



European network against racism

# ENAR Shadow Report 2010-2011

## ENAR SHADOW REPORT

### **Racism and related discriminatory practices in Latvia**

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based on materials collected by the Latvian  
Centre for Human Rights**

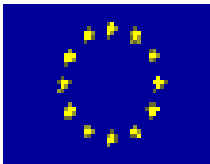
Racism is a reality in the lives of many ethnic and religious minorities in the EU. However, the extent and manifestations of this reality are often unknown and undocumented, especially in official data sources, meaning that it can be difficult to analyse the situation and to establish solutions to it.

The ENAR Shadow Reports are produced to fill the gaps in the official and academic data, to offer an alternative to that data and to offer an NGO perspective on the realities of racism with the EU and its Member States. NGO reports are, by their nature, based on many sources of data, official, unofficial, academic and experiential. This allows access to information which, while sometimes not backed up by the rigours of academic standards, provides the vital perspective of those that either are or work directly with those affected by the racism that is the subject of the research. It is this that gives NGO reports their added value, complementing academic and official reporting.

Published by the European Network against Racism (ENAR) in Brussels, March 2012, with the support of the Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013), the ENAR Foundation, and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

PROGRESS (2007- 2013) is managed by the Directorate-General for Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities of the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields. For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>. The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

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## I. Executive summary

The 2011 Population census showed significantly smaller population figures (by 0,3 million, or 15%) compared to the official data of the Population Register. The 2011 data represents a 20% decrease of the population since the previous census in 2000 and a decrease of 29% since the 1989 census.<sup>1</sup> The lack of statistical and research data also hampers the analysis of the situation regarding implementation of the principle of non-discrimination within the society, including participation of various groups in public life and in the economy.

- Improve and develop the system of data collection to assess the situation of various groups (defined in terms of ethnicity, race, native language, religion, citizenship) in various areas of life, such as employment, education, housing, healthcare and social protection, access to goods and services, work of law enforcement bodies, and participation in public life

The hate crime cases investigated by the Security Police are rare and usually involve no physical attacks against natural persons. While authors of hateful comments on the internet are swiftly punished, the Security Police did not evaluate publications of a systematic hate monger residing in the US and publishing his articles in mainstream Latvian press as “paid advertisements”.<sup>2</sup>

- The political elite and mass media should take more responsibility for their own actions and the repercussions of those actions in society, and clearly distance themselves from, and actively oppose, the ideas of superiority, hate, and group stigmatisation.

In March 2011 the Parliament approved new head of the Ombudsmen’s Office (institution entrusted with the functions of national equality body). The new head does not have any human rights background and it remains to be seen whether he can address the lingering concerns about the role and effectiveness of this institution.

- Review the work of the Ombudsman’s Office as the national equality body and ensure its effectiveness

Due to repeated institutional re-shuffling of the state body responsible for coordinating antidiscrimination and integration policies, recently Latvia did not have an official policy document addressing these issues. Under the auspices of the Minister of Culture, the Society Integration Section of the Ministry has developed a draft document “The Fundamental Principles of National Identity and

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<sup>1</sup> Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, *Population and Housing Census in Latvia*, <http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/statistikas-temas/population-census-30761.html> , accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>2</sup> Fahretdinova, Aleksandra, 'Drošības policijas nevertēs Slučā izteikumu', *LETA* 2011-06-09

Society Integration Policy 2012-2018”.<sup>3</sup> The draft focuses on the issues of identity, language, cultural space and social historical memories. The draft was heavily criticised by many representatives of civil society, including minorities, for ethnocentrism, attempting to determine a “correct” version of social historical memory and for missing fundamental issues of equality and effective participation.

- The government must ensure real participation and influence of various groups in decision-making, especially on the issues directly affecting them, such as the development and implementation of integration policy; and re-work the framework integration policy document to change the focus from identity and historical memory to equality and participation

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<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Culture, *Nacionālās identitātes un sabiedrības integrācijas politikas pamatnostādnes (2012–2018)*, [http://www.km.gov.lv/lv/doc/starpmozares/lidzdaliba/KMPamn\\_100811\\_projekts.pdf](http://www.km.gov.lv/lv/doc/starpmozares/lidzdaliba/KMPamn_100811_projekts.pdf) accessed 24 August 2011

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### III. Introduction

While Latvia continued coping with the consequences of economic crisis and budgetary cuts for the fourth year, the Population Census conducted in 2011 showed that 0,3 million fewer people (15% of the total) are living in Latvia than were officially included in the records of the Population Register.<sup>4</sup>

There is a continuous lack of data on possible instances of discrimination and/or intolerance as well as a lack of data on the situation of different groups in various spheres of life. Performance of the Ombudsman's Office needs to be improved and it remains to be seen whether the newly appointed (March 2011) head of the Office, who had no background in human rights, will be able to deliver on his promise to ensure the institution works efficiently and professionally. The new draft framework integration policy document "the Fundamental Principles of National Identity and Society Integration Policy 2012-2018" developed under the auspices of the Minister of Culture, was heavily criticised for ethnocentrism, attempts to determine a "correct" version of social historical memory and missing fundamental issues of equality and effective participation.<sup>5</sup>

The present report highlights the issues regarding racism and related discrimination in Latvia from January 2010 to June 2011. The report starts with brief demographic information on various groups in Latvia and tries to give an assessment of the number of people of African descent living in Latvia. The sections of the report provide available information on the situation in regard to racism and related discrimination in the areas of: employment, housing, education, healthcare, criminal justice, access to goods and services, the media. The report then looks at the latest relevant political and legal developments regarding racism and discrimination as well as developments in migration and integration. The report, to a great extent, relies on data collected by the staff of the NGO Latvian Centre for Human Rights.

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<sup>4</sup> Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, *Population and Housing Census in Latvia*, <http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/statistikas-temas/population-census-30761.html> , accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>5</sup> Above 3.

## IV. Communities vulnerable to racism and discrimination

While visible minorities and foreigners represent a rather small share of the population, Latvia nevertheless is a diverse society in terms of citizenship status, ethnicity and native language.

### 2011 population census

The Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia conducted a Population and Housing Census from 1 March until 10 June 2011. In total, 1.9 million persons were registered as living in Latvia during the Census.<sup>6</sup> This represents a 20% (or 480,000 persons) drop in population compared to the results of the 2000 population Census (2,38 million people were registered) and a 29% (or 770,000 persons) drop compared to 1989 population Census (2,67 million people were registered).<sup>7</sup> According to the Central Statistical Bureau, during the 100 days of the 2011 Census, around 30,000-40,000 persons registered twice.<sup>8</sup> The preliminary Census data shows much smaller population figures than the data of Population Register (by ca 0.3 million, or 15%).<sup>9</sup> The final results of the population Census will be announced at the beginning of 2012.

### Ethnicity

According to the data of the Population Register, the population of Latvia on 1 July 2011 was 2,224,230,<sup>10</sup> including 1,323,713 ethnic Latvians (59.5% of the total population), 606,972 ethnic Russians (27.3%), 78,052 Byelorussians (3.5%), 54,398 Ukrainians (2.4%), 50,960 Poles (2.3%), 29,174 Lithuanians (1.3%), 9,474 Jews (0.4%), 8,517 Roma 0.4%; 30,276 (1.4%) did not affiliate to any ethnicity.<sup>11</sup> Compared to July 2010, the population decreased by 21,127 people, or 1%. The population is decreasing due to negative natural growth as well as emigration to Western EU countries and Russia. Compared to January 2009, the number of ethnic Russians decreased by 9,868, or 1,6%, while the number of people who prefer not to identify their ethnicity increased by 4,040, or 15%.

<sup>6</sup> Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, *Population and Housing Census in Latvia*, <http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/statistikas-temas/population-census-30761.html>, accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>7</sup> Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, *Number of Resident Population in Latvia*, <http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/dati/results-30756.html>, accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>8</sup> Grūbe, Daiga, 'Vismaz 30 000 iedzīvotāju tautas skaitīšanā saskaitījušies divreiz; emigrējuši aptuveni 50 000', *LETA* 2011-06-13

<sup>9</sup> Zaiceva, E., '2011. gada tautas skaitīšana – brīdinājuma zvans' (2011 Population Census – a Warning Signal), *BaltExpert*, <http://www.baltexpert.com/2011/07/14/e-zaiceva-2011-gada-tautas-skaitisana-%E2%80%93-bridinajuma-zvans/>, accessed 22 August 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Population Register, *Latvijas iedzīvotāju skaits pašvaldības* (Datums=01.07.2011), [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISPV\\_Pasvaldibas\\_iedzivotaju\\_skaits.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISPV_Pasvaldibas_iedzivotaju_skaits.pdf), 22 August 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Population Register, *Latvijas iedzīvotāju sadalījums pēc nacionāla sastava un valstiskas piederības* (Datums=01.07.2011), [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVN\\_Latvija\\_pec\\_TTB\\_VPD.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVN_Latvija_pec_TTB_VPD.pdf), accessed 22 August 2011

## Citizenship

The data of the Population Register shows that among 2,224,230 people registered as living in Latvia on 1 July 2011,<sup>12</sup> 1,847,618 were citizens of Latvia (83.1% of the total population), 319,267 were non-citizens of Latvia (14.4%), 38,063 were citizens of Russia (1.7%), 19,282 - other foreigners and stateless persons (0.9%).<sup>13</sup> Nearly all ethnic Latvians have Latvian citizenship (99.8%), while the number of ethnic minorities that do not have citizenship is significant. The number of Latvian non-citizens decreased from 876,436 in August 1993<sup>14</sup> to 319,267 on 1 July 2011.<sup>15</sup> The decrease by 557,169 (63,6%) also includes 135,206 persons, who received Latvian citizenship through naturalisation.<sup>16</sup> During the recent years the rate of naturalisation decreased and only 2,336 persons received Latvian citizenship through naturalisation in 2010,<sup>17</sup> compared to 19,169 naturalisations in 2005 and to the total number of non-citizens and foreigners living in Latvia (388,116 on 1 July 2010).<sup>18</sup> The rate of successful pass marks in language and history tests also decreased. Among the 3,486 citizenship applicants taking the language test in 2010, 1,497 or 42,9% failed (compared to 3,292 or 16.1% failures out of 20,490 in 2005). Among the 2,731 citizenship applicants taking the history test in 2010, 496 or 18.2% failed (987 or 4.9% of 20,256 in 2005).<sup>19</sup>

## Jews

According to the data of the Latvian Population Register, 9,474 Jews were living in Latvia on 1 July 2011, including 6,236 citizens (65.8%) and 2764 non-citizens (29.2%) of Latvia and 474 foreigners.<sup>20</sup> Expressions of anti-Semitism by radical nationalists in the public sphere are mostly confined to instances of hate speech, including on the internet, and to some extent also verbally, and occasionally in

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<sup>12</sup> Population Register, *Latvijas iedzīvotāju skaits pašvaldības (Datums=01.07.2011)*, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISPV\\_Pasvaldibas\\_iedzivotaju\\_skaits.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISPV_Pasvaldibas_iedzivotaju_skaits.pdf) , accessed 22 August 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Population Register, *Latvijas iedzīvotāju sadalījums pēc valstiskas piederības (Datums=01.07.2011)*, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVP\\_Latvija\\_pec\\_VPD.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVP_Latvija_pec_VPD.pdf) , accessed 22 August 2011

<sup>14</sup> Population Register, cited in Buzaev, V., *Negrazhdane Latvii*, Riga, 2007, p.6.

