



Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Latvia
OFFICE OF CITIZENSHIP AND MIGRATION AFFAIRS

PUBLIC REPORT 2010

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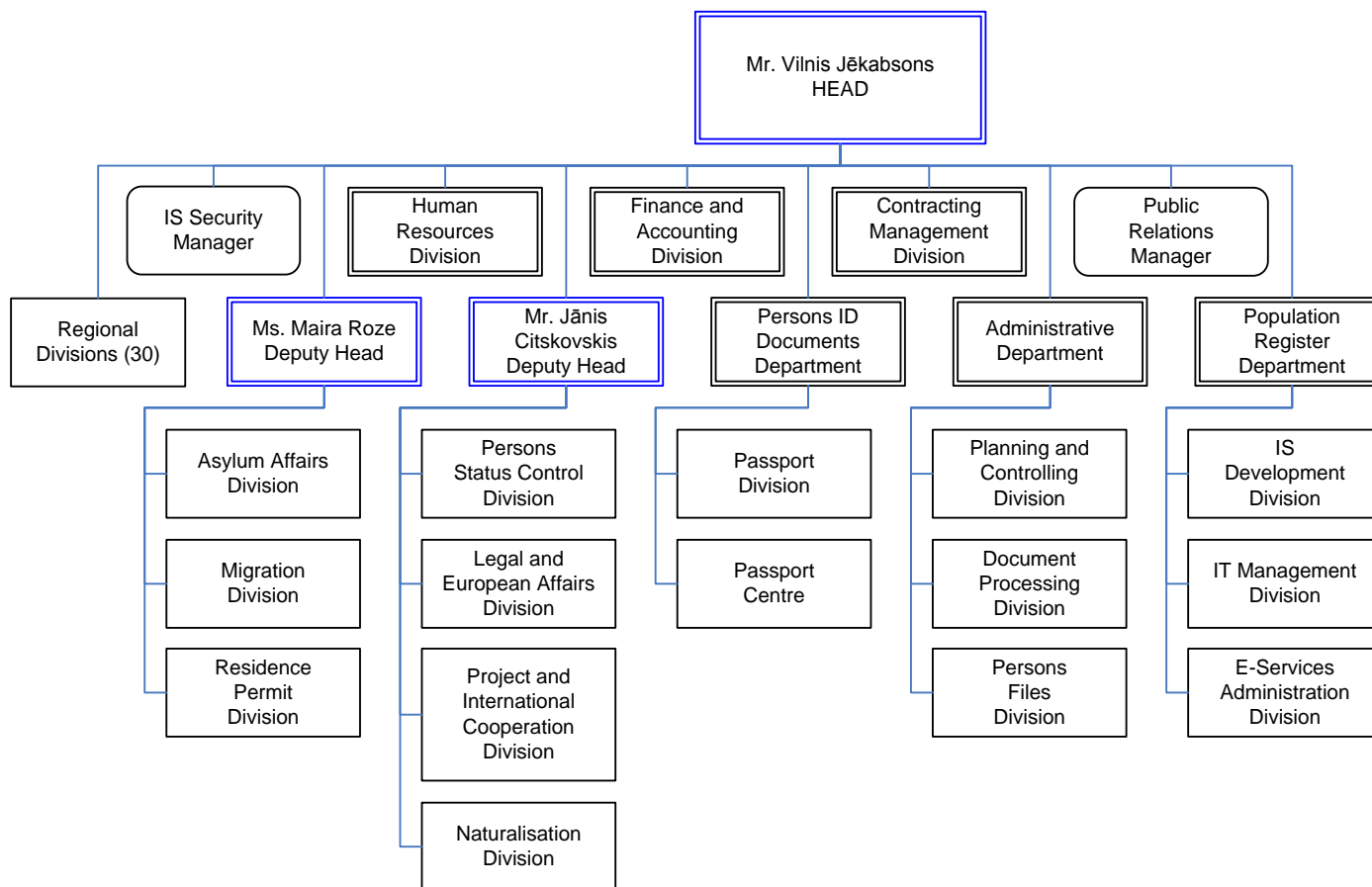
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GENERAL INFORMATION

The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (the OCMA) is a state institution under the supervision of the Minister of the Interior; it implements state **migration and asylum policy**, determines the **legal status of individuals** in the country, keeps **registers of residents**, as well as issues **personal identification** and **travel documents**.

At the end of the reference year, the structure of OCMA consisted of ten independent central divisions, three departments and eight divisions of departments, as well as 30 regional divisions.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE OCMA



POLICY AREAS AND ACTIVITIES

MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

TO IMPLEMENT THE GOVERNMENT POLICY ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM, THE OCMA PERFORMS FOLLOWING TASKS:

- Elaborates legislation on migration and asylum;
- Analyses migration and asylum processes in Latvia and experience gained by other countries in solving migration issues;
- Controls entry and residence of foreigners in Latvia;
- Issues visas, residence permits and registration cards for citizens of the Member States of the European Union and nationals of the countries of the European Economic Area and the Swiss Confederation;
- Issues work permits for foreigners;
- Provides national and VISION consultations to the other associated Schengen countries according to Common Consular Instructions;
- Implements actions in the Schengen information system;
- Issues return decisions and compulsory expulsion decisions;
- Examines issues and takes decisions on imposing the entry ban, cancellation or reduction;
- Grants refugee status or subsidiary protection status and provides them with personal identification documents, as well as makes decisions on benefits to refugees and persons whom the subsidiary protection is granted;
- Provides asylum seekers with accommodation;
- Ensures integration of refugees in cooperation with the other state and local government institutions and NGOs;
- Decides on granting repatriate status, grants benefits to repatriates, as well as takes steps concerning repatriate integration.

MIGRATION

According to the priorities set by the European Union in the area of migration and asylum, the OCMA performed tasks for successful application of the EU legislation, as well as continued to improve the administrative procedures in the reference year.

In order to start the application of Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code of Visas on the single procedure concerning the issuing of visas, the legislation is drawn up to simplify the visa obtaining procedure, the way in which the necessary documents are to be submitted is harmonized and the short-term visa fees are reduced.

The “one-stop-shop” principle is implemented - in procedure of claiming for work permits and residence permits. In order to invite third country nationals, only the letter of invitation approved by the OCMA is required for employers who employ foreigners; the person is not required to turn to the State Employment Agency.

The amendments to the legislation entered into force on July 1, 2010 providing that the residence permit can be claimed by foreigners who have invested a capital in real estate or national economy in Latvia.

THE OPERATION OF THE LATVIAN CONTACT POINT OF THE EUROPEAN MIGRATION NETWORK

Since 2005, the OCMA has been approved as the Latvian Contact Point of the European Migration Network (EMN). The objective of the EMN is to address the information needs of the authorities and institutions of the Community and the Member States by providing up-to-date, objective, reliable and comparable data on migration and asylum and in that way supporting the EU policy making in these areas.

The Latvian Contact Point of the EMN in the framework of the work programme for 2010 produced following researches and reports:

- Research "Migration - a chance to address the demand for workforce in Latvia";
- Research „The short-term and circular migration in Latvia: empirical evidence, current political practice and future perspective”;

- Statistical report on migration and international protection area in Latvia in 2008;
- Policy report on the migration and asylum situation in Latvia in 2010.

In the framework of work programme for 2010, the Latvian Contact Point of the EMN held a conference „Workforce migration – opportunities and challenges” in which the practitioners and researchers of the migration field spoke about the threat posed by the population emigration to the Latvian labour market, as well as necessary solutions for this situation in the future.

Also, the meeting with the Dutch Contact Point of the EMN was held in 2010. The following issues were discussed during this meeting:

- Increasing the profile of EMN and the Network communication strategy drawn up by the European Commission; information exchange system;
- Research and reports produced by the EMN.

This meeting resulted in drawing up proposals for the European Commission in order to improve the exchange of information within EMN, as well as to ensure greater awareness for the EMN at the national and EU level.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

VISAS

The foreigner who needs a **visa** in order to enter Latvia must claim for and obtain it prior to the entering - in one of the diplomatic or consular offices of the Republic of Latvia or embassy of other Schengen Member State representing Latvia or consulate according to the provisions of territorial responsibility. In exceptional cases, the visa can also be issued at border crossing points: if it is in accordance with the international legal norms, in the interests of the Latvian state or if it is connected with Force Majeure or humanitarian considerations.

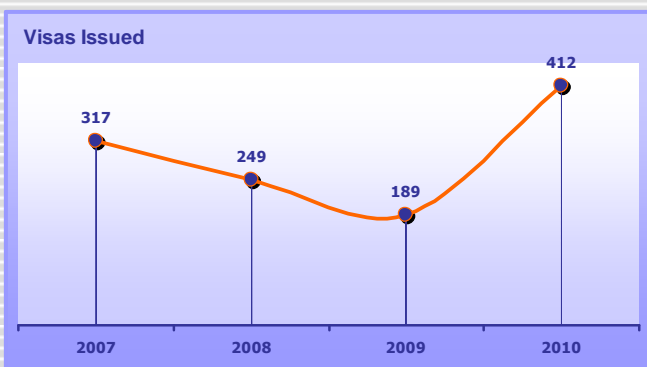
The OCMA is also one of the institutions that issue visas. The number of visas issued by the OCMA is very small compared to the number of visas issued by diplomatic and consular representation offices of the Republic of Latvia and border control points. It can be explained by the fact that the OCMA issues visas only in case a foreigner needs extension of his/her stay in Latvia due to previously unforeseen circumstances and he/she is unable to leave the country by the date indicated in the visa.

In total, **141 879** visas were issued by the visa issuing authorities (diplomatic and consular offices of the Republic of Latvia, border crossing points, as well as the OCMA and the Consular Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in the reference year; it is a 12% increase in comparison to 2009.

In 2010, the number of visas issued by the OCMA has increased more than two times in comparison to 2009 – **412** visas were issued, including 274 C visas and 138 D visas.

