



**International Convention on
the Elimination of All Forms
of Racial Discrimination**

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Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

**Concluding observations on the sixth to twelfth periodic
reports of Latvia**

Addendum

**Information received from Latvia on follow-up to the
concluding observations***

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Follow-up information submitted by the Republic of Latvia in response to the recommendations provided in paragraphs 21 (a) and (b), and 23 (d) of the Concluding observations on the combined sixth to twelfth periodic reports of Latvia

1. On 23 August 2018, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Committee) adopted the Concluding observations on the combined sixth to twelfth periodic reports of Latvia (Concluding observations) (CERD/C/LVA/CO/6-12).
2. The present document contains the follow-up information in response to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 21 (a) and (b), and 23 (d) of the Concluding observations.

I. As to the recommendation contained in paragraph 21 (a) and (b) of the concluding observations

3. Paragraph 21 (a) and (b) of the Concluding observations contain the following recommendations:

“(a) Step up measures to decrease the number of persons without nationality by continuing to facilitate access to naturalization;

(b) Find ways and means to phase out the separate legal category of non-citizen”.

4. The number of non-citizens of the Republic of Latvia continues to decrease every year. On 1 January 2018, 233,393 non-citizens were registered in the Population Register of Latvia; on 1 January 2019 the number had dropped to 224,670, while on 1 July 2019, 220 491 non-citizens were registered in the Population Register. It can be concluded that each year the number of non-citizens decreases by approximately 10,000 persons.¹

5. There are several reasons for the decrease of registered non-citizens. The most significant decrease of the number of non-citizens comes from the stable numbers of those non-citizens who apply for and pass the naturalization exams either in the Republic of Latvia or in other countries. Around 1,500 non-citizens annually receive citizenship of Latvia or another country.

6. In assessing the number of applications for naturalization, it should be noted that there have been no significant increase or decrease in the last four years, and the number of applications remains relatively stable. On average, 1,000 persons per year wish to naturalize.

Number of submission for naturalisation, 2015–June 2019

Year	Applications for naturalization	Admitted to Latvian citizenship	Including their minor children (up to 15 years)	Non-EU country nationals admitted to citizenship
2015	1 257	971	51	82
2016	1 001	987	52	106
2017	1 085	915	47	103
2018	1 137	930	38	104
2019 I–VI	535	472	16	70

Source: Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

7. According to the statistics of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (the OCMA), in the last 4 years’ citizenship of Latvia was granted to:

¹ To compare, see Appendix 2 of the CORE document of the Republic of Latvia, (HRI/CORE/LVA/2017): on 1 January 2016, there were 252,017 non-citizens registered in Latvia.

(a) In 2016 – to 987 persons, including 52 children (7 EU citizens, 97 third country nationals, 2 stateless persons, and 881 Latvian non-citizens);

(b) In 2017 – to 915 persons, including 47 children (13 EU citizens, 89 third country nationals, 1 stateless person, and 812 Latvian non-citizens);

(c) In 2018 – to 930 persons, including 38 children (7 EU citizens, 93 third country nationals, 5 stateless persons, 825 Latvian non-citizens);

(d) In first 6 months of 2019 – to 472 persons, including 16 children (3 EU citizens, 66 third country nationals, 1 stateless person, 402 Latvian non-citizens).

8. The government authorities regularly conduct surveys to establish the attitude towards naturalization, inter alia by analysing changes in the interest regarding the procedure. Such surveys, covering all regions of the country, are conducted since 2010, and over 1000 non-citizens participate in each survey. The most recent survey, conducted in 2018, established that the main causes for the lack of motivation to naturalize, namely, the emotional opinion that the citizenship had to be granted automatically (17 per cent) and that the naturalization process should be further facilitated (15 per cent), have not changed. However, in comparison to identical survey conducted in 2016, the change of opinion was recorded – 19 per cent of the respondents answered that the citizenship has to be granted automatically and 18 per cent expressed the view that naturalization process should be further facilitated.

