



DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION COUNCIL AGREES ON BUDGET FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION POLICY IN 2006

On February 2, 2006 the first meeting of the Development Cooperation Council was held. The key issue on the agenda was the distribution of budget allocation for the implementation of development cooperation activities in 2006. It was agreed to:

- allocate LVL 90,000 for call for project proposals with the goal to implement development cooperation projects in the priority countries - Moldova and Georgia;
- allocate LVL 15,120 for call for project proposals with the goal to implement communication and development studies' activities aimed at gaining public support for the development cooperation policy;
- to allocate financing for continuation of the development cooperation projects launched in 2005 in the area of customs brokers and border guarding, organization of a fact – finding mission to Georgia, implementation of the Glen-Latvia development cooperation project in Georgia, and support the participation of Latvia's Platform for Development Cooperation (LAPAS) in the network of international organizations.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ANNOUNCES THE CALL FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION PROJECTS IN GEORGIA AND MOLDOVA

The purpose of the Call is to facilitate the reform of state administration, local governments and the defence sector in Georgia and Moldova, and the development of European and transatlantic integration processes, development of democratic and civil society in Georgia and Moldova, as well as contribute to the improvement of education, culture, social development, health and environment protection of both countries.

Institutions of public administration and their agencies, local governments, associations and foundations, as well as private businessmen may submit applications to the call for project proposal. Total available funding is LVL 90,000.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ANNOUNCES THE CALL FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS FOR INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS IN LATVIA ON DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION ISSUES

The Call aims to increase public awareness in Latvia on development cooperation and facilitate public support to Latvia's development cooperation policy.

Institutions of public administration and their agencies, local governments, associations and foundations, as well as private businessmen may submit applications to the call for project proposal. Total available funding is LVL 15,120.

Deadline for submission of applications – the 23rd of May

For more information, please see:

<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/Attistibas-sadarbiba/projekti/>

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGREEMENT SIGNED BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS OF LATVIA AND MOLDOVA ON THE 3RD OF APRIL

The main objective of the Agreement is to contribute to economic and social development of the Republic of Moldova and facilitate observation of fundamental democratic and international rights principles and human rights.

The cooperation focus areas of the Agreement are promotion of the development of democratic and civil society and state economy, provision of assistance in implementing the public administration and defence system reforms, strengthening state institutions, transfer of experience in implementing reforms in the areas of environment protection, education, justice, customs, etc. Under the Agreement Latvia plans to support technical assistance initiatives, namely, sending various experts, consultants and other specialists to Moldova.

The Moldovan side undertakes to ensure Latvian experts special privileges, such as to exempt them from taxes and other dues payable in relation to their pay, household goods that are brought into the country, vehicles, etc.



“Establishment of Customs Brokers Association in Moldova”

On March 22 to 25, experts of the Latvian Logistics and Customs Brokers' Association visited Moldova to assist in the establishment of a similar brokers' association in Moldova.

The goal of the visit was to build an effective platform for cooperation and dialogue with all Moldovan institutions concerned with customs issues, by establishing a local Customs Brokers' Association in Moldova. The association will be a non-governmental organization set up to resolve the problems and restrictions of customs brokers and establish and maintain a dialogue between the customs service and businessmen.

The project is a continuation of the development cooperation project on collection of customs duties and improvement of transparency in the customs service in Moldova, implemented by the Latvian Logistics and Customs Brokers' Association in 2005 with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia.

“Strengthening of capacity of the Border Guard of the Republic of Moldova in the area of cynology”

Experts of Latvia's State Border Guard assists the reorganization and development of the cynology service of the Moldovan Border Guard in bringing it to the level of European Union member states.

From April through May six cynologists of the Moldova will be trained at the Latvian State Border Guard College. In addition to this Latvia will present six puppies as a gift to the Moldovan Border Guard.

This project is part of the programme “Provision of support to the Republic of Moldova in strengthening the capacity of the public administration system in the area of border security, border guarding and control and foreigner surveillance”, which was launched in 2005 and implemented by the State Border Guard.

REPRESENTATIVES FROM MOLDOVA GAIN LATVIA'S EXPERIENCE IN PROMOTING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

On March 27 to 31, a Moldovan delegation visited Latvia to gain Latvia's experience in promoting public participation. The Moldovan Parliament, various ministries, the Chisinau municipality and other municipalities, the non-governmental sector, and the media were represented in the delegation.

The purpose of the visit was to share experience how civil society in Latvia is involved in the work of public administration and local governments, as well as the in the process of decision-making. The Moldovan delegation met with representatives of the Saeima, Ministry of Regional Development and Local Governments, Secretariat of Special Assignments Minister for Social Integration, State Chancellery, Riga City Council and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as various non-governmental organisations.