Most of all visas were issued to Russian citizens – 270 visas, the Ukrainians are at the second place - 46 visas, at the third place – the Belarusian to whom 30 visas were issued. Most of the visas which were issued by the OCMA in the reference year are based on humanitarian considerations for issuance – the existence of reasoned exceptional circumstances or serious personal reasons why the entrants were not able or willing to leave the country by the date indicated in the visa and asked to prolong their stay in Latvia. In many cases the need to prolong the stay in Latvia was based upon devastating fires in Russia – due to them the return of Russian entrants to their home-county was burdened. For example, the OCMA in August alone issued 120 visas and 94 of them to Russian citizens.

The number of visas issued by the OCMA was also partly affected by the changes to legislation. The Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishment of Community Code of Visas (the Code of Visas) that entered into force on April 5, 2010 also facilitated the increase in the number of visas by providing, inter alia, more liberal prolongation of the term of residence in comparison to the previous regulation and now it is permitted to prolong a visa or the term of the foreigner's residence if the person can prove with documents the existence of serious personal reasons (216 visas are issued based on the “private visit” reason). In relation to the employment, the OCMA, in turn, issued 25 visas that can be explained by the changes to the short-term employment provisions – a foreigner is now able to obtain a visa with work permit if the term of his/her residence does not exceed 90 days in the half-year period, without stating the profession.



In case the visa applicant is unable to explain extraordinary circumstances due to which he or she cannot leave the country by the date indicated in the visa, the OCMA rejects issuance of a visa. In 2010, the issuance of a visa by the OCMA was rejected in 6 cases, that is 1.44% of all applications (in 2009, the issuance of a visa was rejected in 13 cases).

LETTERS OF INVITATION

Pursuant to the provisions of the Immigration Law, a **letter of invitation** is a document where the inviter undertakes the obligations stated in the Law regarding the third-country national whom he/she has invited to stay in the Republic of Latvia. A letter of invitation is used in cases of visa application and applying for a residence permit.

In 2010, **52 494** letters of invitation have been approved:

45 758 invitations of visa application that include 93 296 persons;

6 736 invitations of applying for a residence permit that include 7 474 persons.

The number of letters of invitation tends to decrease. It can be explained by the worsening of the overall economic situation, as well as by the fact that the possibilities for visa application are constantly widening by presenting other entry target or the residence place approving documents instead of the invitation letter approved by the OCMA, for example, the invitation that does not oblige one to turn to the OCMA, or the tourism voucher. Already since March 2009, the tourism companies can already submit so-called tourism vouchers instead of the letter of invitation approved by the OCMA, as well as enabling to obtain a visa as a matter of urgency. The individual tourists from third countries, in turn, need only a hotel reservation, a return transport ticket and a statement about the existence of finances necessary for the stay in Latvia.

The relevant changes are made concerning the visa issuance supporting documents – the European Community that is willing to promote the lasting economic, cultural and scientific relations with third countries, based on the principle of reciprocity, but at the same time considering that the visa facilitation should not lead to illegal migration, has concluded agreements with Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and five West Balkan states on the visa facilitation, providing, inter alia, facilitations and exemptions concerning the invitation letters for the number of groups of persons.

One more reason for the decrease in number of letters of invitation is the fact that the embassies and consulates are increasingly applying the facilitations provided by the Code of Visas and the agreements between EU and third countries (for example, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova) on the visa facilitation, and they issue longer term multiple-entry visas for the foreigners who have positive travelling experience.

But despite the decrease, the approval of letters of invitation is one of the most popular services of the OCMA.

RESIDENCE PERMITS AND WORK PERMITS

The tasks of the OCMA include the issuing, registration and cancelling of **residence permits** and the issuing and cancelling of **work permits**. To succeed in performing the tasks in the area of residence permits and work permits, the OCMA cooperates with the other government authorities involved – the State Border Guard, the Consular Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic and consular representation offices of the Republic of Latvia abroad, as well as the Ministry of Welfare and the Employment State Agency.

The residence permit is a document that entitles a foreigner to reside in the Republic of Latvia for a fixed period (more than 90 days in the calendar half-year). There are two kinds of residence permits – temporary residence permits (TRP) and permanent residence permits (PRP).

In general, **22 667** residence permits were issued in the reference year.

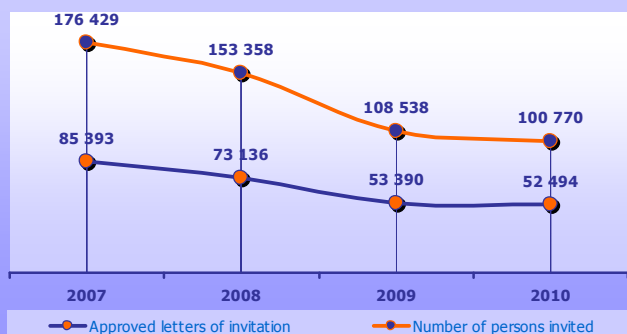
In comparison to the number of residence permits issued in 2009 (19 223 residence permits), the number of residence permits issued has increased in the reference year.

9498 temporary residence permits were issued in the reference year, 2495 of them for the first time.

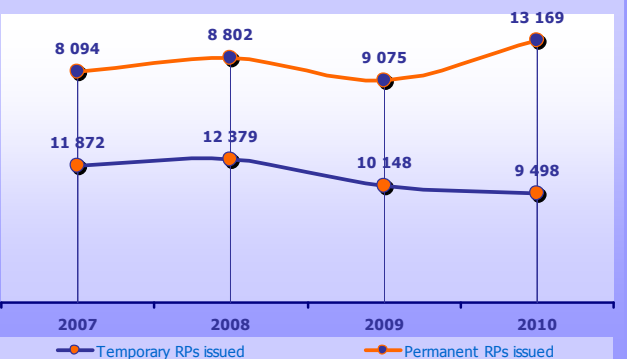
In comparison – in 2009, the temporary residence permits were 10 148 of the total number of residence permits issued (19 223) which is smaller than the number of residence permits issued in 2010 (22 667). The temporary residence permits were issued more in 2009, although the total number of residence permits issued was smaller.

13 169 permanent residence permits were issued in the reference year, 6123 of them for the first time. The permanent residence permits prevail in the number of the residence permits issued in 2010. 9075 permanent residence permits were issued in 2009 (of all 19 223 residence permits issued). The

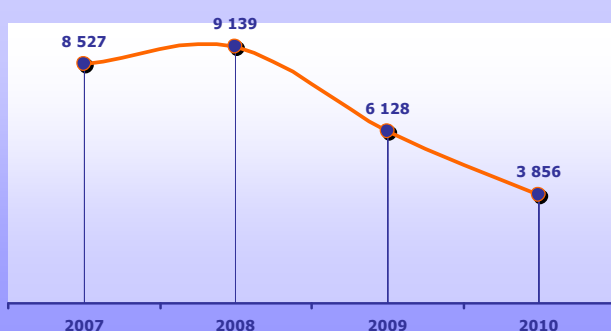
Approved Letters of Invitation and Number of Persons Invited



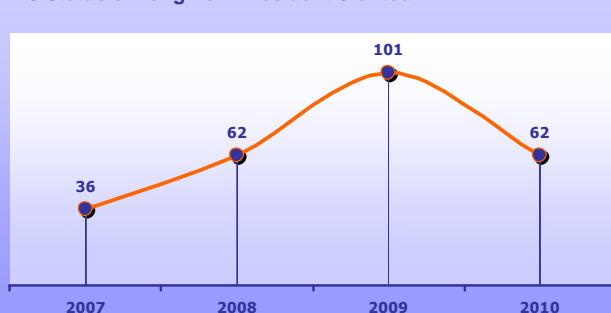
Residence Permits Issued



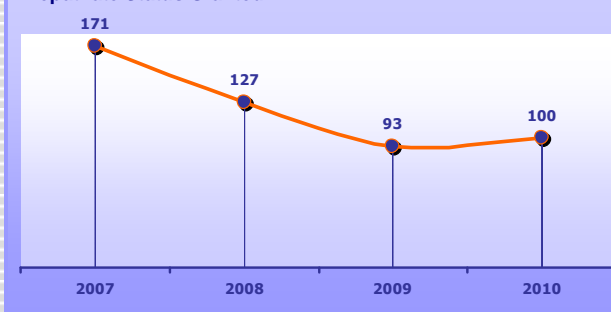
Work Permits Issued



EC Status of Long-Term Resident Granted



Repatriate Status Granted



dynamics of increase in the number of permanent residence permits issued is explained by the fact that the number of residents who want to refuse from the Latvian citizenship or the status of non-citizen of Latvia and to acquire the citizenship of the Russian Federation and to still remain in Latvia has increased in recent years. Mostly the economic benefit (chance to retire sooner, social guarantees), as well as the non-existence of obstacles to enter Russia (Latvian citizens need a visa) are mentioned as a reason for this choice. The largest number of other country's citizens permanently residing in Latvia to whom the residence permits are issued forms citizens of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus.

55 611 residents of the total number of country residents had valid residence permits at the end of reference year:

13 557 - valid temporary residence permits;

42 054 – valid permanent residence permits.

The main reasons for entry in Latvia are employment, union of family and studies.

The demand for the TRP has decreased in the reference year. The reason for the decrease in the number of the TRP is due to the slowdown of economic development and labour market situation in general. One of the most often reasons for issuing the TRP is the employment (a work permit is issued together with a temporary residence permit).

The business activity has decreased, there is a high level of unemployment in country and the employers don't need a foreign workforce. The **3 856** work permits were issued in the reference year. If 2 439 work permits were issued for working for the specific employer in 2009, then it was a smaller number in the reference year – only 2 212 work permits. The ship welders, ship locksmiths and lorry drivers were in greatest demand in the Latvian labour market in the reference year.