9. Latvia continues to grant reduced naturalization fee or exemption from the fee to low-income, unemployed, retired and other socially vulnerable categories. The fee has been abolished for politically repressed and disabled persons, orphans and persons from social care institutions. In 2019, 41 per cent of the applicants payed reduced fee or were exempt from paying naturalization fee.

10. The OCMA continues to organize citizenship information days in various regions and cities of Latvia informing about the procedures to acquire citizenship and offering consultations. In 2017 – 105, in 2018 – 109 such activities took place; and up until 30 June 2019, 61 activities were organized. In April 2019, OCMA launched a project “Improvement and Development of Supporting Information Systems of Naturalization and Related Processes”. To promote naturalization, information campaigns will be organized in the framework of the project. One of the aims of the campaigns is to increase awareness of the targeted audience about the possibility of obtaining Latvian citizenship through naturalization and naturalization tests, as well as about the possibility of self-testing with the help of an electronic tool. The information days are now one of the main ways to provide information about naturalization process. In the framework of the project, an electronic tool will be developed on the OCMA website through which it will be possible to attempt the naturalization test on a trial basis. This will allow persons to overcome their fears and anxiety about the level of their skills and knowledge necessary to pass the naturalization exams.

11. With the increased mobility of the nationals of Latvia, including non-citizens, many non-citizens seek study and employment opportunities in other EU or third countries. Thus, during the last decade a number increases also with regard to the number of non-citizens eligible to apply for citizenship in other countries has risen, given the sufficiently long residence or family ties in the respective country. The OCMA registers information on those non-citizens who received citizenship of another country, thereby losing non-citizen status in Latvia:

(a) In 2015, 1,761 persons renounced the status of non-citizen; for 61 persons the status was revoked;

(b) In 2016, 972 persons renounced the status of non-citizen; for 71 persons the status was revoked;

(c) In 2017, 703 persons renounced the status of non-citizen; for 153 persons the status was revoked;

(d) In 2018, 556 persons renounced the status of non-citizen, for 129 the status was revoked.

12. The other important target group addressed by the Latvian authorities in efforts to decrease the number of non-citizen, are children of non-citizen parents. In this regard the authorities explain to non-citizen parents that the Citizenship Law provides for a possibility to register the new-born babies as citizens of Latvia. The number of registered newborn non-citizen babies in Latvia decreases every year, in 2018 reaching the new lowest number – 33, which is 0.17 per cent of the total number of registered newborns in Latvia.

Number and proportion of children of citizens and non-citizens, born in 2015–2018

<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Number of citizens</i>	<i>Citizens (%)</i>	<i>Number of non-citizens</i>	<i>Non-citizens (%)</i>
2015	22 440	99.63	83	0.37
2016	21 545	99.75	52	0.25
2017	20 374	99.74	53	0.26
2018	18 846	99.83	33	0.17

Source: Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

Recognition of a child as a Latvian citizen, 2015–2018

	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>
Number of children admitted as Latvian citizens	322	256	300	313
Number of children of non-citizens and stateless persons recognized as Latvian citizens at the time of registration of the child's birth	235	204	177	164

Source: Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

13. The Latvian authorities continue their efforts to decrease also the number of older non-citizen children. Among the largest campaigns carried out in the last two years was sending personal written invitations to parents of non-citizen children to register citizenship. From 1 January 2018, to 30 June 2019, invitations were sent regarding 1913 children.

