

# State Language

Published: 20.09.2021.

Latvian is the official state language of the Republic of Latvia and the language for society integration, basis of national identity and part of the varied cultural heritage of the world. The Latvian language has a standardized literary form already since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Among more than 6000 languages of the world, the Latvian language is approximately the 150<sup>th</sup> largest one, judging by the current number of its users. The number of native Latvian speakers reaches at least 1.5 million across the world.

The State Language Law determines regulation of the Latvian language as the official language, and ensures its maintenance, protection and development.


Since 2004 when Latvia joined the European Union, it has gained the status of the official language of the European Union.

## Contacts and Information Sources:

Ministry of Education and Science, Phone: [+371 67226209](tel:+37167226209), [pasts@izm.gov.lv](mailto:pasts@izm.gov.lv)

Department of Policy Initiatives and Development, Phone: [+371 67047766](tel:+37167047766), 67047987

Latvian Language Agency, Phone: [+371 67201680](tel:+37167201680), [agentura@valoda.lv](mailto:agentura@valoda.lv), [www.valoda.lv](http://www.valoda.lv)

Implementation of language policy 




[Section 4 of the Satversme \(Constitution\)](#) stipulates that the official language in the Republic of Latvia is the Latvian language.

The regulation of the official language is determined by the [Official Language Law](#).

The purpose of the law is to ensure:

- preservation, protection and development of the Latvian language;
- preservation of the cultural and historical heritage of the Latvian nation;
- the right to freely use the Latvian language in any area of life throughout the territory of Latvia;
- integration of representatives of national minorities into Latvian society, observing their right to use their native language or other languages;
- increasing the influence of the Latvian language in the Latvian cultural environment, promoting the faster integration of society.

Institutions implementing official language policy 



[Latvian Language Agency](#)

[Latvian State Language Center](#)

[Latvian Language Expert Commission](#)

[Official Language Attestation Commission](#)

[Terminology Commission of the Latvian Academy of Sciences](#)

[State Education Content Centre](#)

[State Employment Agency](#)

[Latvian Language Institute of the University of Latvia](#)

[Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of Latvia](#)

[s/a Latvian Geospatial Information Agency](#)

Consultations on Latvian language issues



The language consultants of the Latvian Language Agency provide consultations on Latvian language issues. Every citizen can receive consultations:

in matters of spelling and identification of personal names, if the names or surnames written in different languages refer to the same person;

for adapting foreign proper names in the Latvian language in accordance with the standards of the Latvian literary language;

correct spelling, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and language style issues.

Specialists also provide linguistic opinions - an explanation of a word, sentence or passage from a linguistic point of view - on how to understand and perceive it in a given context.

Consultations take place:

by phone: 67225879;

by e-mail: [konsultacija@valoda.lv](mailto:konsultacija@valoda.lv);

in person at the Latvian Language Agency, Lāčplēša iela 35-5, Riga, LV 1011.

The Liv language is always present in the Latvian language. Section 4 of the Official Language Law states that the State shall ensure the maintenance, protection and development of the Liv language as the language of the indigenous (autochthon) population. Since the end of 2018, the Liv language and culture have been included on the list of the national intangible cultural heritage of Latvia. The year 2019 was designated as the International Year of Indigenous Languages, thus, with the support of UNESCO LNC, the role of the Liv language and culture in Latvia is especially emphasized. The Liv cultural and historical territory of the Liv coast in the Northern Kurzeme or formerly the "Liv seashore" is alive in the minds of the population.

More information on the website of the University of Latvia Livonian Institute and the Liv Language and Culture website <http://www.livones.net/lv>

The regional/territorial variants of the Latvian language have always been the source of the development of the Latvian literary language. When talking about the historical forms of the Latvian language, the Latgalian written language is usually mentioned as an essential part of the Latgalian identity consciousness and an integral value of Latvian culture.

Section 3 of the Official Language Law states that the State shall ensure the maintenance, protection and development of the Latgalian written language as a historic variant of the Latvian language.

