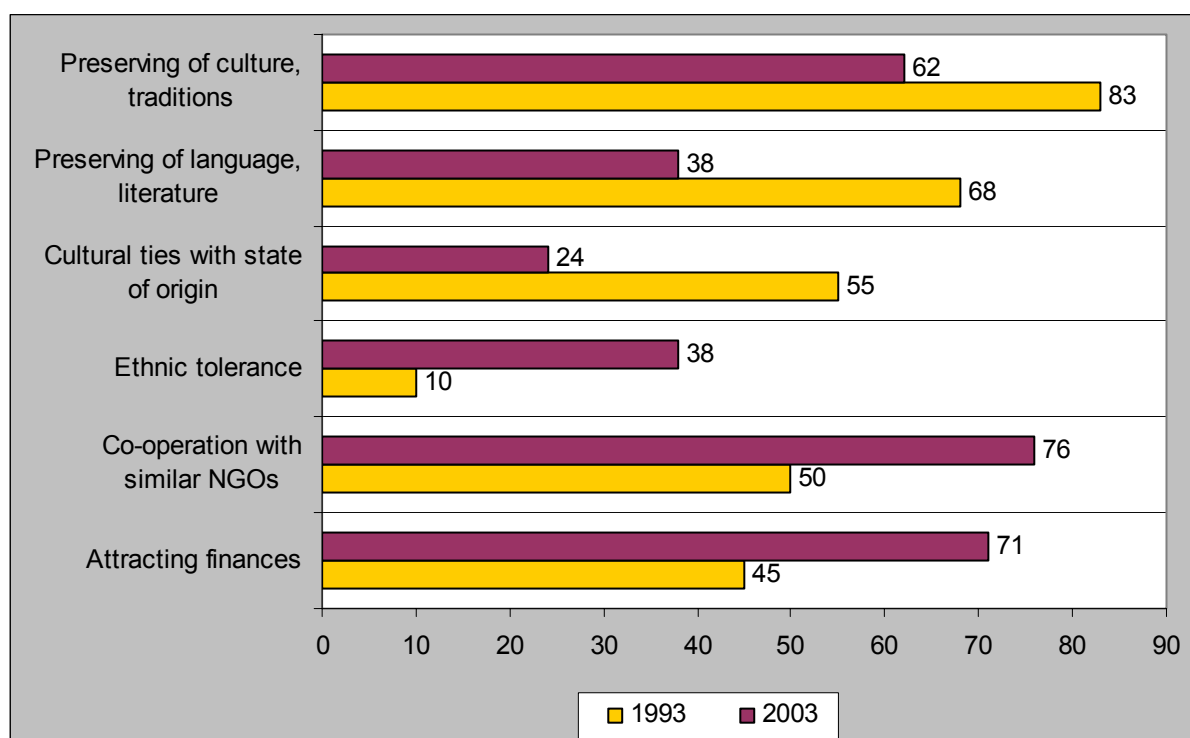
The growth in numbers of ethnic minority NGOs in year 1999 the author of survey explains with Education law, issued in 20 October 1998, which was passed regardless to the interests and wishes of target audiences. A bit further on, in 9 December 1998, the Language law was passed, lacking norms to warrant minority language statuses in Latvia. In context of those proceedings multiple minority NGOs were established in purpose to secure Russian minority interests in education, culture and politics. Besides the mentioned above, partially the growth of ethnic minority NGOs in year 1999 could be explained with the work on the National Programme for the Integration of Society in Latvia started in year 1998.

Following tendencies were disclosed by author analyzing the statutes of organizations established from year 1993 to 2003. At first, increase of multiethnic organizations focusing on defence of several ethnic minorities. Number of organizations representing single ethnic minority decreased, accordingly.

At second, data analysis shows an incline to establish the organizations whose aims are promotion of participation, mutual ethnic and social integration, ethnic tolerance, necessity to attract financing and to promote professional education amongst ethnic minorities.

