

**Latvian Naturalization Project
A Project of Freedom House**

**Associate Cooperative Agreement No. DGS-A-00-99-00006-00
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**Ninth Interim Narrative Report
Reporting Period: April 1 – June 31, 2001**

I. Executive Summary

On March 15, 1999, USAID-Latvia awarded a grant in the amount of \$500,000 to Freedom House to sponsor the Latvian Naturalization Project. In December 1999, USAID increased the grant award by an additional \$95,195 to support the development of a fast-track language-training program to prepare applicants for the naturalization exam. As of the time of this writing, Freedom House received a no-cost extension to implement activities through September 2001.

The Latvian Naturalization Project is designed to strengthen the rule of law and human rights by supporting the implementation of amendments to Latvia's Citizenship Law. The 1998 amendments to the law liberalize the naturalization process as a means of integrating Latvia's 28 percent minority resident population. Through the USAID Latvian Naturalization Project, Freedom House provides technical assistance, training, and support to the Latvian Naturalization Board (LNB) and its Information Centers (ICs) to strengthen outreach to non-citizens and motivate them to apply for citizenship. With the supplemental funding, the project supports language training for citizenship applicants. Since the program aims to raise public awareness of legal rights and responsibilities, instill confidence in the naturalization process, and stimulate public demand for equal treatment under the law, its fundamental goal is to increase access to justice for both citizens and non-citizens of Latvia.

During the grant period, Freedom House has sponsored a variety of program activities designed to meet these goals. The IC became a new arm of LNB in 1999. Freedom House has devoted project support to developing the center, its staff, and its public relations and community outreach work. Freedom House has also supported the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other partners in collaborative projects with the LNB to achieve the program objectives. The program activities have included: (1) institutional capacity building of the IC through strategic planning, training, and on-site technical assistance; (2) strengthening community outreach and public relations through on-site technical assistance, training, and grants; and (3) support for exam preparation training programs through the design of training curricula and training of trainers.

This narrative report reviews the activity carried out during the ninth interim reporting period of April 1 through June 30, 2001.

II. Project Activities this Quarter

In response to requests by the LNB and the U.S. Embassy in Riga, Freedom House is currently assisting the LNB in the design, development, implementation, and management of a Citizenship Campaign, a nationwide, multi-dimensional public relations/media campaign to promote citizenship in Latvia among the Russian minority. The Citizenship Campaign is intended to achieve two basic objectives: to raise public awareness about the citizenship issue in Latvia and, secondly, to motivate non-citizens in Latvia to apply for citizenship. This campaign will be the largest undertaking by the LNB to date, as donors have agreed to provide over \$200,000 for the initiative. The Campaign will be organized and conducted in Latvia by a public relations firm, selected competitively through this tender process. This is the first time that a professional firm will be used to conduct a large scale, nationwide multi-media citizenship campaign. If it is successful, it may well be expanded upon and used in other countries where ethnic and citizenship issues create tensions in the region.

Freedom House has played a critical role in helping the LNB to achieve consensus among local partners and the international donor community on the goals, strategies, and approaches for the campaign. Ongoing Freedom House involvement has significantly increased the pace of the initiative's start-up and contributed to its immediate and effective implementation. This quarter, Freedom House also awarded a grant of \$47,000 to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as the repository for the combined funding from international donors for the tender.

In addition to the grant, Freedom House has shepherded the tender process through with the substantial involvement of our consultant, Jim Denton, former FH executive director and a public relations expert. Last quarter, Mr. Denton traveled to Riga to work with the LNB and the donor community, including the American Embassy, the UNDP, and the OSCE, to coordinate the development and drafting of a tender for the Citizenship Campaign. Freedom House's consultant assisted the LNB in writing a draft tender that presents the project objectives and guidelines. The tender was launched at the end of April 2001.

This quarter, following the launch of the tender for the Citizenship Campaign, Freedom House provided further on-site technical assistance in its subsequent stages. Jim Denton traveled to Riga from May 13-15, 2001 during which he worked with the LNB and OSCE and others in the donor community, including the American Embassy and the UNDP, to conduct a seminar for the potential bidders that have expressed interest in participating in the tender. Freedom House's primary task during this three day consultancy was to meet with the representatives of the donor groups and the LNB to help set the agenda and to ensure that all parties were in agreement on priorities and procedures. Secondly, Mr. Denton served as the moderator and outside expert to explain the project and to answer questions as appropriate in the bidder's seminar.

Fourteen representatives of the commercial public relations community in Latvia attended the bidder's seminar. The purpose of the seminar was to explain the project objectives and guidelines in an effort to ensure that the tender would generate quality and relevant proposals. Mrs. Aldermane, the Director of the LNB, and OSCE Ambassador to Latvia Peter Semneby, opened the meeting. Ms. Gunta Line and Jim Denton conducted the discussion and answered most questions. The seminar lasted for approximately two hours.

Mr. Denton returned to Riga in late June to conduct a preliminary review of the proposals submitted by Riga-based public relations firms in response to the tender. During the visit, he met several times with representatives of the LNB, including Ms. Line, Ambassador Semneby, and his deputy, as well as members of the review committee that will select the winning proposal. Mr. Denton read all proposals independently, and reported back to members of the review panel late the following afternoon (LNB, OSCE, UNDP, embassy representatives) with his assessment. Additionally, Mr. Denton prepared an informal summary of the top proposals and assisted the LNB draft the criteria to be used for the formal proposal review.

Eight comprehensive proposals were submitted. All conformed to the objectives and basic strategy of the tender's criteria. Based on Mr. Denton's assessment, Freedom House identified four competitive proposals. The selection committee will make its decision in the upcoming quarter and award the tender.

Freedom House provided sample documents for a tender agreement to the OSCE for use in awarding the contract funds. Mr. Denton provided consultation to the LNB and OSCE on how they might work with a consortium of private public relations companies.

Future Activities

Next quarter will be the final stage in project implementation. Freedom House will ensure that grant funding for the tender award is administered properly through the OSCE funding mechanism. In addition, Freedom House will consult with the LNB and other partners on ground to ensure that the Citizenship Campaign is underway to determine and whether additional technical assistance is necessary.