

**BENELUX
INTERPARLIAMENTARY
CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL**

10 June 2004

Minority Languages and Integration

Seminar

**by the Education, Science and Culture Committee
of the Baltic Assembly**

Latvia, Daugavpils, 27-29 May 2004

REPORT

BY MR FREDDY SARENS
ON BEHALF OF THE CULTURE
AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

MORNING SESSION

I. Opening of the seminar by Mrs Inara Ostrovska, Chairperson of the Education, Science and Culture Committee of the Baltic Assembly

Mrs Ostrovska welcomes the President of the Baltic Assembly, Minister Nils Muisnieks, the experts and the members of parliament.

Address by Mrs Inara Ostrovska, Chairperson of the Education, Science and Culture Committee of the Baltic Assembly

Mrs Ostrovska welcomes the fact that this seminar on minority languages and integration can be held in Daugavpils, the second city of Latvia. Daugavpils is an important city as regards sport, culture, schools and universities, but also because people from different nationalities are living together. There are 133,000 inhabitants, of whom 54,99 % are Russians, 16,37 % Latvians, 14,99 % Poles, 8,65 % Belarussians and 2,4 % Ukrainians.

Thus, several nationalities are present on the territory of the city and this is reflected in the various cultural associations.

Speaker is of the opinion that the current issues concerning minority languages and integration have arisen in a similar way in the Baltic States and within the Benelux. She hopes that today's debate, in which the experience of the other countries will be highlighted, will bring solutions to this problem.

Address by Mr Freddy Sarens, Chairman of the Culture and Public Health Committee of the Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council

In February 2002, the Benelux Parliament organised a workshop on multilingualism, during which it examined the impact of the European Day of Languages.

In his inauguration of the workshop, the speaker made the following remark: "Knowledge of several languages is an important advantage because it favours integration, contributes to the maintenance of the multicultural dimension, promotes tolerance and helps people tap foreign markets";

Mrs Reding, European Commissioner for Culture, made special mention in her introductory address of the fact that Europe will always be a multilingual and therefore multicultural forum. Learning the language of others will help preserve Europe's wealth. We must respect a person's origins, but at the same time, that person must open up to the culture of his/her fellow citizens.

This statement brings us very close to the topic of this seminar.

Indeed, speaking of minority and integration languages allows us to uncover that area of tension which every person who comes face to face with another language feels welling up inside. On the one hand, there is that person's own language which acts as an expression of his/her identity and culture and on the other, the knowledge of another language which favours awareness of a world other than his/her own.

It is in our mother tongue that we are best able to express our feelings. It is this language which keeps lock of our main cultural values. It swarms of references to our history, our past and our habits. It is the language of tradition, and reminds us of our roots. Our mother tongue is often an external sign of the group of people to whom we belong. This is the reason why we should not only cherish it, but also have the opportunity to do so.

Nevertheless, in reality, we are living more and more in a globalised world. The main tool that we have to grow as individuals in such a world is to learn languages. It becomes crucial when, in our immediate environment, we must deal with a different culture.

Knowledge of a foreign language provides access to an outside world.

Knowledge of a foreign language allows others to get to know you and increases your chance of being accepted by them.

Knowledge of a foreign language allows us to confront other cultures with ease, an experience which is both exciting and enriching.

Knowledge of a foreign language helps us provide our services to foreign labour markets.

Europeans of the 21st century are going to learn how to cope with this tension between their own identity and confrontation with another. This tension can be found in each human but also between Europe's peoples and regions.

The political decision-makers and leaders of our countries must take the necessary legislative steps to allow this process to take place while guaranteeing respect for each and every one of us. This is no mean feat. Allow me to tell you what has already been achieved.

In 1992, the Council of Europe presented the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which aims to protect and promote Europe's historic and minority languages.

The draft European Constitution approved last year at the Convention stipulates in its 1st article that the European Union must respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity and see to the development of European cultural heritage.

At the beginning of my address, I mentioned the interest raised in our very own Benelux countries. Here too, the language issue is an important topic.

Our colleagues from the Benelux Parliament will paint a brief picture of the linguistic reality as it exists in the Benelux countries and, during their address, will present the legislative initiatives that have been taken in the area.

Mrs Aasted-Madsen will present the situation in the Netherlands; Mr Luc Willems will speak of the situation in Belgium and Mr Louis Siquet will devote his address to German-speaking Belgium as well as the situation in Luxembourg.

We hope that this will help contribute to the success of this seminar.

Address by Mrs Vitalijs Aizbalts, member of Daugavpils regional Council

Mrs Aizbalts considers Daugavpils as an ideal location for this seminar considering the fact that this city hosts different nationalities on its territory.

Minority languages and integration is an important issue. At nursery schools, other languages are already taught: 63 % of the actual students learn Latvian. This percentage should still increase. The State allowances in order to promote the teaching of Latvian have nevertheless decreased this year. The local authorities are hopefully contributing to preserving the culture of the different populations (e.g. support to the orthodox branch).

Speaker hopes that the conference will leave good impressions among the participants and that it will contribute to the promotion of tourism in Latvia.

Address by Mrs Eleonora Kleščinska, deputy mayor of Daugavpils

Mrs Kleščinska considers this conference as symbolic. Other events organised by cultural associations have also taken place this week.

Language teaching is promoted, especially in primary schools. A considerable amount of money is devoted to language learning.

People from different nationalities have been living together for ages in Daugavpils.

She expresses the wish that Daugavpils will be considered as a model of a European city. She hopes that this conference will give participants an idea of the real life in Daugavpils.

II. Problems related to the integration of ethnic minorities in the Baltic States: conditions, barriers and recent tendencies

Address by Mr Nils Muiznieks, minister responsible for special missions on the issues of integration into the Latvian society.

Mr Muiznieks underlines the need for cooperation. It is necessary to support Latvian as the only national language while preserving the rights and the authenticity of minorities. All the inhabitants have to learn the state language. Minorities have to cooperate.

Different nationalities are found in all the big Latvian cities. At individual level, integration has been achieved; there are many mixed marriages; Latvians and Russians become friends and people from different nationalities are also working together.

It would not be right to say that all Latvians are rich and all Russians poor or vice versa. A social mixture has taken place.

Very few people living in Latvia are not Latvian citizens. However, certain residents refuse to become Latvian citizens. Some of them are not capable of passing the examination in order to become Latvian citizens. Fortunately, this situation is changing.

In 2004, the number of requests for naturalizations doubled in comparison with 2003.

The authorities spare no efforts to this end. So, letters have been sent to parents to ask them to have their children registered as citizens. Consequently, the number of inhabitants-citizens is increasing.

Moreover, the international situation of Latvia has changed.

Latvia's prestige has increased and since the accession to the European Union, EU citizenship provides facilities to travel throughout Europe or even to work there.

The government is also taking measures to promote citizenship. There are still obstacles, at psychological or linguistic levels. Although the situation is changing, a great deal of inhabitants in Latvia do not speak Latvian (4 % do not know Latvian, 43 % have elementary notions, 36 % have a basic knowledge and 17 % have a thorough knowledge of the language).

This lack of knowledge of the Latvian language constitutes an obstacle for the integration of citizens and access to the labour market.

It also constitutes an obstacle to culture because of the lack of information.

The state authorities make important efforts. An education system was introduced in 1996 with a special programme to learn Latvian (e.g. for prisoners).

Speaker hopes that membership will generate supplementary opportunities and offer supplementary means with a view to stimulating integration (social funds).

