



Development Co-operation Bulletin Number 2 2008

Ministry of Foreign Affairs grant project competition concluded.

On 27 October, the evaluation of applications submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs grant project competition was finalised. This time, the competition participants were non-governmental organisations. The 23 submitted project applications were evaluated by an independent expert commission. The total amount requested from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs development co-operation budget amounted to LVL 350,358.79 which by more than three times exceeds the funding available for the competition. The planned available funding for the grant project competition is LVL 100,000.

In total, seven winners were selected. The timeline for the implementation of the projects is from 10 November 2008 to 1 March 2009.

Further information:
<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/press-releases/2008/October/27-3/>

Representatives from Latvia participate in European Development Days at Strasbourg

From 15 to 17 November the annual European Development Days (EDD) took place in Strasbourg. This year the main theme was local governance, which means development co-operation focused on capacity building and reforms of local authorities. The event brought together more than 3000 participants both from EU member states and from assistance recipient countries, mainly from Sub-Saharan Africa. During the forum, an exhibition on development co-operation: *Development Village* was held. Latvia, for the second year in succession shared a common Nordic-Baltic stand. The common display increased the number of visitors to the stand, and thus more of those interested in development co-operation learned also about Latvia's contribution. The complete predominance of

recipient countries from Africa should be noted as a negative aspect of the event. Almost no mention was made of Asia, (except Afghanistan), nor of Latin America, nor of Latvia's priority assistance countries.

The next edition of the EDD will take place in Stockholm from 21 to 23 October. Discussions with a Swedish representative raised hope that the representation of assistance recipients will be wider.

The Latvian delegation, led by Evija Dumpe, Director of the Development Co-operation Policy Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, included representatives both from the Foreign Ministry and from NGOs.



Photo MFA: Stand of Nordic and Baltic countries.

Foreign Ministry and GLEN Latvia present photographic exhibition on development co-operation.

A photographic exhibition *LATVIJA DODas PASAULE* (Latvia goes out into the world) organized jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia and the GLEN Latvia association, and devoted to Latvia's contribution to development co-operation, was on display from 25 November to 10 December, in the main hall of the Riga Central railway station.

The displays provided an opportunity to learn about the water supply project in Afghanistan, a nature conservation and waste management project in Georgia, food quality projects in Ukraine and Moldova, and also other

assistance projects implemented by Latvia. The exhibition also featured several development co-operation projects implemented by non-governmental organizations, for instance, the construction of a school in Sri Lanka and education projects in Malawi.



Photo AFI: Exhibition in the station building.

Essay competition for secondary school students on development co-operation concluded with awards to authors of the best essays

On 5 December at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), awards were presented to the winners of an essay competition on development co-operation. Students and their teachers listened to a presentation careers in the diplomatic service, became acquainted with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and received valuable gifts – books, Ministry souvenirs and cinema gift vouchers.

The joint project by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was launched with an introductory lecture on development co-operation for the twelfth-formers at the Smiltene Gymnasium and the Friendly Appeal Cesis State Gymnasium. The lectures were attended by representatives from the MFA, the Education Development Centre and the association GLEN Latvia.

The purpose of the lectures was not only to increase student knowledge about development co-operation, but also to create a theoretical and emotional setting for composing essays. Following the lecture presentations, students were invited to write essays on development co-operation and on Latvia's contribution in this field, on the need to assist countries with lower development indicators, and on our possibilities and challenges.

In total, more than one hundred essays were received from students. The works were assessed by representatives from the Education Development Centre and the Foreign Ministry Development Co-operation Policy Department. The panel selected twelve winners – five students from Smiltene and seven from the Cesis Gymnasium.

Additional information in Latvian:

<http://www.am.gov.lv/lv/Attistibas-sadarbiba/info/zinas/new-page/2008-11-12/>



Photo AFI: Winners of the essay competition.

Winners awarded for *Development Co-operation Publication of the Year* competition

On 16 December, awards were presented at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the winners of the *Development Co-operation Publication of the Year* competition.

The purpose of the competition was to promote an awareness and understanding by residents regarding the assistance provided by Latvia to countries with lower economic indicators, and on the significance of development co-operation throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

Submissions were evaluated by an adjudicating panel, which included representatives from the Foreign Ministry, from non-governmental organisations and from among academic teaching staff. In assessing the works, the following criteria were taken into account: topicality, significance to the process of informing the general public, and awareness of the importance of development co-operation to Latvia and in the world.