EC LONG-TERM RESIDENT STATUS

As from July 21, 2006 when the Law on the **Status of a Long-Term Resident** of the European Community in the Republic of Latvia entered into force, the OCMA makes decisions on granting the status of EC long-term resident status in the Republic of Latvia. The EC long-term resident status can be obtained by those foreigners who have been residing permanently and legally by holding a temporary residence permit in Latvia for five years, as well as by non-citizens of Latvia. In order to obtain the status, the persons must prove that they have sufficient and regular means of subsistence and that they have learned the Latvian language.

In the reference year, the status of EC long-term resident was granted to **62** persons, of which 20 were non-citizens of Latvia, 21 Russian citizens, 4 USA citizens, 4 Israel citizens and 4 China citizens, 2 Ukrainian citizens, 2 Belarusian citizens and citizens of other states.

The demand for a status of EC long-term resident was higher in 2009 – this status was granted to 101 persons.

Altogether there are 265 residents in the country who have been granted the EC long-term resident status – 64 of them are non-citizens of Latvia, 2 - stateless persons of Latvia, the others – 199 citizens of other states who have valid residence permits issued by the OCMA. The majority of citizens of other states who have this status are Russian citizens.

The statistics show that the status is not yet popular among the inhabitants of Latvia and there are the greater majority of persons who apply for the national permanent residence permits, not the status of EC long-term resident in Latvia.

REPATRIATION

Pursuant to the Repatriation Law, the OCMA views cases of **repatriates**, makes decisions on granting the status of repatriate, prepares and issues documents to repatriates, provides material assistance, informs repatriates on their social rights and guaranties available to them, as well as, in cooperation with local governments, helps repatriate families solve adaptation and integration issues.

According to the Repatriation Law, a repatriate is a person who is a citizen of Latvia or one of his/her parents or grandparents is a Latvian or a Liiv and who on his/her own volition makes a permanent move to the Republic of Latvia. The repatriates who were forced to leave Latvia prior to May 4, 1990 have the right to receive the state aid to cover travel expenses, the material assistance in the case of unemployment and to bring in their property exempt from the customs duties and taxes.

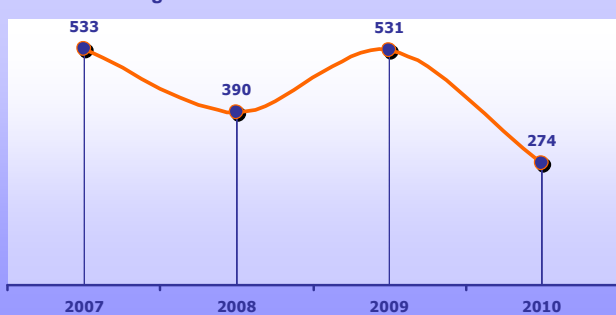
The 100 repatriation cases have been viewed in 2010. The repatriate status was granted to **91** repatriates and 9 family members.

In 2010, in total 100 persons and their family members have moved to Latvia (in 2009, 93 repatriates and their family members moved to Latvia).

Return Decisions and Decisions on Compulsory Expulsion by the OCMA and the State Border Guard



Number of Emigrants



In the period of reference, the **293** allowances were provided as a material assistance to repatriates (travel expenses, unemployment benefits, language training courses) for a total amount of LVL 34 622.

However, the interest of repatriates in returning to Latvia could not be considered as high and it is largely due to the overall socio-economic situation in the country.

RETURN DECISIONS

To ensure the implementation of migration policy according to the international law and interests of Latvia, on the basis of the Immigration Law, the OCMA issues the return decisions or takes decisions on compulsory expulsion if a foreigner during his/her stay in Latvia has violated the procedure for entry or residence of foreigners, for example, he/she has ignored a period of stay indicated in a visa, resides without valid visa or residence permit or he/she has breached the terms of non –visa regime, and in other cases.

The **return decision** gives the foreigner a possibility to leave the territory of country within seven days starting from the day of receiving the order. When a return decision is issued the prohibition to enter the Republic of Latvia for a period up to 3 years can be imposed.

In turn, when a decision on **compulsory expulsion** is taken, the prohibition to enter the Republic of Latvia for a period from three to five years is imposed. The compulsory expulsion of foreigners is performed by the State Border Guard.

The number of return decisions issued has increased in the reference year. If the 69 return decisions were issued in 2009, then **104** of these orders were issued in 2010. The number of compulsory expulsion decisions taken, in turn, has decreased. The 138 decisions were taken in 2009, but **97** - in 2010.

The changes in proportions of numbers of regionals and decisions on compulsory expulsion (the number of return decisions rises, but the number of compulsory expulsions declines) could be explained by the compliance with the requirements provided by Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals, namely, first of all, the chance to leave the territory of country on an optional basis shall be given to a foreigner and the compulsory expulsion is applied as a measure of last resort if a foreigner doesn't obey the return decision of his/her own free will or he/she presents a risk of escape.

EMIGRATION

According to the amendments to the Population Register Law, since July 1, 2010 the OCMA doesn't carry out accumulation of data on the **emigration** of persons for a permanent life abroad. The Latvian nationals don't need to submit the application about emigration for a permanent life abroad any more, but the condition remains valid about announcement of the place of residence abroad if the Latvian national stays outside Latvia more than 6 months.

In certain circumstances, the OCMA on the basis of information provided by the competent authorities makes a decision about non-existence of obstacles to the emigration of the person from the country and issues statements for presentation to competent foreign authorities confirming that there are no obstacles to the emigration of a person from Latvia.

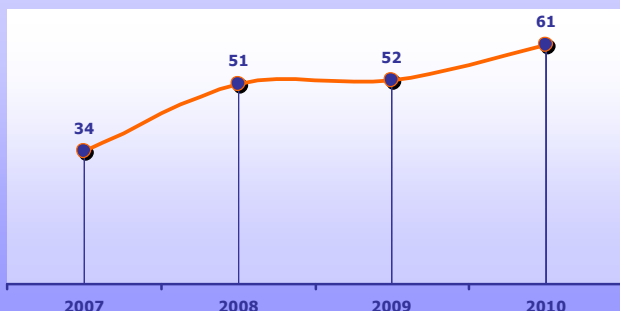
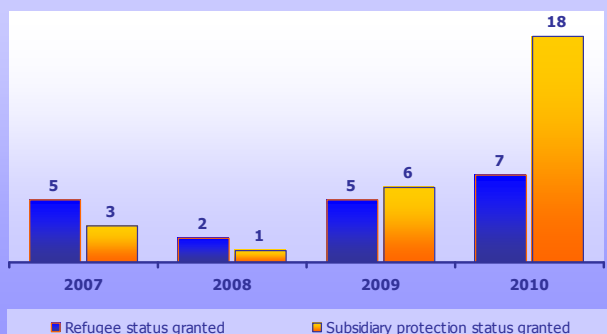
Until July 1, 2010, **274** applications about emigration for a permanent life abroad are viewed, but it does not mean that the activity of population regarding the emigration for a permanent life abroad is decreasing. In 2009, a sharp rise of these applications could be observed – 531 applications were viewed. The applications about emigration for a permanent life abroad mostly were submitted by those Latvian nationals who emigrated to the Russian Federation.

A cause for population activity regarding the emigration for a permanent life abroad is closely due to the economic situation of the country, including the unemployment.

ASYLUM

According to the Asylum Law, in the Republic of Latvia, an asylum seeker is a person who has submitted an application for granting refugee status or subsidiary protection. The refugee status can be granted if the person is justifiably afraid of persecution in his/her citizenship country or previous host country (stateless persons) due to his/her racial, religious, national, social identity or political beliefs.

Asylum Seekers

Refugee Status Granted,
Subsidiary Protection Status Granted

In cooperation with the State Border Guard, the instructions of the Ministry of the Interior are drawn up that provide procedure for cooperation of the authorities under the Ministry of the Interior involved in the procedure of asylum.

In a situation where the number of asylum seekers who permanently resides at the Asylum Seekers Reception Centre „Mucenieki” has increased (the average number of asylum seekers who reside at the Centre is 34 persons, including minors and also unaccompanied minors), the shift work has been introduced that ensures constant presence (for 24 hours a day) of the responsible employee at the Centre.

The transition from the former special order which was defined for preparation and issuance of personal identification documents and residence permits to refugees and persons whom the subsidiary protection has been granted to the general procedure for the preparation of these documents has taken place. Starting from July 1, 2010, the above mentioned function is performed by Riga 1st division of the OCMA.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

61 persons submitted applications for receiving **asylum** in Latvia in the reference year. However, considering the statistics of former years, it can be concluded that this is the highest number of applications submitted by asylum seekers since 1998 when the asylum procedure was started in Latvia.

The applications with request for granting asylum mostly are received from the citizens of Afghanistan, Russia and Kyrgyzstan in the last year. The situation in the area of asylum has not significantly changed in the reference year and the tendency remains that the asylum seekers with children, as well as unaccompanied minors arrive in Latvia.

In 2010, the refugee status under the 1951 Geneva Convention was granted to **7** persons, 6 of whom were from Uzbekistan and one person from Turkey.

In 2010, **18** persons in the same way have received the subsidiary protection which is granted to asylum seekers without any ground to recognize them as refugees, but there is a ground to consider that after the return to their country of origin they could be subjected to serious harm. The subsidiary protection has been granted to 16 persons from Afghanistan and one person from Iran and Palestine.

Asylum Seekers' Source Countries in 2010

Country	Adults	Children
Afghanistan	15	8
Angola	1	
Belarus	2	
Ghana	3	
Georgia	1	
Guinea		1
Haiti	1	
Iran	1	
Cameroon	2	
Kyrgyzstan	4	3

Colombia	1	
Democratic Republic of Congo	4	
Russia	5	2
Libya	1	
Morocco	1	
The Federal Republic of Nepal	1	
Nigeria	1	
Palestine	1	
Uzbekistan	2	
Total	47	14

Since 1998, when the asylum procedure was introduced, in total **367** persons have applied for asylum until December 31, 2010; 29 of them were granted the refugee status, but 45 persons have received the subsidiary protection.