Integration is also developing at cultural level. People who do not know Latvian are not familiar with Latvia's history. An opinion poll was organised in 2001 on the conception of history. The following thesis was submitted to the inhabitants "only thanks to the assistance of the peoples of the USSR did Latvia achieve such a high level of economies and cultures". The answers proved different according to the knowledge of the language.

The information available is of course different. It is most likely that the media reflect history in a different way, that stories are not told in the same way in all the families and that history is taught differently in Russian or Latvian schools.

The State makes huge efforts in order to reform education in the schools, including minority schools.

These problems will surely gradually disappear but this will take several generations.

The referendum on the accession to the European Union also revealed the differences among the different peoples: 2/3 of the Latvians voted yes whereas only 20 % of the minorities supported EU membership.

In order to improve this situation, specific units within the ministry are created with a view to diffusing information on the European Union in different languages.

As far as culture and sport are concerned, integration is running smoothly. With regard to opera, hockey or football for instance, there is no distinction based on nationalities or languages. Political action is not necessary in these fields.

It is nevertheless obvious that the authenticity of the ethnic culture of minorities has to be supported.

To this end, minorities are provided with subsidies. Sport events, festivals,... are organised. The demands of associations are however more important than the financial means available. These means are distributed according to the results of a competition.

While evaluating this competition, we came to the conclusion that a lot of minority organisations are not able to participate because of a lack of knowledge of the language and this slows down their cultural integration.

The ministry department organises consultations in order to enable each minority to benefit from these funds. Cooperation in this field takes place with the local authorities of Daugavpils.

In conclusion, the minister points out that there is still a lot of work to be done. It will take time but the situation will be better during the next generation. It is obvious that we should do our best in the meantime.

Address by M. Ken Koort, office of the minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs, Estonia

Estonians say that a person who does not remember the past lives without a future.

We must remember where we come from. If we remember then we will have a better knowledge of where we are going.

Looking at the general mood in the world, it can be concluded that the sufferings of a small nation are not a matter of concern for to many. In time and time again Estonia and Latvia are forced to explain where the present minorities who speak no Estonian or Latvian in Estonia and Latvia came from; in time and time again the persons who issue fantastic demands to Estonia and Latvia must be reminded of the consequences of nazist and communist occupation, which for some reason nobody wants to hear about although all the traditional and well-integrated minorities in Estonia and Latvia were destroyed as a result and a genocide was executed regarding Estonians and Latvians, then we see that double-standards live on.

And so there can be one single conclusion – Estonians and Latvians can only count on themselves to preserve their nations.

This is namely the key question, the answer which wipes away the dust that has been created by the issue of minorities.

Therefore, at first the consequences of genocide against the indigenous people committed by the Nazis and communists must be overcome. By achieving this we will bring more stability to the society.

The crimes of Nazis and communists brought great suffering upon the people of Estonia.

One of these crimes was the wave of migration into Estonia organised by the Communist Party, which turned the lives of local indigenous people upside down.

Since the Soviet state planned to create the Soviet nation, then the people brought to Estonia from Russia with the indigenous people and local way of life was not necessary. These problems were left on the shoulders of the Estonian state.

Of course, the people that Stalin took advantage of in his atrocious plans, cannot be blamed.

At the same time, the fact itself that lots of people lived in Estonia after regaining of independence who were aliens and who felt the desire to live the life of Russia, then for a small country like Estonia this also means the acceptance of a huge responsibility beginning with the integration of such people into the Estonian society.

Many multi-national countries, which have received masses of immigrants against the will of their indigenous population, have not been successful in the world.

Lets once again stress that the ethnic minorities who lived in Estonia before the Second World War according to history, were almost entirely exterminated by the Soviet and Nazi occupation forces. Amongst them were the Jews, who before the Second World War had a cultural autonomy in Estonia. Estonia was the only European country where this was made possible. Immediately after the Soviet Union invaded Estonia, the communists eliminated the cultural autonomy of Jews, many Jews were deported just like Estonians were to Siberia.

The majority of Jews fled from the Nazis as a result of war between Hitler and Stalin. The remaining few hundred Jews were eliminated by the aggressors. Nevertheless, tens of Jews managed to escape as the Estonians were hiding them.

However, the Jews were not the only ethnic minority to vanish from the territory of Estonia as a result of the Second World War.

The Baltic German minority who had lived in Estonia for over 700 years, who also had their own cultural autonomy in Estonia before the Second World War, were almost entirely resettled to the territory of Reich as a result of a pact between Hitler and Stalin. The Baltic German community played such an important role in Estonia in both culture and economy because they were the indigenous population beside Estonians. The complete vanishing of this ethnic minority had a very serious impact on life in Estonia. Let us also not forget that at the end of the Second World War, the coastal Swedes were forced to leave Estonia against their will, the aggressors destroyed the gypsy community and so on and on.

The Soviet invaders started the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of people from Russian into Estonia, in place of the historical ethnic minorities, who had been a natural part of the Estonian life, who freely spoke Estonian alongside their native language. Naturally, the objective was not to integrate those people into local life but vice versa. The objective was to Russianize the indigenous Estonian nation step by step.

In the process of this huge migration wave more than tens and tens of representatives of other nationalities were settled into Estonia besides the Russians. The representatives of those nations spoke mainly Russian as their native language after having lost their national roots as a result of Stalinist politics.

As an independent country, Estonian started to deal with the Soviet legacy, one result of which was the extremely divided society, had to search for and find the means enabling stability, peace and development for all the people and ethnic groups living in Estonia. And although there has never been violence between people of different nationalities, the different part of the society quite often remain far from each other.

The legal guarantees for the ethnic minorities were established when Estonia regained its independence. In all the democratic countries of the world the ethnic minorities are protected by legal acts and international agreements. As a member of the Council of Europe, Estonia also ratified the Frame Convention on Ethnic Minorities Protection, the sections of which approach the issues of ethnic minorities language use, acknowledgement of names, education, media, prohibition of forced assimilation, protection

and development of culture. Section 49 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia stipulates that :
“Everyone has the right to preserve his or her national identity.”

When summarised, the national policy of the Republic of Estonia is a system of political, legal and cultural resources, the objective of which is to unite Estonians and ethnic minorities living here into a well functioning society. Already on the first Forum of Nations organised by the National Front of Estonia in 1988, the principal of protecting all the national cultures was expressed. Between 1988-1990 the aliens of Estonia themselves started to also form groups according to their ethnic origin into cultural associations and societies. Today there are over 170 such voluntary associations registered in Estonia.

More specific means of providing assistance and integrating the ethnic minorities into the Estonian society have been formed into a national integration programme.

The need for implementing the national programme “Integration in the Estonian society 2000-2007” was determined by a resolution adopted in Riigikogu in 1998 for the bases of integrating non-Estonians into the Estonian society. The national programme “Integration in the Estonian society 2000-2007” was approved by the Government of the Republic on the 14. March 2000. The implementation of the programme is divided into two 4-year stages (2000-2003 and 2004-2007). The activity plans for the programme for 2000-2003 were approved by the Government of the Republic on 27. February 2001. New activity plans will be approved this spring.

According to this programme integration on the one hand means that the society will integrate – the generation and promotion of something that unites all the members of the society – and on the other hand enabling the preservation of all the ethnical differences – offering possibilities to ethnic minorities to preserve their cultural and ethnic distinctive features. It is important in all of this to remember that integration is a two-way process – both Estonians and non-Estonians shall equally participate in the integration of the society.

