



**Current events in development co-operation in 2008.**

**Informative bulletin.**

**SAEIMA (LATVIAN PARLIAMENT)  
ADOPTS LAW ON INTERNATIONAL  
ASSISTANCE.**

On 28 May 2008 the Law on International Assistance came into force.

The law aims to ensure the efficient and transparent planning and implementation of assistance provided by Latvia.

The law provides that the Foreign Ministry shall coordinate the implementation of Latvia's development co-operation, shall develop a development co-operation policy plan and shall co-operate with foreign donors in order to implement joint international assistance activities.

In accordance with the new law, a State Development Co-operation Agency is to be established<sup>1</sup>. The agency will operate under the aegis of the Foreign Ministry and will implement the provision of international aid by Latvia.

**CABINET OF MINISTERS APPROVES  
REGULATION "PROCEDURE FOR  
IMPLEMENTING GRANT PROJECT  
COMPETITIONS"**

On 30 August 2008, the Cabinet Regulation entitled "Procedure for Implementing Grant Project Competitions" came into force. The Regulation stipulates the procedure for the preparation and advertising of grant project competitions, establishing competition management, evaluating project submissions and selecting successful competition applicants. In line with this Regulation, the Foreign Ministry shall in future advertise grant project competitions in the Republic of Latvia or in the recipient state. The Foreign Ministry should also advertise grant project competitions for the allocation of funding for the undertaking of preliminary study visits.

<sup>1</sup> The agency will be formed when there is sufficient funding in the State budget and there has been a significant increase in the resources proposed for development co-operation.

**APPLICATIONS CLOSE FOR FOREIGN  
MINISTRY GRANT PROJECT  
COMPETITION**

On 30 September this year applications closed for the grant project competition advertised by the Foreign Ministry "Support for Development Co-Operation Projects in Recipient States as Determined by the Republic of Latvia". As the competition rules also allow for the forwarding of applications by post, the final applications were received by the Foreign Ministry on 2 October.

A total of 23 project applications were received, for which the sum requested from the Foreign Ministry's development co-operation budget is LVL 350 358.79, an amount three times greater than the total funding provided for the competition.

We wish to draw attention to the fact that the proposed funding for a single project must be between LVL 5000 -20 000. Total funding available for the grant project competition is LVL 100 000.

An independent committee of experts will evaluate the applications by 24 October. Information on successful applicants will be published on the Foreign Ministry website.

The period for implementation of projects will be from 10 November this year until 1 March 2009. Projects may be implemented within a shorter timeframe, but will not be permitted to commence earlier or finish later than the said dates.

Projects implemented under the Foreign Ministry's advertised grant project competition will provide a good opportunity for Latvian non-governmental organisations to develop co-operation with partners in recipient states, passing on their experience and knowledge gained during Latvia's development and reform process.

**FOREIGN MINISTRY CONDUCTS  
TRAINING ON DEVELOPMENT CO-  
OPERATION PROJECT PREPARATION  
AND EVALUATION.**

On 11-12 June 2008, the Foreign Ministry in co-operation with Dr Irene Lorisika, a consultant from the European Commission, organised a training seminar entitled "The Involvement of Civil Society in Development Co-operation". Participating in the seminar were representatives of



state institutions and non-governmental organisations from Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Participants also attended from Italy and Azerbaijan. The event was organised to broaden participants' knowledge of the preparation and evaluation of development co-operation projects in accordance with the criteria determined by the European Commission. During the seminar, participants were familiarised with the work of the institutions of the European Commission concerned with development co-operation issues.

The knowledge acquired during the seminar is important, as it will enable the planners of potential development co-operation projects from Latvia and other countries represented at the seminar to prepare their applications more professionally and become more competitive with other member states of the EU, whose experience in development co-operation is longer.

#### **INTERIM REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION POLICY PROGRAMME FOR 2006 – 2010 COMPLETED**

In June 2008, the Foreign Ministry prepared an interim informative report on the implementation and evaluation of the Republic of Latvia development co-operation policy programme for the period 2006 - 2010.

