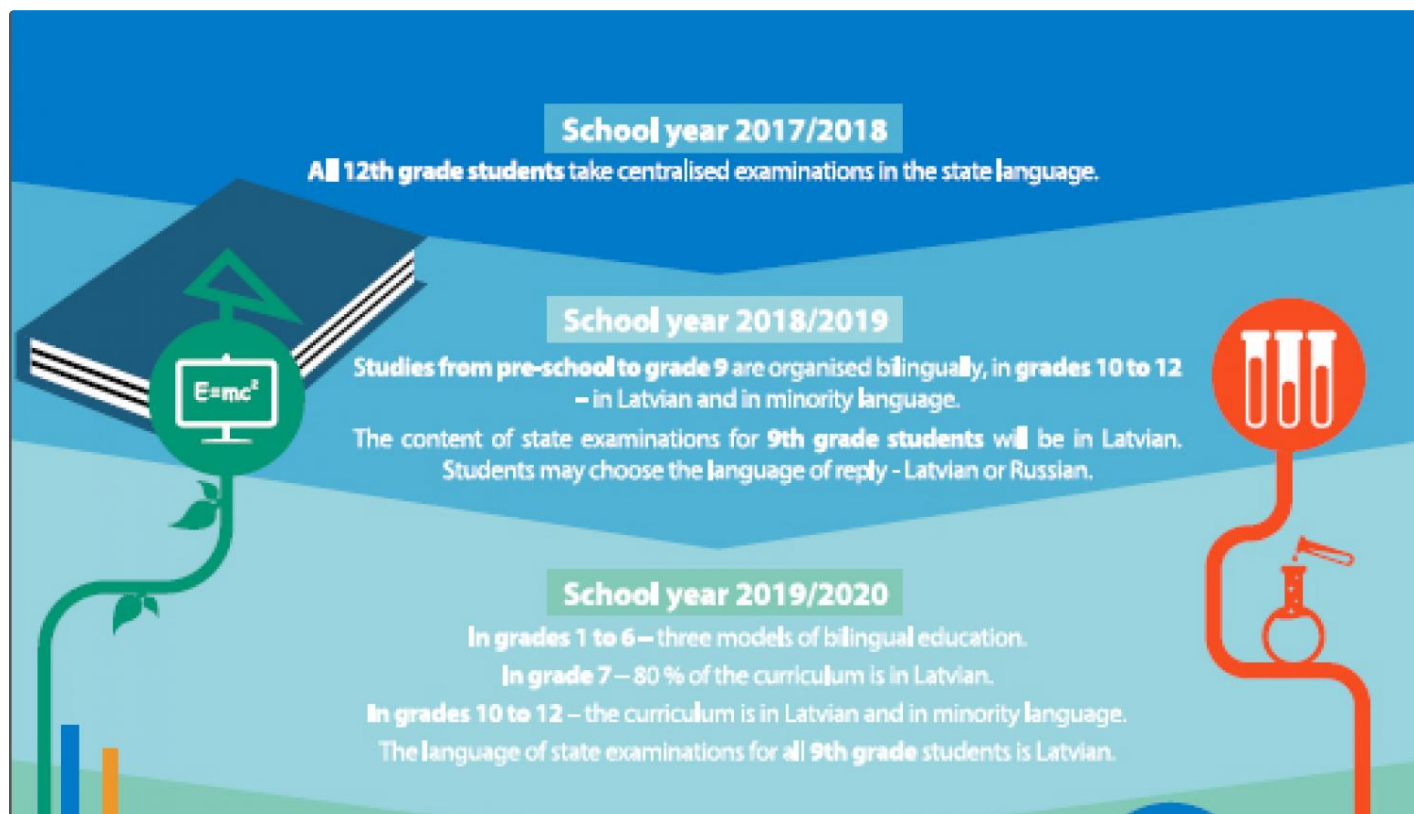


Discover the important facts regarding the transition to studying in the state language

Published: 24.01.2018.

News



On March 22, 2018 the Saeima has approved amendments to the Education Law and General Education Law for a transition to instruction in the state language in secondary schools by the 2021/22 school year. The aim of the changes is to provide every child in Latvia with equal access to a high-quality education that will help them to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary in the 21st century. The new regulation on the language of instruction will expand the opportunities for minority youth in vocational and higher education, where Latvian is the language of instruction, as well as improve their competitiveness in the labour market.

The Ministry of Education and Science has proposed significant changes in the approach to general education in Latvia. These changes include a review of the curriculum and teaching methods, leading to teachers at all levels of the education system organising and managing learning on a daily basis, including for minority students, in a unified system and a successive manner. The transition to instruction in the state language in general secondary education institutions will contribute to the introduction of the new general educational curriculum and learning approach.

At the same time, the Ministry stresses that the Latvian language and culture also provide a unifying basis for Latvian society. Therefore the goal of society as well as the state should be to cultivate language and to nurture the values of national identity, civil society and social integration over the long term. Transitioning to teaching in the state language in secondary schools means its role in Latvia will be strengthened, further ensuring the uniqueness and development of the diverse cultures of the different nationalities residing in Latvia.