<sup>15</sup> Population Register, *Latvijas iedzīvotāju sadalījums pēc valstiskas piederības (Datums=01.07.2011)*, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVP\\_Latvija\\_pec\\_VPD.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVP_Latvija_pec_VPD.pdf) , accessed 22 August 2011

<sup>16</sup> Naturalisation Board, *Uzņemto LR pilsonībā naturalizācijas kārtībā skaits*, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/Naturalizacija\\_1995\\_2010.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/Naturalizacija_1995_2010.pdf) , accessed 22 August 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Naturalisation Board, *Uzņemto LR pilsonībā naturalizācijas kārtībā skaits*, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/Naturalizacija\\_1995\\_2010.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/Naturalizacija_1995_2010.pdf) , accessed 22 August 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Population Register, *Latvijas iedzīvotāju sadalījums pēc nacionāla sastava un valstiskas piederības (Datums=01.07.2010)*, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2010/ISVN\\_Latvija\\_pec\\_TTB\\_VPD.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2010/ISVN_Latvija_pec_TTB_VPD.pdf) , accessed on 9 September 2010

<sup>19</sup> Naturalisation Board, *Informācija par naturalizācijas gaitu līdz 2010.gada 31.decembrim*, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/Naturalizacija\\_1995\\_2010.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/Naturalizacija_1995_2010.pdf) , accessed 22 August 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Population Register, *Latvijas iedzīvotāju sadalījums pēc nacionāla sastava un valstiskas piederības (Datums=01.07.2011)*, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVN\\_Latvija\\_pec\\_TTB\\_VPD.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVN_Latvija_pec_TTB_VPD.pdf) , accessed 22 August 2011



the media, while the cases of anti-Semitic attacks against Jewish property decreased compared to the 1990s.

## Roma

According to official statistics, there were 8517 Roma living in Latvia on 1 July 2011, among them 7999 citizens (93.9%), 468 non-citizens (5.5%) and 48 foreigners.<sup>21</sup> Roma representatives point out that the actual number of ethnic Roma is higher, and up to 15,000 – 20,000 Roma were believed to be living in Latvia at the beginning of the century.<sup>22</sup> Research data and interviews with representatives of Roma show that Roma are clearly experiencing disadvantages and discrimination in all areas.<sup>23</sup>

## Migrants

Migrants represent a rather small part of the Latvian population. According to the data of the Central Statistical Bureau,<sup>24</sup> during 2010, 2,790 individuals migrated into Latvia (2,688 in 2009, 3,465 in 2008 and 3,541 in 2007). In the meantime, 10,702 individuals emigrated in 2010 (7,388 in 2009, 6,007 in 2008 and 4,183 in 2007). Thus, as in previous years, Latvia in 2008 was a net migration donor (-7,912 in 2010, -4700 in 2009, -2,542 in 2008, -642 in 2007). Most of the migration to Latvia comes from European countries and the former USSR. According to the data of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs of the Ministry of Interior, 6,123 people received permanent residency permits and 2,495 people received temporary residence permits in Latvia during 2010.<sup>25</sup> As of 1 January 2011, there were 42,054 people with permanent and 13,557 people with temporary residency permits.<sup>26</sup> A significant amount of these people resided permanently in Latvia before restoration of independence.

## Asylum seekers and refugees

The number of asylum seekers in Latvia is not very big, yet it is growing gradually. During 2010, 61 persons requested asylum in Latvia, compared to 52 asylum requests in 2009, to 51 in 2008, 34 in 2007 and eight in 2006. Refugee status was granted to seven persons in 2010 (five in 2009, two in 2008 and five in 2007), while alternative status was granted to 18 persons in 2010 (six in 2009, one in 2008 and three in 2007).<sup>27</sup> During the first six months of 2011, 94 persons

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<sup>21</sup> Population Register, *Latvijas iedzīvotāju sadalījums pēc nacionāla sastava un valstiskās piederības (Datums=01.07.2011)*, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVN\\_Latvija\\_pec\\_TTB\\_VPD.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVN_Latvija_pec_TTB_VPD.pdf) , accessed 22 August 2011

<sup>22</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies, *The Situation of Roma in Latvia* (Riga, 2003), p.15.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Central Statistical Bureau (Database), *Iedzīvotāji – migrācija*, <http://www.csb.gov.lv/dati/statistikas-datubazes-28270.html-0> , accessed 22 August 2011

Rumpīte D, 'CSP dati par iedzīvotāju migrācijas aktuālajām tendencēm 2009.gadā', *LETA* 27.04.2010.

<sup>25</sup> Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, *Statistika: UZTUREŠANĀS ATĻAUJU IZSNIEGŠANA*, <http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/uzturesanas.html> , accessed 22 August 2011

<sup>26</sup> Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, *Statistika: UZTUREŠANĀS ATĻAUJU IZSNIEGŠANA*, <http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/uzturesanas.html> , accessed 22 August 2011

<sup>27</sup> Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, *Statistika: PATVĒRUMA MEKLĒTĀJI*, <http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/patveruma.html> , accessed 22 August 2011

requested asylum in Latvia. The greatest number of asylum requests were submitted by citizens of Georgia (52), Congo (14) and Cameroon (5).<sup>28</sup>

### People of African descent

There is no specific official data on the number of people of African descent living in Latvia. Depending on definition, it can be estimated that the number may range from around 70 to a few hundred people of African descent living in Latvia.

It also has to be noted that the notion of “African descent” can be seen as vague and dubious in Latvia. The Central Statistical Bureau, as well as other state bodies, do not collect data about race.<sup>29</sup> The Population Register of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs of the Ministry of Interior includes information about citizenship and ethnicity. In the Latvian context, the notions of “race” (rase) and “ethnicity” (tautība) are fundamentally different: “race” refers to visible features and differences between large groups of human population, while “ethnicity” (tautība) refers to cultural identity of a person and his/her relatives.

According to the data of the Population Register there are 71 citizens of countries representing sub-Saharan Africa (including three Afrikaners). North Africa is another region that could be included under the notion of “African descent”: although situated on the same continent the region is very distinct culturally from the rest of Africa. There are 72 citizens from North African countries living in Latvia. A number of people of African descent living in Latvia may be holding citizenship of non-African countries (USA, France etc).

Besides, some people of African descent hold Latvian passports: according to the data of the Population Register, there are 5 ethnic Beninese (3 citizens, 2 non-citizens of Latvia), 1 ethnic Malagasy (citizen of Latvia) and 1 ethnic Nubian (citizen of Latvia).<sup>30</sup>

Table: Citizens of selected foreign countries living in Latvia<sup>31</sup>

State affiliation		State affiliation		State affiliation	
Nigeria citizen	30	Egypt citizen	40	USA citizen	533
Cameroon citizen	9	Morocco citizen	16	UK citizen	442
Somali citizen	7	Algeria citizen	10	France citizen	309
Kenya citizen	4	Tunisia citizen	5	Brazil citizen	29
South Africa citizen	3	Sudan citizen	1	Cuba citizen	24
Cote d'Ivoire citizen	2			Venezuela citizen	11

<sup>28</sup> Poznaka J., ‘Šā gada sešos mēnešos Latvijā patvēruma pieprasīja 94 personas’, *National News Agency LETA*, 04 August 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Information provided by the Central Statistical Bureau on 9 August 2011.

<sup>30</sup> Population Register, *Latvijas iedzīvotāju sadalījums pēc nacionāla sastava un valstiskas piederības (Datums=01.07.2011)*,

[http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVN\\_Latvija\\_pec\\_TTB\\_VPD.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVN_Latvija_pec_TTB_VPD.pdf) , accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>31</sup> Population Register, *Latvijas iedzīvotāju sadalījums pēc valstiskas piederības (Datums=01.07.2011)*, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVP\\_Latvija\\_pec\\_VPD.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVP_Latvija_pec_VPD.pdf) , accessed 10 August 2011

Mali citizen	2			Columbia citizen	8
Mauritius citizen	2			Unknown country	5
Namibia citizen	2			Antigua and Barbuda	1
Ruanda citizen	2			Barbados citizen	1
Tanzania citizen	2				
Angola citizen	1				
Burundi citizen	1				
Gambia citizen	1				
Congo citizen	1				
Togo citizen	1				
Uganda citizen	1				
	71		72		1363

According to representative of African-Latvian association “AfroLat” it is indeed difficult to determine precise number of people of African descent living in Latvia. At the moment, 30 people of African descent are members of “AfroLat”, including both foreigners and 6 naturalised Latvian citizens.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Information provided by NGO “AfroLat” on 24 August 2011.

## V. Racism and related discrimination in employment

There is a fundamental shortage of both official and unofficial information about the situation of different groups and/or instances of discrimination in employment. The lack of complaints about discrimination could be misleading as there are signs that a significant number of people might be disillusioned with existing rights protection mechanisms in Latvia.

The State Employment Agency gathers statistical information about ethnicity of officially registered unemployed. Other relevant categories, such as race, native language, and religion are not available. As of 30 June 2011, 142,428 people were registered as unemployed with the State Employment Agency. While this represents a significant decrease from 183,476 registered as unemployed on 31 May 2010, the 2011 figure is still more than twice as much as the pre-crisis level (60,635 unemployed registered on 31 July 2007). One also has to bear in mind that since the onset of the latest crisis, a significant part of Latvia's labour force has moved to Western Europe and Russia.<sup>33</sup>

**Table: Officially registered unemployed disaggregated by ethnicity**

	2007		2008		2010		2011	
	% of the unemployed (31.07.2007)	% of the total population (31.07.2007)	% of the unemployed (31.12.2008)	% of the total population (01.01.2009)	% of the unemployed (31.05.2010)	% of the total population (01.07.2010)	% of the unemployed (31.06.2011)	% of the total population (01.07.2011)
Latvian	53.5	59.0	52.7	59.2	54.7	59.5	53.6	59.5
Russian	31.4	28.3	31.3	27.8	28.9	27.5	29.4	27.3
Belarusian	4.0	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.2	3.5	3.2	3.5
Ukrainian	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.3	2.4
Polish	2.4	2.4	2.0	2.4	1.8	2.3	1.9	2.3
Lithuanian	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
Jewish	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.4
Roma	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.4
Other	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.4	0.9	1.5
No ethnicity indicated	2.9	0.5	4.9	0.9	6.2	1.2	6.6	1.4

Source: State Employment Agency<sup>34</sup>; Latvian Population Register<sup>35</sup>

The State Employment Agency data continuously shows slight disparities between minority and majority groups; in the meantime, there is a growing trend of people not declaring their ethnicity when registering as unemployed (from

<sup>33</sup> Grūbe, Daiga, 'Vismaz 30 000 iedzīvotāju tautas skaitīšanā saskaitījušies divreiz; emigrējuši aptuveni 50 000', *LETA* 2011-06-13

<sup>34</sup> State Employment Agency, *Izvērstā statistika par bezdarba situāciju Latvijā un reģionos*, [http://www.nva.gov.lv/docs/19\\_4e3fd463c43699.66186007.xls](http://www.nva.gov.lv/docs/19_4e3fd463c43699.66186007.xls), accessed 22 August 2011

<sup>35</sup> Population Register, *Latvijas iedzīvotāju sadalījums pēc nacionāla sastava un valstiskas piederības (Datums=01.07.2011)*, [http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVN\\_Latvija\\_pec\\_TTB\\_VPD.pdf](http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/2ISVN_Latvija_pec_TTB_VPD.pdf), accessed 22 August 2011

2,257 on 31 August 2008<sup>36</sup> to 9,409 on 31 June 2011.)<sup>37</sup>. Given the fact that a number of research studies showed a greater exposure of minorities to inequalities in the labour market, it is possible that representatives of ethnic minorities form a significant part of the group of people who have recently chosen not to declare their ethnicity.