Number of children born after 21 August 1991, who are entitled to acquire Latvian citizenship, 2015–2018

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of children of non-citizens</i>
2015	6 914
2016	6 107
2017	5 260
2018	4 383

Source: Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

Number of children of non-citizens, to whom Latvian citizenship has been granted, 2010–2018

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of children to 15 years of age</i>			<i>Number of children 15 to 18 years of age</i>	
	<i>Recognized as Latvian citizens</i>	<i>Citizenship acquired when one of parents naturalized</i>	<i>Citizenship acquired upon registering the status of a Latvian citizen to one of parents</i>	<i>Citizenship acquired through naturalization</i>	<i>Citizenship acquired in through registration</i>
2010	445	655	154	450	749

Year	Number of children to 15 years of age			Number of children 15 to 18 years of age	
	Recognized as Latvian citizens	Citizenship acquired when one of parents naturalized	Citizenship acquired upon registering the status of a Latvian citizen to one of parents	Citizenship acquired through naturalization	Citizenship acquired in through registration
2011	637				
2012	718				
2013	640				
2014	616				
2015	506				
2016	433				
2017	432	47	50	71	47
2018	439	38	52	51	40
Children up to 15 years acquiring citizenship	5 862			1 408	
Children up to 18 years acquiring citizenship	7 270				

Source: Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

14. Finally, it must be noted that almost half of the non-citizens of Latvia are 60 years of age or older, therefore a certain proportion in the decrease of the number of non-citizens every year is due to some non-citizens passing away.

II. As to the recommendation contained in paragraph 23 (d) of the Concluding observations

15. Paragraph 23 (d) of the Concluding observations contains the following recommendation:

“(d) Reinstatement of the post of Roma consultant in the Office of the Ombudsman to help increase visibility and consultations with the Roma community in issues concerning them”.

16. The Ombudsperson values the opinion of the Committee on this issue, and shares the view that establishment of specific posts for representatives of Roma minority could assist in raising the visibility of their problems and enhance Roma dialogue with the authorities. The measure suggested by the Committee was introduced in the work of the Ombudsperson’s Office in 2011, but by January 2017, the measure did not prove to be the most effective tool to reach out to the Roma community and to effectively address their problems.

17. The Ombudsperson’s Law equips the Ombudsperson with several other tools and mechanisms that can be used to help identify the problems and fight discrimination against the Roma community. Among them are examination of individual complaints, monitoring visits, creation of consultative councils, and cooperation with NGOs. The Ombudsperson has used different tools to develop a dialogue with the Roma community and to promote the involvement of Roma community at the earliest stages in the development and implementation of policies and programmes.

18. As the use of the representative of the Roma community in the Ombudsperson’s Office did not give the expected results and in the light of the more effective use of the budgetary means allocated to the Ombudsperson’s Office, other approaches to Roma

community were considered. The Ombudsperson found that a more effective way to monitor and prevent systematic violations with regard to Roma community was close and regular cooperation and dialogue with the Roma community organizations. On 30 August 2011, the Ombudsperson concluded a cooperation agreement with the International Romani Union. In 2012, the Ombudsperson established Roma Consultative Council to evaluate the activities planned by the Government and to offer suggestions as to the most effective use of financial means allocated to prevent Roma discrimination and promote their full inclusion in the economic development of the state. The Ombudsperson notes that the initiatives carried out so far would achieve better results if the awareness among the members of the Roma communities would be raised regarding the importance of their own initiative and more active participation in public and social life to promote the interests of the Roma community.

19. In this regard, the Government wishes to add that in 2018, the Latvian Roma Platform project III² was implemented by the Ministry of Culture, with targeted measures on combating Antigypsyism in mainstream society and on fostering intercultural dialogue between Roma and general population. Through this project, cooperation and dialogue among Roma representatives, municipalities, governmental sector and social partners improved. Likewise, mutual learning and exchange of best practices on Roma integration at the local and regional level was supported and the participation and effective involvement of the representatives of Roma community, especially Roma youth into the implementation of the set of Roma integration policy measures was facilitated and supported.

20. The Ombudsperson expresses the readiness to reconsider the recommendation of the Committee in the future, should the other tools currently used by the Ombudsperson's Office prove ineffective.

² More information is available online: <https://www.km.gov.lv/en/integration-and-society/roma/projects/latvian-roma-platform>.