

History

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Necessity for Migration policy

Due to free migration of population in the former USSR territory during the Soviet regime Latvia inherited over half a million immigrants and their descendants. In the late 50-ies the proportion of aliens exceeded 50% in some of the largest towns of Latvia (Rīga, Daugavpils, Rēzekne).

In the late 80-ies together with the Third Awakening increased the discontent of the Latvian public with the rapid influx of aliens who brought other traditions, culture, mentality and language to Latvia. The inhabitants of Latvia felt necessity for a definite migration policy that could ensure control over migration process in the country.

Department of Migration Affairs

Regulation of migration processes in Latvia was started only after the renewal of its national independence. A state institution was required for tackling migration matters, therefore on 19 April, 1991 Department of Migration Affairs was established by decision No.108 of Republic of Latvia Cabinet of Ministers. Thus this date can be considered the foundation day of Latvia's migration service.

The first acts regulation migration were drafted and adopted, as well as people employed to develop and implement migration policy in Latvia. In November 1991 migration service started its work in Jelgava, Daugavpils, Krāslava, Tukums, Liepāja, Ventspils and Rīga.

On 2 January 1992 the Department of Migration Affairs was incorporated in Ministry of Justice.

Citizenship and Immigration Service

Department of Migration Affairs was liquidated on 14 January 1992 by decision No. 14 of Cabinet of Ministers and Citizenship and Immigration Service was set up instead.

The abbreviation CIS became so fixed in the public consciousness that even today despite the change of its name, it is still being used both in everyday life and often in mass media.

On 11 December 1991 the Republic of Latvia Supreme Council passed the law "On Population Register", Article 2 of this Law stated that "Citizenship and Migration Service of Ministry of Justice is in charge of developing utilization and of the Register". A new stage in the history of migration service started.

Systems of Population register had been developed in many countries of the world by the end of the 20th century, however, it was something new and unknown for Latvia. What made the situation more complicated was that apart from registering approximately 2.6 million people in the process of the registration Latvia's citizens had to be separated from the persons who were not citizens of this country, as well as from persons to whom the law "On Population Register" cannot be applied. Moreover, the registration had to be completed by the election to the fifth Saeima in 1993.

In 1992 intensive work started in order to set up and staff territorial offices and provide them with resources and hardware. In April 1992 territorial offices were opened in Ogre, Tukums, Liepāja, as well as in Rīga Vidzeme district and in the Centre district, but in May territorial offices were opened in nearly all the districts of Latvia. By the end of the year entering Population Register data in the computers began 444 people were employed in Citizenship and Immigration Service. On 30 June 1992 the

Department passed in subordination of State Minister J.Dinēvičs.

Control of migration processes was carried out parallelly with the above mentioned work. In 1992 the law "On the Entry and Residence of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons in the Republic of Latvia", and in February of 1993 Republic of Latvia Cabinet of Ministers decision "On the Procedure of Issuing Entry Visas and Control of Persons Crossing the Border in the Republic of Latvia" came into force. The number of employers increased - in February 1993 the total number of people working in the Service came to 679.

On 3 August 1993 the Service was incorporated into the Ministry of Interior by Cabinet of Ministers decision.

In May of 1994 the Service took over the functions of passport issuance from the Police Department and the number of employees increased to 851 people.

Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs

In 1996 the Service of Citizenship and Migration was renamed the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

In April of 1997 a modern Passport Centre conforming to present day standards was opened in Riga and centralized issuance of Latvia non - citizen passports was started.

In January of 1998 Refugee Affairs Centre was established within the structure of the Office and applications for receipt of a refugee status were accepted.

In March of 2010 the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs took over the functions of the Naturalization Board. From this moment, OCMA is the sole institution authorized to solve the issues related to naturalization or loss of citizenship.

<https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/en/history>