During this period, 4 of the total number of the mentioned persons who have received refugee status or subsidiary protection have passed naturalization and have become citizens of Latvia.

REQUESTS VIEWED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DUBLIN REGULATION

After Latvia joined the EU on May 1, 2004, Council Regulation (EC) No 343/2003 of 18 February 2003 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national is binding on Latvia (Dublin Regulation).

The main objective of the Dublin Regulation is to ensure that the application of an asylum seeker is viewed only in one EU Member State to prevent cases where the asylum seekers and/or their family simultaneously lodge asylum requests in several EU Member States, in this way abusing the asylum procedure. The Dublin Regulation sets out the criteria which are used by the Member State to assess whether another EU Member State is responsible for viewing a particular asylum application.

In 2010, Latvia has received requests from **250** Member States which were viewed in the Context of the Dublin Regulation. The largest numbers of requests were received from Sweden and Norway (85 % of all requests were from these two Member States). 11 requests of the total number of requests received were the readmission requests of asylum seekers, 36 - requests for taking charge of viewing the applications of asylum seekers in the Republic of Latvia and information requests about 242 asylum seekers.

In 2010, Latvia approved 8 requests by the Member States for readmission of asylum seekers and 32 requests for viewing the applications of asylum seekers in the Republic of Latvia, 6 requests were rejected.

In 2010, Latvia, in turn, has forwarded 38 requests to the Member States to be viewed in the context of the Dublin Regulation. The largest numbers of requests were forwarded to Lithuania (11) and Sweden (7). 12 requests of the total number of requests were requests for readmission of asylum seekers, 12 - requests for taking charge of viewing the applications of asylum seekers in the Republic of Latvia and 14 information requests.

In 2010, the Member States concerned approved 12 requests of Latvia for readmission of asylum seekers and 5 requests for viewing the applications of asylum seekers. 3 requests of Latvia were rejected.

ASYLUM SEEKERS' RECEPTION CENTRE MUCENIEKI

In accordance with the international practice, in 1997 Latvia commenced the work on creating the Asylum Seekers Reception Centre "Mucenieki" (the Centre). The Centre is located in Mucenieki of Ropaži Civil Parish, 17 kilometers from Rīga, in a former Soviet Army military base. The Centre's creation was supported by the US Government, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Swedish Government.

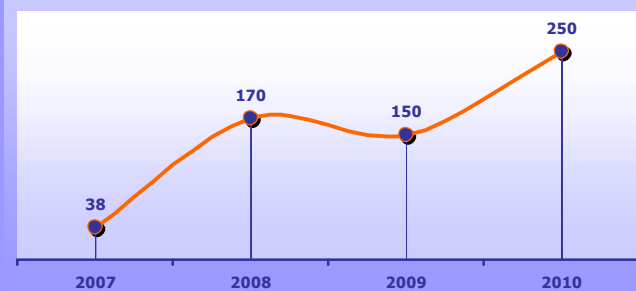
The Centre can accommodate 200 people; its main task is to provide asylum seekers with accommodation while their applications are being viewed and the decision is made in the asylum cases and to facilitate their adaptation into the society of Latvia.

In 2010, in total 55 persons stayed at the ASRC "Mucenieki" (59 persons in 2009 and 24 in 2008).

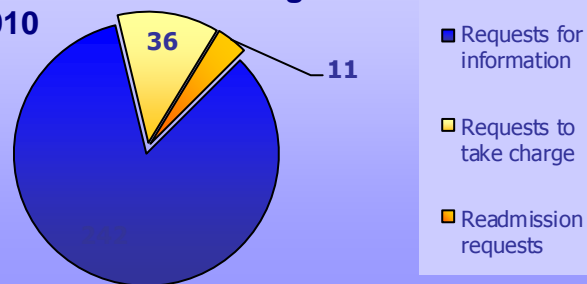
Refugees and asylum seekers from the following countries have lived at the Centre: Afghanistan, Angola, Armenia, Belarus, Iraq, Kenya, Kazakhstan, Congo (Zaire), Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Ukraine. The largest number of asylum seekers simultaneously staying at the Centre in 2010 was 38 persons.

The asylum seekers are entitled to receive LVL 1.50 per day for the acquisition of food, as well as hygiene items and essential goods. The asylum seekers are entitled to receive the state's paid emergency medical treatment and primary health care. During the procedure of Asylum, minors are given the opportunity of acquiring an education.

Applications to be Viewed in Dublin Regulation Context



Types of Requests in the Context of Dublin Regulation in 2010



DETERMINATION OF LEGAL STATUS OF PERSON

TO DETERMINE THE LEGAL STATUS OF PERSON IN THE COUNTRY, THE OCMA PERFORMS FOLLOWING TASKS:

- Prepares the legislation on legal status of person;
- Decides on the belonging of person to the group of Latvian citizens, the Latvian non-citizens or the stateless persons, except for cases if the belonging of person to the group of Latvian citizens is decided by the Saeima or the Cabinet of Ministers;
- Decides on the loss of status of the Latvian non-citizen and the stateless person;
- Delivers an opinion on the issuance of return permits;
- Views the applications of persons on the acquisition of the citizenship of Latvia through naturalization and prepares draft legislation for submission to the Cabinet of Ministers on the acquisition of Latvian citizenship through naturalization or makes decision on naturalization refusal;
- Manages the preparation of the examination materials about the knowledge of the basic principles of the Satversme of the Republic of Latvia, the text of the national anthem, the history of Latvia and the proficiency of the Latvian language for the persons applying for the citizenship of Latvia through naturalization;
- Examines those persons who are applying for Latvian citizenship through naturalization in the knowledge of the basic principles of the Satversme of the Republic of Latvia, the text of the national anthem and the history of Latvia and the proficiency of the Latvian language;
- Views the applications of persons on the renunciation of Latvian citizenship, makes decision on the recognition of person as discharged from Latvian citizenship;
- Views the examination cases about deprivation of Latvian citizenship, takes decisions on bringing legal proceedings to deprive Latvian citizenship;
- Views the applications of persons about restoration of Latvian citizenship.

Starting from March 1, 2010, the tasks of the Naturalization Board have been taken over:

In the result of reorganization, while retaining the requirements set by the Citizenship Law, the naturalization procedure is optimised. The inhabitants have a chance to submit a naturalization application to any of 30 territorial divisions of the OCMA (instead of the former 7 divisions), irrespective of declared place of residence. A person can choose any of 6 cities in Latvia where to take a naturalization examination. The number of documents to be submitted is reduced, as well as the review period of naturalization applications, because the necessary exchange of information is being performed within one institution. A person receives by post in the declared place of residence the information on the acquisition of the citizenship of Latvia and the invitation to produce a Citizen's passport.

The interagency agreements were concluded with the state safety authorities on the electronic exchange of data that enables to obtain operationally information on the eligibility of naturalization applicants according to the provisions of the Naturalization Law.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

DETERMINATION OF LEGAL STATUS OF PERSONS

The **legal status of the person** in the country should be determined if data of the person are not included in the Population Register and no identity number is assigned to the person. A person without this status and the identity number cannot receive valid personal identification document, work legally, pay taxes, and receive allowances and other services.

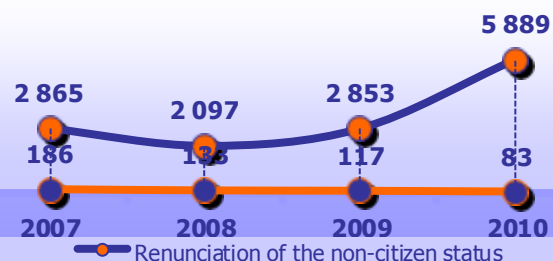
The OCMA determines the belonging of persons to:

- The totality of Latvian citizens according to the Citizenship Law;

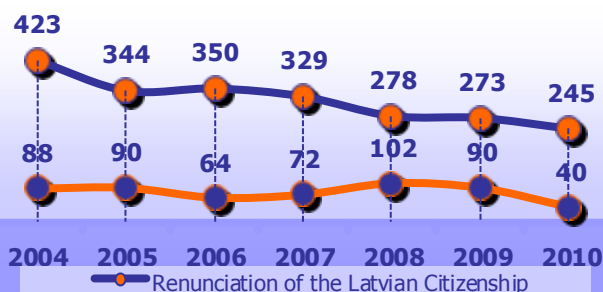
Determination of Legal Status



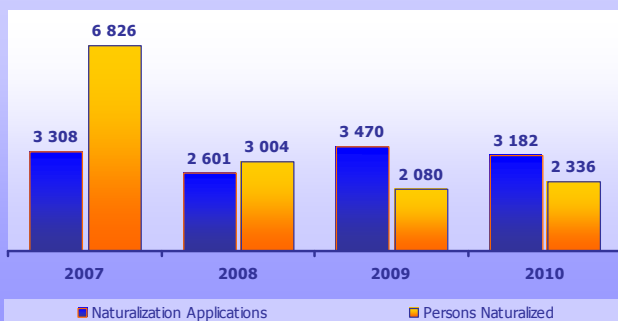
Lost Statuses of Latvian Non-Citizen



Lost Statuses of Latvian Citizen



Naturalization



- The totality of Latvian non-citizens according to the conditions set out by the Law on the Status of the Former USSR Citizens who do not have Latvian or Another Country's Citizenship;
- The totality of stateless persons of Latvia according to the conditions set out by the Stateless Persons Law.

The documents for determining the legal status are accepted by regional divisions of the OCMA, but the cases are viewed by the Persons' Status Control Division of the OCMA.

The largest proportion is formed by the cases for determining the legal status to the children who have born abroad to persons who register the citizenship of Latvia; due to having done a full educational course in the general education schools or the secondary schools with the Latvian language as a language of instruction, as well as recognition of Latvian non-citizens' children who have born after August 21, 1991 as the citizens of Latvia.