According to the Ombudsman's Annual Report, like in the previous years, during 2010 the Ombudsman's Office received few complaints from employees about discriminatory treatment on the grounds of ethnicity or language, yet the Ombudsman's Office concluded that no discrimination had taken place in all those cases, because their employers were able to justify the treatment and prove the treatment was based on objective criteria.<sup>38</sup>

The State Labour Inspectorate (SLI) is authorised to evaluate cases of possible discrimination in labour relations and to impose administrative sanctions on perpetrators regardless of the legal status of employers or specific grounds of discrimination. During 2010, the Inspectorate received 26 complaints, which, besides other violations of labour legislation, also mentioned violation of the principle of equal treatment regarding various grounds. SLI concluded that discrimination had taken place in one case and the employer was found in violation of victimisation prohibition: following employee's legal attempt to defend one's rights he was treated differently (was not given work). During January-July 2011 the State Labour Inspectorate received 32 complaints which also mentioned discrimination on various grounds. SLI confirmed the fact of discrimination in six cases in 2011: discrimination on the ground of gender was found in three cases regarding job advertisements (SLI issued warnings in two cases and imposed a fine LVL 100 (EUR 142) in another), discrimination on the ground of age was found in two job advertisements (warnings issued), the fact of unequal pay for the same job was confirmed in one case (fine imposed LVL 200 (EUR 285)).<sup>39</sup>

According to information provided by the leadership of the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS) it did not have data about cases of discrimination and/or intolerance in employment on the grounds of ethnicity, race, language, religion or citizenship, including complaints from citizens of the EU member countries or third country nationals.<sup>40</sup> Consultative Points established by LBAS within the EU-funded project "Practical Implementation of Labour Relations and

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<sup>36</sup> State Employment Agency, *Izvērstā statistika par bezdarba situāciju Latvijā un rajonos*, [http://www.nva.gov.lv/docs/11\\_49a7e2866c66c8.47340538.xls](http://www.nva.gov.lv/docs/11_49a7e2866c66c8.47340538.xls), accessed 22 August 2011

<sup>37</sup> State Employment Agency, *Izvērstā statistika par bezdarba situāciju Latvijā un reģionos*, [http://www.nva.gov.lv/docs/19\\_4e3fd463c43699.66186007.xls](http://www.nva.gov.lv/docs/19_4e3fd463c43699.66186007.xls) accessed 22 August 2011

<sup>38</sup> Ombudsman's Office, *2010 Annual Report*, p.81, available in Latvian [http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/downloads/Tiesibsarga\\_2010\\_gada\\_zinojums.pdf](http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/downloads/Tiesibsarga_2010_gada_zinojums.pdf), 10 August 2011

<sup>39</sup> State Labour Inspectorate, *Letter Nr.01-14/1901* of 03 August 2011

<sup>40</sup> Information provided by the leadership of the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS) on 29 July 2011.

Labour Security Legislation in Sectors and Enterprises”<sup>41</sup> had limited information regarding possible cases of discrimination in employment. Employees usually request verbal consultations about labour legislation, and three involved questions relevant to discrimination, such as victimisation (employee felt differential treatment after she took consultation about her rights), query about possible ethnic discrimination (employee was required language certificate in order to keep the job), and differential treatment on the ground of age.<sup>42</sup>

Information available to NGOs is patchy as well and there are no official written complaints registered by NGOs about possible discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, language or religion in employment.

According to a representative of the NGO “AfroLat”, the most urgent problem facing many people in Latvia’s African community is finding suitable jobs.<sup>43</sup> While most members of the community earned university diplomas, very few were able to find a job relevant to their education. Latvian language legislation requires various degrees of state language proficiency for over 1000 professions and occupations in private sphere (for details, refer to 2008 report).<sup>44</sup> Lacking the required state language proficiency documents, some are working as private language tutors (English or French), while others have no other choice but to accept unofficial employment, which also means no social security if the job is lost.

According to representative of Roma NGO “Nevo Drom”, there are numerous instances of ethnic discrimination against Roma in employment, yet people don’t file official complaints, because “investigation of such cases and litigation takes time, the system consumes time and energy and usually does not bring any results, while people have more urgent needs in life than searching for justice”.<sup>45</sup>

## V.i The political and legal context

On 16 June 2011, the Saeima (Parliament) in the final reading approved amendments to the Administrative Violations Code, envisaging four-fold increase (from LVL 50 (EUR 71) up to LVL 200 (EUR 285)) of fines for the “unsatisfactory use of the State language to the level necessary for performance of professional or position duties”, and more than doubled fines for cases of repeated unsatisfactory use of the state language (from LVL 200 (EUR 285) up to LVL 500

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<sup>41</sup> Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, *Darba attiecību un darba drošības normatīvo aktu praktiska piemērošana nozarēs un uzņēmumos*, Project information available in Latvian [http://www.lbas.lv/projects/labour\\_relations\\_protection](http://www.lbas.lv/projects/labour_relations_protection) (accessed on 24 August 2011)

<sup>42</sup> Information provided by the Consultative Points in Jelgava and Valmiera in August 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Information provided by NGO “AfroLat” on 24 August 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights, *ENAR Shadow Report 2008 Racism in Latvia*, p.12, p.34, available at: <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/national/Latvia%20-%20SR%202008.pdf> , accessed on 24 August 2011

<sup>45</sup> Information provided by Roma Union “Nevo Drom” on 24 August 2011

(EUR 711)).<sup>46</sup> While the amount of fines may be seen as not very big by European standards, it should be seen in the context of Latvian reality: the average salary during 2010 was LVL 316 (EUR 490) per month,<sup>47</sup> while the remuneration paid to 103,044 persons<sup>48</sup> enrolled in practice works (including, but not limited to, various jobs assigned by municipalities such as open-air public works) during September 2009 – June 2011 was only LVL 100 (EUR 142) per month and even after the reduction of remuneration to LVL 80 (EUR 114) per month since 1 July 2011 the number of applicants (46,028) to the practice works still exceeds the number of practice works' vacancies (43,000).<sup>49</sup>

On 11 March 2010 the Saeima adopted amendments to the "Law on Support for Unemployed Persons and Persons Seeking Employment", adding Section 2.1 „Prohibition of Differential Treatment”.<sup>50</sup> The amendment prohibits differential treatment on the grounds of gender, race, and ethnic affiliation in implementation of the active employment measures and preventative measures for unemployment reduction. The amendment provides definitions of direct and indirect discrimination and harassment, envisages a reverse burden of proof mechanism, extends protection from gender discrimination to pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding, as well as prohibits victimisation. The amendment leaves room for positive action by allowing specific measures aimed at persons of certain gender, race or ethnic affiliation as long as such measures are "objectively justified with legal aim" and the means chosen are "proportionate". The amendments also make a reference to the EU directives 2000/43/EC, 2002/73/EC, 76/207/EEK, 2006/54/EK. The amendments entered into force on 14 April 2010.

On 16 June 2011 the Saeima adopted amendments to the Labour Law, clarifying the responsibility for ensuring the principle of equal treatment in personnel lease situations.<sup>51</sup> Amendments to Section 7 of the Law envisage that a company-provider of leased personnel services is responsible for ensuring that the leased personnel are guaranteed the same employment rules and conditions at the company receiving leased personnel services, as if that worker had a direct employment contract with the company-receiver, including guarantees of equal treatment and prohibition of differential treatment. The amendments are in force since 20 July 2011.

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<sup>46</sup> Saeima, *Grozījumi Latvijas Administratīvo pārkāpumu kodeksā*, <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=232639&from=off>, accessed 24 August 2011

<sup>47</sup> Central Statistical Bureau, *Database*, <http://data.csb.gov.lv/Dialog/Saveshow.asp>, accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>48</sup> State Employment Agency, *PROJEKTS „DARBA PRAKTIZĒŠANAS PASĀKUMU NODROŠINĀŠANA PAŠVALDĪBĀS DARBA IEMAŅU IEGŪŠANAI UN UZTURĒŠANAI”*, <http://www.nva.gov.lv/index.php?cid=2&mid=268&txt=1779&from=0>, accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>49</sup> Lastovska, Alina, "Simtlatnieku" programmā vēl vēlētos iesaistīties 46 028 bezdarbnieki", *LETA* 2011-04-25

<sup>50</sup> Saeima, *Grozījumi Bezdarbnieku un darba meklētāju atbalsta likumā*, <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=207390&from=off>, accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>51</sup> Saeima, *Grozījumi Darba likumā*, <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=232644&from=off> 10 August 2011

## VI. Racism and related discrimination in housing

Information about racism and discrimination in the housing sector in Latvia in 2010-2011, is lacking. State bodies, including the Central Statistics Bureau (CSB) of Latvia and municipalities, do not collect data on housing disaggregated by race, ethnicity, native language, religion or citizenship.

The Population and Housing Census 2011 included questions about citizenship status, main language used at home, and housing conditions.<sup>52</sup> However, the final results of the population Census will be announced at the beginning of 2012. The previous population census was held in 2000 and it also included data on ethnicity in the housing sector, while the regular data collection surveys conducted by the CSB do not include information related to ethnicity, race or religion.

Data on complaints is also lacking. According to the Ministry of Welfare, during 2010-2011 it did not receive any complaints about possible cases of discrimination or intolerance in the area of housing on the grounds of ethnicity, race, native language, citizenship (including foreign) or religion.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, NGOs contacted during preparation of the present report did not have any specific information on complaints about discrimination or intolerance in housing.