The output of the integration process supported by the national programme is the Estonian model of a multi-cultural society, which is characterised by the principles of cultural pluralism, strong integral part and preservation and development of Estonian cultural space. In order to achieve this, Estonia has directed the state resources towards:

Language-communication integration i.e. common database and reproduction of Estonian environment in the conditions of cultural diversity and mutual tolerance;

Legal-political integration, i.e. formation of a society loyal to the Estonian state and reducing the number of persons without citizenship;

Social-economic integration i.e. achieving higher competitiveness and more social mobility than before in the society regardless of the ethnic or language deciders.

The implementation of these objectives takes place through the activity plan of the integration programme, which determines the specific activities and projects financed by the state.

As a result of this, 130 000 people have been naturalised by today, Russian language education and network of cultural institutions have been preserved, Russian language newspapers, radio stations and cable TV studios are active. Many other ethnic minorities such as the Ukrainians and Belarussians have set up their own language schools and media publications.

Many ethnic groups have started to establish their own cultural autonomies. The first ones to do that this spring are the Finnish living in Estonia. More than a few hundred cultural societies have been set up in Estonia, who receive financial support from the state of Estonia.

Another proof of the speed of integration is the fact that none of the parties formed on ethnical grounds were elected for the parliament in the last presidential elections. Also the Russian speaking constituency preferred to vote for the parties, where politicians of different nations with connecting world views are active. At the same time the number of the members of Riigikogu who speak Russian as their mother tongue has increased.

All this speaks for the fact that Estonia has not formally joined the European Union but the principles of the European cultural space are also becoming a reality in the daily life of Estonia. We intend to continue these efforts.

The Office of the Minister of Population started to prepare the activity plans for the II stage of the integration programme, the years of 2004-2007, in the autumn of 2003. The office has in association with the Non-Estonians Integration Foundation analysed the implementation and effectiveness of the activities performed in 2000-2003 and prepared drafts for in 2004-2007 several foreign aid projects (inc. financed by the structural funds of the European Union).

On the 18. December 2003, the basis for the preparation of activity plans of 2004-2007 were approved by the government session meeting.

The current status of the integration programme observes the policy of the government, which came into power in 2003.

The coalition treaty of the Union for the Republic – Res Publica, Estonian Reform Party and Estonian People's Party government includes the main tasks for integration under Section "State Governing and Local Authority Governing Policy" Subsection 9 "Consistency of the Citizenship Policy" :

- 1) current principles of citizenship and language policy shall be preserved;
- 2) the requirement of Estonian language skill as the basis for acquiring citizenship shall be protected and decreasing the number of people without citizenship by avoiding bureaucratic obstructions;
- 3) in addition to language studies, the studies of introducing Estonian statesmanship and history shall be expanded. In order to achieve this objective, 100 % of the costs of language and statesmanship studies shall be paid by the state if the citizenship examination is passed successfully;
- 4) Estonian language and civil studies examinations are compulsory in graduating from secondary school. Both exams are equal to exams for the application of citizenship;
- 5) the analysis of requirements for the citizenship exam are conducted with the objective to have substance, similarity and practicality of requirements.

Currently the necessary bills for achieving the objectives fixed in the coalition treaty, have already been adopted by Riigikogu (e.g. sections 2 and 3 of the within-named issues) or are under construction (e.g. section 5 of the within-named issues). All the planned foreign aid projects take into account the objectives of the coalition treaty (inc. its other parts) and assist in the development of a unified citizen society.

The Estonian state plans to continue activities in all of the sub-programmes in 2004-2007, which have been included in the activity plans of the National integration programme for 2000-2003. The majority of these activities have been very successful and their continuance and further development is extremely important.

The activity plans are reflective of many new focuses and prioritised activities. Up to now the volume and financing within the national integration programme has justifiably been the biggest for the sub-programme "Education" and it shall remain a sub-programme also for the next four years, which receives the most attention.

The second sub-programme receiving more attention than before is the sub-programme "Society Competence". Several new foreign aid projects have been planned within the framework of this specific sub-programme.

The principal for determining the prioritised activities has been:

- 1) activities that have proved their efficiency (e.g. language immersion) ought to acquire as wide a use area as possible and in relation to that also bigger financing;
- 2) attention must be paid more intensively than before to solving the problems that have in certain areas slowed down the successful course of the integration process (e.g. the level of Estonian language teaching in foreign language schools);
- 3) new activities (inc. the foreign aid projects) must be introduced to the activity plans, which support the nationalisation process, improve the competitiveness of foreign language population in the labour market and reduce the proportion of foreign language population in risk groups.

Now about the planned prioritised activities

- 1) Expanding language immersion by involving new foreign language schools into the language immersion programme and increasing the volume of subjects taught in Estonian. Language immersion has turned out to be one of the most effective language study methods according to its success. The projects of language immersion are supported within the framework of EU Phare Programme until the end of 2005 and within the framework of Estonian-Canadian joint project until 2004. Since the year 2006 full financing is guaranteed from state budget. At the same time, it is also perceivable to expand the implementation of the language immersion programme for the preparation of a new foreign aid project. The development of different language immersion models and its implementation in as many schools as possible requires the concentration of knowledge, skills and resources in a short period of time and effective management, inc. the organisation of retraining for teachers of Russian language schools.
- 2) Ensuring Estonian language skills for the professional needs of the graduates of foreign language vocational schools through improving the quality of Estonian language as well as another language and other subject studies of Russian language vocational schools. A project of "The expansion of the Estonian language education in Russian language vocational schools" has been made. The project is implemented according to national development plan (RAK 2003-2006) and within the framework of the 1st priority of the EU structural funds "Development of Human Resources" measure 1.1. "Education system that is available to everyone and guarantees the flexibility, subsistence and life-long learning of labour force". The project requires co-financing from

the state and the co-financing for 2004 stipulated in the bill is 550 000 kroons and this is pre-assigned from the state budget of 2004.

- 3) Creating conditions in schools that would ensure the subject studies of study groups in Estonian in parts and the level of Estonian and other language skills for daily and professional communication for the graduates. The within-named priority covers primarily the training of Russian and Estonian language school teachers for teaching other subjects in Estonian. It would be extremely important to stress the need for training the teachers of Estonian as the second language by allocating the necessary resources for this in the budget.
- 4) Creating conditions for educating pupils from different nationalities in Estonian language education institutions. A system of educating the children of new immigrants and refugees to enable them to acquire education in the Estonian education system. Resulting from these activities, we should achieve that the Estonian education system is ready for teaching the children of new immigrants and refugees arriving in Estonia and that the education institutions, school staff are competent to make decisions in the issues of educating these children. The contents, organisation and volume of the "preparatory studies" should be determined, the supporting teachers must receive training. The children of refugees should be able to integrate into the education system and society of Estonia with the help of supporting education.
- 5) Creating conditions for foreign language school pupils in order for them to want and be able to act as a citizen, make conscious decisions on their further education and professional career – in-service training for teachers of civil studies and social studies of Russian speaking schools, issuing additional materials and supporting the valuation of being a citizen. Extra-curricular activities related to civil studies and social studies are supported by "Integration Estonia 2002-2004" foreign aid project until the end of 2004. From 2005 we need to guarantee the state financing in full capacity.
- 6) Supporting the preservation of language and culture of ethnic minorities through the activities of ethnic culture societies, art societies and Sunday schools. The activities of ethnic culture societies, art societies and Sunday schools have so far been supported by the Ministry of Culture and projects through the Non-Estonian Integration Foundation. From 2004 the distribution of finances was transferred from the Ministry of Culture to the State Office (the Office of the Population Minister) and the Ministry of Education and Research shall support the activities of Sunday schools. Support for projects continues through the Non-Estonian Integration Foundation. The sum allocated from the state budget has remained the same for years and it has clearly been insufficient. Therefore, the activity plans now stipulate the step-by-step increase of the allocated resources until 2007.
- 7) The compensation for costs of the preparation courses for Estonian language placement examinations and knowledge of legal acts for acquiring the citizenship of Estonia are for those who have passed the exams/obtained the citizenship and partial compensation for those who have passed the placement exams for vocational purposes. On 10 December 2003, Riigikogu adopted a decision on amending the Citizenship Act according to the coalition treaty, which stipulates that up to one hundred per cent of the fee for Estonian language training paid to a private school holding an education licence by a person who has passed the Estonian language examination provided for in subsection 8 (3) of this Act and the examination on the knowledge of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia and the Citizenship Act provided for in subsection 9 (2) of this Act shall be reimbursed to the person within the limit established by the Government of the Republic. Until the 31st of December 2005, 50 % of the study costs will be returned within the EU Phare

project and 50 % from the state budget resources, but starting from 2006 the return of 100 % of the study costs must be guaranteed from the state budget.