The informative report finds that progress can be observed in the implementation of development co-operation projects and the promotion of public support for the policies and objectives of development co-operation. However, to promote the growing role of Latvia as a new donor state and fulfilment of its international obligations in development co-operation, it is necessary to significantly increase the amount of funding allocated each year. Although the funding for implementation of bilateral development co-operation has been increasing each year (2006 - LVL 150,000; 2007 - LVL 450,000; 2008 - 580,000), nevertheless the total amount of funding allocated for the implementation of development co-operation policy is the lowest of all the member states European Union.

#### **FOREIGN MINISTRY INVITES JOURNALISTS TO PARTICIPATE IN COMPETITION FOR BEST PUBLICATION ON THE THEME OF DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION**

The Foreign Ministry of Latvia is organising a competition for journalists entitled "Development Co-operation Publication of the Year".

The competition aims to promote the awareness and understanding of Latvia's inhabitants 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. The competition will accept entries from television, radio and the press.

The prize is a trip to Brussels and visits to institutions of the European Union who work with development co-operation issues.

Prizes will be awarded in three nominations: best publication in national electronic media; best publication in national press publications; and best publication in the regional media.

Submissions are welcome by 1 November of this year. We emphasise that works must have been published prior to the date of submission.

A judging panel, which will include representatives from the Foreign Ministry and non-governmental organisations, will evaluate works submitted. The following criteria will be taken into account during assessment of the publications: topicality, significance into the process of informing the public, awareness of the importance of development co-operation in Latvia and the world, and other criteria.

The competition will accept not only publications on our country's contribution to development co-operation, but also the significance of development co-operation overall in promoting growth in less developed regions of the world.

#### **REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION COUNCIL FOR 2007**

In 2007, seven sittings of the Council took place, during which 23 decisions were adopted relating to grant project competitions and submitted projects. In 2007, the Council voted to support a total



of 35 projects (grant project competition projects, projects to be administered by embassies, preliminary research visits and a post-conflict reconstruction project).

It is essential to note that as from 28 May, with the coming into force of the Law on International Assistance, the Development Co-operation Board was abolished. This had been the decision-making institution in the field of development co-operation since 2005. The Law on International Assistance provides for the formation of a development co-operation agency; however, until the agency is established, its functions will be assumed by the Foreign Ministry.

#### EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT DAYS

On 15-17 November the European Development Days (EDD) are to take place in Strasbourg for the third time. This will be the largest event in development co-operation this year. During the EDD there will be an opportunity to view a development co-operation exhibition. As in the previous EDD in Lisbon, Latvia will share a combined pavilion for the Baltic and Nordic states, at which it will inform exhibition visitors about Latvian projects. The common theme this year will be: local government, local government projects and contribution to assistance recipient states.

The Latvian winner of the EC African drawing competition was Elina Primaka, a student from Valka.



Second place went to Marta Pukite, a student at the Jelgava Spidolas College.



In late 2007 and early 2008, the European Commission held, for the second successive time, a competition for drawing and multimedia works on the theme of Africa. Pupils from member states of the EU were invited to prepare competition entries on the following three themes: climate change, water and energy, and tourism.



The closing date for submission of entries to the competition was 31 March, followed by a process of selecting the best works from each of the member states and judging by a Grand Jury in Brussels, which selected national winners and runners-up. The prize winners will be invited to attend the European Development Days in Strasbourg, where, on 16 November, the formal award presentation ceremony will take place. A trip to Africa also awaits the winners.

### **ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN**

First Latvian-financed development co-operation project in Afghanistan concludes.



On 29 May 2008 the first Latvian-financed development co-operation project in Afghanistan was completed. Within the project framework, a water collection and supply system was established in the Faryab province, where members of the Latvian national armed forces are also stationed.

The implementation of this project means that almost 5000 local inhabitants will be provided with drinking water. Drinking water will also be delivered to the local school, supplying approximately 1300 pupils. The project was completed in six months at a total cost of USD 58 044 (approximately LVL 31,000). A sum of

USD 50,000 (LVL 25,000) was allocated from the Foreign Ministry's development co-operation budget for this project, with the balance of the project budget sum being covered from local resources, and the village inhabitants participating in the implementation of the project.

The realisation of the project took place in extremely difficult circumstances: in a country where military activity is present, and where, at the moment, no Latvian non-governmental organisation is operating. Implementation of the project was possible thanks to funding from the development co-operation budget and active co-operation between diplomats and members of the Latvian national armed forces.

