

PC.DEL/824/04
13 September 2004

ENGLISH only

**National Programme for the Promotion of Tolerance
in Latvia**

(Background information)

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1. Relation of the programme to the priorities of the government, ministries and other policy documents

The Secretariat of the Special Tasks Minister for Social Integration (hereafter SSTMSI), in compliance with the sections on *Integration, Civil Society, Justice and Culture* of the Declaration of Indulis Emsis' Cabinet of Ministers, has developed the National Programme for the Promotion of Tolerance (hereafter NPPT).

The development of the NPPT was carried out by an inter-agency working group acting under provision of the Prime Minister's Decree No. 42 *On the Working Group for the Development of a National Programme against Intolerance* of 30 September 2003. The working group comprised representatives from government agencies, institutions of higher learning and NGOs. The working group found it unnecessary to develop a preliminary framework document, since opinions on ways to address the issue of intolerance did not differ. Thus, there was no need for an abstract document laying the groundwork for future work on a policy document.

The NPPT has been drafted in the context of the following documents developed and adopted by the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe and other international organizations:

- UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10.12.1948)
- UN Declaration on the Elimination on all Forms of Racial Discrimination (20.11.1963)
- UN International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (07.03.1966)
- European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (04.11.1950)
- Council of the European Union directive 2000/45/EC, implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial and ethnic origin (29.06.2000)
- Council of the European Union directive 2000/78/EC, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation (27.11.2000)
- Council of the European Union decision 2000/750/EC, establishing a Community action programme to combat discrimination (2001.-2006.)(27.11.2000)
- European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights (7.12.2001)
- ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance) Second report on Latvia (14.12.2001)
- ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance) General Policy Recommendation No. 7 on National legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination (13.12.2002)
- the experience and practice of the European Commission's Campaign *For Diversity-against Discrimination*¹
- the experience and practice of other European Union member states developing national action plans against intolerance and discrimination (e.g. Sweden, the Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland)

The NPPT is a medium-term policy document intended for five years.

The content of the NPPT reflects international practice. Action plans against intolerance, racism, anti-semitism, xenophobia and discrimination have been developed and implemented in the member states of the European Union. Summing up the experiences of several countries, the working group included the findings from the action plans of the Republic of Ireland, Sweden

¹ Annual report on equality and non-discrimination 2003. Towards diversity. European Commission, 2003; Equality, Diversity and the Enlargement. Reports on measures to combat discrimination in acceding and candidate countries. European Commission, 2003.

and Norway² into the contents of the NPPT. The experiences of these countries are similar to the situation in Latvia. Discrimination and intolerance due to ethnic origin, religion and other grounds have been found in the above countries. Measures have been taken against these manifestations of intolerance and discrimination, changes in legislation have been introduced and inter-agency cooperation has been developed.

SSTMI initiated public discussion of the NPPT which took place from 22 March to 22 April, 2004. On 22 March the public discussion was started in the premises of SSTMI, where representatives of public agencies, NGOs, representatives of the media and human rights experts convened. Concurrently, the draft programme was made available on the Internet. The draft text with an introduction was available at several web sites: www.integracija.gov.lv, www.politika.lv, and www.delfi.lv. The printed version of the text was available at SSTMSI. The discussion of 22 March was recorded and the audio tape is available at the SSTMSI.

The output of the public discussion can be described as positive. Public interest in the draft programme was significant. Both electronic discussions and discussions in other mass media took place. There were altogether twenty comments at www.integracija.gov.lv and 23 comments at www.politika.lv. The Internet portal www.politika.lv commissioned an evaluation from an independent expert and also asked several NGO representatives to express their opinions. The results of the public discussions were summed up and submitted to the working group, which incorporated many suggestions into the programme.

2. Primary and secondary objectives of the programme

2.1. Target audience of the programme

The problem of intolerance concerns all of society since it may affect any person living in Latvia. Summarizing international legal practice, expert opinions and the action plans of various EU member states, the following grounds for intolerance and discrimination were identified:

Race, skin colour, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, age, religion, political opinion, world view, social status and origin, property, origin (birth), professional rank, affiliation with a political party, disability, genetic characteristics, sexual orientation, opinions other than political, and other features.³

Studies carried out in Latvia and abroad demonstrate that the most common forms of intolerance in Latvia are related to ethnic origin and religious affiliation.⁴ In particular, Roma have been identified as a risk group. Public opinion polls show that a substantial part of Latvia's inhabitants harbour stereotypes and prejudices towards Roma.⁵ As elsewhere in Europe, anti-semitism⁶ and prejudice towards Muslims are occasionally evident in Latvia. For example, the European Values Study in 1999 found that 27.2% of Latvia's inhabitants would

