Russian Federation Citizens in Latvia: A Real or Exaggerated Security Threat?

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Abstract

In September 2022, Latvia introduced stringent new requirements for long-term Russian Federation (RF) citizens in the country, obliging over 25,000 people to pass a Latvian language test and undergo a security review or else face expulsion. This paper provides an overview of this policy and its security implications for the region. Although by the end of 2024 a majority of these RF citizens had either re-established their legal status or departed the country, many thousands remained to be processed before the final June 2025 deadline. If the policy comes to a head and Latvia begins expelling a significant number of RF citizens, security tensions in the region are likely to escalate.

Keywords

Latvia, Russian Federation citizens, language requirements, security screening, immigration law

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Introduction

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has had countless reverberations for national minorities in Europe. One prominent shift has been how Russian-speaking minorities have been treated in different European countries and by the West as a whole. Starting with the suspension of rebroadcasting of Russian Federation media in the European Union and permeating down to heightened scrutiny of the loyalties of Russian minority communities, there is an ever more complicated relationship with, or even gaze toward, Russians with respect to who they are or what they arguably represent. While legitimate security concerns underpin and justify some of the policies and discourses that have surfaced in the past three years, it is clear that these measures have also had a ratcheting effect over time, underscoring the long-term impact of Russia's war on ethnic politics in the region.

One such transformation has been unfolding in Latvia. In September 2022, the Latvian parliament amended the

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country's Immigration Law, mandating the reprocessing of permanent residency permits for some 25,000 Russian Federation (RF) citizens in order to implement security checks on them and verify their basic proficiency in Latvian.[1] These amendments unleashed a process whereby thousands of RF citizens were compelled to take Latvian language exams and reapply for residency permits—all within a year's time. Although the Latvian authorities later extended the deadline to mid-2025, the mere fact that these long-time residents would be subjected wholesale to language and security checks in such rapid order constituted an unprecedented policy shift in Latvia's approach to ethnopolitical issues.[2] To be sure, RF citizens in Latvia do not qualify as a national minority, and thus the country has been spared criticism concerning its commitment to minority protection. Still, both the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) and the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities expressed concern about these policy changes. The stakes of the matter concerned whether the policy would end up alleviating or aggravating the security situation in the Baltic region.

The key political dimension of the controversy pertained to the perceived and/or constructed security threat posed by RF citizens on the basis of (a) their seemingly low levels of integration into Latvian society (to be addressed by the language exams) and (b) their potential sympathies for Moscow's aggression in Ukraine (to be addressed by security questions and special service reviews conducted during the reapplication process). While public debate and the media have focused largely on the former, it is the latter that has featured as a recurring theme in official documents, including a constitutional court ruling in favor of the policy.

Critics have questioned whether the policy might be disproportionate, given that three-quarters of the affected RF citizens are aged between sixty and seventy-five. This demographic is predominantly female (61 percent), socioeconomically vulnerable, and arguably poses minimal security risks.[3] The potential gains for Latvian national security—whether in preventing territorial aggression from Russia, combating disinformation, or averting societal unrest—are arguably marginal compared to the added administrative cost, social strain, and international ramifications.

The central aim of this paper is to lay out the key parameters of this policy change and to describe the varied developments that have followed from it. Particular attention is given to the degree to which RF citizens have been able to satisfy the necessary language requirements and the impact of the special security questions included as part of the reapplication process. The paper also analyzes a special ruling by the Latvian Constitutional Court in favor of the policy. A final section outlines the OSCE's involvement and offers recommendations for policymakers.

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Russian citizens in Latvia

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered an unparalleled wave of security and defense reactions across Europe and the Western world. Alongside moves related to military deterrence, the presence of RF citizens in these countries also quickly came under scrutiny. As the Russian government was increasingly denounced as a criminal regime, questions arose about the political, and even moral, responsibilities of its citizens, wherever they were located.