In 2010, **4 137** cases for determination of the legal status of persons were viewed in general. An increase in the number of cases for determination of the legal status has been affected by the takeover of the Naturalization Board's functions. Since March 1, 2010, the registration of persons as the Latvian citizens whose legal status has already been determined in the Republic of Latvia (Latvian non-citizens and foreigners who have permanent residence permits), as well as the recognition of the Latvian non-citizen's children who have born after August 21, 1991 as the citizens of Latvia also fall within the competence of the OCMA.

LOSING LATVIAN CITIZENSHIP AND THE STATUS OF LATVIAN NON-CITIZEN

The OCMA also deals with cases on losing the status of Latvian **non-citizen** which include renunciation of the non-citizen status and deprivation of the non-citizen status.

Considering the protracted unfavourable economic situation in Latvia, the number of applications for renunciation of the status of Latvian non-citizen continued to increase in the reference year. People choose to accept the citizenship of other countries and to emigrate for a permanent life outside Latvia or continue to reside here with the permanent residence permits.

In 2010, **5 889** persons applied for refusing from the Latvian non-citizen status and **83** persons were deprived of the status of non-citizen, but in 2009, 117 persons were deprived of the status of non-citizen.

Since March 1, 2010, the OCMA views applications for renunciation of the **citizenship** of Latvia. In total, **245** persons have renounced the citizenship of Latvia in 2010. This function previously was performed by the Naturalization Board.

Similarly, the OCMA views the cases for deprivation of the citizenship of Latvia. Since March 1, 2010, 82 claims for deprivation of the citizenship of Latvia have been presented to court. **40** rulings on the deprivation of the citizenship of Latvia entered into force in 2010.

NATURALIZATION

According to the Citizenship Law, the persons are entitled to acquire the citizenship of Latvia through **naturalization**. The applications of persons for acquisition of the citizenship of Latvia through naturalization are accepted in any of 30 regional divisions of the OCMA. The examination of the knowledge stated by the Citizenship Law takes place in six cities and towns of Latvia – Riga, Valmiera, Daugavpils, Jēkabpils, Liepāja and Ventspils.

The OCMA views the naturalization applications, verifies the person's eligibility according to the Citizenship Law and prepares the draft instructions of the Cabinet of Ministers on acquisition of the citizenship of Latvia through naturalization or takes decision on suspension, termination of viewing the application for naturalization or refusal of naturalization.

3 182 applications for naturalization were received in 2010.

2 336 persons have acquired the citizenship of Latvia in the reference year. The naturalization is refused for 22 persons.

During the reference year, the number of applications for naturalization accepted has slightly decreased (3 470 applications were received in 2009); nonetheless, in comparison to the previous year, the number of persons who have acquired the citizenship of Latvia through naturalization has slightly increased in 2010.

The applications for naturalization were mostly submitted by the young people at the age up to 30 years (55.3%). The proficiency of the Latvian language of the Latvian citizenship applicants has worsened in the reference year; on the first occasion, the examination in the proficiency of the Latvian language was passed by 56.2% of the citizenship applicants.

For four years already, the naturalization pace in Latvia is constantly low. The intensity of process of acquisition of the citizenship of Latvia is substantially affected by a number of internal and external factors:

- **internal factors** – socio-economic situation, political debates, the position of mass media in the reflection of issues related to citizenship and integration of society, environment of official language use, opportunities for informing, etc.
- **external factors** – Regulations adopted by the European Union, introduction of a visa-free regime for non-citizens, attitude of neighbouring countries (especially Russia) to the issue of acquisition of the citizenship in Latvia, etc.

PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

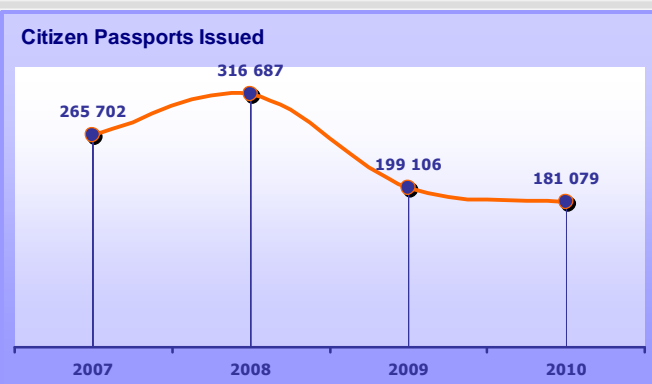
TO ENSURE THE ISSUING OF PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS, THE OCMA PERFORMS THE FOLLOWING TASKS:

- Prepares the legislation on personal identification documents;
- Issues travel documents to Latvian citizens, Latvian non-citizens, refugees, persons whom the subsidiary protection is granted and stateless persons who have received the permit to reside Latvia;
- Keeps registers of personal identification and travel documents;
- Accepts applications by the participants of national resistance movements and the politically repressed persons and issues identity cards for the participants of national resistance movements and the politically repressed persons;
- Updates information on personal identification documents in the FADO (False and Authentic Documents) database.

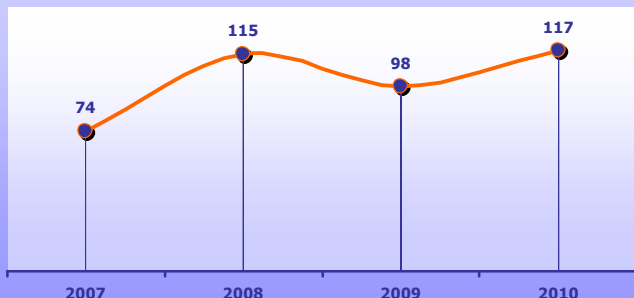
TO ENSURE THE ISSUING OF RELIABLE PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS ACCORDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

To ensure the fulfilment of requirements stated by Council Regulation (EC) No 380/2008 of 18 April 2008 laying down a uniform format for residence permits for third-country nationals, during the reference year, the OCMA continued work on the project which will make available to the population a new personal identification document starting from January 1, 2012 – an identification card or electronic identity card (eID). Its holder will be able to confirm his/her identity by the identification card (eID) not only in presence, but also in the electronic environment by using the opportunities presented by the authentication and electronic signature.

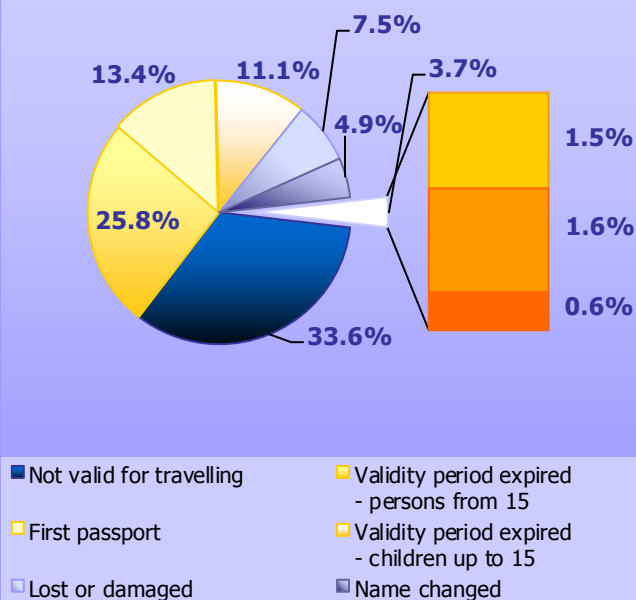
Already since November 20, 2007, the electronic component has been included in the new-design passports – a no-contact microchip in which the information is written is also visually displayed in the data sheet, as well as the biometric data of person – image of the face and digital pictures of two fingerprints. The information included in the microchip is electronically signed by the issuing office, thereby ensuring the possibility to make sure of its authenticity. To ensure the use of the identification card (eID) for travelling and the similar protection as to passports, the no-contact microchip with data of document's holder, including biometric data, will also be incorporated in the identification cards (eIDs). In addition to the no-contact microchip, the second electronic component will be included in the identification card (eID) – a contact microchip (similar to bank cards) that includes the unique to a person authentication and electronic signature creation data which the holder of identification card (eID) will be able to use in order to confirm his/her identity online (internet) and to add an electronic signature to documents.



Travel Documents for Stateless Persons Issued



Reasons for Issuing Passports in 2010



RESULTS ACHIEVED

PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

In general, the OCMA has issued **217 432 personal identification documents** in 2010, including **181 079** passports of Latvian citizens and **36 211** passports of Latvian non-citizens. **117** persons have received the travel documents for stateless persons of Latvia.

7 persons have received travel documents for refugees, but travel documents are issued to **18** persons for whom the subsidiary protection is granted. In comparison to 2009, the number of passports issued in the reference year has decreased.

The number of the issued travel documents for stateless persons of Latvia has slightly increased – the large proportion has received this travel document because the previous document is not valid for travel, or there is no free space in the passport for border crossing notifications or validity of passport is not sufficient for receiving a new visa.

The reason why fewer passports were issued in 2010 than in 2009 is explained by the fact that there were fewer passports whose validity expired in 2010. The number of personal identification and travel documents to be issued also depends on the activity of travellers which has not increased in recent years.

As in previous years, also in 2010, persons have mostly applied for a passport in spring and summer. The lowest activity of the population, in turn, could be observed in the winter months.

The largest proportions of Latvian nationals have received a new passport due to the expiry of validity of the previous passport or the previous passport was not valid for travel.

In the reference year, most of the personal identification documents were issued in Riga divisions: most of the personal identification documents outside Riga were issued in Daugavpils, Liepāja and Jelgava divisions. During the reference year, 7 322 Latvian nationals have received a new passport in the diplomatic representation offices of Latvia abroad.

POPULATION REGISTRATION

TO ENSURE THE POPULATION REGISTRATION IN THE COUNTRY, THE OCMA PERFORMS THE FOLLOWING TASKS:

- Prepares the legislation on population registration;
- Registers persons in the Population Register and updates data included in the Population Register;
- Maintains and improves the archive of person registration documents;
- Maintains and improves the information systems under the supervision of the OCMA;
- Ensures the processing of data included on the Electoral Register, the verification of election lists, the preparation of statement for posting and the preparation of voters' lists for successful proceeding of elections and referendums;
- Provides information from the Population Register online;
- Administers e-services under the supervision of the OCMA;
- Provides the necessary information for individuals, businessmen, local governments and governmental authorities.