² The action plans of the above countries are available at the following web sites:
Republic of Ireland <www.justice.ie/802569B20047F907/vWeb/wpMJDE5NKE2S>;
Norway <www.odin.dep.no/archive/krdvedlegg/01/13/handl022.pdf>;
Sweden <www.umn.edu/humanrts/hrcommittee/sweden2003.html>

³ Levits, E. Par tiesiskās vienlīdzības principu [On the principle of judicial equality]. *Latvijas Vēstnesis*. 68(2833), 08.05.2003

⁴ ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance) Second report on Latvia (14.12.2001). *Council of Europe*, 2002. Pp.19-20.

⁵ Latvijas Cilvēktiesību un etnisko studiju centrs. Čigānu stāvoklis Latvijā. [Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies. The Situation of Roma in Latvia]. Riga, 2003. Pp.11-13.

⁶ See: Dribins, L. Antisemitisms un tā izpausmes Latvijā. Vēstures atskats. [Anti-semitism and its Manifestations in Latvia. A Historical Overview.] *Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas raksti. [Publications of the Latvian Historical Commission]*. Vol.4, Riga, 2001.

not like to have Roma as neighbours, 14.5% would not choose to live next door to Muslims and 5.2 % next to Jews.⁷

A significant number of Latvia's inhabitants believe that not only discriminatory attitudes, but also illegitimate differential treatment of persons based on ethnic origin exists in Latvia. A sociological survey commissioned by the National Human Rights Office in 2000 suggested that 24 % of all respondents (18 % ethnic Latvians and 31% minorities) believed they had experienced discrimination over the preceding three years. When asked about the causes of discrimination, the respondents most often mentioned ethnicity and language (28 % and 24%, respectively).⁸

Due to the enormous demographic changes that took place in Latvia as a result of migration during the Soviet occupation, there exists a distinct mistrust towards potential immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees.⁹ Although a surge of immigration is not predicted in the first years after Latvia's accession to the European Union, data on current manifestations of intolerance and trends observed elsewhere in Europe suggest the possible appearance of such forms of intolerance as Islamophobia, anti-semitism, xenophobia, and intolerance towards people based on skin colour. Hence, the objectives put forward within the framework of the NPPT envisage the implementation of mechanisms targeted to combat intolerance and prevent previously uncommon forms of intolerance in Latvia.

Public opinion polls also demonstrate that there exists intolerance towards other social groups such as sexual minorities, former convicts, HIV/AIDS patients, and the mentally ill or disabled.¹⁰ Individuals and groups expressing ethnically or religiously intolerant views are often intolerant towards other social risk groups as well.

In the course of its work, the NPPT working group reviewed the Programme on *Implementation of Gender Equality (2005-2007)* developed by the Ministry of Welfare and the policy documents *On Necessary Action to Avert Drawbacks in National Pension Policy* and *On the Monthly Family Benefit after Childbirth*.

The NPPT does not provide for combating intolerance on the basis of age, disability or towards other socially vulnerable groups, which is the responsibility of the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs or the Ministry of Health.

Until now, existing or emerging policy documents have not proposed effective measures for the promotion of tolerance.

2.2. Primary and secondary objectives of the programme

The overall objective of the NPPT is the formation of a tolerant Latvian society, the elimination of intolerance and the further development of a multi-cultural society under conditions of European integration and globalisation.

The secondary objectives of the NPPT are:

- 1) promotion of inter-agency cooperation in the field of combating intolerance;
- 2) active public participation in monitoring actions to combat intolerance;
- 3) distribution of reliable, widely accessible and exhaustive information about manifestations of intolerance and activities to promote tolerance;

⁷ Secretariat of the Special Tasks Minister for Social Integration. *Cultural Diversity and Tolerance in Latvia. Data, Facts, Opinions*. Riga, 2003. P.20.

⁸ For more information see: Cīvēktiesību problēmas Latvijā. Socioloģisks pētījums. [Human Rights Problems in Latvia. A Sociological Survey.] Baltijas Datu nams. [Baltic Data House], 2000. P.43.

⁹ The Programme of Studies and Activities *On the way to a Civil Society*. The Naturalization Board of the republic of Latvia/Baltic Data House, 1998.Pp. 90-92.

¹⁰ Ibid.

3. Planned policy and action results of the programme

As the result of implementation of the NPPT, intolerance and the number of violations of human rights will decrease, preventive measures against discrimination on the basis of various grounds will be taken, preconditions for social integration and the competitive development of the Latvian economy in the multi-ethnic European Union will be created. Inter-cultural communication skills will improve, as will the necessary skills for resolution of potential ethnic, social and cultural conflicts.

