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National scenario: Latvia

Terminology for Europe

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Terminology development in Latvia: Past (1/5)

Historical stages of development of Latvian terminology

- 1) From the first written records up to mid 19th century (major contact language: German);
- 2) From the mid 19th century (from the National Awakening) up to 1918 (main contact languages: German and Russian);
- 3) From 1918 up to 1944 (main contact languages: German and Russian);
- 4) From 1944 up to 1990 (main contact language: Russian);
- 5) Since 1990 (main contact language: English).



Terminology development in Latvia: Past (2/5)

- In written form one may find Latvian terms since the 16th century when the first books in Latvian were published.
- In the 17th century language standardization began, incl. orthography, grammar and bilingual dictionaries (mainly German-Latvian).
- Translation of Bible in Latvian published in 1685 and 1694.
- In the last trimester of 18th century the tradition non-religious literature was established (in the frame of the Enlightenment), incl. the first encyclopaedy (“The Book of High Wisdom” (1796) by the Lutheran pastor Gotthard Friedrich Stender.
- First Latvian newspaper «Latviešu Avīzes» established in 1822.
- First textbooks for elementary schools.
- Rapid development of language since 1856 (the beginning of the National Awakening) to create modern, all-purpose usable language.



Terminology development in Latvia: Past (3/5)

- Rapid development of the periodical press and belletristics in Latvian, first modern encyclopaedic dictionaries at the second half of 19th century.
- Discrepancy between high level of general education and language and limited possibilities to use Latvian in many sociolinguistic functions in the Russian Empire.
- After the proclamation of national independence the first Terminology Commission was established in 1919, and is the main body for terminology development in Latvia. Status of state language obliged to find and use Latvian terminology in all fields, incl. legislation, higher education and army.
- After the second Soviet occupation of Latvia in 1944, the Latvian Academy of Sciences was founded in 1946 and the Terminology Commission continued its activities despite constant Soviet pressure and devaluation and russification of the Latvian language.
- Formally, the Soviet regime did not pursue a policy of assimilation. Yet in reality, the national language was gradually pushed out of individual state administration and the public sphere, in general, in favour of Russian.



Terminology development in Latvia: Past (4/5)

The body of work of the Terminology Commission

- The Terminology Commission coined Latvian terms in more than 20 branches of Science. The results of the Terminology Commission work are seen in different term dictionaries published during the years 1948–1989.
- The Terminological Commission till 1990 had published 15 terminological dictionaries and more than 50 bulletins in various fields of science and technology.
- Studies of Latvian were carried out, a two-volume grammar of the modern Latvian language and eight-volume dictionary of the Standard Latvian had been compiled.



Terminology development in Latvia: Past (5/5)

In the period of Soviet occupation socio-linguistic functions of Latvian were significantly diminished by the bureaucratic, managerial and Communist Party apparatus which was overwhelmingly Russian, and all official communication was conducted in Russian.

Law on languages (1989) prescribed *«Latvian language as the official language in accordance with the Constitution of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic.»*

After re-establishment of independence a lot of attention is paid to the research, standardization, maintenance, protection and development of the Latvian language.

State Language Law:

Article 24: It shall be the duty of state and municipal institutions to provide material resources for the research, cultivation and development of the Latvian language.

Article 22: Standardised terminology shall be used in specialised teaching materials, in technical documents and office documents. The creation and use of terms shall be prescribed by the Terminology Commission of the Latvian Academy of Sciences [..]



Terminology development in Latvia: Present (1/3)

1996: Cabinet Order No. 230 *On establishment of Translation & Terminology Centre.*

2009: Reorganization of Translation & Terminology Centre merging it with the State Language Centre.

The main government bodies for terminology development:

- **the Terminology Commission** – the main institution for the development of unified, coordinated and harmonized multi-branch terminology;
- **the State Language Centre** – provides the State administration institutions and the public with official translations of laws and regulations and other documents issued by the State or international organisations while concurrently ensuring use of consistent terminology.

The Terminology Commission's decisions have the status of normative documents, and terms approved by the Terminology Commission are official.

The Terminology Commission consists of 30 subject-field terminology subcommissions.



Terminology development in Latvia: Present (2/3)

The institutions responsible for the development of Latvian language and some aspects of terminology work:

- **the Terminology Commission** – the main institution for the development of unified, coordinated and harmonized multi-branch terminology;
- **the State Language Centre** – provides the State administration institutions and the public with official translations of laws and regulations and other documents issued by the State or international organisations while concurrently ensuring use of consistent terminology.
- **the State Language Commission** – established under the auspices of the President of Latvia, serves as the main institution determining the state language policy in Latvia;
- **the State Language Agency** – a government body under the Ministry of Education and Science. Among its major tasks are consulting and promotion of Latvian as the state language;
- **the Latvian Language Institute** – A research institute under the authority of the Latvian University.
- **the Latvian Language Expert Commission** – on a regular basis, examines the compliance of norms provided for in laws and regulations to regularities of the Latvian language;



Terminology development in Latvia: Present (3/3)

Terminology Commission of the Latvian Academy of Sciences uses the following main steps in terminology creation:

- the initiators of a term may be different organizations and individuals dealing with all kinds of social, legal, technological, medical, economic activities; translators and education managers, banking officers, newspaper writers and publication editors, standard developers and even students and front-end users of different kind of devices;
- the request for a new term is addressed to the corresponding branch of a subcommission of the Terminology Commission, which at its meeting analyses the requested term and its explanations;
- the task of subcommission members is to select the essential features and propose an adequate Latvian equivalent of the term;
- the most important resolutions and approved terms that are intended for a wide use in the society are published in the official publisher of the Republic of Latvia «Latvijas Vēstnesis».



Terminological resources in Latvia

- The terminology database of Terminology Commission: **<http://termini.lza.lv>**
- The terminology database of the State Language Centre: **under development**
- Legal acts of the Republic of Latvia in English and Latvian: **<https://likumi.lv>**
(Likumi.lv is a website of legal acts that ensures free access to consolidated legal acts of the Republic of Latvia.)
- The terminology database IATE: Inter-Active Terminology for Europe: **<http://iate.europa.eu>**
(The terminology of the legislative acts of the EU may vary from the national legislative acts)



Major problems to solve

- Existing printed and electronic terminological resources are very different, there are a lot of resources with historical value;
- Different contact languages (how to incorporate terminological dictionaries with Latvian-German or Latvian-Russian in current data-bases);
- Status of terms are not precise (proposal, accepted, really used, obsolete etc.)



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