At third, evaluation of organizations established in ten years shows the tendency of lesser ratio of organizations which aims are culture and traditions of particular ethnic group, language and fostering of literature or particular religion, or integration of particular ethnic group, spreading information about particular ethnic group in Latvia and promoting the cultural contacts with the country of origin.

**Figure 9. The comparison of the aims of organizations registered in 1993 and in 2003. % of NGOs.**



Source: Racko, G. 2004: Survey on aims of establishment of national minority NGOs in Latvia. Riga: Rīgas Stradina Universitate. Eiropas Studiju fakultate 2004, p.12. (Available only in Latvian)

Data extracted from indepth interviews shows that establishment of oldest organizations were mostly determined by peak of self-organization in 80ies of 20th century, when breakdown of USSR allowed to start in Latvia official retaining of ethnic culture and traditions. Main aims of those organizations were uplifting the ethnic self-consciousness and preserving ethnic identity, economic and cultural contacts with home country governmental institutions and fellow nationals abroad by establishing primary schools, secondary schools and Sunday schools, fostering native language and literature by establishing libraries and printing houses, renewal of native culture by singing, dancing and holding common national festivals, as well as by informing society about those proceedings. Those organizations were mainly founded to bring together and consolidate ethnic group representatives in Latvia.

Newer organizations mostly were established in purpose to use opportunities issued by the Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs and Society Integration Foundation project competitions. It must be noticed that reasonable role was played by minority ethnic leaders' participation in educational workshops of the Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs and ethnic minorities NGO "Zelta kamoliņš", where they were taught to promote their projects and take part in integration of society.

Overall analysis allows to conclude that from year 1993 to 2003 changes in aims of NGO establishing have taken place. General tendencies of value orientation transformation shows that tradition, language, religion as point of solidarity lessens, instead increasing focus on social participation, multiculturalism, ethnic tolerance or acquiring financial resources (Figure 9). Therefore this transformation can be explained to reasonable degree by increasing individualization of society and need for achieving personal objectives along the coping with surrounding changes.

It must be noticed that until year 2004 multiethnic organizations have implemented bigger number of Society Integration Foundation and Soros Foundation projects than mono-ethnic ones, at the same time carrying out more projects on civic participation and interethnic dialogue.

On the part of conclusions author states that his assumption that establishments of year 2003 are more individualistic and civic participation minded in their aims than those of year 1993 has been proved. If older organizations were established to revive ethnic culture after the breakdown of USSR, then newer organization establishing aims were connected to opportunities to obtain finances, which was backed mostly by framing of the Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs, as well as delivering possibilities of carrying out professional, organizational and administrative interests of respective leaders.

In general, aims of newer organizations were more flexible and uncertain, allowing the edge for adjustment to changes. If member association in older organizations was supposed as a progress, newer ones regarded new members as burden. Newer organizations and associations were partially connected to reaction of being not admitted to the Association of National Cultural Societies and wish to consolidate inner resources in their transactions with state.

### ***Summary***

In Latvia ethnic minorities are organizing themselves in order to make preconditions for retaining their ethnic identity. Currently, there are more than 200 national minority NGOs operating in Latvia. Activities of these organizations are expressed in two main directions – development of ethnic culture and ethnic policy.

Politicized Russian organizations actively evaluate ethno policy of the state and keep up critical attitude towards *Education law* and *State language law*. They try to affect ethnopolitical circumstances in Latvia. Other Russian organizations are aimed to preserve Russian cultural environment in Latvia. All Russian organizations are unified about the question about keeping the secondary schools with Russian as Language of instruction.

In the context of civic participation it should be noted that in 2004 in Riga and other cities in Latvia, there were a number of protests actions by minority representatives, aimed against the changes which were planned for the minority education system in September 2004.

An increase of unconventional political participation among Russian speaking minorities in Latvia corresponds to the concept of Karklins and Zepa (2001) and witness that they did not see themselves as a part of the political decision making process. Altogether this signalize

about an increasing gap between the Russian speaking community and the state as the political elite.