- 8) Creating additional opportunities for the fulfilment of requirements of the application for the citizenship of Estonia according to legislation to achieve the necessary competence. The project of "Support for the integration of persons without citizenship" under the EU programme Transition Facility has been established. The aims of the project are: increasing the proportion of persons with Estonian citizenship amongst the persons with an unspecified citizenship, including the preparation and implementation of education for the adult persons with an unspecified citizenship to pass the examination on the knowledge of the necessary legal acts (Constitution and Aliens Act); the preparation of pupils with an unspecified citizenship regarding the knowledge of necessary legal acts to complete the exam of citizenship; informing the persons with an unspecified citizenship of the grounds for applying for the citizenship of Estonia. The free training within the framework of the project regarding the knowledge of necessary legal acts to complete the exam of citizenship is in compliance with the objective of the coalition treaty to pay 100 % of the statehood studies. The project requires co-financing of the state and the co-financing for 2004 stated in the bill in the amount of 395 000 kroons is allocated in the state budget of 2004.
- 9) The vocational retraining of the foreign language social risk groups (unemployed, job-seekers) and arranging the national language studies and implementing the labour exchange within Estonia for the aim of language practice. The European Social Fund project "Integration of foreign language population into the labour market" has been made. The project will be implemented according to national development plan (RAK 2003-2006) within the EU structural funds 1st priority "Development of Human Resources" measure 1.3. "Equal Opportunities in the Labour Market". The project requires co-financing and the co-financing for 2004 mentioned in the bill in the amount of 405 000 kroons is allocated in the 2004 state budget.
- 10) Creating the opportunities for non-Estonian youth and adults with regards to their social, ethnical and linguistic features, which will reduce their participation in social risk groups, inc. drug-addiction, HIV/AIDS, crime, unemployment. The European Social Fund project of "Reducing risk groups amongst the non-Estonian youth and adults" has been made. The project will be implemented according to national development plan (RAK 2003-2006) within the EU structural funds 1st priority "Development of Human Resources" measure 1.3. "Equal Opportunities in the Labour Market". The project requires co-financing and the co-financing for 2004 mentioned in the bill in the amount of 120 000 kroons is allocated in the 2004 state budget.
- 11) The Non-Estonians Integration Foundation is successful. A number of important tasks have been designated to The Non-Estonians Integration Foundation in the process of implementing the integration programme, which are related to both the assessment of effectiveness and success of the programme, reporting, ensuring an effective functioning of the managing committee of the project as well as financing the activities, conducting and coordinating the activities. The foundation is also the institution that administers a large part of the sums used in the framework of foreign aid projects. In order to conduct the previously mentioned activities successfully, it is necessary to annually allocate sufficient sums from the state budget to the foundation.

The activity plans are reflective of the continuance of the previously initiated foreign aid projects and their activities. The foreign aid project "Integration Estonia 2002-2004" (A cooperation agreement signed on 27.03.2002 by Norway, Finland, Great Britain, Sweden and Estonia) shall finish in 2004. The majority of the activities of the project have been directed towards youth – Estonian language studies are supported, inc. language immersion on the pre-school and primary school level, increase in daily contacts of Estonian

speaking and Russian speaking youth, between organisations and schools. Also the competitiveness in the labour market and vocational schools and language skills of non-Estonians are improved, non-Estonians are included in the Estonian media sector and their knowledge and motivation to obtain the citizenship is increased.

The EU Phare programme “Estonian language studies and Estonian language education for the non-Estonian speaking population” runs from 2003-2006. The directions of the finished programme of 2003 shall be continued (Estonian language for adults, inc. project Interest, language camps and family learning, public awareness of the methods of integration support) and new activity directions shall be initiated: teacher training in higher education institutions, development of in-service training for teachers, development of Estonian language learning materials, development of Estonian language skills in non-Estonian vocational schools, development of Estonian language skills in kindergartens, training programme for education personnel and study materials in language immersion schools; acquiring technology and study materials for language immersion schools; technical support for late language immersion programmes; integration support for non-governmental organisations and local governments.

Speaker hopes that his detailed overview gave at least some idea of the tremendous work the Estonian state is doing in the area of integration to overcome the consequences of the horrific crimes committed by the communists.

Today Estonia is a part of Europe. We receive great assistance in solving our problems from our friends in the European Union, USA and Canada. We regret to point out the fact that no such assistance is provided by our neighbour Russia. They have rather inclined towards following the imperialistic motto of “divide and dominate”, the more problems in Estonia the better. Estonian nation : Estonians, Russians, Jews, Finns, Tatars and Ukrainians, the representatives of over 100 nations living in Estonia are part of a peaceful community, the aim of which is a better society for all of us living in Estonia.

Address by M. Rimantas Vaitkus, vice-minister Education and Science, Lithuania

Speaker explains that in Lithuania there are not so many different nationalities as in Latvia. Minorities represent more or less 8 %.

The most important question is to know how these minorities can have access to education and integrate into society.

All the pupils, whatever their nationality, have the same right to education. Education is organised by private and public schools. The conditions to benefit from education are favourable. Minorities can, indeed, receive instruction in their national language (Russian, German, Belarussian and Jewish).

A working group has been set up within the ministry with a view to analysing education of minorities. A positive report has been drafted on the basis of this study. There are about 2,500 schools in Lithuania; 49 schools are mixed and 56 are Russian. This concerns in total 3,600 pupils representing 5,9 % of all students in Lithuania.

In 2001, 2,500 “Roma” gypsies were registered. With regard to their education one can say that the latter are completely integrated into society: specific schools are not necessary.

Speaker also explains that, concerning the efforts made by the authorities in order to integrate minorities, the state is preparing a schoolbook in the gypsy language: courses have also been organised in this language.

Study books have been translated into Polish and Russian in order to enable students from different nationalities to study in their own national language. The schools concerned have the obligation to order these study books.

The State has also established, with the agreement of the UNESCO, a programme designed for teachers. Free books and CD-rom are put at their disposal.

These books, for teachers as well as for pupils, also deal with the history of Lithuania.

Speaker concludes by stating that all the programmes drawn up by the authorities put the emphasis on mutual understanding.

Address by Mrs Ine Aasted-Madsen, member of the Culture, Education and Public health committee of the Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council

Friesian, the only minority language recognised in the Netherlands

Many different languages are spoken in the Netherlands. Primarily, these are regional varieties of the Dutch language. In the border regions, there are great similarities between the regional languages spoken on either side of the border.

Above all, these regional languages take on cultural and historic value and are appreciated as such.

The regions where Dutch is spoken obviously include Holland, but also Flanders (the Northern part of Belgium) and the former Dutch colony of Surinam. The language therefore has many varieties.

