

# *The Riga Manifesto: from Evidence to National Commitment*



Baiba Moļņika  
The National Library of Latvia

October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026

# Key statistics about Latvia:

**Population:** 1.845 million (early 2026)

**Official language:** Latvian

**Languages spoken at home:** Latvian 67%,  
Russian 37%

**Latvian diaspora size:** 300,000 holding latvian citizenship, up to 500,000 if second and third generation descendants included.

**Occupied by the Soviet Union:** between 1944 and 1991

**A member of the EU and NATO:** since 2004



# The Context of the Manifesto:

- 500 years since the first book was published in the Latvian language – what is our plan for the future?
- Literacy as a prerequisite for the formation, existence and sustainability of a nation.
- Reading as a fundamental human right.



latviešu 5[..]0  
grāmatai

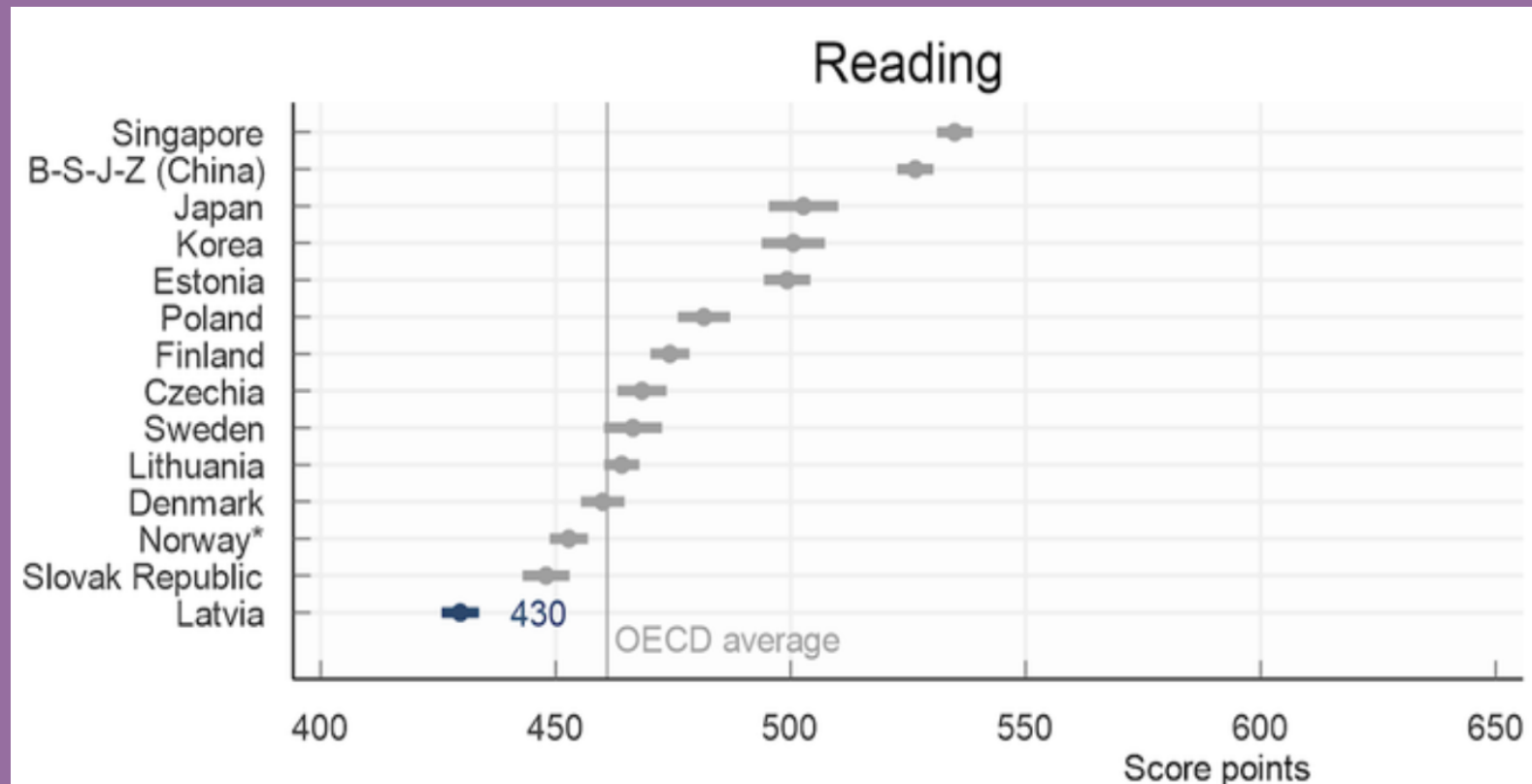
# Research: Reading habits in Latvia (2024)

- From 1009 respondents 31% of adults had not read a book in any format in the past year.
- Men had read printed books significantly less than women – 41% of non-readers compared to 22% in women.
- In people aged 16-19 reading in English heavily competes with reading in Latvian.

**This has led to a decreased literacy among children, weakened ability to comprehend complex texts and to maintain attention which increases disinformation risk.**

# OECD PISA results 2025 for Latvia:

- Around 59% of students in Latvia attained level 2 or higher in reading compared to the OECD average of 69%.
- Level 5 or higher in reading was scored just by 2% of students in Latvia compared to the OECD average of 6%.



# Reading habits among youth in Latvia:

- Between the ages of 13 and 22, 79% read in Latvian, 65% in English and 29% in Russian.
- Most popular answers WHY is that it grants the ability to read in the original language, for some it's easier due to the frequent use of English and additionally it is a way to practice the language.
- However, reading is crucial for the sustainability of a language within Latvia and in diasporas and its development, especially in the age of AI.