Although it should be added that other minorities in Latvia, for example, Jews, Poles, Lithuanians, Estonians, are comparatively integrated in the Latvian society, and their organizations are aimed to preserve their ethnic identity, to promote the process of social integration and ethnic tolerance in Latvia.

## **The most prominent examples of immigrants active in public life, their background and field of activity**

### **1. Rafi Haradžanjans**

He is a leader of the Association of National Cultural Societies, as well as the leader of the Society of Armenians in Latvia. He has born in 1944 in Yerevan, Armenia. He has immigrated in Latvia at the beginning of the 70-ties and is a remarkable pianist in Latvia. During the last 15 years he has been active in public life in Latvia both as a representative of the Association of National Cultural Societies, and pianist. In 1995 Latvian Citizenship was granted to him for special merits.

### **2. Jurijs Petropavlovskis**

He is an active member of the Headquarters for Defence of Russian Schools, and was a main organizer a number of protest activities aimed against the changes which were planned for the minority education system in September 2004. He is also in the Board of the political party – the Union For Human Rights in the United Latvia. His latest activities are connected with his naturalisation. The Cabinet of Ministers refused to grant Jurijs Petropavlovskis Latvian citizenship because of his ‘non-loyalty towards the state.’ Afterwards he challenged the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers to prohibit him grant on Latvian citizenship and submitted a claim to the Administrative Court. In his application with the Court, Jurijs Petropavlovskis stresses that, in accordance with the Citizenship Law, the government can exclude a person from the list of naturalisation applicants only if a person does not meet the criteria provided by the Law. Jurijs Petropavlovskis admits that he filed a claim with the court not because he or his party wants that the court issues a positive ruling, but because they want international scandal. ‘Our [the union For Human Rights in the United Latvia] goal is to monopolise the Russian electorate before the next Saeima elections’ states Jurijs Petropavlovskis.

### **3. Kristofers Ejugbo**

He is a leader of the Afro-Latvian Association in Latvia, which was founded in March 2004. He is a musician and has arrived in Latvia in early 90-ties from Nigeria. According to estimations of Kristofers Ejugbo there are about 30 Africans in Latvia. The aim of the Afro-Latvian Association in Latvia is to promote mutual understanding and ethnic tolerance in Latvia and to educate Latvian society about the culture of Africans.

### **4. Houssam Abou Merhi**

He is a leader of the Latvian-Lebanon Club of Education and Culture. Currently he is also practising doctor and he lives in Latvia already 11 years. According to his estimation there are

about 60 Lebanese in Latvia. Most of them are students of medicine in Riga Stradins University. The aim of the Latvian-Lebanon Club of Education and Culture in Latvia is to promote mutual understanding and to educate Latvian society about the Lebanon.

## **5. Haisams Abu Abda**

He has born in Egypt, although originally comes from Palestine. He was officially granted as refugee (altogether only 8 persons have granted status of refugee in Latvia). In November 2004 he received a status of Latvian citizen, as he fulfilled all the requirements of naturalisation.

He was a leader of Latvian Foreigners and Refugees Association, which is not active any more. Currently he is working as interpreter.

### **PART III: EXPERT ASSESSMENT**

- (a) a more or less secure knowledge, confirmed by multiple and/or quantitative studies;*
- (b) a hypothesis that is more or less strongly grounded in empirical information;*
- (c) a personal opinion.*

***What are the main fields of civic activities that immigrants engage in (e.g. religious associations, parent associations, political parties, etc.)?***

Answer (a):

According to the survey data the main fields of civic activities that immigrants, namely, non-citizens in Latvia, engage are trade unions (5%), religious and church organizations (4%), sports and recreational organizations (2%), artistic amateur groups – dance groups, rock groups, choir (1%), youth organizations (1%) and organizations of ethnic minorities (1%).

During the last two years Russian speaking minorities (Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians) have been very active also in different protest actions. In 2000 politicized Russian speaking NGOs consolidated mutually for counteraction against language policy implemented in the state. In 2004 in Rīga and other cities in Latvia, there were a number of protests actions by minority representatives, aimed against the changes which were planned for the minority education system in September 2004.

