

Field operations

OSCE/Steven Weinburg



OSCE Representative to the Estonian Expert Commission on Military Pensioners

The main task of the Representative is to participate in the work of the Estonian Expert Commission on Military Pensioners, which makes recommendations to the Government on residence permits for retired Russian military personnel who stayed in Estonia after the bulk of Russian forces was withdrawn in 1994.

Activities and developments

Review of applications for temporary residency permits. During six sessions in 2005, the Commission successfully reduced the number of pensioners and their families who hold short-term temporary (from one- to three-year) permits to just 27 from

300 in 2004 and 450 in 2003.

As a result of the Commission's work, 5,665 persons out of a total of 5,692 now have long-term temporary (four- to five-year) residence permits.

Permanent residence permits. The Aliens' Act was amended to exclude the issuance of permanent residence permits to military pensioners as of 1 January 2004. After the relevant state court ruling in 2005, the Estonian authorities finally approved the review of approximately 250 cases registered before the amendments were proclaimed.

Some 5,500 persons did not register, for whatever reason, for permanent residence permits, before the Aliens' Act was amend-

ed. They now have no immediate recourse to obtain permanent residence.

OSCE work for the Commission. The Commission on Military Pensioners handles applications for temporary and permanent residence permits for pensioners and their families whose cases fall under the 1994 Estonian-Russian Bilateral Accord on Social Guarantees. The OSCE Representative has continued to provide assistance in the solving of a number of problem cases in the ambit of residence claims, and will continue to provide support to the work of the Estonian Commission on Military Pensioners.

OSCE Representative: Uwe Mahrenholtz
Revised budget: €105,000

OSCE Representative to the Latvian-Russian Joint Commission on Military Pensioners

As in previous years, the OSCE Representative provided assistance in the implementation of the 1994 Agreement between the Latvian and the Russian Governments on social guarantees for military pensioners of the Russian Federation and their families residing in Latvia.

In accordance with Article 2 of this Agreement, the OSCE Representative's tasks are:

- to consider, together with the Latvian and Russian parties, appeals on matters involving the rights of military pensioners;
- to participate in the adoption of recommendations and decisions on the basis of consensus; and
- to consider, at the request of either party, questions relating to the application of the Agreement's provisions.

In 2005, a total of 17,202 people were eligible under the Agreement, 674 less than in 2004. At the time of the Agreement in 1994, a total of 22,320 people were eligible.

Activities and developments

Softening potential hardship situations.

To a large extent, military pensioners' recent appeals related to social questions were resolved by the respective Latvian local administrative bodies in co-operation with the relevant Russian authorities.

As in 2004, housing issues in so-called "denationalized" accommodations gained in importance as these issues affected more pensioners and their families. Latvia adopted a law in 1991 regulating the return of nationalized property to their legitimate

owners or their descendants. Denationalization started in 1993/94 and stipulated a seven-year period of special protection for tenants living in these houses or apartments. Latvian authorities offered favourable financial conditions to affected pensioners and set limits on the rents in "denationalized" houses through the end of 2007.

Support for resettlement. Latvian authorities have taken up the issue of pensioners wishing to resettle from Latvia to Russia. On 1 January 2006, Latvia's financial aid programme for the resettlement issue took effect.

OSCE Representative: Helmut Napiontek
Revised budget: €8,300