The "Nederlandse Taalunie", representing the Netherlands, Flanders and Surinam ensures that spoken, and mainly written Dutch remains pure.

The Netherlands, as a part of Europe, also teaches English, French and German in schools. In some schools, two languages, Dutch and English, are currently taught at the upper level of secondary school. English is also used at many universities.

Let's come back to the regional varieties of Dutch and the only regional language recognised in the Netherlands. Regional languages such as Limburgish, spoken in the South of the Netherlands, and Saxon, spoken in the East, differ greatly in terms of their pronunciation and written form, even within one single region. That is why they are considered to be dialects of Dutch.

Friesian is recognised as a language because it is spoken and written in the same way throughout the whole of Friesland. The recognition of Friesian was a long-haul process. The debate was launched by the Dutch Parliament in 1953 and the position of Friesian has today been set down in law.

Obviously, all this has to be put in line with European legislation and regulations. In 1950, in Rome, the Netherlands signed the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms which prohibits all discrimination based on language. In 1992, in Strasbourg, it signed the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

The law on the rightful use of Friesian entered into force in 1997, and stipulates that :

Any person who, in executing a legal command, must take a spoken oath, or make a commitment or confirmation, may do so in the Friesian language. The law contains texts to be read out in Dutch and Friesian.

Any person who appears before a judge in Friesland may speak in Friesian. The judge may decide to bring in a sworn Friesian-Dutch interpreter for those who do not know Dutch.

The minutes reproduce, in Friesian, declarations made in that language. At the request of any of the parties to the trial, the minutes will be supplemented, as a matter of course, by the addition of the Dutch translation.

In criminal, civil, regulatory and administrative cases brought before a court established in Friesland, the exhibits, with the exception of criminal subpoenas and charges, maybe submitted in Friesian. Once again, the judge may, either as a matter of course or at the request of another person party to the case, ask for the addition of a Dutch translation.

In criminal, regulatory and administrative cases, translation costs are met by the state; in civil cases, however, the judge may decide for this also to be so.

All exhibits and statements submitted to the public records may be presented in Friesian but must be accompanied by a Dutch translation done by a sworn translator.

Teachers accustomed to teaching in Friesian in secondary schools may take the oath before a judge as a sworn translator.

A Friesian defendant or witness called to appear before a judge outside of the Friesian province may be assisted by an interpreter if s/he can provide proof of insufficient knowledge of Dutch.

Legislation on education:

Since 1948, legislation on education enables schools to also teach Friesian in primary or secondary schools in Friesland.

Since 1952, Friesian may be chosen as an examinable subject at the University of Friesland and in schools of higher education.

In 1970, Friesian was also recognised as an examinable subject in secondary schools.

Since 1974, Friesian has been taught in primary schools in Friesland and schooling in other subjects may be given in Friesian. The same has been true of secondary education since 1992.

National laws and regulations on provincial and local planning:

Since 1984, local councils in new municipalities have been able to replace the Dutch name of a municipality with a Friesian name.

Since 1989, all official lists of candidates running for provincial or local elections in Friesland may be drawn up in Friesian.

On 1st January 1997, the Dutch name "Friesland" was officially replaced with the Friesian name "Fryslân".

In 1995, the use of Dutch and Friesian by local and provincial authorities was regulated by law.

Since 1996, Friesian has been the second official language of Fryslân.

Since 1996, official documents in Fryslân regarding births, marriages and deaths have been drawn up in two languages: Dutch and Friesian.

Firms set up in Fryslân may draw up reports to be passed on to official authorities in Friesian; in certain specific cases, a Dutch translation may be requested.

Since 1997, tax payers may lodge their claims at Fryslân tax services in Friesian.

Provincial legislation:

In 1969, Friesian spelling was officially fixed.

Since 1985, written communications with the Fryslân province may be done in Friesian.

The province of Fryslân provides various subsidies to organisations which contribute to the development and preservation of the Friesian language and culture.

Address by Mr Ludwig Siquet, member of the Culture, Education and Public health committee of the Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council

Minority Languages and Integration

In the framework of the topic we are considering today, which is minority languages and integration, I wish to complete your information by introducing the situation in the German-speaking community of Belgium, so often mentioned as an example in the field of protection of minorities.

No one will question that being able to communicate in one's mother tongue is one of the best ways to live and work together in better circumstances and to create a climate of friendliness.

I am a citizen of the German-speaking community of Belgium where the mother tongue is German. In Belgium, German is recognized as the third national language. But German is also a minority language in Belgium.

With respect to the German Community, it is worthwhile noting that it is surrounded by regions which speak four different languages : French, Dutch, Luxembourg and German. Locked in as it is, the German-speaking Community can also play the role of promoter of multilingualism.

In 1997, the German-speaking Community also obtained the ability to decide itself about the implementation of language legislations in education, which means it can decide which language is taught in its schools.

This Community decided it would promote multilingualism and a first step was made recently with the adoption of a decree regulating the implementation of language legislations in the field of education in order to enhance bilingualism. For the German Community, the first language is French.

As from its third year, the pupil who is in nursery school has contacts with the first foreign language. This contact takes place through diverse pedagogic activities, like singing or playing games.

As soon as he enters primary school, the pupil has French lessons and secondary education provides for the opportunity for students to learn more foreign languages.

My colleagues from Luxemburg will no doubt confirm that as far as the Grand-Duchy of Luxemburg is concerned, the Luxembourg language is taught there as a national language, in addition to German and French.

The fact that the German-speaking Community would provide for an education favoring multilingualism, contributes to the excellent rating of the German-speaking labour force. This makes that unemployment rates in the German-speaking Community are lower than in other regions.

The above mentioned example shows the considerable advantages a linguistic minority can enjoy in the same country: that minority could for instance act as an interface between the French-speaking part of Belgium and the German Länder in order to facilitate communication between these entities. It is an advantage for all partners and the impact on the economy should not be underestimated.

Besides these rather material aspects, one should not forget that minority languages are also an important cultural feature that deserves to be protected.

To effect that protection of minority languages, it would be important that all European countries ratify the European Charter of regional or minority languages without further delay.

Discussion

Mr Peteris Tabuns refers to the intervention of Mr Koort who described really well the situation in the Baltic States after the years of Soviet occupation. This occupation and its consequences were the most tragic in Latvia.

Latvia was indeed the centre of the soldiers of the Russian armies and even today several pieces of land in Latvia cannot be used due to the toxic waste left by the Soviet army.

The situation in Latvia is really difficult.

Speaker requests the assistance of other countries in order to put an end to the heritage of occupation. Assistance is certainly necessary with regard to the integration of minorities but in other areas assistance should also be provided.

Mr Tabuns gives the example of Russian families living in Latvia and wishing to go back to Russia (± 60,000).

Means should be released in order to help these persons go back to their homeland.

He cannot admit that certain Russians refuse education in Latvian. Latvians speak two languages: Latvian and Russian; there is no reason for Russians not to speak Latvian in Latvia.

Mr Happart respects the specific situation of the Baltic States, which have emerged from occupation.

But one must adopt a constructive attitude and benefit from the accession to the European Union.

He is somewhat reticent as far as the words "integration" and "minorities" are concerned.

Integration should never lead to total submission but must rather lead to harmonisation.

It would be better to replace the word "minority" by the word "difference".

Diversity and respect for each other are the greatest assets of a region.

If all Europeans had to speak a European language, this would entail an enormous cultural loss.

Belonging to a country respecting differences is a great asset. Mr Happart gives the example of Belgium which has recently adopted a legislation about euthanasia, marriage between homosexuals and adoption.