TO IMPROVE THE SINGLE MIGRATION INFORMATION SYSTEM (SMIS), INCLUDING SUBSYSTEMS, TO PERFORM ELECTRONIC EXCHANGE OF DATA AND TO ENSURE THE PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA OF INDIVIDUALS

During the reference year, the information system of participants of national resistance movements and politically repressed persons is developed and implemented.

Since January 1, 2010, foreigners are able to declare the place of residence simultaneously with receiving of the residence permit in the regional divisions of the OCMA.

The cooperation between services involved in the asylum procedure will be optimised by improving the Asylum Seekers Subsystem of the SMIS (the Single Migration Information System).

In order to improve the control of migration processes, to ensure the exchange of data with the central visa system of the European Union and to supplement the National Visa Information System (NVIS) of Latvia, development and improvement of the software are carried out.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

DECLARATION OF RESIDENCE

The **place of residence** can be declared in the relevant authority of the local government where the new place of residence of the person is located, electronically - by using the electronic residence declaration service of the OCMA at www.latvija.lv, in the OCMA, by turning to the regional division – foreigners, stateless persons, citizens of the EU Member States and nationals of the countries of the European Economic Area and the Swiss Confederation and their family members. The foreigners are able to declare the place of residence simultaneously with receiving the residence permit in the OCMA. Thus, it is not necessary to visit the local government in order to declare the place of residence. The place of residence is declared by **2 110** foreigners in 2010.

Since January 1, 2010, the OCMA does not declare the person's place of residence by post.

In comparison to 2009, during the reference year, the demand for the declaration of residence place has significantly increased. If 5 004 places of residence were declared electronically and by post (2 000 of them – electronically) in 2009 then **20 693** places of residence are declared in 2010 when the declaration of residence place by post is not offered any more. The reason why the number of declarations submitted electronically has significantly increased is explained by the perfection and improvement of the service availability. It is possible to receive the electronic service "Submitting the declaration of residence place" also by using the internet bank's authentication tools.

THE POPULATION REGISTER

The **Population Register** is one of the most significant databases on the national level; it contains information about more than three million persons. The Population Register is a single country's population registration system where information is gathered about the given names, surnames of inhabitants and changes thereof, places of residence of persons, personal identification documents, etc. The OCMA ensures reporting to the inhabitants as well as to the governmental authorities and other institutions by using the resources of this data base.

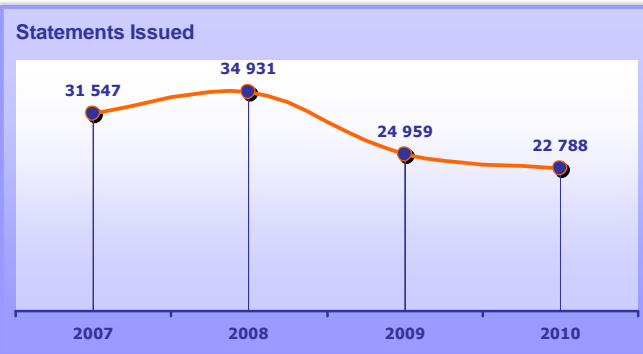
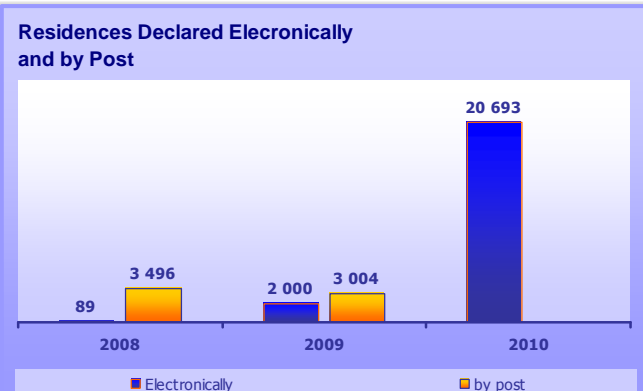
The Population Register is the only national-level register where information is used online by all other national registers. The Population Register is also used to ensure the operation of e-administration and e-services too.

The information is used for statistical surveys, tax estimates and calculations, organization of elections and other processes of national scale.

During the period of reference, the OCMA has issued **22 788** statements. This number includes the general statements (559) and the statements from the Population Register (22 229).

The number of statements issued is decreasing. The reason for decrease in the number of statements issued – the electronic circulation of information develops and improves in the country, thus the necessity to demand different statements for state institutions and enterprises is decreasing; it is possible to obtain this information online. The decrease in the number of statements issued is also defined by the fact that it is also possible for inhabitants to receive the statement on residence place in local government.

The amount of electronically provided information by the Population Register has significantly increased - **454 151** statements.



The actuality and importance of operation of the Population Register is characterized by the increase in the quantity of data included and updated in it. During the reference year, the quantity of data included and updated in the Population Register reaches **1 434 839**.

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

The OCMA will continue the implementation of an important EU programme - the framework programme "Solidarity and management of migration flows". The programme is made of four different funds: European Refugee Fund, European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals, European Return Fund, and External Borders Fund.

In 2010, four projects implemented by the OCMA have terminated:

PROJECT OF THE EUROPEAN REFUGEE FUND (ERF) "IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ASYLUM PROCEDURE":

The aim of the project – improving the quality of procedures of viewing the claims for international protection, as well as improvement of the professional skills of employees involved in the asylum procedure, improving the quality and administrative capacity of the existing procedure.

Within the framework of the project:

- The employees of governmental authorities involved in the asylum procedure, as well as judges of District Administrative Courts are instructed on the application procedure of the new Asylum Law.
- The comments on the Asylum Law are drawn up (author J.Gromovs). 750 copies were sent out for the employees of government authorities and courts of the Republic of Latvia, as well as the libraries of Latvian universities. This book is an excellent tool to aid the work on the asylum procedure – viewing the cases, application and interpretation of provisions of the Asylum Law.
- The manual of the asylum procedure is drawn up as an auxiliary material for the new and present employees of Asylum Affairs Division of the OCMA in order to ease viewing the asylum cases. The manual contains information on operations to be performed by the employees of Asylum Affairs Division from receiving asylum application and creating case to operations to be performed regarding the person whom the refugee status or subsidiary protection has been granted; it also contains examples of standard decisions.
- The procedure of the asylum seekers interview is optimised. In cooperation with the State Border Guard, the original questionnaire for asylum seekers has been revised. The minutes and the appendix of minutes of the negotiations with the asylum seeker – the list of questions have been revised. The questions have been divided into groups: political motives, religious motives, racial, skin colour, ethnic origin motives, punishments, torture, violence, interview of minors.

The project has terminated in 01.31.2010. During the implementation of the project, the amount of LVL 39 230 (the funding of the European Refugee Fund – LVL 29 422, the national public funding – LVL 9 808) has been absorbed.

PROJECT OF THE EUROPEAN REFUGEE FUND (ERF) "EXAMINING THE OPTIMISATION OF RECEPTION FUNCTIONS AND IMPROVING THE ASYLUM SEEKERS SUBSYSTEM OF THE SINGLE MIGRATION INFORMATION SYSTEM"

The aim of the project – to implement the EU Asylum Policy by setting up an effective coverage for asylum seekers reception procedures; to optimise the procedures for asylum seekers reception and the economic efficiency of Asylum Seekers Reception Centre „Mucenieki”; to improve the processing of asylum seekers’ personal data.

Within the framework of the project:

- The technical appraisal of Asylum Seekers Reception Centre “Mucenieki” (hereinafter – ASRC) is carried out. The work group that evaluated the results of the technical appraisal, the efficiency of functions performed by the OCMA and costs, as well as possibility to involve the non-governmental sector in overtaking of some functions of the OCMA regarding the area of asylum is set up;
- The improvements to the Asylum Seekers Subsystem of Single Migration Information System are carried out. The prototype of the Asylum Seekers Subsystem of Single Migration Information System is developed;

- The action plan for necessary improvement works on the ASRC is drawn up and the most economic-efficient model for exploitation and provision of reception functions of the ASRC is developed. The condition of living-space of the ASRC is improved;
 - The health care and translation services have been provided, the necessary household effects have been purchased, the travel expenses have been covered for project's target group;
 - The proposals for improvement of the data processing security of coordination of the material assistance to asylum seekers.
- The project has terminated in 06.30.2010. During the implementation of the project, the amount of LVL 180 152 has been absorbed.

PROJECT OF THE EUROPEAN RETURN FUND "TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE OFFICE OF CITIZENSHIP AND MIGRATION AFFAIRS"

The aim of the project – to promote cooperation with the services of other states in order to reduce the period of time for receipt of information and decision making about persons who have violated the entry and residence provisions, as well as to train the employees of the OCMA who are involved in solving the issues related to the return of persons travelling illegally.

Within the framework of the project, 41 employees who are involved in solving the issues related to return of illegally travelling persons have improved their foreign language skills.

The project has terminated on February 28, 2010.

During the implementation of the project, the amount of LVL 82 098 (the funding of European Return Fund – LVL 61 573, the national public funding – LVL 20 525) has been absorbed.

PROJECT OF THE EXTERNAL BORDERS FUND "PROVIDING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN NVIS AND CENTRAL VISA INFORMATION SYSTEM"

The aim of the project – to improve the control of the migration processes, external security, to ensure the exchange of data between the National Visa Information System of Latvia and the Central Visa Information System of the European Union, as well as to carry out training for users.

Within the framework of the project, the connection between the National VIS and the Central VIS has been set up. The software has been developed and the training for users has been carried out, as well as equipping of work places for the issuance of visas, acquisition of technical equipment, arranging the trainings, joining to the ICAO PKD.