***What ethnic and nationality groups are particularly active, and why?***

Answer (a):

The most visible actions and organizations are those who represent themselves as Russian. This is because Russians are the biggest minority in Latvia (29% of all inhabitants) and these actions involve big societal groups. Although if we analyse political participation in respect of ethnic groups, Russians are among those who are less active (in percentages from all group) in public life in comparison with other groups. The most active ethnic groups are those whose number is very small in Latvia, for example, Africans or Lebanese (each group comprising about 50 persons).



The main reason why there is an increase of unconventional political participation among Russian speaking minorities in Latvia is the fact that they do not see themselves as a part of the political decision making process. They do not agree with ethno policy implemented, and keep up critical attitude towards *Education law* and *State language law*. Therefore they try to affect ethno-political circumstances in Latvia.

***Is the degree of active civic participation of immigrants high or low compared to the majority population?***

Answer (a):

Studies about the civic participation of citizens and non-citizens reveal that citizens had more often participated in different political activities and NGOs than non-citizens. In 2000 62% of citizens and 88% of non-citizens had taken no part in any of the political activities proposed in the optional answers. 73% citizens and 85% non-citizens were not involved in any social or non-governmental organization.

Generally, both citizens and non-citizens have low participation rates in various organizations, their range of communications usually is limited to that of their family, friends and colleagues at work. The reason why the participation rate among non-citizens is lower than among citizens can be sought in the alienation between the elite of state power and the inhabitants. Several aspects of the conflict between power and people are strictly marked: one of them is the feeling of lack of social fairness. The inhabitants of Latvia are dissatisfied with the authorities' attitude towards them: dissatisfied with the fact that they "cannot influence the work of the government", that they do not feel that "the government treats every individual equally and fairly".

***What is the relation between engagement in ethnic or migrant organizations (e.g. any organization having the name of the minority in the name) compared to mainstream society organizations? Are there transitions and overlaps?***

Answer (b):

There are certain types of organizations where citizens and non-citizens, Latvians and other ethnic groups are engaged. These are organizations that most often receive a support from the Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs, because the main aim of the Secretariat is to promote society integration in Latvia. According to the survey data the main fields of civic activities that immigrants, namely, non-citizens in Latvia, engage do not differ significantly from those of citizens.

However certain types of organizations tend to be monolingual. Namely, the main division of organizations in Latvia is not by ethnicity or by status (citizen, non-citizens, immigrant etc.), but by language. Those with Russian as a native language and those with Latvian as a native language tend to organize their lives separately (for 37% of Latvia's residents, Russian is the mother tongue). The main reasons for this is both emotional and rational: Latvians are not very willing to communicate in Russian, but a certain part of Russians still do not know Latvian or are not willing to communicate in Latvian (according to the survey data 58% of those with native language other than Latvian do not know Latvian or have very weak knowledge of Latvian).

Among the participants in organizations with Russian language as a dominating language are Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians and others. Among the participants in organizations with Latvian language as a dominating language are Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians and others. Although these are trends which have to be investigated and probably there are certain changes in the ethnicity and language use of NGOs in Latvia.

Another trend indicated by survey results is that people active in one organization, usually participate also in other organizations, but those people who are not active do not participate in public life at all. Namely, activists are active in several realms of life, not only in particular minority organization.

***What issues do you consider to be of particular interest and importance in the field?***

Answer (c):

As there is no information about the problems met and civic participation of immigrants arrived in Latvia recently, of importance would be to organize study on conditions met and attitudes, and civic participation of those who have arrived in Latvia after regaining independence. The special attention should be paid to those ethnic groups who are not Russians, Belorussians, and Ukrainians, but others, including people with visible differences, as racism is a question that has been upon the discussions in mass media and society in Latvia.

Another issue of particular interest might be the dynamics of activities of minority NGOs – why certain organizations are growing and becoming stronger and others are decreasing their activities or even are not active any more.