AFTERNOON SESSION

III. The importance of languages in the (conscientisation) of the public

Address by Mrs Ina Druviete, Head of the Human Rights and Public Affairs committee of the Saeima

The Latvian language – Latvian people, Latvian state or European Union identity element

Identity is a fascinating concept. For thousands of years, mankind has tried to conceive what we are, what unites us and what divides us, what incorporates every human being into a particular group, and what makes us aware of this belonging. Sometimes it is easier to feel this notion on the emotional level than to formulate it rationally. However, for several decades a discussion has been going on in our cultural medium embracing the following issues:

- what is identity and what elements does it consist of;
- is identity an objective reality or is it a subjective feeling;
- should we regard identity or at least some of its elements as a value, which has to be nourished and protected;
- if it exists, how can we put it into effect?

Identity, or in other words the self, is the central element in every human being's awareness about himself/herself and his/her place in the society. It allows an individual both to perceive himself/herself as being different and at the same time to form a group identity with other people. The most important group identity elements are race, sex, age, social strata, health condition, sexual orientation, religious denomination, ethnic group and, certainly, the language. These elements form a layer upon layer, and sometimes intertwine closely. Their hierarchy in different societies and even in an individual's life may change in the course of time.

The language, or the linguistic identity, occupies a special place in this complex structure, and it is hard to separate it from the ethnic identity. As well as other languages, the Latvian language is a constituent part of an identity. Several questions arise. Whose identity? To what extent? For how long?

In order to analyse the role of the Latvian language in the formation of the peculiarity of Latvian ethnos, Latvian residents and European Union, we have to go back to the origins and define language as a phenomenon.

Language or verbal communication is the main feature, which helps discriminate people from animals. Indeed, some animals can ensure information transmission on a high level by non-verbal signals. However, Bertrand Russell has said : "No matter how beautifully a dog can bark, it cannot tell us that his parents are poor, but honest". Consequently, language is the basic identity element, which is inherent to all of us, homo sapiens. It has not only ensured our predominance over other human subspecies, but has also facilitated our intrusion into the ecological niches of other species.

The development of the verbal language can be regarded the most important event in the evolution of animate nature since the emergence of the multi-cellular organisms. From the point of view of the evolution theory, quite recently - not earlier than 200 000 years ago - a new information transmission model evolved. It allowed to define nuances and details; to position situations in the past, present and future time; to formulate ideas as questions, orders, statements, hypothesis or conditions. Without verbal communication there would not exist habits, laws, art, science, technologies.

Every person speaks at least one language, and it is hard to imagine social and intellectual activities without language mediation. The fundamental structural and semantic traits of both dead and existing languages are basically the same, and all languages have more common features than different differences.

Most of researchers support the theory of monogenesis. All languages initially had a common origin, but gradually these initially small communities dispersed in the search of new territories thus, through divergence, forming genealogically and typologically different languages. In that way we can infer that thousands of different linguistic identities were added to the common *omo sapiens* identity. One of them is the Latvian language.

The Latvian language, first of all, is the language of the Latvian ethnos. It belongs to the group of the Baltic languages of the Indo-European language family, which consolidated in the 10.-12.centuries after Latvian tribes separated from Lithuanian tribes in 5.-7.centuries.

Since then we can talk about Latvian linguistic identity, which manifested itself as an alternative to other linguistic identities in the same geographical space - Liiv and German, but later on - Gypsy, Jewish, Russian, Swedish and Polish - being one of the 7 000 identities in the modern world.

This identity has been changeable and differently accentuated in this geo-politically attractive territory, which has always abounded in cultural contacts. It has been weakened and strengthened due to political changes.

Several times it has come to foreground, especially during the three so-called awakening periods. Latvian is the native language to 1.5 million people now. In addition, it is the second language to 0.5 million people. Since 1988 Latvian has regained its state language status.

What is more, it is one of the 20 official European Union languages. In year 2000 population census 96 % Latvians recognized it as their native language, and the process of language transmission from one generation to another is stable. The language issue is always topical in the public discourse. Latvians have always been language-centered, at least in the recent past. However, it is wrong to assert unequivocally that language is the main element of Latvian identity. A few years ago when the question was included in a socio-linguistic opinion poll, we were more than surprised to find out that most of the respondents named mentality as the most characteristic feature of Latvian identity. Nevertheless, the Latvian language is a stable element of the Latvian ethnos identity, and sharp changes are not expected in this aspect.

The Latvian language as an element of Latvia's identity ties closely with its state language status. Ilmars Mezs justly maintains : "The state language status means that now the Latvian language does not belong to Latvians alone". A model of coexistence, analogous to other European Union membership countries is being formed in Latvia: support must be provided to minority languages, but the knowledge of the language and its usage in the communication of different ethnic groups is a norm.

The guidelines of the Latvian society integration program have established the Latvian language as the foundation for the unity of Latvian society, and the state, international community and non-governmental organizations have made remarkable contribution, both financial and intellectual.

Since the restoration of independence the number of people whose second language is Latvian has considerably grown - from 23 % in 1989. to 53 % in 2000. Although the percentage seems impressive, the actual situation is not well balanced. Lithuanians know the language best (86 %). They are followed by

Estonians (77 %) and Gypsies (66 %). However, only 50 % of Russians, Belo-Russians and Ukrainians master the language. Half of the minority speakers still - 16 years after Latvian was declared the state language - have poor knowledge of Latvian or no knowledge at all.

It must be pointed out that the situation in Latvia is one of the rare occurrences when language skills, language usage and the linguistic attitude are not correlated. Thus we can conclude that the Latvian language has not yet become an all-embracing element uniting all residents of Latvia alongside with the linguistic identities of minority speakers.

The European Union linguistic identity is invariably characterized as multilingual. The philosophical guidelines of the European Union language policy towards multilingualism and language protection are evident: languages are an asset, European treasure, the backbone of the national and European identity.

The so-called Vienna guidelines state: "Many of the European cultural achievements are closely related to specific languages and intellectual traditions. If these languages were not used, the European cultural diversity would become impoverished and endangered. European citizens will only support the integrated Europe idea, if their language and cultural heritage becomes and remains an integral part of this Europe."

The protection and preservation of the diversity of European Union languages was first mentioned as a conceptual goal in the ES Fundamental Rights charter. ("All European languages are equally valuable and honourable, and form an integral part of European culture and civilization".) The European Union motto 'United in diversity' includes a strategic approach, which has to be incorporated to detail in legislative acts and programs, e.g. the strategic plan adopted by EU Commission in July 2003 'Language learning and linguistic diversity promotion (2004-2006)'.

On one hand, the linguistic human rights in European Union secure the protection and preservation of common linguistic identity, on the other hand - they ensure effective communication in EU institutions as well as within the framework of the whole supranational body. The Latvian language as one of the official EU languages can be heard in the European Parliament, and all official EU documents are accessible in Latvian as well. It has become an integral part of EU, so it has to be recognized as a perspective EU linguistic identity element.

So, we can conclude that the Latvian language nowadays functions as a stable Latvian ethnic identity element, and it is gradually becoming a part of European Union linguistic identity. However, it still does not perform the uniting function among Latvian people. What is the future about to bring? Is it possible to predict and influence the fate and fortune of a language? Let us try to give an answer in general and in detail.

In accordance with the 21st century philosophical thought, the diversity of languages and cultures is the treasure of the whole mankind. Languages are no more perceived as simply a communication code, but as a depository of cultural traditions, the backbone of the national identity.