In Latvia, the presence of RF citizens initially escaped significant debate, despite their disproportionately high share of the national population—the second highest in the European Union (after Estonia). By the end of 2022, approximately 48,000 RF citizens resided in Latvia, representing roughly 2 percent of the country's population.[4] Of these, around 23 percent held temporary residency permits or had entered Latvia under more recent regulations involving background checks. Some 70 percent of the remaining 40,000 were long-term residents of Latvia, meaning that they had lived in Latvia since birth or prior to the restoration of independence in 1991 and had acquired RF citizenship through simplified procedures offered by Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Moreover, many of these individuals had previously been without any citizenship, as Latvia's stringent post-1991 citizenship laws had limited automatic citizenship to those who had been citizens of Latvia prior to 1940 and their descendants. Those who had arrived in Latvia following the beginning of the Soviet occupation in 1940, as well as their descendants, were eligible for Latvian citizenship only through a separate naturalization process. As a result, up to 27 percent of Latvia's population was rendered stateless following the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, neither recognized as Latvian citizens nor automatically declared citizens of Russia.[5] Over the years, a majority of these people decided either to acquire Latvian citizenship through naturalization, to remain stateless, or to leave the country, but a significant number opted for RF citizenship due to family ties or identity preferences. In addition, there was a wave of RF citizenship adoption in the 2010s, as many of these stateless individuals realized they could also claim a Russian Federation pension alongside their Latvian one. The Latvian authorities continued to accord permanent residency to both stateless persons and RF citizens without imposing language requirements or other special conditions.

Policy change

All of this changed in September 2022, when the Latvian government introduced a bill to annul existing permanent residency permits for long-term RF citizens unless they passed an A2-level Latvian language exam and resubmitted their residency applications within one year. Those who failed to meet the deadline could still apply for a temporary residency permit but would receive limited welfare and health benefits. Those who

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failed to take action would eventually be subject to expulsion from the country. Given that the vast majority of the RF citizens in question were pensioners, the amendments exempted those over seventy-five, children under fifteen, and those with serious, medically certified illnesses from the language test.[6] Nonetheless, all RF citizens who were long-term residents of Latvia were required to reapply for residency permits.

Moreover, the government asked parliament to consider the bill under an "expedited procedure," meaning that only two readings would be necessary and that these could take place within a matter of days, with minimal debate and amendments. This urgency was partly driven by the looming parliamentary elections, which were set to be held within three weeks of the bill's submission (on October 1, 2022). In its final lame duck weeks, the legislature fast-tracked the amendments. The bill was passed by parliament on September 22, 2022, and was promulgated by the president the following day.[7] No noteworthy discussion of the bill took place either in the parliamentary chamber or in the public sphere, as the country's political focus had already shifted to the approaching elections.

Indeed, the elections resulted in Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš's return to office, although now with a different governing coalition that included the center-right United List, from whose ranks a new minister of interior, Māris Kučinskis, was appointed. Kučinskis was responsible for implementing the immigration regulations for RF citizens via the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (OCMA). Meanwhile, the National Center for Education (under the Ministry of Education and Science) was tasked with administering the thousands of language tests that were expected to be held as part of the screening process. By February 2023, the Center had established a registration procedure for the tests, with three designated locations: Rīga, Daugavpils, and Liepāja. Over a period of seven weeks, some 7,500 RF citizens reportedly registered for the exams; however, this was less than half of the 18,000 the government had projected would be affected by the new rules.[8] This prompted Minister Kučinskis to warn that the government's system would be unable to handle the anticipated administrative burden. In April, the Latvian parliament approved an extension of the processing deadlines to December 2023, with the stipulation that applicants must attempt the Latvian language test at least once before September 1, 2023.

Language tests

Yet, the issue of administrative overload was not the only complication emerging from the unprecedented reform. Data from the National Center for Education revealed that more than half of all applicants were failing the Latvian language test, with some even failing multiple times.[9] These figures underscored the sociolinguistic complexities of the new policy. On the one hand, many RF citizens in Latvia, particularly those who had opted for RF citizenship after the collapse of the Soviet Union, were less integrated in

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mainstream Latvian society. While they considered Latvia their home and had little interest in moving to Russia, they also tended to live in predominately Russian-speaking areas of cities such as Rīga, Daugavpils, Ventspils, and Liepāja and had little contact with Latvians and the Latvian language. This isolation and lack of integration also extended to many stateless people in Latvia (mostly Russian speakers). However, to the extent that RF citizens were classified as foreign nationals, the Latvian authorities were in a position to institute new language requirements and threaten expulsion—an option that was unavailable when it came to stateless persons.