The Foreign Ministry will continue work on implementing further development co-operation projects in Afghanistan.

### **FOREIGN MINISTER OF AFGHANISTAN EXPRESSES GRATITUDE FOR LATVIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESTORATION OF HIS COUNTRY**

On 15 August 2008, Foreign Minister Maris Riekstins received a letter from the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Dr Rangeen Dadfar Spanta in which he expresses gratitude for Latvia's political and moral support to Afghanistan, as well as Latvia's financial contribution to the restoration of Afghanistan as announced at the international conference for the support of Afghanistan which was held in Paris on 12 June.

"Your invaluable assistance will play a pivotal role in the reconstruction of our country and provide Afghanistan with the opportunity to restore its rightful place among the community of nations, promote regional co-operation and establish friendly relations with all countries of the world for peace and stability in the region and the world," writes Dr. Rangeen Dadfar Spanta.

### **FIRST FOUNDATION STONES LAID IN AFGHANISTAN FOR NEW COURTHOUSE TO BE BUILT WITH CO-FINANCING FROM LATVIA AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

In Afghanistan on 1 August construction work began on a new courthouse in the town of Shirin-Tagab in Faryab Province.



This is now the second project funded by Latvia in Afghanistan.

Within the project framework a total of three such court houses will be constructed, and training will be provided for judges and other court staff.

### **AID FOR GEORGIA**

To provide assistance to Georgia in overcoming the consequences of hostilities and to avert of a humanitarian crisis, Latvia has provided significant humanitarian aid to Georgia. On 12 August the Latvian Cabinet of Ministers allocated the sum of LVL 120 000. Utilising part of the allocated funding, 12 shipments of humanitarian aid were delivered to Georgia on 12-19 September, providing Georgia with medicines, food, clothing, tents and other basic essentials. Participating in the provision of humanitarian aid are Latvian state institutions, the Latvian Red Cross and a number of non-governmental organisations and enterprises whose goods were forwarded to Georgia with the assistance of the Foreign Ministry. Within the framework of assistance provided by Latvia, 30 children from South Ossetia participated in a two-week long rehabilitation course in Latvia during September.

### **LATVIA'S PLATFORM OF ORGANIZATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION (LAPAS) – THE YEAR 2008**

Significant achievements.

*Information prepared by LAPAS.*

In 2008 existing organisations in LAPAS were joined by the Latvian Youth Council, which represents 50 youth organisations, and also the student organisation AIESEC Latvija, Latvia's Georgian Association Šamšoblo and the Vidzeme Lifelong Learning Support Association.

In the spring, LAPAS and representatives of its member organisations in Saldus, Aluksne, Livani, Daugavpils, Madona, Ivande, Riga, Valmiera, Jelgava and Ogre provided information on Latvia's role in development co-operation and on opportunities to participate to approximately 180 people from more than

100 public organisations, regional councils and social service departments..

During 2008 LAPAS has arranged for Latvia to participate in more than 30 EU-level events abroad on Europe's development co-operation policy.

This year LAPAS coordinated the elaboration of the Development Education Guidelines 2008-2015.

This year also LAPAS continued to promote co-operation opportunities for Latvia's NGOs and other parties with neighbouring countries, focusing particular attention on Ukraine. LAPAS initiated co-operation with the districts of Donetsk and Dnepropetrovsk, which until now had received the fewest offers of development co-operation. LAPAS has promoted the search for partners in the areas for co-operation as suggested by Ukraine. In late summer, a joint summer camp for Latvian and Ukrainian partners took place at Tuja, attended by 16 representatives from Ukraine and over 40 from Latvia.

In order to promote and coordinate support from NGOs at the start of the Georgian crisis, thanks to an initiative from LAPAS, the "Latvian NGO Coalition for Support to Georgia" was formed. Representatives from 20 organisations have indicated their intention to participate in this informal coalition.

This year LAPAS organised World Days on the theme of Africa's development. Seven lectures have been delivered in Riga on the theme of Africa, in addition during the week-long World Days - A Dream of Africa in Valmiera (7-11 April), in Aluksne (14-19 July) and in Liepaja (6-11 October).

Within the World Days framework, 14 new Millennium Development Goals (TAM) experts aged between 18 and 24 received training. These new experts will present an electronic book entitled "Ready for TAM" on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.