The winners were: in the category *Best publication in the regional media* – Juris Lipsnis, a journalist from the newspaper *Kurzemnieks*; in the category *Best publication in electronic media* – Andrejs Fiļipovs from Latgale Regional Television; and in the category *Best publication in the national media* – Māris Puķītis, a journalist of the magazine *Kas jauns?*

Further information (in Latvian):

<http://www.am.gov.lv/lv/Jaunumi/PazinojumiP resei/2008/septembris/16-1/>



Photo AFI: Media award.

Latvia maintains implementation of development projects in Afghanistan

On 20 September, an official ceremony was held to lay the foundation stone for a court building, a construction project being funded by Latvia.

On 15 October, an agreement was signed for the construction of a Latvia-funded police station.

In November, the third political and development advisor from Latvia, Valts Vītums, commenced his tour of duty in Afghanistan. On 2 November, the distribution of warm winter blankets to residents of the Almar district in Faryab Province was successfully concluded. Latvia has financed the delivery of 136 blankets.

Journalist visits Afghanistan

From 14 to 21 October, a project entitled *A journalist's visit to assistance recipient countries* was carried out. Television journalist Sandijs Semjonovs prepared several reports on projects being implemented in Afghanistan by Latvia, and also on the assistance required by this much-suffered country. The documentary videos were screened as part of the *Panorama* news programme.



Photo: Lauris Drēziņš, LA

Foreign Ministry assists the Gori University in Georgia

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has initiated co-operation with the Gori University in Georgia. During the hostilities in August 2008, the City of Gori suffered considerable damage, including air raid damage to two of the University buildings. The Gori University has developed a project for capacity building and reinforcement of its operations.

The project foresees several activities: the installation of a new computer class with 10 workstations, a computer training course for students, supplementing the library stock with new books, the setting up of a University publishing house, the installation of technical equipment in a lecture room for the delivery of a course in interest education, as well as the provision of training for the continuing professional development of teachers.

Foreign Ministry creates a civil expert database

By the end of 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had established a database of civil experts. The database is required to facilitate the selection of civil experts to be posted to assistance recipient countries. The civil experts database will be accessible through the Foreign Ministry website. Experts themselves will be able to register by filling in a questionnaire; they may also be listed by the database administrator.

LAPAS – Latvian Platform for Development Co-operation - activities

During the last quarter of 2008, LAPAS was joined by two more organisations – *Seib - Support to the Children of Guatemala* and by the *Community Development Centre Latvia*. The new Board of LAPAS convened and approved the organisation's activity plan for the year 2009.



Photo: LAPAS

<http://www.lapas.lv/?lang=LV&id=13>

On 30 September in Riga, a LAPAS member organisation, the association *Papardes zieds* (Fern Blossom) held a seminar on transfer of the “Finnish experience in the formulation of development education content and on its integration into the education system”.

Within the framework of the *World Days* project, LAPAS, in association with the Liepāja NGO Centre and the Finnish National Platform of development NGOs, KEPA (Service Centre for Development Co-operation) organised the *African Days* in Liepāja from 6 -11 October.

On 14 October, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, a group of young MDG (Millennium Development Goals) experts held a presentation of their electronic book *TAM gatavi* (Ready for MDGs). <http://www.tam2015.com> at the *K Suns* cinema.

Nino Jakobidze, head of the LAPAS Opportunity Agency, compiled information on the work of Latvian NGOs in Georgia; organised two round-table discussions on the coverage of the situation in Georgia by the Russian-speaking media of Latvia; distributed two newsletters for the NGO coalition in support to Georgia; organized the meeting with PhD Alexander Rondeli, President of the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies and LAPAS member organizations, and prepared proposals for the Foreign Ministry regarding the possibilities for Latvia to facilitate assistance to Georgia.

From 27 to 31 October in Paris, LAPAS took part at the first world meeting of leaders of development co-operation platforms, organised by the French platform within the framework of the French EU Presidency.

On 11 December, the Director of LAPAS, Māra Simane, represented CONCORD, the European association of platforms (European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development) at the Conference on Non-Governmental Diplomacy. The conference was organised in Washington by InterAction, the American Council for Voluntary International Action, the French platform *Coordination Sud* and the Georgetown University.

Member organisations of LAPAS continue active work on projects in the field of development co-operation and development education. On 15 December, a member organisation project bank was launched on the LAPAS website (<http://www.lapas.lv/?lang=LV&id=8>), and may provide a source of inspiration and a forum for an easier exchange of experience and contacts.