The project has terminated on June 30, 2010. During the implementation of the project, the amount of LVL 453 258 has been absorbed.

DURING THE REFERENCE YEAR, THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS HAVE BEEN LAUNCHED AND CONTINUED:

PROJECT OF THE EXTERNAL BORDERS FUND "DEVELOPMENT OF THE NVIS BY ENSURING ITS COMPLIANCE WITH FINAL VERSION OF THE TECHNICAL DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND ARRANGING THE NECESSARY TRAININGS FOR SYSTEM USERS"

The aim of the project - to ensure the exchange of information between the Member States of the European Union on Schengen Visas and to improve the process of visa issuance.

Within the framework of the project, the improvement of NVIS will be continued in order to provide its connection with CVIS and thus easing the exchange of data between the Member States of the EU regarding the applications for visas and decisions related to them. The NVIS will be supplemented by the new, advanced functionality – VISION and VIS MAIL which will provide fast and convenient mechanism for consultations between the Member States of the EU about visa issues. Considering the changes to the NVIS, the training for users about work on the new systems will be carried out.

The project was launched on June 1, 2010 and it is scheduled to be completed in 2011.

The amount of LVL 1 477 782 is earmarked for the implementation of the project.

PROJECT OF THE EXTERNAL BORDERS FUND "THE DRAFTING OF A MANUAL OF BEST PRACTICES ON VISA ISSUANCE"

The aim of the project – to develop the tool for increasing the qualification of personnel involved in the visa issuance process, thus improving the visa issuance process.

Within the framework of the project, it is intended to develop electronic, interactive tool that will contain information and references on operations to be performed by users in National Visa Information System (NVIS). The tool will be available to authorised persons in the public web. The manual will be available to the employees of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, the State Border Guard and diplomatic and consular representations of the Republic of Latvia abroad who uses the NVIS in their work.

The project was launched on October 1, 2010 and it is scheduled to be completed in 2011. The amount of LVL 49 196 is earmarked for the implementation of the project.

PROJECT OF THE EUROPEAN RETURN FUND "THE LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES INVOLVED IN THE AREA OF RETURN"

The aim of the project - to promote cooperation with the services of other states in order to reduce a period of time for receipt of information and decision making about the foreigners who have violated the entry and residence provisions. To improve and to perfect the language proficiency for those officials of the OCMA and the State Border Guard who are dealing with the issues on return of the foreigners who have violated the entry and residence provisions.

Within the framework of the project, it is intended to arrange the language training (English, French, Spanish and Arabic) for 42 employees of the OCMA and 41 officers of the State Border Guard, to develop the concept of personnel training that will provide insight on the needs of language training for employees of the OCMA and officers of the State Border Guard and necessary finances for training in the coming years.

The project was launched on June 1, 2010; it is scheduled to be completed in 2011. The amount of LVL 45 483 is earmarked for the implementation of the project.

PROJECT OF THE EUROPEAN RETURN FUND "SETTING UP AND DEVELOPING THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE FOR CASES OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS"

The aim of the project – to increase the administrative capacity of the institutions involved in the area of return; to ensure the necessary equipment and software in order to start the setting up of digital archive for cases of illegal immigrants.

Within the framework of the project, it is intended to define the most characteristic document types of illegal immigrants' cases, to draw up the work task for the procurement of development and implementation of digital archive, during the implementation of the project, to draw up the procedure for sorting and circulation of illegal immigrants' personal cases, to set up 2 scanning work stations, to increase the performance of existing server complex, to select 10 000 personal cases of illegal immigrants, to sort documents of cases and to prepare personal cases for scanning, to develop a test version of the digital archive and to perform the test scanning of 1000 document units.

The project was launched on July 1, 2010; it is scheduled to be completed in 2011. The amount of LVL 156 022 is earmarked for the implementation of the project.

PROJECT OF THE EUROPEAN RETURN FUND "IMPROVING THE COOPERATION BETWEEN STRUCTURES INVOLVED IN THE RETURN PROCESS BY ENSURING ACCESS TO THE QUALITATIVE DATA"

The aim of the project – to remove barriers in the return process of persons and to improve exchange of information with other Schengen States; to perform the synchronization of data on persons to whom restrictions to move and reside within the territory of Schengen are imposed in the National register of obligations of non-admission and SIS.

Within the framework of the project, it is intended to set up the web service that enables faster update of data in SIS, to minimise the risk of including the irrelevant data, to ensure the faster access to reports on obligations of non-admission issued by the competent authorities of Latvia for other government authorities and the Schengen Member States, to minimize the risk of unduly detention of the persons involved in the return process within the territory of the Schengen Member States and at the external border.

The project was launched on October 1, 2010; it is scheduled to be completed in 2011. The amount of LVL 34 154 is earmarked for the implementation of the project.

PROJECT OF THE EUROPEAN REFUGEE FUND "TRAINING FOR THE EMPLOYEES OF THE OFFICE OF CITIZENSHIP AND MIGRATION AFFAIRS"

The aim of the project – to improve the quality of procedures for viewing of international protection claims and to strengthen administrative structures in order to address the tasks presented by closer cooperation with other states. To train a larger number of employees of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs about the application of the new Asylum Law in order to involve immediately the necessary human resources in the event of rapid increase in the number of asylum seekers.

Within the framework of the project, the English language training in Great Britain and Latvia and the French language training in France and Latvia are intended. The visits for sharing experience in the Member States of the EU in order to draw on the experience gained by these countries about dealing with asylum seekers and refugee issues. The participation in the EU training sessions arranged within the project of European Asylum Curriculum in order to promote establishment of the Common European Asylum System. The seminars on operation of the new Asylum Law's provisions and cultural differences are organized.

The project was launched on July 1, 2010; it is scheduled to be completed in 2011. The amount of LVL 58 860 is earmarked for the implementation of the project.

PROJECT THE EUROPEAN REFUGEE FUND "IMPROVING THE NECESSARY RECEPTION AND ASSISTANCE TO ASYLUM SEEKERS AT THE ASYLUM SEEKERS RECEPTION CENTRE "MUCENIEKI" "

The aim of the project –to provide necessary reception conditions and assistance to asylum seekers at ASRC "Mucenieki"; to provide practical assistance to asylum seekers and to improve processing of asylum seekers' personal data.

Within the framework of the project, it is intended to provide practical assistance to asylum seekers residing at ASRC "Mucenieki" by providing them with health care services, psychological support, as well as translation services. Educating staff of ASRC "Mucenieki" about providing first aid. To provide access to information for the organisations involved about provided assistance to asylum seekers, refugees and persons who have subsidiary protection. To improve the housing conditions of ASRC "Mucenieki". To supplement the Asylum Seekers Subsystem of the Single Migration Information System with the processes of asylum application and adopted decision by preparing specification for the processes of correspondence and legal proceedings.

The project was launched on July 1, 2010; it is scheduled to be completed in 2011. The amount of LVL 166 410 is earmarked for the implementation of the project.

PUBLIC SERVICES

In order to provide services of the OCMA, the net of regional divisions is set up throughout the Latvia. The recipient of the service is able to choose the place of receiving service and the kind of service, irrespective of the declared place of residence of the person or address of the legal person. This approach ensures that the service is available to everyone, including persons who are in the healthcare facilities and educational institutions, prisons, Latvian nationals living abroad, as well as persons without a permanent place of living. The OCMA carries out regular analysis on the work load of regional divisions and, in accordance with service demand, reviews the number of employees in regional divisions, thus ensuring the efficient service provision in accordance with demand.

During the period of reference, the OCMA continued to work in order to establish a level of resident services corresponding to the highest standards and to promote the availability of services of the OCMA for residents.

The transition to the customer service system corresponding to high standards in divisions of the OCMA was initiated in 2000. In order to promote the availability of services, the customer service was launched in the Līvāni branch of Jēkabpils division in 2010.

At present, 29 divisions are already working in the modern, specially equipped premises. Despite the limited budgetary resources, the OCMA continues the modernisation of regional divisions in order to introduce modern customer service halls in all regional divisions and every customer of the OCMA could receive qualitative, effective and foreseeable services.

It is possible to pay for the services by the OCMA in all 30 regional divisions by using the payment cards - VISA, VISA Electron, Maestro, Master and American Express. There is still a chance to pay for the services by the money transfer through a bank.

The services are available on location (in the regional division of the OCMA or in the other structural unit) and from a remote location: in the electronic environment, by post or phone).

Several services of the OCMA are related to the identification of persons, for example, issuance of personal identification or travel documents or residence permits, issuance of written statement, etc. Therefore, these services are available only on location.

THE OCMA PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING **FREE SERVICES IN THE ELECTRONIC ENVIRONMENT**:

The services available without authentication tools:

- “Clarification of person’s place of residence at the start of given year of municipality”,
- “Entrance adviser”,
- “Person’s name data base for searching a person’s name”.

The electronic services that are available to the public by using authentication with an electronic signature or through an internet banking facility:

- **“Submission of residence place declaration”** - this service enables persons to declare their residence place, the residence place of their underage children or persons in their custody or dependent persons in Latvia.
- **“Persons declared at my property”** - this service enables a private individual to find out information about their immovable properties registered in the Land Register and the people who have declared their place of residence at the addresses of these properties.
- **“My data or data of persons represented by me”** - this service enables persons to find out which information on the person, their underage children or persons in their custody or dependent persons is included in the Population Register.
- **“Checking whether the person is listed in the Population register and there is no information on person’s death”** - this service enables to verify data included in the Population Register whether the person with the identity number specified by user is listed in the Population Register, and if he/she is, that there is no information on the death of the person according to the Population Register.
- **“Checking whether the person has valid registration of residence at the specified address”** - this service enables to find out in the Population Register’s data whether the person with the identity number specified by user has a valid residence registration at the specified address.
- **“Approval of a letter of invitation for a visa application”** - this service enables the submission of applications for the approval of letter of invitation required for a foreigner in order to apply for a visa to enter in the Republic of Latvia.
- **“Approval of letter of invitation for a residence permit”** - this service enables the submission of applications for the approval of letter of invitation required for a foreigner in order to apply for a residence permit in the Republic of Latvia.
- **“Application for prohibiting or permitting the use of person’s body, tissues and organs after death”** - this service enables persons to notify to the OCMA their prohibition or permission to use their body, tissues and organs after their death.
- **“Application for registering residence place abroad”** - this service enables persons to declare to the OCMA the residence address abroad of the persons, their underage children or persons in their custody or dependent persons.
- **“Application for statement from the Population Register about oneself or a represented person”** - this service enables persons to request information included in the Population Register on themselves, their underage children or persons in their custody or dependent persons.
- **“Application for statement from the Population Register on a third person”** - this service enables person to request information included in the Population Register on a third person.

