



**Resolution 1236 (2001)<sup>1</sup>**

Final version

## Honouring of obligations and commitments by Latvia

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly welcomes the substantial progress Latvia has made towards honouring its commitments and obligations as a member state since its accession to the Council of Europe on 10 February 1995. Latvia has thus met most of the objectives and deadlines set out in Assembly [Opinion No. 183 \(1995\)](#):

- i. Latvia had already ratified the European Convention on Human Rights and its Protocols Nos. 1, 2, 4, 7 and 11 as well as Protocols Nos. 3, 5 and 8 before the monitoring procedure opened on 26 September 1997; since then Latvia has also ratified Protocol No. 6, on 7 May 1999;
- ii. Latvia has also ratified the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (10 February 1998); the European Convention on Extradition (2 May 1997); the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (2 June 1997); the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons (2 May 1997); the General Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Council of Europe and its additional protocol (15 January 1998); and the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime (11 December 1998);
- iii. Latvia has honoured its obligation to settle international disputes by peaceful means, as an obligation incumbent on all member states of the Council of Europe.

2. As regards the honouring of commitments related to the situation of Latvia's stateless non-citizen population, the Assembly welcomes:

- i. the amendments to the Law on Citizenship as approved in a nationwide referendum on 3 October 1998, which abolished the "age-window system", granted Latvian citizenship to stateless children born in Latvia since 21 August 1991, simplified the language tests for persons aged over 65 years and reduced the number of questions in history and other knowledge tests;
- ii. the adoption by the Saeima of the amended State Language Law on 9 December 1999 and of implementing legislation in August 2000, as well as the further amendments made to these regulations by the Cabinet of Ministers on 21 November 2000, thus completing the implementation mechanism of the State Language Law, which is now essentially in conformity with Latvia's international obligations.

3. Noting the adoption of the Education Law (29 October 1998), the Assembly considers it to be essential that Latvian authorities maintain an open dialogue with the non-Latvian speaking community on the further implementation of this law, in particular on issues concerning the introduction of Latvian as the sole language of instruction in secondary schools by 2004, and the implementation of minority education programmes in primary schools.

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1. Assembly debate on 23 January 2001 (2nd Sitting) (see [Doc. 8924](#), report of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe, rapporteurs: MM. Davis and Jansson). Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 January 2001 (2nd Sitting).



4. The Assembly welcomes the National Programme for the Integration of Society in Latvia which was adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in December 1999, presenting a comprehensive approach to furthering civic participation and integration in the political, social, educational and cultural fields. The Assembly considers the implementation of the social integration programme to be outstandingly important for Latvia's future development, and expects the speedy establishment of the new institutions foreseen in the programme.
5. The Assembly calls on the Latvian authorities to pursue their policy towards consolidation of democratic reforms and social integration by undertaking the following:
  - i. to ratify as a matter of priority the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (signed by Latvia on 11 May 1995) and to amend and implement legislation, in particular the amended State Language Law, in conformity with the provisions and the spirit of the framework convention;
  - ii. to give further encouragement to non-citizens to apply for citizenship – through media campaigns and public statements by the political leadership. Despite significant progress made in the naturalisation process, sustained efforts are imperative to produce further results in this field by, for instance, combining the compulsory tests for naturalisation with centralised final school exams, targeting language training for naturalisation candidates and reducing the cost of the application for naturalisation;
  - iii. to provide additional resources to the Naturalisation Board and the National Programme for Latvian Language Training;
  - iv. to amend and implement the Education Law of October 1998 in accordance with the provisions and spirit of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;
  - v. to devise and adopt a law on the protection of national and language minorities and establish a state body in charge of minority affairs;
  - vi. to ratify as a matter of priority the Social Charter of the Council of Europe;
  - vii. to speed up the implementation of the Social Integration Programme.
6. The Assembly encourages the non-citizen population of Latvia to take advantage of all opportunities to learn the state language and to apply for citizenship in order to fully participate in the country's political, economic, social and cultural life.
7. The Assembly calls on the authorities of the Russian Federation to reduce the fees for visas for Latvian citizens to the same level as the fees for non-citizens, and also calls on the Russian and other neighbouring states' authorities to encourage non-citizens in Latvia to apply for Latvian citizenship.
8. The Assembly calls on all member states of the Council of Europe:
  - i. to grant technical assistance to the implementing agencies of the State Language Law and Latvia's Naturalisation Board, and both financial and technical assistance to the National Programme for Latvian Language Training and the agencies implementing the Social Integration Programme;
  - ii. to fund Council of Europe confidence-building projects with a view to strengthening social integration at the level of civil society.
9. In conclusion, the Assembly is of the opinion that Latvia has made substantial progress in honouring its obligations and commitments as a member state of the Council of Europe, and that Latvia is also determined to fulfil the remaining commitments. The Assembly therefore considers the current monitoring procedure as closed. It will carry out its post-monitoring dialogue with the Latvian authorities through its Monitoring Committee on the issues listed in paragraph 5 above, or on any other issue arising from the obligations of Latvia as a member state of the Council of Europe, with a view to reopening the procedure in accordance with [Resolution 1115 \(1997\)](#) if further clarification or enhanced co-operation is deemed desirable.