3.1. Policy results:

- decreased intolerance in Latvian society towards people of different ethnic origin and skin colour;
- decreased intolerance in Latvian society towards potential immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees;
- decreased intolerance in Latvian society towards religious minorities;
- decreased intolerance in Latvian society towards other social groups at risk becoming targets of discrimination;
- mobilisation of civil society against discrimination and intolerance;
- greater public awareness of the right to non-discrimination.

3.1.1. Policy indicators:

- Public opinion polls demonstrate a decrease in the number of individuals considering ethnic origin or race important in their contacts with other people;
- public opinion polls demonstrate a decrease in the number of individuals who are negative about potential co-existence with new groups (refugees, immigrants, foreign students and employees) and who may manifest intolerance towards these groups;
- public opinion polls demonstrate a decrease in the number of individuals who express intolerance towards the diversity of religious identities;
- a growing number of NGOs implement projects addressing intolerance and discrimination;
- public opinion polls demonstrate an increase in the number of individuals who, in the event of discrimination or intolerance, appeal to law enforcement agencies as a result of greater public awareness of public institutions combating and preventing discrimination and intolerance;
- increase of the number of articles in the press and on the Internet, and the number of radio and TV broadcasts, dealing with intolerance and discrimination, and explaining their causes.

3.2. Action results:

- strengthened cooperation among state institutions and NGOs in combating intolerance, SSTMSI together with the state institutions and NOGs have participated in the National working group and the EU Working group of the European Union campaign *For Diversity – Against Discrimination*;
- SSTMSI, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Culture and other government institutions as well as NGOs have implemented educational and information activities intended to educate the public about manifestations of intolerance towards various risks groups and about good practices in the promotion of tolerance;

- SSTMSI, in collaboration with the media, have developed and implemented particular measures (seminars, conferences and expert discussions) intended to prevent intolerance in the mass media;
- SSTMSI, in collaboration with research institutions, performs the monitoring and evaluation of intolerance in Latvia.

3.2.1. Indicators of the action results:

- SSTMSI, in cooperation with government institutions and NGOs and within the framework of the NPPT, have implemented 30 events promoting tolerance;
- SSTMSI has developed, published and distributed a series of six booklets *This is Intolerance!* for NGOs, the media, schools and institutions of higher education, and local government;
- SSTMSI has organised four mobile exhibitions for Latvian schools on manifestations of intolerance;
- SSTMSI, in cooperation with the National Human Rights Office and other government offices, and public organisations have organised the Tolerance Day (annually on 16 November, for five years) and the European Week Against Racism in Latvia (annually, 20 – 27 March, for five years);
- SSTMSI has commissioned and published two studies on the dynamics of intolerance in order to perform an evaluation and monitor progress within the framework of the NPPT.

4. Main tasks to be accomplished within the programme framework

In order to meet the objectives of the NPPT, it is necessary to promote tolerance in those sectors that form and influence public opinion, inform the public and communicate information necessary to develop attitudes towards human rights, intolerance and discrimination.

In parallel with the development of the NPPT and within the mandate of the SSTMSI, a working group comprised of lawyers was convened. By 31 December 2004, the group will develop a framework document on legislation against discrimination in Latvia which will be one of the instruments for achievement of the objectives of the NPPT.

The working group which developed the NPPT recognised that effective promotion of tolerance is achievable by involving representatives of the following governmental and non-governmental sectors:

- 1) governmental authorities and local councils;
- 2) non-governmental organisations (especially those representing ethnic minorities);
- 3) educational institutions;
- 4) media.

Within the NPPT framework, representatives of the above sectors have been identified as partners in the achievement of the objectives set in the NPPT.

Hence, the working group put forward the following groups as partners in the achievement of the objectives of the NPPT: the socially active inhabitants of Latvia, especially school pupils, students, teachers, university lecturers, scholars, media workers, officials of the government and local councils, NGO activists, employers, trade unions etc. – namely, the groups that actively participate in the process of public opinion formation and education.

The main tasks to be accomplished for the achievement of the objectives set by the NPPT are:

- a) to get all NPPT partners, especially NGOs, educational institutions and media involved in combating intolerance in Latvia;

- b) in cooperation with the partners and other interested parties:
 - to study the existing legal instruments and develop amendments where necessary;
 - to implement measures promoting tolerance in the education process;
 - to implement measures promoting tolerance towards different ethnic and religious groups.