The Ministry of Education and Science will fulfil its international obligations for the provision and development of minority education responsibly, inter alia, by providing the necessary funding to those educational institutions that implement the minority education programmes in accordance with international agreements.

Steps for the introduction of changes:

2017/18

central examinations in the 12th grade will only be able to be taken in Latvian.

2019/20

At the preschool stage, from the age of five, new educational guidelines will be introduced, that will support a significant increase in the role of Latvian in the learning process, ensuring the successful integration of minority children in primary education. A transition will begin from the five existing minority education models to three new models at the basic education stage. A transition to the new model of bilingual education in grades 7-9 will also be initiated; thus, not less than 80% of the curriculum, including foreign languages, will be taught in the state language. State examinations in the 9th grade will only be able to be taken in Latvian.

2020/21

All general subjects in grades 10-11 in general education institutions will be taught in Latvian; minority students will continue to have the opportunity to study their minority language, literature, and cultural and historical subjects (modules) in their mother tongue.

2021/22

All general subjects throughout secondary education will be taught in Latvian; minority students will continue to have the opportunity to study their minority language, literature, and cultural and historical subjects (modules) in their mother tongue.

For information:

On 22 March 2018 the Saeima approved the amendments to the law at the second reading, prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science in order to ensure an adequate regulatory framework for the transition to Latvian as the language of instruction in secondary schools.

The data in the "Language Situation in Latvia: 2010-2015" report shows that 39% of minority young people are fluent in Latvian, and the same percentage of young people speak Latvian well, while 22% admit that they have only acquired basic Latvian language skills or have poor knowledge of Latvian.

Research data also shows that the majority of the Latvian population (approximately 70%) believe that teaching subjects in Latvian should commence as early as possible – in nursery and primary schools.

The number of minority education programme graduates who choose to take state examinations in Latvian is increasing annually. In the 2013/14 school year, this option was chosen by 76% of minority students, while in the 2016/17 school year, this figure was as high as 92%.

Vocational and higher education is already provided in the state language.

The proposal by the Ministry of Education and Science that centralised examinations should be taken in the state language was supported by the Advisory Board on Minority Education Issues. The fact that the bilingual education system has to change in order to move towards a more homogeneous society has been recognised by experts and also by the Ombudsman's Office. On 8 August 2017, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted Cabinet Regulation no. 335 "On the Procedure for Centralised Examinations" and made amendments to Cabinet Regulation no. 1510 "Procedures for the Execution of State Examinations" to provide for taking state examinations and centralised examinations in grades 9 and 12 in the state language.

In order to successfully ensure the implementation of the intended changes in education, the Ministry of Education and Science will undertake targeted support measures to improve the professional competence and state language skills of teachers. Support will be provided both by developing and ensuring the provision of teaching aids and methodological materials, and by improving the professional competence of teachers to ensure their understanding of the curriculum and the improvement of their state language skills.

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The Ministry of Education and Science has drafted amendments to the law for a transition to instruction in the state language in secondary schools by the 2021/22 school year. The aim of the changes is to provide every child in Latvia with equal access to a high-quality education that will help them to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary in the 21st century. The new regulation on the language of instruction will expand the opportunities for minority youth in vocational and higher education, where Latvian is the language of instruction, as well as improve their competitiveness in the labour market.

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At the same time, the Ministry stresses that the Latvian language and culture also provide a unifying basis for Latvian society. Therefore the goal of society as well as the state should be to cultivate language and to nurture the values of national identity, civil society and social integration over the long term. Transitioning to teaching in the state language in secondary schools means its role in Latvia will be strengthened, further ensuring the uniqueness and development of the diverse cultures of the different nationalities residing in Latvia.

The Ministry of Education and Science will fulfil its international obligations for the provision and development of minority education responsibly, inter alia, by providing the necessary funding to those educational institutions that implement the minority education programmes in accordance with international agreements.

Steps for the introduction of changes:

- As of the 2017/18 school year, central examinations in the 12th grade will only be able to be taken in Latvian;
- At the preschool stage, from the age of five, new educational guidelines will be introduced in the 2018/19 school year that will support a significant increase in the role of Latvian in the learning process, ensuring the successful integration of minority

children in primary education.

- In the 2019/20 school year, a transition will begin from the five existing minority education models to three new models at the basic education stage.
- In the 2019/20 school year, a transition to the new model of bilingual education in grades 7-9 will also be initiated; thus, not less than 80% of the curriculum, including foreign languages, will be taught in the state language.
- As of the 2019/20 school year, state examinations in the 9th grade will only be able to be taken in Latvian;
- As of the 2020/21 school year, all general subjects in grades 10-11 in general education institutions will be taught in Latvian; minority students will continue to have the opportunity to study their minority language, literature, and cultural and historical subjects (modules) in their mother tongue.
- As of the 2021/22 school year, all general subjects throughout secondary education will be taught in Latvian; minority students will continue to have the opportunity to study their minority language, literature, and cultural and historical subjects (modules) in their mother tongue.

For information:

On 8 March 2018 the Saeima approved the amendments to the law at the second reading, prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science in order to ensure an adequate regulatory framework for the transition to Latvian as the language of instruction in secondary schools.

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