That is why every language has its special place in the human values system, and every language must be protected and preserved - no matter how many people speak the language and what is its economic value.

We can draw parallels with plant species: on our planet about 7 000 plant species are used in human consumption. However, only 150 species have commercial value, but just three of them - rice, wheat and corn - constitute 60 % of calories. Shall we let the rest of the species perish?

Nevertheless, languages in the modern world are disappearing. They are disappearing even faster than plant or animal species. At the present moment 24 % of plant species, 20 % of animal species, 41 % of mammal species, and 50 - 90 % of languages are endangered.

The world of languages is dynamic and mass transition of smaller languages to politically and economically dominating languages is an inevitable companion of globalisation and integration. Is it possible to preserve a specific communication code - the Latvian language - under such circumstances?

Now and then we hear pessimistic prognoses about the future existence of the Latvian ethnos due to the unfavourable demographic situation. Obviously, the existence of a certain body of the language speakers is a prerequisite to the language existence.

But then again; first of all, the demographic situation is stabilizing, secondly, the actual number of speakers necessary to make a language self-sufficient, is relatively small: about 10 000 people. According to the most recent theories as non-endangered are considered the languages where the number of speakers exceeds one million.

There are no more than 250 such languages in the world today. As you see, the Latvian language, which is the native language for 1.4 million people, belongs to this group of big languages.

However, these languages would not be endangered only in complete isolation. We have to take into account that among the group of the big languages there exists another subgroup - mega languages. They constitute only 0.1 - 0.15 % from all world languages, yet 51 % of the world population speak them. The strongest competitors of the Latvian language - Russian and English - belong to this group of very big languages. They objectively possess great assimilatory power, and the speakers of these languages usually enjoy linguistic self-sufficiency.

It takes knowledge, good management and financial means to preserve a language under such severe competition. During its half a century long development, socio-linguistics has clearly marked the main conditions that a language depends on. Latvians have been used to poeticising language issues, so the main conclusion may seem even cynical - the destiny of a language does not depend on its richness, purity or correctness.

The crucial factor in modern democratic countries is its judicial language protection system, alongside with economic factors. They can motivate people to great extent to use the language in such socio-linguistic functions which are the most vital for the language existence. Latvia has to take full responsibility for its language policy in order to ensure the competitive capacity of the Latvian language.

We have a carefully planned network of state language policy institutions: the State language commission under the President, the State language centre, as well as the newly founded State language agency. The Latvian language development conception has been worked out. The state budget funding could be more generous, but a minimal sum of money for Latvian language development is available already now. What could be the obstacles on the way of strengthening the positions of the Latvian language, not only in Latvian ethnic, but also in Latvian statehood and ED identity dimension?

The heaviest burden are the chauvinistic stereotypes which have been inherited from Soviet times, alongside with the ambitions of Russia's propaganda machinery. It is trying to hinder the consolidation of the Latvian language, the status symbol of the Latvian statehood, as a society integration tool. In fact, instead of raising this issue at a scientific conference, it should be discussed at high-level political talks.

Speaker is going to address the issue of Latvian linguistic behaviour. Overcoming some of the obstacles depends solely on us.

Sixteen years after Latvian was declared the state language, we still can observe discrepancy between the nominal and the real state of the Latvian language. The most characteristic trait is not using Latvian as means of communication between Latvians and minority language speakers. We cannot explain this fact simply by a prolonged transition period.

The socio-linguistic opinion polls carried out by the institute of the Latvian language regularly pose a question "Do you use Latvian as a means of international communication when you are speaking to non-Latvians who know the language?"

The rights of a Latvian speaker as a customer or a client are protected by law at institutions and organizations. So, 58 % responded that they always speak only Latvian in work environment, whereas in everyday life, only 46 %. The respondents explained such behaviour by a habit, politeness, and convenience. Answers like "it's easier for me", "I want to be understood", "I don't want to lose my Russian", "I don't want them to learn Latvian", "I'm not going to wait until they are stumbling", "I feel superior this way", "none of your business" were incidental.

I have to admit that the question about not using Latvian very often causes aggressive emotional reaction in Latvian respondents. It is characteristic of the same respondents to insist on stricter linguistic legislation thus delegating all responsibility for the language environment to the state.

According to the population census of 2000, 75,3 % of Latvians can speak Russian. The speculations that the new Latvian generation will not know Russian and the problem will disappear itself are not grounded. At the age of seven, 18.7 % Latvian children speak Russian, and by reaching the age of 19, the Russian language proficiency level among Latvians reaches 81 %. Let us not misunderstand: knowing any language is a tremendous asset. To paraphrase Wittgenstein : the limits of my language knowledge are the limits of my world. What we are discussing here is the usage of a concrete language in a concrete situation.

On an individual level, the choice of the language could be considered a private matter, if not for the unbreakable link between the actions of each and every individual and language-sustainability. There are always bound to be people who will evaluate a language from a pragmatic point of view - what are the social and economic benefits you can gain with the help of the language. An individual has rights to a voluntary linguistic assimilation, as well as everybody has a right to be cosmopolitan and nobody can reproach such choice. However, under the present circumstances the usage of the Latvian language should be recognized not only as every Latvian's right, but as a duty as well-in order to help others to master the language of the society integration and to ensure the existence of the Latvian language.

This is serious. Low ethno-linguistic vitality can result in failure to preserve the ethnic diversity of the world languages thus bringing down to nothing the efforts of national and international institutions. My spiritual teacher, Karlis Milenbahs, has said that a person without self-esteem is bound to lead a miserable existence, and the same applies to a nation.

Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, there is a great number of factors which can endanger language as the backbone of identity : supranational corporations; free flow of goods, services and working-force; migration, mass media, internet.

There is one more identity, which is not mentioned very often among other identities: the identity of our economic well-being; in other words : our identifying with rich, prosperous, fit to life people, or vice versa. It has a direct impact on the language. People who identify themselves with a group of speakers not having high economic value are forced to use a language with higher economic value, at least in some spheres. If we regard economic well being as our goal on a global level, the perspectives of small and medium size nations are not bright, especially in the status of L2.

Poet Uldis Berzins has said : “Our orphan tears can make ‘this gentleman’, the free market, have pity on us, but we cannot soften the heart of the destiny of small languages.” To EU immigrants, English looks much more perspective than, e.g. Dutch, Danish, Finnish or Latvian. The situation in Latvia is even more complicated, because minorities, in the contrary to other European countries, do not see the usage of the state language in official communication as natural and matter-of-course.

However, the trends of globalisation and linguistic imperialism are bringing forth a counter phenomenon. The number of organizations and movements protecting the local identity is growing dramatically despite the logics of the market. In this confusion of global networks and local identities language plays a critical role. It is the last bastion of resistance and self-control, not just a tool of entrepreneurship. People are starting to value collective linguistic identity. The preservation of the linguistic identity of a particular territory is the only way how to ensure language diversity in the world.

The 21st century is asking for a new language philosophy - or returning to established values. Will language be treated as the basic identity element again ? The balance between globalisation and localization has not been achieved yet. We can make a difference here, in Latvia, too.

Address by Mr Juris Zigurs, Chairman of the Organisation for Latvians in Estonia

Speaker states that his speech will deal with the following issue: how do Latvians live in Estonia and how did Estonia help them in the integration process?

Estonians and Latvians have always had close contacts. They have the same culture and the same religion. It would be difficult to conceive that they do not speak the same languages. Statistics reveal that in 2000, there were 2,330 Latvians in Estonia, of whom 1,200 spoke Estonian.

Thanks to the knowledge of the Estonian language, Latvians are integrating really well into the Estonian society. Why did Latvians settle in Estonia?