In the absence of official data, earlier qualitative studies indicated poor housing conditions of Roma, with interviewees representing this minority unanimously emphasising poor housing conditions, and mostly linking this fact to high level of unemployment and lack of finances, which prevents Roma from renting better housing or building private houses.<sup>54</sup>

Since 1 June 2011 the illegal immigrant and asylum-seeker detention centre was moved to Daugavpils (a city near Russian border, 230 kilometres east of the capital Riga).<sup>55</sup> Previously, the detention centre was situated in Olaine (near the

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<sup>52</sup> Central Statistical Bureau, *Population and Housing Census 2011 form in English*, <http://www.tautasskaitisana.lv/files/pdf/Anketa-en.pdf>, accessed 24 August 2011

<sup>53</sup> Information provided by the European and Legal Affairs Department of the Ministry of Welfare on 25 August 2011.

<sup>54</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *RAXEN Thematic Study - Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers: Latvia*, p.6, [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Latvia\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Latvia_en.pdf), accessed 21 November 2011

<sup>55</sup> Ministry of Interior, "No 1.jūnija Aizturēto ārzemnieku un patvēruma meklētāju izmitināšanas centrs Daugavpilī gatavs uzsākt darbību" (The Housing centre for detained foreigners and asylum seekers in Daugavpils is ready to begin its work since 1 June) <http://www.iem.gov.lv/lat/aktualitates/?doc=22800> accessed 21 November 2011



capital Riga) in re-fitted Soviet era facility for the treatment of alcoholics.<sup>56</sup> Since its establishment, the living conditions at the Olaine centre gradually improved; however, even in 2009 the conditions were seen as “simple, acceptable, but not much more than that”.<sup>57</sup> According to information provided by the staff of the Latvian Centre for Human Rights working with asylum-seekers, conditions in the new facility in Daugavpils represent a considerable improvement. The renovated 1870’s building complies with modern standards and generally provides residents with more space and all necessary facilities, including separate rooms for meetings, healthcare, library, learning, religious rituals, gymnastics, resting, cooking, eating, laundry. The centre is organised into three separate “blocks” for men, women and for families; the family block includes a play room for children. Each residential room includes a toilet and a shower. The building is accessible for people with disabilities.

## VI.ii The political and legal context

During 2010 and 2011, there were no new legislative or policy developments or public debates in Latvia regarding housing.

None of the laws that regulate housing policy in Latvia make a reference to minorities, including ethnic, race, linguistic, religious or other. Legislation regulates the right to apply for and receive a social housing financed by the state or local authorities. The following laws determine the housing policy in Latvia: Law „On Residential Tenancy”<sup>58</sup> (adopted on 16.02.1993), Law on Municipalities<sup>59</sup> (adopted on 19.05.1994), Law “On Assistance in Solving Housing Issues”<sup>60</sup> (adopted on 06.12.2001), Law “On social apartments and social houses”<sup>61</sup> (adopted on 12.07.1997) and Law on social services and social assistance<sup>62</sup> (adopted on 31.10.2002). The legislation envisages assistance for socially vulnerable groups such as people with low income, pensioners, families with underage children, persons with disabilities and special needs. While national legislation sets mandatory minimum of eligibility for social housing, the local

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<sup>56</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights, 2006 *Independent Detention Monitoring in Latvia*, p.16, accessible in English at: [http://www.humanrights.org.lv/upload\\_file/Independent\\_Detention\\_Monitoring\\_in\\_Latvia.pdf](http://www.humanrights.org.lv/upload_file/Independent_Detention_Monitoring_in_Latvia.pdf) accessed 21 November 2011

<sup>57</sup> Jesuit Refugee Service-Europe, 2010, *Becoming Vulnerable in Detention*, p.268, [http://www.detention-in-europe.org/images/stories/DEVAS/jrs-europe\\_becoming%20vulnerable%20in%20detention\\_june%202010\\_public\\_updated%20on%2012july10.pdf](http://www.detention-in-europe.org/images/stories/DEVAS/jrs-europe_becoming%20vulnerable%20in%20detention_june%202010_public_updated%20on%2012july10.pdf) accessed 21 November 2011

<sup>58</sup> Saeima, Likums “Par dzīvojamu telpu īri” (Law “On Residential Tenancy”), available in Latvian <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=56863> accessed 21 November 2011

<sup>59</sup> Saeima, Likums “Par pašvaldībām” (Law on Municipalities), available in Latvian <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=57255> accessed 21 November 2011

<sup>60</sup> Saeima, Likums “Par palīdzību dzīvokļa jautājumu risināšanā” (Law “On Assistance in Solving Housing Issues”), available in Latvian <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=56812> accessed 21 November 2011

<sup>61</sup> Saeima, Likums “Par sociālajiem dzīvokļiem un sociālajām dzīvojamajām mājām” (Law “On social apartments and social houses”), (Latvian) <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=44160> accessed 21 November 2011

<sup>62</sup> Saeima, Sociālo pakalpojumu un sociālās palīdzības likums (Law on social services and social assistance), available in Latvian <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=68488> accessed 21 November 2011

authorities (municipalities) are authorised to extend it, depending on resources available to the respective municipality.

## VII. Racism and related discrimination in education

There is a lack of information about the situation of different groups in education in Latvia. No information is available on court cases about discrimination in education on the grounds of ethnicity, race, language or religion in education in 2010-2011.

There are three main types of public schools in Latvia: Latvian-language schools, Russian-language schools (implementing bilingual Latvian/Russian minority education programmes since 2004) and a few other minority schools (also bilingual).

**Table: Distribution of pupils of general education schools according to language of instruction programmes<sup>63</sup>**

Academic year	Total	Latvian	%	Russian	%	Other	%
2010/2011	216307	158137	73,11	56636	26,18	1534	0,71
2009/2010	226034	166073	73,47	58456	25,86	1505	0,67
2008/2009	236223	173712	73,54	61022	25,83	1489	0,63
2007/2008	250941	184107	73,37	65402	26,06	1432	0,57
2006/2007	266111	194230	72,99	70683	26,56	1198	0,45
2005/2006	283947	205189	72,26	77471	27,28	1287	0,45
2004/2005	300667	214855	71,46	84559	28,12	1253	0,42
2003/2004	312489	219975	70,39	91209	29,19	1305	0,42
2002/2003	325503	227552	69,91	96554	29,66	1397	0,43
2001/2002	336941	232239	68,93	103350	30,67	1352	0,40
2000/2001	344822	232859	67,53	110629	32,08	1334	0,39
1999/2000	347052	230239	66,34	115469	33,27	1344	0,39
1998/1999	348205	226166	64,95	120866	34,71	1173	0,34

*Data of the Ministry of Education and Science*

Despite a long-standing practice of gathering statistical information about the ethnic break-down of pupils in Latvia, there are no official or unofficial mechanisms for monitoring school attendance and the educational achievements of pupils of different ethnic affiliation in majority and minority schools.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Ministry of Education and Science, *Izglītojamo skaits pēc apmācības valodas vispārīglītošajās dienas apmācības programmās 2010./2011.m.g.*, [http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload\\_file/Registri\\_statistika/2010\\_2011/apmac\\_val\\_skoleni\\_10.xls](http://izm.izm.gov.lv/upload_file/Registri_statistika/2010_2011/apmac_val_skoleni_10.xls), accessed 26 August 2011

<sup>64</sup> Koltchanov, Boris (based on materials collected by the Latvian Centre for Human Rights), *Racism in Latvia, ENAR Shadow Report 2007*, <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/national/Latvia%20-%20SR%202007.pdf>, accessed 24 August 2011 and Latvian Centre for Human Rights, *Racism in Latvia, ENAR Shadow Report 2008*, <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/national/Latvia%20-%20SR%202008.pdf>, accessed 24 August 2011

NGOs also generally lack specific information about possible cases of intolerance and/or discrimination in Latvian education establishments. During the reporting period, the NGOs the Latvian Human Rights Committee and “LASHOR” (Latvian Association for the Support of Schools with Russian Language of Instruction) received no concrete complaints about possible cases of intolerance and/or discrimination in education on the grounds of ethnicity, race, native language, religion or citizenship.<sup>65</sup>

According to representative of Afro-Latvian association “AfroLat”, school-age children of African descent may have a mixture of different experiences in Latvia.<sup>66</sup>

Generally, the situation at schools is good: regarding both the attitudes of teachers and classmates. There may be a certain feeling of unease at the beginning when the kids go to the first class and the vast majority of ethnic Latvian children and their parents never had any personal experience of contact with people of African descent. However, children quickly make friends and origin or visual differences do not matter in relations between classmates. Also, there is no information about any derogatory, racist or discriminatory attitudes of teachers towards children of African descent.

However, experiences with strangers may be negative: unfamiliar people may “call names” directed at the children and/or their parents, also when one of the parents is of European descent. These reproaches can take place anytime or anywhere and cannot be “forecasted” in advance because such people may represent any group of the population, there is no typical “profile” of perpetrators (age, gender, native language, profession etc).

### **NGO Good Practice**

#### **Study on access to education**

The Latvian Centre for Human Rights implemented the project “Study on access to education of asylum seekers, refugees and persons with alternative status in Latvia”, co-funded by the European Refugee Fund. The study aimed at assessing the opportunities, needs and problems of asylum seekers, refugees and persons with alternative status (minors and adults) in accessing education at various levels, quality of education and cooperation among various institutions. The study found that while amendments made to Latvian legislation in 2010 significantly improved the right to education (the principle of non-discrimination and the right to general education for the above-mentioned groups became enshrined in the Education Law), many practical aspects of implementation are still underdeveloped. The study included analysis of Latvian legislation in the context of international and the EU legal

<sup>65</sup> Information provided by Latvian Human Rights Committee on 10 August 2011 and by LASHOR on 24 August 2011

<sup>66</sup> Information provided by NGO “AfroLat” on 24 August 2011.

norms as well as 37 in-depth and partially structured interviews with asylum-seekers, refugees, persons with alternative status, representatives of the state and municipal bodies and NGOs, as well as detailed study of situation in four schools which already provided education to representatives of the target group.<sup>67</sup>

## VII.ii The political and legal context

The issue of promoting intercultural dialogue in schools has not been widely debated in Latvia during 2010 - first half of 2011.