# Key ideas of the Manifesto:

## Language and Identity

Reading in Latvian as the foundation of identity and culture. Language as the key building block of a nation and its sustainability.

## Accessibility and Inclusion

Equal right to read for everyone. Libraries as facilitators for engagement

## Reading culture and Resilience

Reading and literary comprehension as a pillar of democracy and resilience

## Reading and Development

Reading as the driver of knowledge, creativity and innovation.

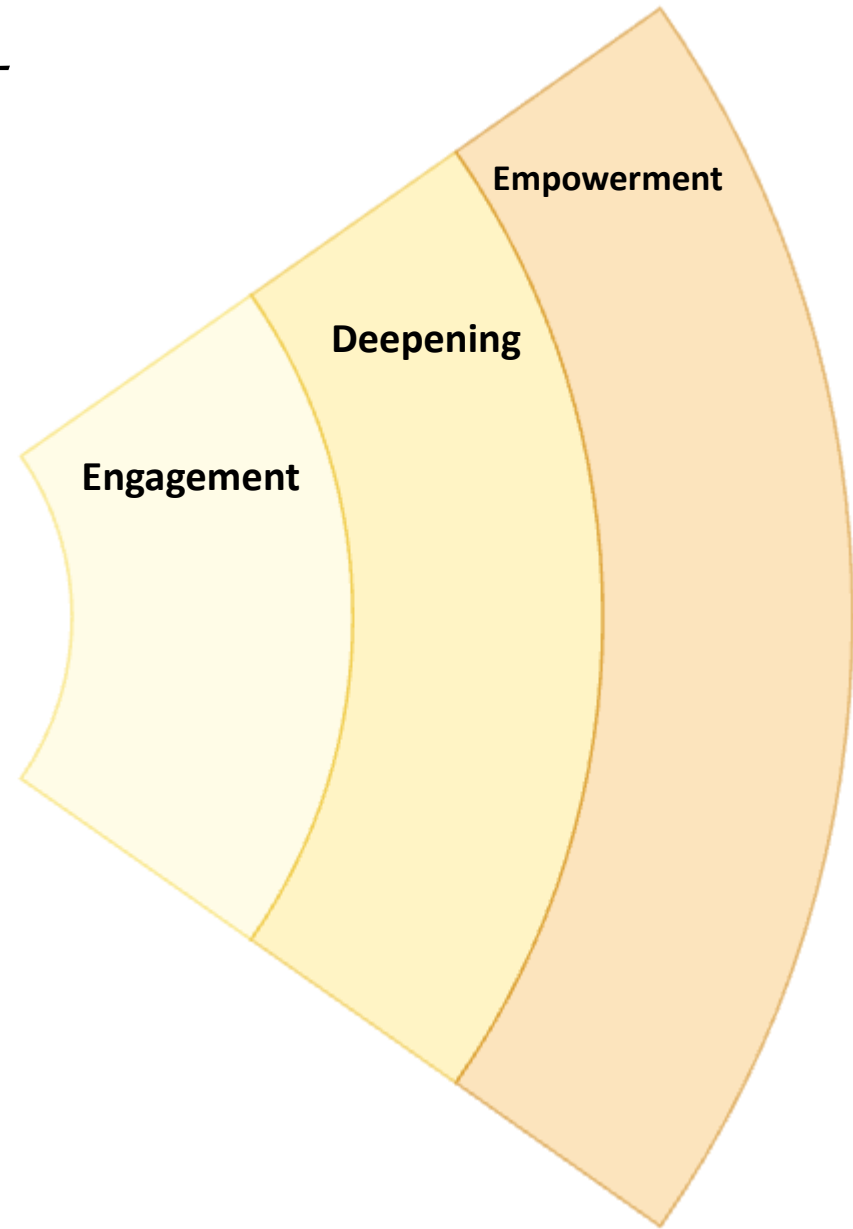
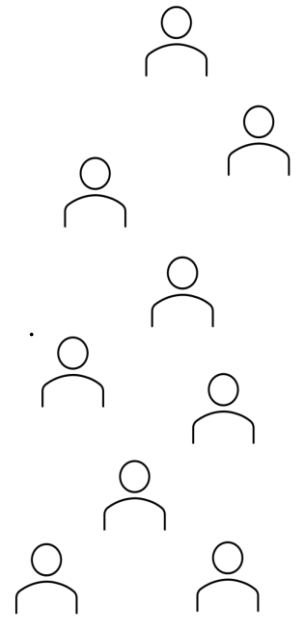
The National Library of Latvia initiated the Manifesto and facilitated a working group of:

- Publishers
- Printing industry
- Libraries
- Educators
- Plain-language specialists
- Latvian diaspora
- Business community
- Reading families
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Education and Science
- National Artificial Intelligence Centre
- Latvian National Commission for UNESCO

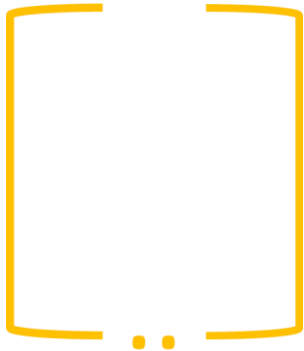


# Next step: *The National Reading Strategy*

- Encompassing all age groups;
- Development beyond the ability to read;
- Across diverse literacy forms
- The importance of librarians at all stages.



The role of the library is to lead through these processes and to show how reading builds and sustains language and nationhood.



Symposium *The Right to Read: The Riga Manifesto*, 24 October 2025. Photo by Kristians Luhaers

# Thank you!

дякую!

Paldies!

For further inquiries:  
[Baiba.Molnika@lnb.lv](mailto:Baiba.Molnika@lnb.lv)