The visit was organised by the Soros Foundation - Latvia and Latvia's Platform for Development Cooperation (LAPAS) in cooperation with the Latvian experts and Soros Foundation - Moldova.

“Museum opens to the public”

From September through December this year, young experts from Latvia, Lithuania and Germany will be working in the State Museum of Georgia to strengthen and support the transition processes within the Georgian network of museums, using the expertise of Latvian specialists. Under the project various experience exchange seminars will be held, new working materials and a methodology manual are to be elaborated, a programme for attracting children and youth will be prepared, and various expositions of museum exhibits, focusing on different target audiences are planned. The project will be implemented by Glen Latvia and supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Glen Latvia is a development education organization that aims to increase public awareness of development cooperation issues in Latvia and in the world.

THE UN WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME AIMS TO FACILITATE COOPERATION WITH LATVIA

On March 6, representatives of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) visited Latvia with the goal to facilitate cooperation with the state, private and non-governmental sectors of Latvia.

During the visit the WFP representatives informed that cooperation with the Programme can be implemented by financial assistance, as well as logistics services allowing for transportation of food to the crisis regions.

The NGO sector representatives of Latvia demonstrated interest in the World Food Programme project Walk the World, which aims to attract public attention to the global poverty and food shortage problems, as well as collect donations.

Walk the World is scheduled for the 21st of May to be held simultaneously in more than 90 countries. As in the previous years, the Walk in Riga will be organised by “TNT” in cooperation with Latvia's Platform for Development Cooperation (LAPAS) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia.



ON MARCH 13 TO 15, THE LATVIAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS VISITED MOLDOVA

During the visit, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Artis Pabriks, met with the President of Moldova, Mr. Vladimir Voronin, Prime Minister, Mr. Vasile Tarlev, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Mr. Andrei Stratan, and Parliament Speaker, Mr. Marian Lupu. The Minister also visited the customs control point Palanka, met with the Latvian experts who participate in the EU border control assistance mission on the Moldova-Ukraine border.

Moldova is one of Latvia's priorities under the European neighbourhood policy. Latvia is sharing its reform experience with Moldova to assist in the fulfilment of the Neighbourhood Policy Action Plan. The Moldovan officials thanked Latvia for the support to Moldova in its EU integration aspirations. The visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs preceded the state visit of the President of Latvia, Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, to Moldova.

Representatives from Latvia participate in the New Group of Georgia's Friends meeting in Tbilisi

The representatives of the foreign ministries of the Member States represented in the New Group of Georgia's Friends met in Tbilisi on the 1st of March to discuss the progress of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration, energy security and the pending conflict issues. The New Group of Georgia's Friends is a type of interstate cooperation aimed to facilitate Georgia-Europe and transatlantic integration aspirations. The New Group of Georgia's Friends comprises Latvia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania.

Latvia's delegates – Director of the First Bilateral Relations Department of the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Vilmaris Henins, and Acting Director of the Security Policy Department, Andris Pelss – emphasized the great importance of Georgia's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). The fulfillment of the plan is evaluated by NATO member states.

In March, representatives from Latvia acted as international observers during the Presidential elections in Belarus and the Parliament elections in Ukraine

On March 19, the Presidential elections were held in Belarus. Four presidential candidates had been registered, and two of them represented the democratic opposition. For the third time of office was also running the current President Mr. Alexander Lukashenko. Latvia had nominated eleven observers to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Bureau (ODIHR), of which three were the diplomats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the others – representatives of various non-governmental organizations. The OSCE acknowledged that the elections had not been held in accordance with the international criteria of free and democratic elections.

On March 26, in Ukraine the Parliament elections were held. The OSCE Election Observation Mission acknowledged that the elections were organized in line with the criteria of free and democratic elections, pointing out, however, to some technical drawbacks in the elections process. Latvian representatives - one diplomat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and one representative of a non-governmental organization – were part of a team of international observers.

ON APRIL 2 TO 4, THE PRESIDENT OF LATVIA, MRS. VAIRA VIKE-FREIBERGA, WAS ON A STATE VISIT TO MOLDOVA

During the visit the President met with the highest Moldovan officials. The visit included signing of the agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Republic of Moldova on Development Cooperation, as well as the agreement on cooperation between the Latvian and Moldovan Ministries of Defense. The main focus of the discussions was on the reform process in Moldova, and Latvia's opportunities in extending assistance and sharing its experience in implementing of reforms, economic cooperation, as well as the Trans-Dniester issue. The Moldovan side underlined the positive character of the relations to date, thanking Latvia for its understanding of issues that are both of crucial importance and challenging to Moldova, pointing out that the assistance provided by Latvia has been of high value to Moldova.