The statistical indicators show that, in general, the e-services of the OCMA are some of the most popular. The services “Submission of residence place declaration”, “Persons declared at my property”, “Checking whether the person has valid registration of residence at the specified address”, “My data or data of persons represented by me” are particularly often used by inhabitants. Persons are more willing to use the authentication tools of the internet bank, while requesting e-services.

In order to receive services from a remote location, the OCMA enables a chance to request and receive distinct services by post. For example, the OCMA can help to get in contact with the person searched for (relative, old friend or acquaintance whose address is lost, forgotten, etc.) by forwarding the written message enclosed by customer to the searched person in his/her registered residence place about which information is included in the Population

Register. It is possible to send a statement by post about indicating the residence place abroad. It is also possible to receive specific services by post provided by the Population Register, for example, statistical information.

For convenience of residents, “Forum” operates at the home page of the OCMA where residents can ask questions and receive answers to the questions of interest without visiting the office.

In order to receive services from a remote location by phone, the OCMA enables the operation of telephone information line. This service enables residents in Riga to apply for receiving a service by signing up in advance, as well as to receive the information related to the performance of the OCMA tasks – about reception hours, location, etc.

THE INTER-INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES

The Population Register’s information is used by the other state registers in the online data processing regime; it is also used to ensure the operation of e-government and e-services.

One of the inter-institutional services provided by the OCMA is ensuring the exchange of data in the online data processing regime. 240 intersystem interfaces are established between the OCMA and governmental authorities and local authorities; the greatest part of them (108 interfaces) ensures the exchange of data in the Population Register Information System, the National Visa Information System (8) and the Single Visa Information System (5).

In comparison to 2009, in 2010, the number of interfaces provided for the online exchange of data has increased (235 interfaces in 2009, but 240 in 2010) and the number of individual users of the information systems maintained by the OCMA has decreased (19 791 users recorded in 2009, but 18 216 users in 2010).

A decrease in the number of users of the information systems maintained by the OCMA is explained by the fact that the necessity to access the information systems was thoroughly examined and the rights were annulled for those who didn’t use the systems, as well as a decrease in the number of employees in governmental authorities and local authorities. In order to optimise the process of receiving data, the online exchange of data is used.

THE ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR NEXT YEAR

THE MAIN TASKS FOR NEXT YEAR

The OCMA has set up the following priorities for 2011:

- To conduct a range of measures in order to start the issuance of the new personal identification document – electronic identity card.
- To conduct a range of measures in order to ensure the issuance of residence permits to the citizens of third countries in the form of a single document - identity card.
- To take a range of measures in order to implement the requirements of Council Directive 2009/50/EC of 25 May 2009 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment. The directive provides the introduction of the so-called Blue Card of the European Union for unitary organizing and controlling migration flow of highly qualified workers from third countries.
- To conduct a range of measures in order to ensure the connection between the National Visa Information System and the Central Visa Information System starting from June 24, 2011.
- To start viewing the administrative infringement cases and the control of paying the fines in the infringement cases.
- To improve the Asylum Seekers Subsystem of the Single Migration Information System by including data on asylum applications and decisions taken in the asylum procedure; it will allow officials of the institutions involved in the asylum procedure to obtain information on the decision made in asylum case online.

- To conduct a range of measures in order to ensure automatic transfer of data on the Schengen entry bans from the Entry Ban Subsystem of the Single Migration Information System to the Schengen Information System; it will ensure the quality of data and prevent the possibility of mistakes.
- To introduce the new Invitation Register in order to ensure inclusion of information in the Register according to changes to legislation and to improve data security, and availability of services in the e-environment.
- To ensure representation of interests of Latvia and participation in the activities of the European Asylum Support Office.
- To conduct measures to optimise procedure for naturalization and procedure for recognition as citizens of Latvia of non-citizens' and stateless persons' children who are born after August 21, 1991. It is planned to draw up changes to legislation, providing that the application for recognition of a child as a citizen of Latvia could be submitted in the registry office while registering the birth of the child and to reduce the quantity of necessary documents, to optimise examinations of citizenship applicants' knowledge, to reduce the period of time for viewing the application, etc.
- In order to improve the availability of services, it is planned to perfect the existing electronic services and to introduce new services. It is planned to establish the e-service "Forwarding letter to a person", as well as to ensure opportunity to receive information electronically about acquisition of the citizenship of Latvia, thus reducing posting expenses.

THE PLANNED PROJECTS FOR NEXT YEAR

TWO PROJECTS OF THE EUROPEAN REFUGEE FUND ARE SCHEDULED TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN 2011:

- Project "Training for the employees of the OCMA".
- Project "Improving the necessary reception and assistance to asylum seekers at the Asylum Seekers Reception Centre "Mucenieki"".

TWO PROJECTS OF THE EXTERNAL BORDERS FUND ARE SCHEDULED TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN 2011:

- Project "Development of the National VIS by ensuring its compliance with final version of the technical documentation provided by the European Commission and arranging the necessary trainings for system users".
- Project "The drafting of a manual of best practices on visa issuance".

THREE PROJECTS OF THE EUROPEAN RETURN FUND ARE SCHEDULED TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN 2011:

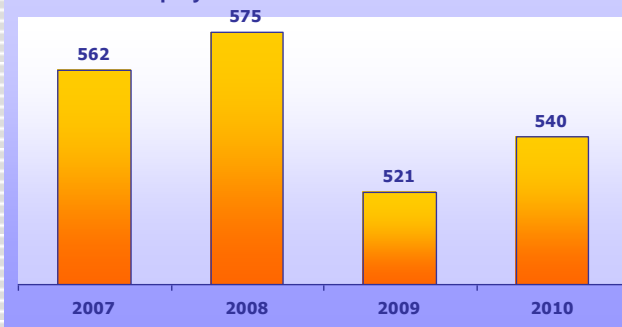
- Project "The language training for employees of the government authorities involved in the area of return".
- Project "Setting up and developing the digital archive for cases of illegal immigrants".
- Project "Improving the cooperation between structures involved in the return process by ensuring access to the qualitative data".
- In 2011, it is scheduled to start work on the ERDF project "Development of the passport system and the Single Migration Information System (SMIS) for issuance of electronic identity cards and electronic residence permit cards".

THE RESEARCHES PLANNED FOR NEXT YEAR (RESEARCHES AND REPORTS)

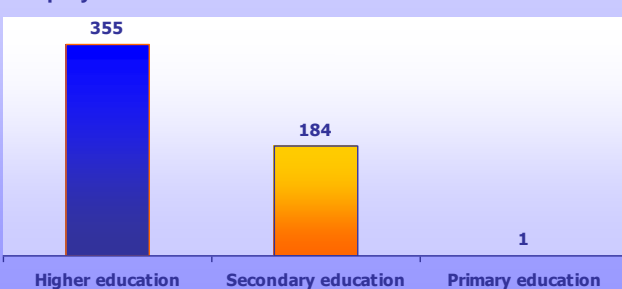
In 2011, the following researches and reports are scheduled:

- Policy report on the migration and asylum situation of Latvia in 2011.
- Statistical report on the area of migration and international protection of Latvia in 2009.
- Research on Visa Policy in Latvia.

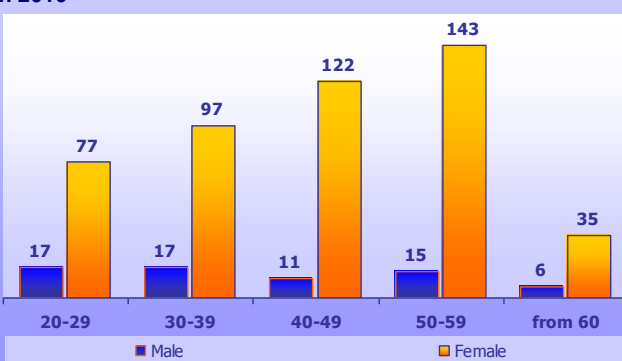
Number of Employees



Education Level of Civil Servants and Employees in 2010



Number of Employees by Age Group and Gender in 2010



- Research “Practical action of Latvia in the fight against illegal immigration”.
- Research “The structure of migration and asylum in Latvia”.

PERSONNEL

From year to year, the requirements for the qualifications of the OCMA personnel are growing as the functions of the authorities under the Ministry of the Interior are substantially expanding in the fields of migration and asylum as well as in the fields of IT and electronic services, and also with regard to the determination of the person's legal status.

Along with overtaking of public administration tasks of the Naturalization Board, 24 posts were assigned to the OCMA in order to ensure the fulfilment of the new tasks.

In the reference period, the functions of the central structural units of the OCMA were optimised and reorganised. The employment relationships with 26 employees were terminated, and 60 new employees were hired.

As of December 31, 2009, the OCMA employed 540 persons; of them 346 employees and 194 civil servants.

Of the 540 employees of the OCMA, 355 have a higher education degree, 184 – secondary education, and only one employee – primary education.

There is a majority of women in the personnel of the OCMA: 474 employees are women and only 66 employees are men of the total personnel.



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OFFICE OF CITIZENSHIP AND MIGRATION AFFAIRS, 2011

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