In the context of general civic participation of importance would be to analyse the dynamics of discourse on civic participation and particularly, Russian minority NGOs. The problem indicated by researchers in the field is that participation in protest actions and NGOs are interpreted negatively by mass media. Protest actions are sometimes viewed as something anti-social or anti-state, but participation in NGOs as something insignificant. This is an indicator that democratic norms in Latvia are not deeply rooted yet.

The issue of particular interest would be also a civic potential of religious organizations and their role in the process of society integration and in organization of ethnic communities. As this issue has not been explored in Latvia it can be considered as a research gap as well. Of particular interest would be to study the impact of the Orthodox Church in Latvia and the Muslims congregation.

***Where do you see the major research gaps?***

Answer (c):

First of all it should be noted that there are no studies targeting immigrant civic participation in Latvia. One can find studies where the political participation of non-citizens is touched but not as a main focus of the study.

Secondly, the participation in different NGOs has not been analysed in respect of ethnic groups. The methodological problem of such study would be that analysis can not be done on

the basis of national sample as a number of those active in NGOs is small. Therefore a special quota sampling combined with random sample procedure would be needed.

Thirdly, there is a lack of information on grassroots movements and unconventional civic participation during the last years in Latvia. Although since 2000 there is a number of street protest actions organized in Latvia, there are no particular studies in this field.

Fourthly, there is limited possibilities to inquire about the finances and other statistics of the NGOs in Latvia (e.g., number of paid staff), because there is no precise definition of the NGO sector, and no precise statistical information about the sector in Latvia. In 2001, a study conducted by the Latvian Academy of Science's Economics Institute "Economic calculations regarding the impact on state and local government budgets of proposed taxation amendments in legislation governing public benefit organizations" discovered that it is almost impossible to obtain plausible statistical information on the work of NGOs in Latvia. By now the situation regarding the supervision and analysis of the sector has not improved.

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## **Annex: Active civic participation of immigrants – mapping research competences in Latvia**

### **1. Active civic participation of immigrants - leading institutions**

#### Summary

There are no researches in the field of active civic participation of immigrants in Latvia. This can be explained, firstly, with the fact that immigrations is not the issue of importance in Latvia (during the last ten years more people emigrate than immigrate to Latvia), secondly, due to the migration flows from Soviet republics in Latvia the term “immigrant” has a negative meaning therefore due to political reasons immigrants who settled in Latvia before 1991 usually are not marked out from the body of minorities in Latvia.

It is possible however to find studies concerning the civic participation of non-citizens and newly naturalised citizens in Latvia, and studies on ethnic minorities and minority organizations in Latvia. As research organizations active in the field of general civic participation are authors of studies on the civic participation of non-citizens and newly naturalised citizens in Latvia, their description is given in point 3 - Civic participation - leading institutions.

### **2. Immigration - leading institutions**

#### Summary

There are almost no researches in the field of immigration in Latvia. The only organizations one can name in this field are Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia and Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. These are organizations which collect the statistics on migration in Latvia. The only study accomplished recently in this field is done by the Latvian Institute of Foreign Policy (detailed description is given in point 3 - Civic participation - leading institutions): Indans, I. 2004: The Impact of Immigration on Ethnic Relations in Latvia in the Context of Enlargement of EU. This study is focused on the immigration prognosis and their possible impact in Latvia in the context of EU enlargement.

### **3. Civic participation - leading institutions**

#### Summary

The researches in the general field of civic participation are slightly more developed than in field of immigration or civic participation of immigrants. The interest in the field began only after the restoring independence, and first publications in the field appeared in the middle of the 90ies. **Prof. Brigita Zepa** is a leading scholar in this field. She is a professor in the Department of Sociology, University of Latvia, but she is also a director of the research institute **Baltic Institute of Social Sciences**. In 1999 she published a monograph in the field: “Conditions of Enhancement of Civic Participation”. Besides she is an author of several international journal articles in the field and a team leader of the research projects: “Towards a Civic Society. 1997, 2000, 2001” (organized by the Naturalization Board of Latvia. Financed by Soros foundation-Latvia, UNDP, OSCE mission in Latvia and others); Survey of the New Naturalized Citizens. 2001 (In collaboration with Naturalization Board of Latvia. Financed by PHARE) and others.