On 29 March 2011, activists of radical nationalist union “All for Latvia / For Fatherland and Freedom / Latvian National Independence Movement” (AL/FF/LNIM) submitted to the Central Election Commission the signatures of more than 10,000 voters in support of the Draft law “Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia”.<sup>68</sup> The draft envisaged adding the condition that “the state shall provide an opportunity to acquire elementary education and secondary education in the state language free of charge”, as well as a Transitional provision stipulating that ‘from 1 September 2012 education is in the state language from the 1st grade in all state and municipal educational institutions’. In practice, adoption of the amendment and the transitional provision would mean liquidation of education in minority languages funded by the state and municipalities, thus giving up one of the fundamental features of the Latvian education system since its establishment in 1918. Upon receiving required 10,000 citizens’ signatures for the initiative, the Central Election Commission, in accordance with the “Law on National Referendums and Legislative Initiatives”, conducted state-funded national collection of voter’s signatures during 11 May - 9 June 2011.<sup>69</sup> During the national collection of signatures, 120,433 signatures of voters were collected, thus falling short of the 10% of the citizens who were eligible to vote in the last parliamentary elections (153,232), required for the draft to be submitted to the Parliament for approval.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights, *Study on access to education of asylum seekers, refugees and persons with alternative status in Latvia*, available in Latvian <http://www.humanrights.org.lv/html/iv/aktual/publ/30459.html> , accessed 26 August 2011

<sup>68</sup> Central Election Commission, 2011, Parakstu vākšana par grozījumiem Latvijas Republikas Satversmē, <http://web.cvk.lv/pub/public/29863.html> , accessed 21 November 2011

<sup>69</sup> Central Election Commission, Lēmums Nr. 4. Par parakstu vākšanu likuma „Grozījumi Latvijas Republikas Satversmē” ierosināšanai, Rīga, 11 April 2011, <http://web.cvk.lv/pub/public/29878.html> , accessed 21 November 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Central Election Commission, Lēmums Nr.34. Par parakstu vākšanas likuma „Grozījumi Latvijas Republikas Satversmē ” ierosināšanai rezultātu, Rīga, 21 July 2011. <http://web.cvk.lv/pub/public/30044.html> , accessed 21 November 2011.

## VIII. Racism and related discrimination in health

### VIII.i Manifestations of racism and related discrimination in health

According to information provided by the Health Inspectorate of the Ministry of Health,<sup>71</sup> during 2010 and the first six months of 2011 the Inspectorate received no complaints about possible cases of discrimination or expressions of intolerance on the grounds of ethnicity, race, native language, citizenship (including foreign citizenship), or religion. The Patients' Ombudsman Office<sup>72</sup> received 313 complaints altogether about "attitude of the healthcare personnel" during 2010-2011. According to the Patients' Ombudsman Office, only 9 of these could be considered as complaints about discrimination, most of the latter complaints about "discriminatory attitude because of language" (such as, when the doctor refuses to speak a language which the patient understands (Russian) despite the fact that the patient witnessed the doctor communicating in that language with someone else just a while ago), one complaint about discrimination on the ground of age (the family doctor refused to sign specific disease test order for patient because "she is too young to have this disease"; the test made at the patient's own expense confirmed that she has this disease), one complaint about healthcare personnel refusing to treat a patient because she was living in a different location, and one complaint about the disclosure of information about the patient's condition which caused differential treatment at work.<sup>73</sup>

#### NGO Good Practice

##### Different Client in Diverse Latvia II

In March-June 2011 the Latvian Centre for Human Rights implemented a project "Different Client in Diverse Latvia II" aimed at the training of healthcare workers, policemen and trade union representatives about intercultural communication, anti-discrimination and diversity management issues.<sup>74</sup> The three-day training "Different Client in Diverse Latvia II" was aimed at representatives of institutions providing services to third country nationals. In total, 78 participants, including 39 healthcare workers, 21 representatives of trade unions and 18 policemen took part in the four seminars each lasting three days. Training participants gained both theoretical knowledge and practical advice for work in diverse society. Lectures, practical exercises, role plays, analyses of video materials and publications were used as the training methods in order to promote active engagement of participants. An updated training material "Different Client in Diverse Latvia. Supplemented Edition"

<sup>71</sup> Health Inspectorate, *Letter Nr. 3.5-1/16127* of 15.08.2011

<sup>72</sup> Patients' Ombudsman Office, *Letter Nr. 13/2011-A* of 16.08.2011

<sup>73</sup> Patients' Ombudsman Office, *Letter Nr. 13/2011-A* of 16.08.2011

<sup>74</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights, „Atšķirīgs klients daudzveidīgā Latvijā” *Papildināts izdevums*, Description of the project in Latvian, <http://www.humanrights.org.lv/html/lv/aktual/publ/30477.html>, accessed 10 August 2011

was also published in the framework of the project.<sup>75</sup> The project was implemented in the framework of the European Fund for the Integration of Third-country nationals (75% of the EU funding and 25% of Latvian state co-funding), administrated in Latvia by the Ministry of Culture.

## VIII.ii The political and legal context

There have been no new legislative developments regarding healthcare in Latvia since March 2010.

The Ministry of Health developed the “Fundamental principles of Society Healthcare 2011-2017”.<sup>76</sup> The document is aiming at maintaining, improving and restoring the health of residents of Latvia and at prolonging the duration of high-quality life. Among other things, the document is aiming to “Avert inequality in the field of healthcare by implementing measures, which ensure all Latvia’s residents equal opportunities for health”. The document does not give any assessment of whether there are any inequalities in health status and the quality of healthcare received by various groups of Latvia’s residents differentiated in terms of ethnicity, race, native language, religion, citizenship status. The document highlights inequalities along gender lines (average life expectancy of men is 9.8 years shorter than that of women), rural/urban (average life expectancy of people in countryside is 2 years shorter than that of people in towns and cities), as well as income - 16% of people in Latvia cannot afford healthcare checks (medical examinations) because of lack of money – the worst level in the EU. The document was accepted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 5 October 2011.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights, „Atšķirīgs klients daudzveidīgā Latvijā II”, available in Latvian [http://www.humanrights.org.lv/upload\\_file/001-144\\_GRAMATA\\_preview\\_encr.pdf](http://www.humanrights.org.lv/upload_file/001-144_GRAMATA_preview_encr.pdf) accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>76</sup> The Ministry of Health, *Sabiedrības veselības pamatnostādnes 2011.-2017.gadam*, <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=3768>, accessed on 21 November 2011

<sup>77</sup> The Ministry of Health, *Sabiedrības veselības pamatnostādnes 2011.-2017.gadam*, <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=3768>, accessed on 21 November 2011

## IX. Racism and related discrimination in criminal justice

### IX.i Manifestations of racism and related discrimination in criminal justice

#### IX.i.i Policing and ethnic profiling<sup>1</sup>

There was no new official or unofficial information on ethnic profiling or discrimination in policing in Latvia during 2010-2011. Earlier studies indicated a certain level of negative attitude towards some groups, such as Muslims, Roma, Jews, Caucasians, Africans, and Chinese. Given the fact that the prejudices are present in society, visible and culturally different groups may potentially become the targets of ethnic profiling. In the meantime, there were reports raising concerns about possible ethnic profiling against ethnic Romas in Latvia,<sup>78</sup> although no substantive information has been made available on this issue so far.

#### IX.i.ii Racist violence and crime

All 12 cases investigated by the Security Police under the Section 78 of the Criminal Law (intentional acts aimed at incitement of national, ethnic and racial hatred) during 2010 and the first seven months of 2011 involved no violence and nearly all of these cases concerned comments published by the readers of articles on the internet.<sup>79</sup>

However, the Security Police did not have information about any decisions regarding the attack on an underage Russian-speaking youngster on 5 March 2010.<sup>80</sup> The attack was allegedly motivated by ethnic hate, as the victim claimed he was attacked and severely beaten by Latvian-speaking youth because he was speaking Russian and wore a winter cap with an inscription "Russia" (for more details, refer to 2009-2010 report).<sup>81</sup>

During 2010 the Security Police considered 26 cases of activities possibly aimed at incitement of national, ethnic or racial hate; 20 cases were declined, and in six cases the Security Police decided to initiate criminal proceedings under Section 78 (all dealing with the internet). By the 1 August 2011, one case was closed because of the lack of criminal offence; one case was forwarded to the Prosecutors' Office with recommendation to determine forced medical treatment;

<sup>78</sup> Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), 2009, *Central Europe's Emerging Far-Right*, available at: [http://www.cepa.org/file\\_manager/pdfstorage/streamfile.aspx?name=Central+Europe%27s+Emerging+Far-Right.pdf&path=](http://www.cepa.org/file_manager/pdfstorage/streamfile.aspx?name=Central+Europe%27s+Emerging+Far-Right.pdf&path=) , accessed on 21 November 2011

<sup>79</sup> Security Police, *Letter Nr.21/2426-K/187-jur* of 05.08.2011

<sup>80</sup> Security Police, *Letter Nr.21/2426-K/187-jur* of 05.08.2011

<sup>81</sup> Koltchanov, Boris, based on materials collected by the Latvian Centre for Human Rights, *ENAR Shadow Report 2009/2010 Racism and Discrimination in Latvia*, see p.24 <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/Latvia.pdf> , accessed 26 August 2011



two cases were forwarded to the Prosecutors' Office with recommendation to bring charges; two cases are still under investigation.<sup>82</sup>

During January-July 2011 the Security Police considered 16 cases of possible incitement to national, ethnic or racial hate; 10 cases were declined, while in six cases the Security Police decided to initiate criminal proceedings under the Section 78 (all but one dealing with the internet). By the 1 August 2011, one case (speech in a TV programme) was closed because of the lack of criminal offence; the other 5 cases (all dealing with the internet comments) are under investigation.<sup>83</sup>

During 2010 the Security Police considered two cases involving possible violation of Section 74 of the Criminal Law (Justification of Genocide, crime against humanity, crime against peace and war crime); in both cases the Security Police initiated criminal proceedings under the Section 74 on 1 July.<sup>84</sup> One case dealt with a procession honouring the anniversary of the entry of the Nazi troops into Riga; the case was closed due to the lack of criminal offence. Another case dealt with publishing online an article justifying Soviet deportations in 1941; the Security Police initiated criminal proceedings and as the perpetrator admitted his guilt he was punished by a public prosecutor's injunction with 60 hours of forced labour.<sup>85</sup>

During January-July 2011 the Security Police considered five cases regarding a possible violation of Section 74 and in all the cases the decision was taken not to initiate criminal proceedings.<sup>86</sup>

During 2010 and January-July 2011 the Security Police did not consider any cases of possible incitement of religious hatred, falling under the Section 150 of the Criminal Law.<sup>87</sup>

According to the Ombudsman's Annual Report, during 2010 the Ombudsman's Office received no requests from individuals to keep track of the work of the police in investigation of the racist attacks.<sup>88</sup>

### **IX.i.iii Counter terrorism**

The issues of counter-terrorism did not feature in Latvian public debates during 2010-2011. Being a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO),

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<sup>82</sup> Security Police, *Letter Nr.21/2426-K/187-jur* of 05.08.2011

<sup>83</sup> Security Police, *Letter Nr.21/2426-K/187-jur* of 05.08.2011

<sup>84</sup> Security Police, *Letter Nr.21/2426-K/187-jur* of 05.08.2011

<sup>85</sup> Latvia/Rīgas Tiesa apgabala prokuratūra/Nr.11840002210 (10.02.2011)

<sup>86</sup> Security Police, *Letter Nr.21/2426-K/187-jur* of 05.08.2011

<sup>87</sup> Security Police, *Letter Nr.21/2426-K/187-jur* of 05.08.2011

<sup>88</sup> Ombudsman's Office, *2010 Annual Report*, p.81, available in Latvian

[http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/downloads/Tiesibsarga\\_2010\\_gada\\_zinojums.pdf](http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/downloads/Tiesibsarga_2010_gada_zinojums.pdf), accessed 10 August 2011

Latvia cooperates closely with the alliance and participates in its missions abroad. However, there is no official or unofficial information on whether Latvian involvement in NATO or relevant anti-terrorism measures have impacted ethnic or religious communities in Latvia.