It is less frequently named, but many are familiar with the Suiti Cultural Space, which has been on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List since 2009. The cultural and historical identity of the Suiti as inhabitants of a certain territory is marked by the less profound Kurzeme Liv sub-dialects of the Liv dialect (Alsunga, Jūrkalne) and the Curonian sub-dialect of the middle dialect (Gudenieki).

There is more and more talk about the cultural-historical and ethnographic region of Selija, because a certain part of the identity of our nation is formed by the historical heritage of the Baltic tribe - the Sēļi, nowadays - the Sēļi sub-dialects of the Augšzeme (Highland) dialect.

Relics of the ancient Curonian tribe can be found in the territories of Piemare and Duvzare (the ancient land of Kursā) and in the dialects spoken there.

In North-East Vidzeme, we will meet the Malenians who speak the deep Latgalian sub-dialects of the Augšzeme dialect.

Dundžiņi and Ventīņi are known as tāmnieki or speakers of the Liv dialect. And then there is also the stereotypical division into čiuļi (mostly Vidzeme residents) and čangaļi (living in Latgale), which is also based on differences in pronunciation.

## Acquisition of the Latvian language



An important aspect of language policy is the protection and development of minority languages living in Latvia. The state funds bilingual education programmes in eight minority languages: Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Estonian, Polish, Hebrew, Lithuanian and Roma.

As Latvian is the language of communication and cohesion of the society of Latvia, everyone is provided with an opportunity to learn the Latvian language as a second language at all levels of education or the Latvian language as a foreign language in formal and non-formal education. Teachers have been provided with the necessary support to prepare for the implementation of the new educational content and further improve their Latvian language skills for professional needs.

In order for teachers to be able to help remigrating children better integrate into the Latvian education system, the Latvian Language Agency under the Ministry regularly organises courses for the improvement of teachers' professional competence.

Diverse teaching materials have been developed in accordance with the language proficiency levels A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 specified in the "Common European Guidelines". Using online tools, the Latvian language can also be learnt in the digital environment:

<https://elaipa.lv/Home/A1>

<http://maciunmacies.valoda.lv/>

<http://valodasrokasgramata.lv/>

## Latvian language outside Latvia



The Latvian language as a foreign language can be acquired at 22 foreign universities in Europe, North America and Asia. <http://maciunmacies.valoda.lv/vva/> The Latvian language is usually chosen by those who have a professional interest in the Baltic region. Students who achieve high-level Latvian language skills (B2-C1) become professionals in their field - linguists, translators, interpreters, historians and representatives of other fields. International projects and research that is more objective and in-depth are being implemented, promoting the image of Latvia abroad.

The Latvian Language Agency cooperates with the universities abroad and supports the Latvian language studies as a foreign language by sending study materials, informing about various competitions, events in which Latvian language students can participate, as well as educating Latvian language guest lecturers in seminars and summer courses in Latvia.

In order to maintain contact with the population of Latvia, who have left Latvia for various reasons, different measures are being implemented to learn Latvian as a language of ethnic heritage and preserve the Latvian culture in the diaspora. Knowledge of the Latvian language and culture outside Latvia can currently be acquired in 29 countries, in more than 100 weekend schools and summer secondary schools. <http://maciunmacies.valoda.lv/vva/> Diaspora schools are provided with teaching materials, teachers of these schools are educated, youth camps and exchange programmes are supported. Diaspora children have access to support for learning the Latvian language in a distance learning environment [lva.classflow.lv](http://lva.classflow.lv); tests of Latvian language skills in the diaspora are provided.



Scientific research on the Latvian language is provided by the leading universities in Latvia - the University of Latvia in Riga, the University of Liepaja and Daugavpils University, as well as linguists at the universities outside Latvia.

Informative materials about Latvian linguistics in historical and modern aspects, as well as scientific research can be found here:

<http://www.lingvistiskakarte.lv/info/1>

<https://www.liepu.lv/lv/616/liepu-izdevumi>

<https://du.lv/zinatne-un-petnieciba/>

<https://valoda.lv/petijumi/sociolingvistika/>

<http://www.lulavi.lv/vpp-projekts-latviesu-valoda->

<https://www.izm.gov.lv/en/state-language>