In any case, the debate over language proficiency became a major dimension of the Latvian authorities' justification for demanding that thousands of elderly people undergo new language tests on pain of possible expulsion.[10] Needless to say, the fact that many of these people had lived in Latvia their entire lives and were not in a position to pass a relatively basic-level Latvian language exam was a stark commentary on how separated the Latvian- and Russian-speaking communities had become as a result of Soviet rule. Tens of thousands of Russian speakers had entered the country during the Soviet era with no expectation of having to learn Latvian, since Russian was considered the primary language of the USSR. This led to major sociolinguistic divides that persisted long after independence. Latvian interpretations of this phenomenon went even further, hinting that the inability of these long-term residents to communicate in even rudimentary Latvian indicated a lack of affinity with, or respect for, the country as a whole. In this regard, the new language requirements represented a final chance for these populations to demonstrate their commitment to Latvia and to acquiring the basic skills necessary for integration.

Security dimension

These reforms were not solely aimed at fostering societal cohesion, however. The fact that the legal provisions concerned the citizens of the Russian Federation—Latvia's neighbor and the instigator of an illegal war against Ukraine—framed their presence as a potential security risk. These security concerns revolved around the loyalties of RF citizens and their susceptibility to Russian dis- and misinformation in the course of the war, especially if they lacked knowledge of the Latvian language. These arguments reverberated throughout legislative debates on the first extensions of the residency permit renewal deadlines.[11] Many nationalist politicians highlighted the participation of RF citizens living in Latvia in Russia's presidential elections, pointing to Vladimir Putin's overwhelming victories as evidence that large segments of this community supported the Russian dictator and thus posed an implicit security risk for Latvia.[12]

This aspect of the new policy received little public attention in the media and among Russian community leaders. As the language testing process began, the OCMA prepared the ground for receiving the final residency permit applications.

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It released a special application form for RF citizens that differed from that used for other third-country nationals.[13] This form requested a staggering amount of personal information (see table 1) and included an appendix requiring applicants to declare that they were not affiliated with any private army or paramilitary organization, were not subject to conscription or mobilization by the Russian Federation or Belarussian Army, and would immediately inform the Latvian authorities if contacted by either force.

Table 1. List of information required as part of the application for renewed permanent residency in Latvia for Russian Federation citizens

- Personal CV
- Spouse or partner's CV
- Parents' CVs
- Spouse or partner's parents' CVs
- Siblings' or stepsiblings' CVs
- Adult children's CVs
- Prior employment in third-country government offices or elected posts
- Prior service in the armed forces of the Russian Federation or Belarus
- Prior activity in any non-governmental, governmental, inter-governmental, transcontinental, or other organization
- Property ownership
- Possession of a vehicle with which it would be possible to cross a Schengen border
- Possession of a residency permit, visa, or citizenship of another country
- List of close contacts in Latvia
- Future plans in Latvia for the next one to five years
- Account statements for one year from all financial institutions, payment portals, or cryptocurrencies where the applicant holds an account, especially those sanctioned as part of the Ukraine war

Source: Pilsonības un migrācijas lietu pārvalde [Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs], https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/media/12084/download?attachment

Importantly, the application contained a series of surprising political questions related directly to the applicant's views on Russia's military aggression. Going back more than a decade, applicants were asked to reply "Yes" or "No" to the question "Do you believe that Russia annexed Crimea (the Crimean Peninsula) in 2014, or illegally included it in the Russian Federation?" Further questions included: "Do you support the annexation of Crimea (the Crimean Peninsula) or any other part of Ukraine (Zaporizhia, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson) to the Russian Federation?" and "Do you think Russia is carrying out unprovoked military

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aggression against Ukraine?" Topping off this stream of questions, the application asked pointedly: "Do you condemn the military invasion of Ukraine by the Russian government and its army and consider it a criminal act?"

While these questions aligned with Western legal and political stances on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Latvian authorities also touched on local issues, asking: "Is the dismantling of Soviet memorials in Latvia justified?"—a reference, inter alia, to the Latvian authorities' removal of a 79-meter-high Soviet victory monument in Rīga in August 2022 and the renaming of numerous Soviet and Russian placenames across the country. In other words, the government's form also required applicants to take a stand on memory politics in the country. These issues had been particularly contentious in both Latvia and Estonia going back to April 2007, when the relocation of a Soviet-era monument in Tallinn precipitated two nights of rioting by Russian-speaking youths and prompted a broader discussion on the salience of historical memory issues for societal integration and cohesion.

The Latvian authorities justified these questions as promoting their legitimate interest in probing the political beliefs of RF citizens residing in Latvia. The scale of pro-Kremlin sympathies in the country was of genuine concern, magnified by the documented brutality and war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine. These issues were also not academic to a country like Latvia, which (like Ukraine) shared a border with Russia and remained vulnerable to any number of threats from Moscow. To this end, the application also asked legitimate security questions such as whether applicants had provided material support to the Russian or Belarussian military since February 2022, whether they had violated any of the EU sanctions imposed on Russia, and whether they had posted pro-Kremlin, anti-Latvian, or anti-EU content on social media.