4.1. Instruments for the achievement of the programme's main objectives

The means of implementing the programme were chosen to meet the following needs: 1) to amend laws and regulations, b) to educate, c) to inform, d) to involve the public in the promotion of tolerance and combating intolerance, and e) to conduct monitoring of the combating of intolerance.

In compliance with the above mentioned basic principles, the instruments developed and selected within the framework of the NPPT are:

- research existing legal instruments and develop amendments where necessary;
- educational measures which provide new knowledge as to tolerance, intolerance and discrimination against different ethnic and religious groups;
- the popularization of best practices from Latvia and other EU member states and EU institutions in the field of combating intolerance (preparation and distribution of information materials, conferences, seminars, expert discussions, exhibitions, etc.)
- development and implementation of projects involving the broader public in the promotion of tolerance and combating intolerance (festivals, campaigns);
- monitoring the dynamics of intolerance.

4.1.1. Involvement of non-governmental organisations in combating intolerance:

- an NGO forum for the promotion of tolerance and combating intolerance in the society (creation of a coalition of NGOs, exchange of experience, development of co-operation projects);
- regularly informing the public about good practices in combating intolerance during Tolerance Day and the Week Against Racism;
- involvement of teachers of human rights courses and development of courses for teacher trainers.

4.1.2. Involvement of the Latvian media in combating intolerance:

- regular seminars and working groups for journalists and editors, searching for solutions to eliminate ethnic and other stereotypes, intolerance and discrimination in the content of the Latvian mass media, stimulating discussion on self-control as an effective tool for combating intolerance and discrimination under the conditions of freedom of expression in a democratic society;
- "A Manual for Employees of the Mass Media" for editors, journalists, publishers and owners of the mass media aimed at developing understanding of the legislation of the Republic of Latvia and experiences of European states concerning combating intolerance and discrimination;
- monitoring of the national Latvian and Russian language media to identify manifestations and levels of intolerance.

4.1.3. Promotion of tolerance in education:

- Organise seminars and expert discussions on tolerance for the authors of textbooks. To pay particular attention to continuous dialogue with teachers of the humanities (World history and the history of Latvia, etc.);
- Pay attention to the issues of tolerance in institutions of higher learning, to create an information network for professors, administrators and student self-governments, and to organise student conferences on tolerance;
- Promote tolerance at schools, organising regular seminars and conferences for school teachers, pupils and representatives of the parents' organisations;
- Prepare and distribute a booklet series about the importance of tolerance and manifestations of intolerance at schools (in the classrooms and libraries);
- Prepare additional handbooks and information from the mass media for teachers of civics, thus stimulating discussions on the topic of tolerance at schools. Summon a working group comprised of experts in the fields of education and human rights for the preparation of the above materials;
- Complement the education standards and programmes of secondary education with detailed information about the diversity of ethnic and religious cultures in Latvia;
- Review the subjects touching on the issues of religion in the general education programmes in order to ensure that the religious diversity found in Latvia is depicted and no priorities are given to any particular religion.

4.1.4. Promotion of tolerance towards various ethnic groups, religious minorities and other social groups at risk of becoming targets of intolerance and discrimination:

- Improve Latvian legislation to further the elimination of all forms of discrimination;
- Ensure effective co-operation with the Ministry of Interior and the courts of justice in the field of eradication and prevention of intolerance through regular informative seminars organised by SSTMSI for Latvian judges on changes in anti-discrimination policy and legislation in Latvia and the EU;
- Series of academic and practical seminars on cultural diversity, inter-religious dialogue and the promotion of tolerance;
- Information campaign for the broader public on topics concerning tolerance, development of teaching materials for the eradication of intolerance;
- Creating hot-lines (telephone and e-mail);
- Publishing information pamphlets dealing with the promotion of tolerance under conditions of growing ethnic and religious diversity and fragmentation;
- Take regular measures to monitor and assess intolerance.

5. Time frame set for particular tasks, allocation of funds already raised and for future spending needs

Defined in the NPPT action plan (Annex 1).

The impact of the policy paper on the national budget (Annex 2, part III of the summary).

6. Institutions responsible for the accomplishment of the project tasks

Supervision, coordination, control and assessment of the implementation of the NPPT on the basis of annual reports from the implementing and collaborating institutions, are carried out by the SSTMSI.

7. The procedure for reporting and assessment

The SSTMSI prepares an annual information report about the accomplishment of the NPPT tasks and submits it to the Cabinet of Ministers by 1 May of each year. The assessment of the results achieved comprises the information on the measures taken and the reports and findings of organisers and partner organisations responsible for particular measures.