Inese Šūpule - researcher of the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences – is an author of several publications in the field and was a project manager of the projects: “Towards a Civic Society. 1997, 2000, 2001”, Survey of the New Naturalized Citizens. 2001, Motives and Impact of Participation in NGO. 1997 – 1998, NGOs and Political Stability. 1999. (In collaboration with The Soros Foundation –Latvia) and others.

The research institutes - the Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS and the Latvian Institute of Foreign Policy – have been named because during the last two years they have accomplished several researches in the field. Studies provided by these organizations can not be considered as academic studies, but more as policy analysis concerning particular aspects of civic participation.

**The Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS**, organization which continues the work in a number of policy areas that was begun as early as 1992 by the Soros Foundation – Latvia, recently has supported two studies related to the development of the third sector: Miezaine, Z. 2003: Public Administration and Non-governmental Organizations - Opportunities for Cooperation, and Indriksone, A. 2003: Non-governmental organizations - partners in local development.

Recently the **Latvian Institute of Foreign Policy** has accomplished two studies relevant in the field: Vilka, I., Strupiss, A., Strode, I., Balodis, O., Simane, M. 2004: The Development of Civil Society in Latvia: an Analysis, and Indans, I. 2004: The Impact of Immigration on Ethnic Relations in Latvia in the Context of Enlargement of EU.

#### Research institution 1

##### **Baltic Institute of Social Sciences**

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Relevant researchers: Brigita Zepa, Inese Šūpule

#### Short description:

Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (BISS) is a non-profit, independent research institute. It was established in January 13, 2000 on the base of former Department of Academic Research of Baltic Data House, Market and Social Research Centre (founded in 1991).

The main activities of BISS are related to public policy analysis and sociological studies in different fields (civic participation, ethnic relations, education, language use, social integration, gender studies). BISS has carried out a number of policy analysis projects in key sectors of Latvia's social and political life: societal integration, official language use, bilingual education, health care reform, constitutional reform.

BISS participates in a number of international research projects:

- International Social Survey Programme (ISSP);
- World Values Survey (WVS);
- European Values Survey (EVS);
- New Baltic Barometer (NBB);
- Nordic-Baltic Barometer.

### Research institution 2

#### **Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS**

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Short description:

The Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS is an independent, non-partisan policy institute working in the following main policy areas: criminal justice, education policy and anti-corruption policy. It also provides an institutional home to the public policy website [www.politika.lv](http://www.politika.lv) / [www.policy.lv](http://www.policy.lv). PROVIDUS was founded in December 2002 but effectively continues the work in a number of policy areas that was begun as early as 1992 by the Soros Foundation - Latvia.

Currently, PROVIDUS is engaged in policy work in the **criminal justice area**, promoting alternative sentencing, assisting in the creation of a probation service, undertaking policy research in areas such as pre-trial detention, sentencing policy and police abuse. In **education** policy, PROVIDUS has recently released a broad policy report on the state of education in Latvia, focusing on challenges to management: education finance, tax policy, innovation and other issues. PROVIDUS is engaged in **anti-corruption** work, promoting proposals for campaign finance reform, and designing new models of civil society monitoring for corruption prevention.

### Research institution 3

#### **Latvian Institute of Foreign Policy**

Lomonosova 1, Rīga, LV-1019

Phone: 7089888

Director: Atis Lejiņš

Relevant researchers: Ivars Indāns, Inga Vilka, Ieva Strode

Short description:



The Latvian Institute of Foreign Policy is an open society foundation, caring out researches on the security of Baltic States. It was founded in 1992 with financial support of Sweden. Recently has accomplished two studies relevant in the field: Vilka, I., Strupiss, A., Strode, I., Balodis, O., Simane, M. 2004: The Development of Civil Society in Latvia: an Analysis, and Indans, I. 2004: The Impact of Immigration on Ethnic Relations in Latvia in the Context of Enlargement of EU.