



### **PROVISION OF SUPPORT TO GEORGIAN MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION IN CAPACITY BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY**

From 23 to 27 November, five representatives of Georgian municipalities visited Latvia to gain experience of the Latvian Union of Local and Regional Governments in developing municipal system and building relations with the government.

To assist in developing and strengthening a sustainable municipal system in Georgia, the Union of Local and Regional Governments of Latvia (ULRGL) organised several seminars, focusing on the implementation of Latvian municipal reforms, provision of public utilities services to the society and development of the municipal election processes.

During the visit, the representatives of the Georgian delegation met with the representatives of three Latvian municipalities - the Riga City Council, Cesis City Council and Priekuli County Council, learning practically about the municipal work done in relation to the provision of public utilities services.

*“There was a time when we lived in the same country – the USSR, and the development level of the countries was similar. Today we can see the development of your country. Returning home, we wish to take with us your experience in developing a municipal system so that to assist our country in terms of fostering its development and implementation of the relevant reforms,”* said Alexander Kalandadze, the Chairman of the Gardabani City Council.

#### **DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION POLICY DECLARATION “THE EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON DEVELOPMENT ” APPROVED**

On 21 November, the Declaration on Development Co-operation Policy was approved during the meeting of the EU General Affairs & External Relations Council. The Declaration aims to stand for the guidelines of the EU development co-operation policy. For the first time the Declaration has determined the goals, principles and priorities of the common development co-operation policy of the European Community and member states, which are oriented on the reduction of poverty and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Declaration has given priority to the low-income countries as the main recipients of assistance, with special focus on Africa. Yet, with Latvia participating actively in the discussions, a compromise was reached, admitting equal importance of extending assistance also to the countries with medium income. This was crucial to Latvia in view of its development co-operation priorities and focus region and countries.

Text of the Declaration:

[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/development\\_policy\\_statement/docs/eu\\_dps\\_en.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/development_policy_statement/docs/eu_dps_en.pdf#zoom=100)

### **ON 29 NOVEMBER 2005, THE GOVERNMENT APPROVED THE DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION POLICY PLAN 2006 OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA**

The Development Co-operation Policy Plan for 2006 has set as priority the implementation of bilateral and trilateral co-operation projects, as well as public information activities to raise public awareness and support for development co-operation policy implementation.

Due to the well-established contacts and co-operation, foreign policy focus and desire to co-operate with Latvia, priority countries for the 2006 are Moldova and Georgia. In some areas there will be co-operation with Belarus, too.

Total budget for development co – operation implementation in 2006 is 150,000 lats, of which 130,000 Ls will be for bilateral and trilateral co-operation projects, whereas 20,000 lats will be used for support of development studies and communication activities.

### **STRENGTHENING THE MASS MEDIA SECTOR OF GEORGIA IN THE PROCESS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

In December, the EU Information Centre of the Saeima (the Parliament of Latvia) in cooperation with the Saeima European Affairs Committee implemented a development co-operation project with an aim to strengthen the principles of good governance in Georgia by raising the qualifications and professionalism of the journalists and sharing Latvia's experience in the EU integration process. Eight representatives of the mass media and two from the Parliament of Georgia stayed in Latvia from 12 to 18 December with the purpose to learn about the work of the Latvian mass media and government administration institutions and the reforms implemented in Latvia. During the visit the delegation met with the Saeima Speaker, Ingrida Udre, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Artis Pabriks, visiting also the State Chancellery and Latvian Institute. As part of the project, the Georgian delegation together with the representatives of the Latvian mass media participated in the seminar "Interaction of state institutions and mass media in a democratic society".

*“Latvian experience in implementing democratic reforms stands for an excellent example to Georgia. Both countries should even more strengthen the contacts and existing co-operation,”* says Tengyz Gogotsvili, Georgian TV-journalist.



### **PROVISION OF SUPPORT IN STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF MOLDOVA MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVES**

Latvian Union of Local and Regional Governments organised a visit of the Moldovan delegation to Latvia from 11 – 14 December. The purpose of the visit was to inform about the authority and fiscal decentralisation model in Latvia.

During the visit several lectures were delivered in relation to the current events in Moldova with direct impact on sustainable and efficient existence of municipalities, such as distribution of authority and competencies between the state and local governments, and the municipal budget and finances. The representatives of the Moldovan delegation met with the experts of the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government and representatives of the Kurzeme Regional Development Agency and Budget Department of the Ministry of Finance.

*Consultant to the Directorate General of the Moldovan Agency for Regional Development, Grigore Zaharia, underlined that in the future they were about to witness huge changes affecting the municipal system and formation of the Municipal Ministry, pointing out that the information provided by the Latvian officials would allow to avoid many problems in this respect.*

### **YOUNG PEOPLE ARE INVITED TO SIGN UP FOR VOLUNTARY WORK IN GEORGIA, SRI LANKA AND NAMIBIA\***

Until 9 January 2006, young people of Latvia could apply for participation in one of the four "GLEN 2006" projects in Georgia, Namibia and Sri Lanka.

GLEN (Global Education Network of Young Europeans) voluntary programme aims to increase the level of public awareness regarding the world development issues, strengthen the support by the young people of Latvia to sustainable development, ecologically and socially responsible way of living and foster co-operation among various cultures as well as the rich and less prosperous countries.

The voluntary programme will include three months of work, a study tour, two introductory seminars and the assessment seminar, which will be held on return from the respective country.

In 2005, there were 3 representatives from Latvia (Janis Kirpitis, Julija Berkovica and Ilze Saleniece) co-participating in projects in Namibia, Ghana and Sri Lanka.

\* "LETA", 08.12.2005.

### **THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY IN IMPLEMENTING THE DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION POLICY**

One of the most essential elements in planning and implementing the development co-operation policy is the European Neighbourhood Policy that aims to increase the level of stability and welfare in the countries that are near to the external borders of the European Union, hence also Latvia.

#### **LATVIAN EXPERTS PARTICIPATE IN THE EU BORDER ASSISTANCE MISSION ON THE UKRAINE – MOLDOVA BORDER**

From 1 December 2005 to May 2006 the EU Border Assistance Mission operating on the Moldova-Ukraine border is taking place. For the first time six Latvian borders control and customs experts are participating in the mission, whose experience will be of assistance in fighting smuggling, violations of law and illegal trade on the border. The mission also includes experts from other EU states, such as Estonia and Lithuania, Germany, UK, Sweden and the Netherlands.

#### **THE MEETING OF "THE GROUP OF NEW FRIENDS OF GEORGIA"**

On 9 November, the second meeting of the "Group of New Friends of Georgia" was held in Bucharest with the representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Baltic States, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania participating. The meeting was held to discuss Georgian and European and transatlantic integration attempts. The participants of the meeting voiced their support to Georgia's reforms and asserted readiness in sharing the experience of the countries they were representing. Unity was reached as to the need to determine clear co-operation priorities, which would allow increasing the efficiency of the reforms in Georgia.

#### **THE VISIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER TO UKRAINE**

In November, as part of his official visit to Ukraine, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia, Aigars Kalvitis, met with all high-level Ukrainian officials, including the Mayor of Kiev and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in order to discuss the intense co-operation between Ukraine and the European Union in implementing the European Neighbourhood Policy.