At the same time, the political questions included in the new application form clearly constituted an ideological loyalty test, with any problematic answers potentially raising red flags. Moreover, signing the application form implied a commitment to maintaining or defending these views in the future. Indeed, applicants risked putting themselves in criminal jeopardy should they ever return to the Russian Federation, as Russian authorities could interpret any such declaration as a "discreditation" of the Russian army or a critique of the Kremlin's "special military operation." In a Russian-language television show from April 2023, Ingmar Lidaka, chair of the Latvian parliament's Citizenship, Migration, and Social Cohesion Committee, described these questions as a signaling effort meant more to alert applicants of where the Latvian state stood on these issues than to screen for potential Putinists.[14] Even so, in September 2023, a Latvian television program reported that the Latvian State Security Service had recommended that the OCMA deny eighty applications for renewed residency permits specifically on security grounds.[15] Although it remained unclear how many of these rejections were based

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on objectionable answers to the questionnaire, it was evident that the Latvian authorities were monitoring these declarations.

Policy relaxation

By the summer of 2023, it was becoming evident that the number of failed language tests and the administrative challenge of implementing the new policy were both set to cause major problems as the initial deadlines approached. In August, the Kariņš government—then acting in a caretaker capacity following its resignation over unrelated issues—asked parliament to extend the policy deadlines once again. One day later, Latvia's president, Edgars Rinkēvičs, publicly endorsed the move, criticizing the previous parliament for having underestimated the administrative demands of the policy.[16] In September, the legislature approved an extension of the application period to June 20, 2025, on the condition that applicants must have attempted the language test at least once before the original September 2023 deadline. In this respect, the amendment recognized that many applicants would need additional time to attend courses or otherwise prepare to meet the A2-level language requirement. At the same time, the policy as a whole would stay in place.

By September 2023, the Latvian authorities were in a position to begin addressing those individuals who had thus far made no effort to comply with the new law. The OCMA announced that at least 3,541 RF citizens had neither submitted an application nor informed the Office that they had left the country. This figure was later revised to 1,213 by the end of the year, and according to border control officials over 900 individuals had emigrated from Latvia.[17] Still, the Office indicated that it would begin expulsion procedures in the case of individuals who continued to ignore the requirements while also refusing to leave the country voluntarily. In June 2024, it was reported that the Latvian authorities had issued sixty expulsion orders to RF citizens, fifteen of which had been carried out, some even by force.[18] It was also estimated that around 2,000 RF citizens had emigrated from Latvia, representing roughly 10 percent of those affected by the new policy. While it remained unclear whether these individuals had left for Russia in particular, their departure was a tangible consequence of the new policy, which had effectively encouraged a significant portion of RF citizens to leave Latvia.

Minority reaction and legal appeals

Public debate over Latvia's new policy was subdued among Russian community leaders. Initially, many took a wait-and-see approach, believing that legal action in the Latvian courts might actually reverse the dramatic change in policy. In January 2023, the first of four separate complaints to the Latvian Constitutional Court was submitted by various groups of RF citizens in Latvia affected by the policy shift. Their calls to annul the amendments pertained to their potential to break up families, citing the

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threat that possible expulsion posed to the inviolability of private life. Likewise, while the plaintiffs agreed that the new policy had legitimate links to national security, they questioned whether parliament had adequately assessed the actual degree of the threat posed by RF citizens and whether the measures enacted by the amendments were proportional and sufficiently effective to justify the impact (or burden) on individuals' rights. Additionally, they argued that by changing the rules for a category of people who, for the previous two decades, had reasonably anticipated that their residency permits would be renewed without issue, Latvian authorities were undermining the principle of legal expectations and opening the door to arbitrary governance.[19]

Following a year of study, hearings, and deliberation, the Constitutional Court ruled against the plaintiffs in February 2024, arguing that a combination of national security concerns and broad autonomy in the area of immigration law afforded the Latvian state a wide prerogative in dealing with this issue.[20] It stressed additionally that in the given instance, the Russian Federation—having been internationally denounced as supporting terrorism and military aggression—constituted a particularly pressing danger to Latvia. The Court added that one could not overlook the fact that individuals who had voluntarily acquired RF citizenship (as all of these individuals had) bore a responsibility for the loyalty and identity implications of their decision.[21] This justified subjecting each of them to a review by the competent authorities (the Court did not mention the significance of the extensive questionnaire developed as part of the policy). The Court disagreed with the claim that the new policy was arbitrary, reaffirming that each application would be reviewed individually. Finally, it defended the language requirements contained in the new policy as serving not only to strengthen the status of the Latvian language but also to protect Latvian speakers' right to use the state language in all social interactions. This, the Court asserted, was integral to safeguarding democratic order.[22]