First of all, the people deported to Siberia, between 1941 – 1949, came back and settled in Estonia. There are also the former legionnaires.

A great deal of Latvians living in Estonia settled in Talinn, in the sixties and seventies, in order to have higher education. After their studies, they remained in Estonia as they were better paid for their work.

A lot of soldiers also remained in Estonia after their military service.

Finally, there are many mixed families: 55 % of Latvians settled in Estonia because they “fell in love”.

The Organisation for Latvians in Estonia, founded in 1902, aims at helping its members to better integrate into the Estonian society, at linguistic and cultural levels.

This organisation organises various events (general activities, celebrations on the occasion of public holidays...) on the territory of the three Baltic States.

However, we still face certain problems with regard to the integration of Latvians in Estonia.

There is, indeed, a lack of educational material, for instance dictionaries. An English – Latvian - Russian dictionary has recently been published.

Address by Mr Stanislav Vidtmann, deputy director general of the Department of National Minorities and Lithuanians living abroad, Lithuania

Speaker points out that in Lithuania all citizens are equal, even if they belong to a minority.

The objective is to be tolerant as regards divergences while diminishing the role of the State in that context. One should not forget that within the European Union, 150 ethnic groups and 41 languages are registered.

There are also several ethnic groups in Lithuania and different dialects. Nevertheless, 80 % of Lithuanians speak the national language.

The Constitution provides for the right to preserve one's own language and to speak it. Discrimination on the basis of language is not tolerated. Minority languages are taught in schools and can be used within State organisations.

Minority languages are also used in the press and private radio stations exist in Russian and Polish as well as web sites.

The same holds true for religions. More than 80 % of the population is catholic but it is possible to practice another religion in one's mother tongue.

The authorities have also established a programme designed for gypsies in order to prepare their children to the Lithuanian education system. Lithuania's history is taught in the gipsy language.

Everything is being done to ensure that the youth belonging to a minority group learn Lithuanian.

Address by M. Luc Willems, Member of the Culture, Education and Public health committee of the Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council

Belgium is a federal state with 10 million inhabitants (language groupes : 6 millions Flemish or Dutch-speaking, 4 million French-speaking or Walloon, 80.000 German-speaking). With the exception of Brussels and a few municipalities on the "language border", each language groupe has its own territory.

In 1830, at the time of independence of Belgium, the only official language was French, although the majority of the population spoke Dutch dialects of Walloon dialects. In the 19th century, the "bourgeoisie" chose for her language. This meant that all recognised education institutions, all law texts, all administrations, all civil servants, all lawyers spoke French and had no obligation to speak or understand Dutch.

The first legislations on the use of languages dating from the mid 19th century authorised the use of Dutch in public life in some exceptional situations : it became allowed to use Dutch (or German) in contacts with the administration and in court if the civil servants or the lawyers could understand it.

From the 1880's on timid pieces of legislation regulated some aspects of language use in schools, courts, administrations, ... but still as exceptions on the untouchable position of French over the whole country.

In 1898 the first really important language-law was adopted : the Dutch version of the legislation was recognised as official.

In 1923, a law organised the possibility to study partially in Dutch at one university.

In 1930, the first Dutch-speaking university in Belgium was a fact. In 1932, a law organised the use of Dutch in the administration in the whole of Flanders.

In 1963, the process was finalised by the establishment of the "language frontier". Belgium was now divided in linguistic entities : the Dutch-speaking region, the French-speaking region, the bilingual region of Brussels, the German-speaking region. A number of municipalities within those regions received a special statute (called "facilities") which provides that inhabitants of another language can use their own language in administration. (The private use of languages being of course free in the whole country).

In the 1970's, a process of federalisation or decentralisation started. The Flemish wanted more "cultural" autonomy. The Walloons expected that economic autonomy would work in their advantage.

After 30 years of successive reforms, the Belgium Constitution is a balance of those different aspirations: Belgium is a federal state composed of communities (responding to the Flemish aspirations and competent for personal matters as health, culture, education, social policy, ...) and regions (responding to the initial Walloon demand, competent for hard matters as employment, economy, infrastructure, ...). All communities and regions are territorially and linguistically embedded.

a. Communities

Flemish Community = Dutch-speaking region and Dutch-speaking inhabitants of the bilingual region of Brussels.

French Community = French-speaking region and French-speaking people of the bilingual region of Brussels.

German-speaking Community = German-speaking part of the Walloon region.

b. Regions

Flemish Region = Flemish-speaking region.

Brussels Region = bilingual region of Brussels.

Walloon Region = French and German-speaking regions.

It is a complicated structure, but it translates the Belgian fragile compromise for the best. The Belgian case is probably the most complex and far-reaching one as regards the protection and political treatment of the languages spoken in the country.

The basic principle governing the linguistic legal system in Belgium is that of territoriality although it also articulates the principle of free choice of language and the distribution of political powers. Thus at federal

level, this made it possible to give an official statute to both Dutch and French as well as an official protection of the German-speaking community in the east.

Accordingly, the Belgian Constitution meets the need for autonomy for ethno-linguistic regions and incorporates a territorial division in the linguistic regions (Art. 4). At the same time, this started a double decentralisation process through the creation of three economic regions (the Wallon, the Flemish and the city of Brussels) and three cultural communities (Walloon, Flemish and German-speaking) and is based on the former linguistic areas within the state.

One could state that language issues have directly affected the institutional structure of federalism in the Belgian case. The polarisation of the linguistic communities has led to the 1994 Constitution. It states that Belgium is a federal state. So, the Belgian linguistic legal system could be described as a result of the general combination of the principle of the free use of languages (Art. 30), the principle of regional monolingualism (except in the case of Brussels – Art. 4) and that of the distribution of competences between the Federation and the Communities (Art. 129).

We can therefore find differences from a legal point of view, as French and Dutch are official languages, and German enjoys a near official status in its territory. On the other hand, French and Dutch are not both official in the whole state but only within the state's central administration (following in this case the personality principle), whereas in there is a mixed model of double official status for both Dutch and French.

In addition to the three Regions, the Federal State has three Communities. They are based on the "language". So we talk about the Flemish, French and German-speaking Communities.

The competences of the Communities

Since the Communities are based on the concept of "language" and language is "dependent on the individual", a number of other powers are obviously associated with the Communities.

The Community has powers in the field of culture (theatre, libraries, audiovisual media, etc.), education, the use of languages and matters relating to the the individual which cover on the one hand health policy (curative and preventive medicine) and on the other hand assistance to individuals (protection of youth, social welfare, aid to families, immigrant assistance services, etc.). They also have powerd in the field of scientific research in relation to their powers and international relations associated with their powers.

Discussion

Mrs Zommere explains that the quality of national education must be a priority in the year 2005. The ministry of national education has to take all possible steps so that young people learn the national language by using modern methods. The knowledge of the national language will give a new impetus to the dialogue among the different groups.

The problem is similar in the three Baltic States. It is crucial to release means in order to train and motivate teachers and to ensure that mutual communication is optimal.

Mr Pliners agrees with the idea of cooperation and tolerance among different groups; Daugavpils is indeed a multicultural society but he has the impression that the Russian schools of the city are in danger today. The pupils of these schools do like Latvia, as a country, but they want to carry on their studies in the Russian language. These pupils fear that they will no longer be able to pursue their studies, as education in Latvian will become compulsory.

Mutual understanding is necessary.

Mr Siquet considers that a definition of a minority language is necessary.

Mrs Druviete replies that this concept is defined differently in each country.

There is no definition at such in Latvia.

End of the seminar