On 10 March 2011 the Parliament has approved the “National Security Concept”.<sup>89</sup> The concept considers various aspects of security. As far as terrorism is concerned, the concept believes that the level of terrorism threat remains low, as there are no persons, groups or organisations inside Latvia that are planning to use terror to achieve their aims. However, there is a growing threat from Islamic extremists, who identify Latvia with European security and defence policies. The greatest threat is perceived to be towards transport and infrastructure objects, as well as places with great concentrations of people. The concept emphasises Latvia’s strategic interest in providing assistance to NATO and the EU in the fight against international terrorism, and identifies four priorities in combating the terrorism threat, such as participation in international anti-terrorist operations, international cooperation, cooperation of domestic institutions and security of terrorism risk objects.

## **IX.ii The political and legal context**

The issue of hate crime has not been at the centre stage of public debates in Latvia during 2010-2011 and there have been no legislative developments regarding hate crime or implementation of the EU Framework decision on racism and xenophobia during the reporting period. Latvian legislation outlaws hate crimes; crimes motivated by racist or ethnic hatred are registered under Section 78 of the Criminal Law (“intentional acts aimed at incitement of national, ethnic and racial hatred”). Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law has been transposed in 2009 by adding Article 74 (Justification of Genocide, crime against humanity, crime against peace and war crime) to the Criminal Law.<sup>90</sup> Most cases registered under Section 78 of the Criminal Law represent incidents of hateful comments to articles published on news portals in the internet and do not involve physical violence. The response of the civil society varies greatly depending on capacity and resources available to individual organisations: few NGOs were engaged in awareness-raising and initially provided certain expertise and training to law-enforcement, while some NGOs are involved in monitoring of the situation.

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<sup>89</sup> Saeima, *Par Nacionālās drošības koncepcijas apstiprināšanu*, <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=227460> , accessed on 21 November 2011

<sup>90</sup> Koltchanov, Boris, based on materials collected by the Latvian Centre for Human Rights ENAR, *Shadow Report 2009/2010 Racism and Discrimination in Latvia*, <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/Latvia.pdf> (accessed on 24 August 2011)

## X. Racism and related discrimination in access to goods and services

According to the Ombudsman's Annual Report, during 2010 the Ombudsman's Office received four complaints about language usage in communication with the state and municipal bodies. Authors of the Ombudsman's Annual Report inform that the translation services are available for speakers of other languages only in certain cases, such as in criminal proceedings.<sup>91</sup>

In 2010 the Ombudsman's Office initiated its investigation into one complaint by a foreigner who was denied an access to a nightclub in Riga. The case was closed, because the club owner denied the incident has ever taken place, while the claimant was not able to present any evidence. The Ombudsman's Office informed the club's owners about the prohibition of discrimination in provision of goods and services.<sup>92</sup>

During the first eight months of 2011 the Ombudsman's Office initiated its investigation into three cases relevant to the issue of access to goods and services, including those provided by the public authorities.<sup>93</sup> Investigation into one complaint about the denial of access to court and discrimination on the ground of language revealed that the complainant (a prisoner) is not able to submit application to the administrative court because he does not know the state language while no translation is available, thus access to court is completely blocked; the Ombudsman's Office requested the Ministry of Justice to provide its assessment of how, without violating the State Language Law, to secure in practice access to court for those residents who due to objective reasons are not able to prepare documents in the state language. Another case involved a complaint about ethnic discrimination in the provision of social services, as the complainant claimed that the state does not provide social services because of the complainant is ethnic Roma; the case was closed after the relevant municipality provided detailed explanation about social assistance available to the complainant and emphasised that no decision was ever taken to discontinue the provision. Investigation into a complaint about discrimination on the ground of citizenship in provision of goods and services in the private services was initiated upon the receipt of the complaint by citizens of Belarus, who were not allowed to stay in their chosen hotel and therefore had to settle in another, more expensive hotel; investigation revealed that a conflict had indeed taken place, yet it was not related to discrimination.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ombudsman's Office, *2010 Annual Report*, p.81, available in Latvian [http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/downloads/Tiesibsarga\\_2010\\_gada\\_zinojums.pdf](http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/downloads/Tiesibsarga_2010_gada_zinojums.pdf), accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>92</sup> Ombudsman's Office *Letter to the Latvian Centre for Human Rights* of 31 August 2011

<sup>93</sup> Ombudsman's Office *Letter to the Latvian Centre for Human Rights* of 31 August 2011

<sup>94</sup> Ombudsman's Office *Letter to the Latvian Centre for Human Rights* of 31 August 2011

During the reporting period Latvia did not yet amend its pension legislation in order to comply with the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and to avoid discrimination against non-citizens in provision of pensions (ECHR Grand Chamber Judgment, *Andrejeva v. Latvia* on 18 February 2009, No. 55707/00).<sup>95</sup> According to the Latvian State Pensions Act, only periods of work in Latvia could be taken into account in calculating retirement pensions of non-citizens of Latvia, while the entire period of employment (including in other republics of the USSR) is to be taken into account in calculating pensions of citizens. ECHR ruled that this provision violates Article 14 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms taken in conjunction with Article 1 of Protocol No.1. The claimant died on 16 April 2010 without seeing her pension re-calculated according to ECHR ruling (for more details, refer to 2009-2010 report).<sup>96</sup>

On 5 March 2010 the Latvian Human Rights Committee, on behalf of five non-citizens of Latvia, submitted a separate application to the Constitutional Court of Latvia requesting to recognise that the said provision of the State Pensions Act does not comply with the Latvian Constitution and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.<sup>97</sup> The Constitutional Court of Latvia delivered its decision on 17 February 2011, ruling that the said provision complies with the Constitution and Article 14 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms taken in conjunction with Article 1 of Protocol No.1.<sup>98</sup> The Constitutional Court argued that the ECHR ruling does not apply to the said provision of the Latvian State Pensions Act outside the case of *Andrejeva*.

#### **NGO Good Practice**

**Data collection to assess discrimination: Situation testing method:** The **Latvian Centre for Human Rights (LCHR)**, for the first time in Latvia, conducted situation testing at night clubs during the night of 5-6 March 2011.<sup>99</sup> The aim of the initiative was to promote situation testing as a method for collecting information on treatment of different groups, as well as to highlight the risks of racial and ethnic discrimination. LCHR tested five nightclubs in Riga, using two groups of testers, one group representing youngsters with darker skin colour, another group representing youngsters with white skin

<sup>95</sup> ECHR, *Grand Chamber Judgment, Andrejeva v. Latvia* (Application no. 55707/00), Strasbourg, 18 February 2009:

<http://cmiskp.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp?action=html&documentId=847435&portal=hbk&source=externalbydocnumber&table=F69A27FD8FB86142BF01C1166DEA398649> , accessed on 23 November 2010

<sup>96</sup> Koltchanov, Boris, based on materials collected by the Latvian Centre for Human Rights, *ENAR Shadow Report 2009/2010 Racism and Discrimination in Latvia*, see pp.22-23

<http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/Latvia.pdf>

<sup>97</sup> Information provided by the Latvian Human Rights Committee on 10 August 2011.

<sup>98</sup> Latvijas Republikas Satversmes tiesas Spriedums, Rīgā 2011. gada 17. februārī, lietā Nr. 2010-20-0106 [http://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/upload/spriedums\\_2010-20-0106.htm](http://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/upload/spriedums_2010-20-0106.htm) , accessed on 10 August 2011

<sup>99</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights, *Situācijas testēšanas eksperiments cīņā pret rasu diskrimināciju*, <http://www.humanrights.org.lv/html/30516.html?yr=2011> , accessed 10 August 2011

colour. The groups tested whether the nightclubs treat differently customers depending on their skin colour. In all five nightclubs in Riga no discrimination of this sort was detected. Information about the situation testing method and its approbation in Riga nightclubs and its results was disseminated to mass-media in Latvia. The situation testing was conducted within a European-wide initiative "the first Europe-wide testing night against racial discrimination" coordinated by the European Grassroots Antiracist Movement (EGAM).<sup>100</sup> The activists have tested the nightlife places in the main cities of 14 countries of Europe; in 15 cities, 35 nightlife places were found to be carrying out discriminatory practices.

## X.ii The political and legal context

During 2010-the first half of 2011, there have been no public debates or legal developments in relation to racism and related discrimination in access to goods and services.

Discrimination in access to goods and services is prohibited in Latvia. The relevant norms are included in the Consumer Rights Protection Law and the Law on prohibition of discrimination of natural persons who are economic operators. Thus, the Consumer Rights Protection Law, adopted on 18 March 1999, stipulates that "Differential treatment based on gender, race, ethnic belonging or disability of a consumer is prohibited when offering goods or a service, selling goods or providing a service".<sup>101</sup> If the prohibition of differential treatment is violated, a consumer may protect his or her rights according to the procedures specified by the Ombudsman Law, as well as by applying to court according to the procedures specified by the Civil Procedure Law.<sup>102</sup> The Law also envisages shifting the burden of proof,<sup>103</sup> prohibition of victimisation<sup>104</sup> and the possibility to award moral damages.<sup>105</sup>

The Law on prohibition of discrimination of natural persons who are economic operators, adopted on 21 May 2009, determines that the economic operators are prohibited from differential treatment based on gender, race or ethnic belonging when offering goods or a service, selling goods or providing a service, as well as providing natural persons' access to economic operations.<sup>106</sup> This Law also

<sup>100</sup> Information about the first Europe-wide testing night is available in English at (accessed on 22 August 2011): <http://www.scribd.com/doc/55608978/First-European-Testing-Night-EGAM-Report>

<sup>101</sup> Saeima, *Patērētāju tiesību aizsardzības likums* (Consumer Rights Protection Law), Paragraph 1 of Article 3.<sup>1</sup> "Prohibition of Differential Treatment", available in Latvian <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=23309> accessed 21 November 2011

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, Paragraph 4 of Article 3.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, Paragraph 5 of Article 3.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, Paragraph 10 of Article 3.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, Paragraph 11 of Article 3.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Saeima, *Fizisko personu — saimnieciskās darbības veicēju — diskriminācijas aizlieguma likums* (Law on prohibition of discrimination of natural persons who are economic operators),

envisages shifting the burden of proof,<sup>107</sup> prohibition of victimisation<sup>108</sup> and the possibility to award moral damages.<sup>109</sup> In the case of differential treatment prohibition violation, the victim may protect his or her rights according to the procedures specified by the Ombudsman Law, as well as by applying to the court according to the established procedures.<sup>110</sup>

According to the Ombudsman's Annual Report, during 2011 the Office received complaints about lack of access to goods and services because of disability, yet no information was available regarding facts of discrimination in access to goods and services on the grounds of race, ethnic affiliation or religion.<sup>111</sup> No information is available about court cases on the violation of the prohibition of differential treatment in access to goods and services on the grounds of race, ethnic affiliation or religion.

