

## Support for naturalization

The Government will continue to facilitate naturalization of non-citizens through the financing of Latvian language instruction for those seeking citizenship, as well as information activities on the naturalization process. More than 60,000 persons have been granted Latvian citizenship since naturalisation began in 1995. While approving the state budget of 2003, the Saeima on its own initiative and with overwhelming support approved additional funding of 85,000 EUR for language training for naturalization applicants. Already in 2001 a pro-active information campaign was started to provide non-citizens with additional information about the opportunities to naturalize, including outdoor stands and opportunities to try sample tests.

## Education

State-funded minority education is guaranteed by the Education Law and functions in eight minority languages - there are 173 Russian schools, 149 schools with 2 languages of instruction (Latvian and Russian), 6 Polish, 2 Jewish, 1 Ukrainian, 1 Estonian, 1 Lithuanian and 1 Belarusian school, as well as Roma classes in 2 schools.

In 2004, the 10th grade of state and municipal general education institutions and the 1st year of state and municipal vocational education institutions will start studies in the state language. However, primary schools will continue studying bilingually. At present, 70% of the minority schools are ready to start studies in Latvian as they are already teaching bilingually.

In the 2001/2002 academic year 76% of the first-graders began studying in Latvian. During the last ten years a trend has been observed that the demand for education in the Latvian language has increased, leading to a corresponding decrease in the demand for education in Russian.

## Latvian Language Training Program

The Government successfully continues the National Programme for Latvian Language Training. International donors have provided financial support for the Program.

During the last 2 years the Government of Latvia has allocated over 1 330 000 USD for the Program. More than 58 000 persons have benefited from the programme since 1996 (2484 courses have been conducted).

The Program has offered free language courses for the representatives of the professions who need Latvian language skills in their jobs. Priority has been given to pedagogues, as well as medical and police staff.

## Cooperation with international organizations

Over the last ten years, Latvia has cooperated and consulted on the aspects of society integration with international organizations that are active in this field, notably, the Council of Europe, OSCE, UN, Council of the Baltic Sea States. As a result, the OSCE resident Mission was able to complete its presence in Latvia by the end of 2001. Currently, Latvia continues its longstanding cooperation with international human rights organizations, including the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. Latvia will also continue to share its successful experience in the field of social integration with other states.

Naturalisation campaign:  
Latvian Citizenship - make your choice!  
/ Photo: Ilmārs Znotiņš/

