



Welcome from Latvia

**Multicultural Education
Centre**

**University of Latvia,
Faculty of Education and
Psychology**



Language Policy in the Process of Integration in Latvia



- How is the role of language policy in integration of Latvia and why does linguistic problems were chosen as the focus in project INTEGRATION for our institution?



- 1. Present ethnolinguistical situation. In Latvia there are represented more than 150 ethnic groups. Among all inhabitants - 2.3 millions in 2006 in the state there were living:
- 59.0 % or 1.3 millions Latvians;
- 28.5 % or 652 thousands Russians;
- 3.8 % or 86.5 thousands Belarusians;
- 2.5% or 58.1 thousand Ukrainians;
- 2.4% or 55.6 thousands Poles;
- 1.4% or 31.3 thousands Lithuanians;
- 0.4% or 9.5 thousands Jews;
- 0.4% or 8.5 thousands Roma;
- 0.2% or 3.7 thousands Germans;
- Representatives of other ethnoses - lesser than 3 thousands each.



- The tendencies of migration in Latvia during the last years show that the balance of migration is negative.
- Today Latvia can not be notable among the other EU memberstates with the number of refugees and asylum seekers: In a year 2005 there were 20 asylum seekers. Most of them are from Russia, Iraque, Aizerbaidzan, Afganistan. Since the year 1998 the status of refugees received 8 persons; latest person who received the status of refugee was in the year 2001.



- **Functional monolinguals in largest minority language – in Russian** till now are the most important and weaker part of integration in Latvia, and for integration of this part of inhabitants till now there is actual need for language policy and education efforts.
- The aim of language policy is one-community state based on one state language.



- The Census of population shows that:
- Latvian is a mother tongue for 1 383 143 inhabitants or 58.2% from the total amount of inhabitants (2 377 383),
- Russian is mother tongue for 940 526 inhabitants or 39.6%,
- but other language is for 53 714 or 2.2% of inhabitants (Results of the Population and Housing Census in Latvia, 2002, 142–144).



- Since the proficiency of Latvian language among minority people has increased, Latvian language is more used for communication between immigrants or/and minorities and Latvians. Still Russian language dominates in everyday life, business, and in other spheres, where Latvians and minority people can choose language of communication.



- Analyzing the choice of language in communication among bilinguals of Latvian and Russian language, we can see that in general Latvians do not have the strong tendency to keep linguistic borders of their group.



- Bilingual Latvians usually switch to the language used by their partner. There are some reasons for that:
- avoidance of communication blockade;
- avoidance from negative attitude towards oneself during the conversation (especially in business sphere);
- tolerance towards other language users;
- inertia and ability to adapt, which is typical for Latvians.



- Above mentioned language choice for communication in private spheres is not approving for Latvian language community in general, in that way psychological climate of another language community has been strengthen, and such situation in its turn influences language situation in the country. The solution could be that Latvians should always and everywhere persistently speak Latvian, even in private sphere.



- The attitude towards language is very often determined by psychological factors from the period when Russian language was language of official communication in the territory of the previous USSR. This attitude can be felt even nowadays because people's thinking is hard to change.



- Intercultural training course created during INTEGRATION project concerns the above mentioned issues of the integration due to the language situation in Latvia, bilingual education`s reform since the 2004, changes in ethnopolitical and economical situation after entering into the EU (migration processes, changes in labour market etc.).



- Our overall aims are:
 - Integration of society through linguistic integration;
 - Changes in education due to changes in society;
 - to re-think and to re-write current study programs, offering additional intercultural education courses for all levels of teacher training education.



- We hope to achieve this aim in order to promote Latvian language use, to develop of homogeneity of society as opposite to the two-community society.



- The course trains the trainers who will work with new learning materials, new methods in order to reach previous mentioned objectives of the training.
- The subtarget of this training course also is aimed how train to be psychological ready to use the state language in the language choice situations.



- Demands of the course:
 1. Integration of society through linguistic integration: Facilitate the state language use; Facilitate the realisation of the bilingual education.



2. Changes in education due to changes in society: new immigration from previous Soviet Union territories predicted by the needs in labor market; changes in the students` content in schools; state`s predicted demands for improvement of professional qualification.



3. New point of view to the integration problems:
- awareness of diversity issues;
 - increase the lack of the knowledges about intercultural communication;
 - to develop understanding and ability psychologically to solve problems which are connected with linguistical integration of Latvia.



- Product created in INTEGRATION project: first in Latvia is elaborated detailed program to train the trainers what is aimed for integration of migrants on the base of the state language;
- New methodology of training, teaching methods offered in the project INTEGRATION are novelty for education on integration process in Latvia.



- This is the first program in Latvia what trains trainers in order to facilitate the psychological readiness to use the state`s language.



Target groups of this latest product are post war long-term non-integrated Russian speaking minorities,

- Latvians who easily adapt to the largest minority speakers what impedes the integration of Latvia, at the same time declaiming the state language use, declaiming their culture.



- From our experiences and our material other people in Latvia benefit:
- decrease of discrimination and intercultural conflicts and increase of ethnotolerance due to state`s language using and identifying with the whole society of Latvia;
- improve education system because of the promotion of the bilingual education:



- teachers receive skills to understand and receive ability independently to solve problems which are connected with linguistic integration of Latvia;
- awareness of diversity issues;
- understanding and new point of view to the integration problems;



Thank you
for attention!