In a dissenting opinion, one Court justice argued that the Latvian state policy was inconsistent to the extent that RF citizens who had acquired permanent residency under a much earlier law (in force until 2003) had been excluded from the new policy.[23] The Latvian parliament ultimately resolved this discrepancy by passing a further amendment to the Immigration Act in June 2024 to include this group (estimated at 4,650 individuals) under the new registration and language test requirements, with a compliance deadline set for mid-2025.[24]

By August 2024, the OCMA reported that nearly 16,000 of the estimated 25,000 RF citizens affected by these policy changes had completed the procedures and had been issued new permanent residency permits.[25] This figure included those who had passed the new language test as well as those who had been exempted from it for age or health reasons. Another 5,500 individuals were granted two-year residency permits (with continued welfare and health insurance rights), allowing them additional time to meet the language and other application

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requirements. The remaining RF citizens had either left Latvia or were awaiting a decision on their application. A total of sixty-two expulsion orders had been issued.

OSCE involvement and recommendations

From the standpoint of human and minority rights, Latvia's decision to tighten regulations on foreign residents aligned with existing European (OSCE and Council of Europe) standards. While RF citizens formed part of Latvia's sizable Russian-speaking minority, their legal status was more limited than that of stateless persons or Latvian citizens, and they constituted only around 5 percent of the entire Russian-speaking population. To some extent, the Latvian state was simply seeking to unify its approach by requiring a certain level of Latvian language proficiency from all of its long-term foreign residents, ostensibly in the name of social cohesion. Nevertheless, by specifically targeting citizens of its eastern neighbor, Latvia undeniably heightened the already tense security climate in the region.

In March 2024, Kairat Abdrakhmanov, then OSCE HCNM, visited Latvia and, among other issues, addressed the country's policy shift regarding RF citizens. While RF citizens in Latvia did not constitute a national minority under the HCNM's mandate, the potential for the policy to exacerbate tensions with Moscow was evident. In this respect, the Latvian authorities were called upon to consider lowering the age threshold for exemption from the new language certification requirements down to the legal retirement age and to relax the income verification requirements. At this stage, however, the Latvian government declined to adopt either of these adjustments, likely because the policy was already too far advanced. Still, the Latvian government demonstrated some flexibility by extending the original application deadlines and treating the forcible expulsion of noncompliant RF citizens as an absolute last resort, thereby preventing significant public and international backlash. A more aggressive approach, such as widely publicized expulsions or the use of force against RF citizens, might have provoked a stronger international reaction.

Russia's public response to Latvia's policy was muted. In September 2023, Maria Zakharova, spokesperson for Russia's Foreign Ministry, criticized the reforms as discriminatory and in gross violation of international legal norms.[26] However, at no point did she attempt to demonstrate how Russia would seek to influence Latvia to reverse its policy and secure Russian citizens' opportunities to stay in the country. Instead, she stressed the multiple ways in which Moscow could help individuals to resettle in Russia if necessary. Within the OSCE, while Russia's ambassador lamented the HCNM's inability to persuade the Latvian government to relax its immigration policy, his comments were generally directed more at the plight of Russian-language media in the country and the denigration of Russian historical memory.[27]

Looking ahead, the real challenge will lie in monitoring these processes,

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especially as the June 2025 language requirement deadline approaches. Should hundreds of RF citizens continue to fail the language exam, the Latvian authorities will face the difficult choice of having to either encourage voluntary departures or enforce expulsion orders to uphold the policy's integrity. From a human rights perspective, the political questions included in Latvia's new application form raise serious concerns, placing RF citizens in legal jeopardy as long as Moscow continues to criminally prosecute those who voice the slightest objection to its aggression in Ukraine. While Latvia may be trying to ensure its own national security by posing these questions to RF citizens, it is placing them in the impossible position of having to choose between the two countries. Those who answer these political questions in favor of Latvia risk jeopardizing their ability to return to their legal homeland, which, paradoxically, could serve as an incentive for them to remain in Latvia. Those who answer these questions in favor of Russia, by contrast, risk expulsion from Latvia as a security risk. The room for maneuver for RF citizens is thus growing ever narrower.