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<http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=193005&from=off> accessed 21 November 2011

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, Article 4

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, Article 7

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, Article 5

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, Article 6

<sup>111</sup> Ombudsman's Office, *2010 Annual Report*, available in Latvian [http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/downloads/Tiesibsarga\\_2010\\_gada\\_zinojums.pdf](http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/downloads/Tiesibsarga_2010_gada_zinojums.pdf) , accessed 21 November 2011

## XI. Racism and related discrimination in the media

One particular problem that surfaced during 2010-2011 was the publication of hate material in large-circulation Latvian print media as “paid advertisements” by a Latvian American healthcare professional, Aivars Slucis. “Advertisements” published during the reporting period focused on propagating hatred against ethnic Russians, Russian language and culture, as well as Russia as a country. For example, in his 12 January 2011 publication in “Neatkarīga” he alarmed readers with “Russians are winning in Latvia” – “the country of riflemen and Legionnaires” (i.e. Waffen SS legionnaires),<sup>112</sup> while in a 19 May 2011 publication in “Latvijas Avīze” he claimed that problems of Latvia could not be resolved as long as ethnic Russians represent more than 10-15% of population, compared ethnic Russians to a “forest, where our deceivers and corrupt are hiding” and stated “the time has come to rarefy the forest”; in his 8 June 2011 publication in “Latvijas Avīze” he called on ethnic Latvians to give preferential treatment to each other.

His March 2011 publication in the mainstream newspaper “Diena” produced a certain amount of public discussion. Aivars Slucis called on ethnic Latvians to build a psychological wall in their minds and thoughts against the “darkness, evil, death”, - everything which came from the East “during the last 500 years”, stated that he believes ethnic Russians are descendants of Stalinist murderers and linked ethnic Russians to the drug trade in South America, weapons trade in Asia and desecration of Jewish graves in Riga.<sup>113</sup> According to Mr.Slucis, nearly all ethnic Russians in Latvia are “the 5th column” and without ethnic Russians, there would be no corruption in Latvia. He argued for the reduction of the ethnic Russian population of Latvia and called upon ethnic Latvians to gather together for a big public cleaning effort.<sup>114</sup>

Interviewed experts stated that the publications of Mr.Slucis feature elements of incitement of interethnic hatred, the law enforcement agencies should react and that the editorial staff of the newspapers should take more responsibility for what they choose to publish.<sup>115</sup> It was also highlighted during the discussion that the law enforcement bodies tend to swiftly prosecute 15-24 years old youngsters for one or two hateful comments on a news article on the internet, although the same bodies are unwilling or unable to prosecute a hate monger who runs a systematic campaign.<sup>116</sup> The Security Police stated that it will not evaluate his publications, because such publications are seen as an expression of opinion.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Slucis, Aivars, “Politiski korekti latviskā gaumē”, *Neatkarīga* (12 January 2011)

<sup>113</sup> Slucis, Aivars, “Ne ātrvilcienu uz Maskavu, bet mūri Zilupes krastā”, *Diena* (30 March 2011)

<sup>114</sup> Ibid

<sup>115</sup> Hauka, Evija, ‘Aivars Slucis lamā krievus, tiesībsargi plāta rokas’, *Kas jauns* (8 April 2011) <http://www.kasjauns.lv/lv/zinas/44642/aivars-slucis-lama-krievus-tiesibsargi-plata-rokas>

<sup>116</sup> Ibid

<sup>117</sup> Fahretdinova, Aleksandra, ‘Drošības policijas nevērtēs Sluča izteikumu’, *LETA* 2011-06-09

### NGO Good Practice

**Media and Diversity:** In March-June 2011 the Latvian Centre for Human Rights implemented the activity project “Media and Diversity” aimed at raising awareness of the journalists and journalism students about the issues of diversity in the media.<sup>118</sup> A seminar for journalism students “Diversity in Mass Media” was held in the framework of the activity. The future journalists discussed the role of diversity and stereotypes in media as well as tested their skills in inclusion of diversity when preparing a news story. Education material for journalists and journalism students “Media and Diversity” was also published.<sup>119</sup> The publication addresses the role of the media in modern society and effect on the views about and behaviour towards different groups, as well as provides useful practical information for reporting in diverse environment. The activity was implemented within a larger project “Different Client in Diverse Latvia II” (IF/2009/3.1./27) and funded by the European Union (75%) and Latvian (25%) budgets.

### XI.ii The political and legal context

Apart from discussions caused by publications by Aivars Slucis, there have been no major public debates related to racism and racist discrimination in the media as well as no relevant legislative developments during 2010-the first half of 2011.

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<sup>118</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights, *Mediji un daudzveidība. Materiāls žurnālistiem un žurnālistikas studentiem*, <http://www.humanrights.org.lv/html/lv/aktual/publ/30464.html> , accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>119</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights, *Mediji un daudzveidība. Materiāls žurnālistiem un žurnālistikas studentiem*, [http://www.humanrights.org.lv/upload\\_file/Mediji\\_un\\_daudzveidiba.pdf](http://www.humanrights.org.lv/upload_file/Mediji_un_daudzveidiba.pdf) , accessed 10 August 2011



## XII. Political and legal developments in anti-racism and anti-discrimination

The EU Employment directive (2000/43/EC) was transposed by the end of 2006, when the Civil Service Law was amended.<sup>120</sup> By the end of 2010 the transposition of the Race Directive (2000/43/EC) had also been complete, although transposition process was not only lengthier, but also more complicated, because the law-makers in 2004 rejected comprehensive draft “Discrimination Prevention Law” and instead decided to amend various norms in eight existing laws relevant to prohibition of differential treatment, - a process which took several years to complete.

Functions of the designated national equality body in Latvia are entrusted to the Ombudsman’s Office. However, the role and effectiveness of the Office continue to raise concerns. The budget of the Office in 2010 (LVL 558,901, or EUR 795,249) was less than half of the 2008 level (LVL 1,303,002 or EUR 1,854,015).<sup>121</sup> Moreover, its mandate is broader than that envisaged for a national equality body and it is not clear how much of the budget and efforts of the Office are devoted to the above mentioned functions.

On 3 March 2011 the Saeima elected Juris Jansons to the position of the head of the Ombudsman’s Office.<sup>122</sup> The new Ombudsman, Juris Jansons, is a lawyer by training and, prior to nomination, was working as a liquidator for the Riga Health Insurance Company. M.Jansons received 53 votes (out of total 100 MPs in Latvian Parliament), yet he does not have any human rights background and the process of his election was not very transparent. The new Ombudsman emphasised that he will act more as a professional manager, ensuring effective and professional work of the Office. In the meantime, he already made some statements unfortunate for his position, such as that the liquidation of education in minority languages, pushed by national-radicals, would not violate the human rights obligations of Latvia.<sup>123</sup>

On 27 April 2011 the Ombudsman publicised the “The Ombudsman’s Strategy 2011-2013.”<sup>124</sup> The document describes the Office’s mission and mandate, as well as modes of action. The goals of the three-year strategy are: informed society and timely remedies, compliance with the principle of good governance,

<sup>120</sup> Saeima, *Grozījumi Valsts civildienesta likumā*, <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=147533>, accessed 21 November 2011

<sup>121</sup> Ombudsman’s Office, *2009 Annual Report*, p.8, available in Latvian <http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/downloads/Tiesibsarga%202009.gada%20zinojums.pdf> accessed 09 September 2010

<sup>122</sup> Petrovam, Alla, ‘Juris Jansons is a new ombudsman in Latvia’, *The Baltic Course*, Riga, 03.03.2011, <http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/legislation/?doc=37986>, accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>123</sup> Gluhih, Aleksandra, ‘Kogo zashischaet pravozashtitnik?’, *Telegraf*, 09.08.2011 <http://www.telegraf.lv/tags/intervyyu/news/kogo-zashtishtaet-pravozashtitnik>, accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>124</sup> Ombudsman’s Office, *Tiesibsarga strategija\_2011-2013*, available in Latvian [http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/lat/tiesibsargs/majas\\_lapas\\_jaunumi/?doc=664](http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/lat/tiesibsargs/majas_lapas_jaunumi/?doc=664) accessed 10 August 2011

as well as the Ombudsman's Office effectiveness and authority.<sup>125</sup> The ombudsman's term in office is five years.

According to the Ombudsman's Annual Report, during 2010 the Ombudsman's Office received 3601 verbal and written communications from individuals (i.e. 70% of 5120 communications received during the last pre-crisis year of 2007).<sup>126</sup> This includes 91 communications (verbal consultations and written complaints) regarding possible discrimination on various grounds (i.e. 30% of 304 communications received during the last pre-crisis year of 2007).<sup>127</sup>

While the transposition of the EU Equality Directives determined the development of Latvia's anti-discrimination legislation, further analysis of the situation regarding implementation of the principle of non-discrimination is hampered by the lack of statistical and research data on the status of various groups within the society, including participation in public life and in the economy.

Available information suggests there is fundamental lack of data and lack of any coherent approach to collect the data necessary for assessment of discrimination and the impact of anti-discrimination norms. According to information provided by the Ministry of Culture (MC), The MC is the institution responsible for the development of society integration policy and in order to secure supervision of the situation in the field of anti-discrimination, the MC is cooperating with various state bodies and research institutions. The MC mentioned already available data on the distribution of pupils according to language of instruction, Ombudsman Office's complaints data, migration and naturalisation data, as well as research data. However, the MC did not identify any specific measures to assess issues of discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, race, native language, religion, citizenship in various areas of life, such as employment, education, housing, healthcare and social protection, access to goods and services, and the work of law enforcement bodies.<sup>128</sup> Similarly, the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia stated that it does not conduct surveys on race, religion and ethnicity and did not explain what methods of data collection are being developed and/or used to assess the situation of various groups (ethnic, race, native language, religion, citizenship) in employment, education, housing, healthcare and social protection, access to goods and services and the work of law enforcement bodies.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Ombudsman's Office, *Tiesībsarga stratēģija 2011-2013*, available in Latvian [http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/lat/tiesibsargs/majas\\_lapas\\_jaunumi/?doc=664](http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/lat/tiesibsargs/majas_lapas_jaunumi/?doc=664) accessed 10 August 2011

<sup>126</sup> Ombudsman's Office, *2010 Annual Report*, p.81, available in Latvian [http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/downloads/Tiesibsarga\\_2010\\_gada\\_zinojums.pdf](http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/downloads/Tiesibsarga_2010_gada_zinojums.pdf) 10 August 2011

<sup>127</sup> Ombudsman's Office, *2010 Annual Report*, p.81, available in Latvian [http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/downloads/Tiesibsarga\\_2010\\_gada\\_zinojums.pdf](http://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/downloads/Tiesibsarga_2010_gada_zinojums.pdf) 10 August 2011

<sup>128</sup> Information provided by the Ministry of Culture on 23 August 2011.