Notes

1 For the precise statistics, see "Likumprojekta 'Grozījums Imigrācijas likumā' Anotācija" [Legislative bill "Amendments to the Immigration Law" abstract], September 5, 2023, https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/saeimalivs14.nsf/0/3B590F71E6A48554C2258A210049356F?OpenDocument. Formally, the policy change also affected long-term citizens of Belarus, as this country was allied with Russia in its aggression against Ukraine. This group will not be discussed separately in this paper, however, since they constituted a much smaller number of people (around 340) and were rarely mentioned directly in the media or by politicians. The overwhelming focus of the policy and debates around it was on RF citizens.

2 The change comes on top of a decision to end Russian-language education in the country by 2026 and possibly discontinue Russian-language public broadcasting by the same year.

3 Demographic figures extrapolated from data on the age and gender distribution of the total population of RF citizens in Latvia as accessed from the Official Statistics Portal of the Central Statistical Bureau of the Republic of Latvia, https://data.stat.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/OSP_PUB/START__POP__IR__IRV/IRV020, October 12, 2024.

4 Extracted from the website of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs; permanent and temporary residency permit holders combined as of December 31, 2022: https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/statistika-uzturesanas-atlaujas-2022

5 Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, database table "IRV020. Iedzīvotāji pēc dzimuma, valstiskās piederības un pa vecuma grupām gada sākumā 1996 – 2024" [Residents by sex, citizenship and age group]; see data for 1996.

6 Hence, around 20 percent of the RF citizens in question were exempted from the language tests based on age and another estimated 8 percent based on medical conditions.

7 "Grozījumi Imigrācijas likumā" [Amendments to the Immigration Law], https://likumi.lv/ta/id/335817-grozijumi-imigracijas-likuma

8 Vita Anstrate, "Valodas pārbaudei pieteikusies nepilna puse Latvijā dzīvojošu Krievijas pilsoņu" [Less than half

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of Russian citizens living in Latvia have applied for language testing], *LSM.lv*, March 24, 2023, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/24.03.2023-valodas-parbaudei-pieteikusies-nepilna-puse-latvija-dzivojosu-krievijas-pilsonu.a502284/

9 LSM, "Valsts valodas pārbaudi nokārto aptuveni puse Krievijas pilsoņu" [About half of Russian citizens pass the state language test], *LSM.lv*, January 12, 2024, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/12.01.2024-valsts-valodas-parbaudi-nokarto-aptuveni-puse-krievijas-pilsonu.a538685/

10 See remarks by Rihards Kols during the debate in the Latvian parliament, September 7, 2023, https://www.saeima.lv/lv/transcripts/view/2485#section_105

11 Madara Līcīte, "Latvijas iedzīvotājiem ar Krievijas pasēm dod papildu laiku atkārtotai valodas pārbaudei" [Latvian residents with Russian passports given additional time to retake language test], *LSM.lv*, April 5, 2023, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/05.04.2023-latvijas-iedzivotajiem-ar-krievijas-pasem-dod-papildu-laiku-atkartotai-valodas-parbaudei.a503747/

12 Edvīns Šnore, "Latvijas ļaudis ar Putinu sirdī" [The people of Latvia with Putin in their hearts], *Ir*, March 20, 2018, https://ir.lv/2018/03/20/latvijas-laudis-ar-putinu-sirdi/

13 See point 5, "Anketa," at the bottom of the following OCMA press release: https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/informacija-krievijas-federacijas-pilsoniem-kuri-pirms-kf-pilsonibas-iegusanas-bijusi-latvijas-pilsoni-vai-latvijas-nepilsoni-un-sanemusi-pastavigas-uzturesanas-atlaujas

14 LSM+, "С паспортом РФ — на выход?" [With a Russian passport—on the way out?], April 3, 2023, https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/analitika/03.04.2023-video-programma-tck-s-pasportom-rf-na-vyxod.a503486/; see as of 37:07.

15 LTV, "Pēc pieteikšanās uzturēšanās atļaujām par 80 Krievijas pilsoņiem — negatīvs Drošības dienesta atzinums" [After applying for residence permits 80 Russian citizens receive negative opinion from the Security Service], September 4, 2023, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/04.09.2023-pec-pieteiksanas-uzturesanas-atlaujam-par-80-krievijas-pilsoniem-negativs-drosibas-dienesta-atzinums.a522633/

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