<sup>129</sup> Information provided by the Central Statistical Bureau on 11 August 2011.

### XIII. Migration and integration

During 2010-early 2011, the focus of public discourse in Latvia regarding migration has only slightly changed when compared to the previous years. Latvia continues to be a country of emigration, and the primary concerns in public debates on migration are still focused on the people who have left the country, their reasons for leaving and their plight abroad. The society, experts and decision-makers are adjusting to the idea that any mass-scale return of emigrants is unlikely. As a result, more attention is being paid to the proposals to allow dual citizenship for emigrants and their children in order to preserve their links with the country. Another consequence of these debates is the slowly growing understanding that even if at the moment, unemployment officially is at 12% (and unofficial may be higher), in order to develop economically, Latvia would need to be more open to the world, attracting investment, new ideas, technologies and know-how, as well as a dynamic youthful labour force. However, Latvia still lacks any coherent policy in the area and is unprepared to integrate newcomers (see further below), while among politicians, there is a tendency to insist that in terms of migration, Latvia's top priority should be to try to bring back the emigrants.

#### MIPEX

Latvia scored 31 points according to Migrant Integration Policy Index III (MIPEX) taking the last place among 31 countries included in the 2010 research.<sup>130</sup> While Latvia showed limited progress of +3 points since the previous MIPEX II (2007), the country still remained at the bottom ranking spot on the list. In general, assessment provided by MIPEX is realistic and adequate. The authors pointed at the overall problem: the lack of comprehensive policy. Significant improvement was made in March 2010, when the Education Law was amended to include everyone with residence permits in Latvia (including temporary) to the list of persons eligible for education (for details, refer to 2009-2010 report).<sup>131</sup> Specific problems were also identified, such as restrictions on the access to the labour market, lack of adaptation of schools to the needs of newcomer children, minimalist approach in anti-discrimination and citizenship policies, and a lack of voting rights. However, one can doubt whether the increase in labour market mobility score (from 27 to 36) is well justified: on the one hand, Latvia reduced bureaucracy and slashed fees for the employment of foreign workers, on the other hand, the government introduced various degrees of state language qualifications for nearly 1000 professions in the private sector (for details, refer to

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<sup>130</sup> British Council and Migration Policy Group, *Migrant Integration Policy Index III. Latvia*, <http://www.mipex.eu/latvia>, accessed 24 August 2011

<sup>131</sup> Koltchanov, Boris, based on materials collected by the Latvian Centre for Human Rights ENAR, *Shadow Report 2009/2010 Racism and Discrimination in Latvia*, <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/Latvia.pdf> (accessed on 24 August 2011)

2008 report)<sup>132</sup> which disproportionately impact on the newcomers' ability to work.

### **Society Integration Policy**

Since the onset of the economic crisis in Latvia and the consequent austerity measures, the issues of society integration were, to a certain extent, sidelined. During 2008-2010, the government reorganised the main state body responsible for the development of anti-discrimination and society integration policies several times, reducing its staff and resources due to economic considerations and passing its functions between four different ministerial supervisions (the Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Social Integration, the Ministry of Children, Family and Integration Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Culture). During that period, there was no effective policy document on society integration, while the last official framework document State Programme "Society Integration in Latvia" was approved in 2001.<sup>133</sup> During the three-year institutional reorganisation process, a new framework document "the Fundamental Principles of Society Integration Policy 2010-2017" has been developed,<sup>134</sup> but it was never approved by the government.

Since the transfer of the Integration section to the Ministry of Culture, a new draft integration framework document "the Fundamental Principles of National Identity and Society Integration Policy 2012-2018"<sup>135</sup> has been developed under the leadership of the Minister of Culture, Sarmite Elerte. The document focuses on the issues of identity, language, cultural space and social historical memories. The document presents Latvia as a "European nation state", introduces the notion of *staatsvolk* ("a nation which established the state and determines its national cultural identity"), emphasises that ethnic Latvians are the *staatsvolk* in Latvia, declares that besides the *staatsvolk*, ethnic minorities (yet not immigrants) are a part of the "people of Latvia" and that "ethnic Latvian identity – Latvian language, culture, social memory – is common for all the people of Latvia". The document also distinguishes between ethnic minorities holding Latvian passports and ethnic minorities holding Latvian non-citizens' passports, the latter category being named as privileged long-term immigrants. The overall aim of the policy is "strong, united Latvian people – a national and democratic community, which secures the preservation and enrichment of its unifying foundation – Latvian

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<sup>132</sup> Latvian Centre for Human Rights, *ENAR Shadow Report 2008 Racism in Latvia*, p.12, p.34, <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/national/Latvia%20-%20SR%202008.pdf>, accessed 24 August 2011

<sup>133</sup> Cabinet of Ministers, Valsts programma "Sabiedrības integrācija Latvijā", <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/view.do?id=495>, accessed 21 November 2011

<sup>134</sup> Ministry of Justice, *Draft Framework and Programme*, available in Latvian: [http://www.tm.gov.lv/publ\\_apsriesanas/lv/documents/TMPam\\_ietvars\\_030810.pdf](http://www.tm.gov.lv/publ_apsriesanas/lv/documents/TMPam_ietvars_030810.pdf) [http://www.tm.gov.lv/lv/noderigi/sabiedribas\\_integracija/TMPam\\_200810\\_sit\\_rakst.pdf](http://www.tm.gov.lv/lv/noderigi/sabiedribas_integracija/TMPam_200810_sit_rakst.pdf) (accessed 10 August 2011)

<sup>135</sup> Ministry of Culture, *Nacionālās identitātes un sabiedrības integrācijas politikas pamatnostādnes (2012–2018)*, [http://www.km.gov.lv/lv/doc/starprozares/lidzdaliba/KMPamn\\_100811\\_projekts.pdf](http://www.km.gov.lv/lv/doc/starprozares/lidzdaliba/KMPamn_100811_projekts.pdf) accessed 24 August 2011

language, culture and national identity, European democratic values and unique cultural space, for the balanced development of Latvian national democratic state”.

Since April 2011 the document has been heavily criticised by many experts and civil society representatives, including minorities, as well as journalists and politicians. Many critics believe the document is “ethnocentric” or even “based on ethnic superiority”,<sup>136</sup> and express concern that the state is attempting to overstep citizens’ freedoms by imposing a “correct” version of social historical memory on society, and that the document does not address fundamental issues which are crucial for the successful integration of society: equality and effective participation.

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<sup>136</sup> See, e.g. Monika Kreile, “Ēlertes latviskā utopija” (accessed 24 August 2011): [http://www.politika.lv/temas/sabiedribas\\_integracija/elertes\\_dziva\\_utopija](http://www.politika.lv/temas/sabiedribas_integracija/elertes_dziva_utopija)

## **XIV. National recommendations**

Regarding the areas of **Employment, Housing, Education, Health, Criminal justice, Access to goods and services, Media:**

- Improve and develop the system of data collection to assess the situation of various groups (defined in terms of ethnicity, race, native language, religion, citizenship) in various areas of life, such as employment, education, housing, healthcare and social protection, access to goods and services, work of law enforcement bodies, and participation in public life.

### **National leadership and Media**

- Political elite and mass media should take more responsibility for their own actions and processes in the society, clearly distancing themselves from and actively opposing to the ideas of superiority, hate and group stigmatisation.

### **General**

#### **Anti-racism and anti-discrimination**

- Review the work of the Ombudsman's Office as the national equality body and ensure its effectiveness
- Maintain a clear and consistent system of registration and categorisation of: discrimination claims, Ombudsman's opinions on the substance of these claims and the outcomes of these cases
- Realise the Ombudsman's full potential, such as the right to represent the interests of victims of discrimination in civil court proceedings
- Conduct follow-ups to the Ombudsman's own findings, such as legislative proposals
- Conduct studies on vulnerable groups and discrimination

#### **Migration and integration**

- Ensure real participation and influence of various groups in decision-making, especially on the issues directly affecting them, such as the development and implementation of the integration policy
- Re-work the framework integration policy document to change the focus from identity and historical memory to equality and participation
- Elaborate and implement measures to promote principles of social inclusion, such as effective participation of minorities in public life, into all national programmes addressing social integration and anti-discrimination
- Facilitate naturalisation
- Examine opportunities to grant non-citizens voting rights in municipal elections
- Consider measures to ensure access to public goods and services for persons who are not sufficiently fluent in the state language

## XV. Conclusion

As Latvia continued to bear the brunt of economic crisis, there was only limited development in tackling problems of racism and discrimination during 2010-2011.

Overall assessment of the situation is far from simple. Latvia completed the transposition of Equality Directives by the end of 2010 and the number of discrimination complaints and hate crimes remain low. At the same time, there is continuous lack of data on the situation of representatives of various groups in different spheres of life, insufficient public confidence in existing rights protection mechanisms, and no efforts to substantially improve data collection. Moreover, the lack of reliable data has clearly surfaced again as a problem in 2011: preliminary results of the population census showed that the number of people actually living in Latvia (1.9 million) is by 0,3 million (or 15%) smaller than the officially updated figure provided by the Population Register (2,2 million) few months later.<sup>137</sup>

Two important developments relevant to antidiscrimination and inclusion have taken place during 2010-2011. The change in leadership of the Ombudsmen's Office (national equality body) in March 2011 is an opportunity to revise and improve its performance. The announcement of the new draft integration framework policy document is another important development in Latvia during the reporting period.<sup>138</sup> However, the document presented for public discussions did not address issues which are fundamental for successful integration of society: equality and effective participation.

Civil society organisations are delivering important contributions to the development of tolerant, inclusive society in Latvia through awareness raising, training, collecting information and assisting victims of rights violations. Civil society representatives also have a great interest in the improvement of the work of the Ombudsman's Office and have actively participated in the development of the new integration framework policy draft document. However, since the capacities of various organisations may differ significantly, while available resources became more limited due to the crisis, it is ultimately the state responsibility to run an adequate system of data collection, promote tolerance, develop and implement inclusive, non-discriminatory policies and to make sure that existing rights protection mechanisms are effective in practice.

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<sup>137</sup> above n.1

<sup>138</sup> Ministry of Culture, *Nacionālās identitātes un sabiedrības integrācijas politikas pamatnostādnes (2012–2018)*, [http://www.km.gov.lv/lv/doc/starprozares/lidzdaliba/KMPamn\\_100811\\_projekts.pdf](http://www.km.gov.lv/lv/doc/starprozares/lidzdaliba/KMPamn_100811_projekts.pdf) accessed 24 August 2011

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## **Annex 1: List of abbreviations and terminology**

CSB - Central Statistics Bureau

LBAS - Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia

LVL – Lats, Latvian national currency

SLI – State Labour Inspectorate

