



SECURITY POLICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

The author of the photos included in the annual report: Latvian Security Police

Annual report

about the activities of the Security Police in 2015

Riga, May 2016

Dear Reader,

We have prepared this public report on the work of Latvian Security Police (DP) in 2015. The aim of the report is to inform you about what our service has achieved in the last year, as well as to provide DP's assessment of what are in our view the most significant processes affecting our national security interests.

The bygone year was one of the most complex in the history of our service. In the first half of 2015, Latvia held the Presidency of the Council of the EU and this was an intensive and busy time for DP. In conjunction with other institutions, DP carried out counter intelligence activities and measures to strengthen protection of state secrets, as well as coordinating and implementing top level security measures during the Presidency on a national scale.

For the duration of the Presidency, DP also had responsibility for coordinating counter-terrorism cooperation between European security services, as well as heading the Council of the EU working group on counter terrorism issues. During Latvia's Presidency heightened attention was paid to counter terrorism issues, because only a few days after the start of the Presidency Islamist terrorists carried out attacks in Paris. At the end of the year terrorist carried out more attacks in the French capital, which were the biggest terrorist acts in Europe in recent years. Several other terrorist attacks also took place in Europe last year, while many more were prevented during their planning stage due to the work of security services. The large number of terrorism incidents emphasizes the growing threat of terrorism to Europe's security.

Compared with other European countries, the terrorism threat level in Latvia is still low, however there is no doubt that religious radicalisation processes have also affected some individuals in Latvia. Although compared with other EU member states few persons from Latvia have joined *Daesh* in Syria, the number has increased precisely in the bygone year. Since returnees from conflict regions are currently one of the main sources of terrorism threats in Europe, such persons pose significant risks to our national security.

Along with the growing threat of terrorism, the previous year did not see a reduction in the risks associated with the willingness of the Russian Federation (hereinafter Russia) to use military instruments to achieve its geopolitical goals. Following its aggression against Ukraine's territorial integrity, which continues to cause tension in relations between Western countries and Russia and to negatively influence the security situation in Europe, last year Russia also commenced military operations in Syria. Due to increasing international ambitions, Russia's intelligence and security services continued their espionage activities against Latvia.

At the same time, Russia has not ceased using so-called *soft power* instruments, waging aggressive information manipulation activities and systematically exploiting so-called *compatriot organisations* which it funds to achieve its geopolitical goals. Taking advantage of free speech and other attributes of democracy, people's political activists financed by Russia continue their efforts to systematically undermine the ties between Latvia's inhabitant and their country and to support Russia's geopolitical goals both in Latvia and on the international scale. Given the experience of the conflict in Ukraine, such activities demand closer scrutiny and cannot be ignored as just marginal phenomena.



Another serious challenge to Europe's security was caused by the refugee crisis, which was used as a cover by *Daesh* to conduct its criminal acts in Europe and by Russia for its propaganda campaign. Radical right wing activists in Latvia tried to exploit the negative public attitude toward settling refugees in Latvia. Although support for right wing radical ideologies is low in Latvia, giving refuge to asylum seekers could radicalise persons with xenophobic or racist orientations.

The unstable security situation in Europe, which is largely driven by Russia's aggressive foreign policy and the increasing terrorist threat, will continue to pose challenges for our national security interests this year. Our country's security does not only depend on Latvia's membership in NATO and the EU and our allies – it mostly depends on ourselves. The most effective guarantee of security is the ability of state institutions to professionally perform their national security functions and the readiness of every person in Latvia to contribute to strengthening our common security. Therefore, in conclusion, on behalf of the service I would like to thank everyone in Latvia who has given significant assistance to our work.

Best regards,
Normunds Mežviets,
Director General of DP

1. Counter intelligence

Counter intelligence is one of DP's priority areas, involving systematic measures to identify activities by foreign intelligence and security services against Latvia and illegally obtaining or revealing confidential information. DP cooperates in counter intelligence with Latvia's other intelligence and security services – the Military Intelligence and Security Service (MIDD) and the Constitution Protection Bureau (SAB) - as well as foreign partner services. DP informs top state officials about trends uncovered through counter intelligence activities, to ensure that decision-makers are informed about potential risks and are able to quickly and effectively avert them.

During the reporting period, DP organised 64 lectures on counter intelligence and national security risks to raise awareness about the threats posed by foreign intelligence and security services amongst state and municipal officials engaged in international cooperation or with access to information of interest to foreign intelligence and security services.

1.1. Espionage by foreign intelligence and security services

During the reporting period the main counter intelligence risks faced by Latvia continued to come from Russia's intelligence and security services – the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and the Main Intelligence Directorate (GU).¹ In the last year, representatives of intelligence and security services from other states outside the EU and NATO also operated in our country, however the intensity of their activities and risks for Latvia's security were comparatively low compared with Russia's intelligence and security services.



FSB logotype



GU logotype



SVR logotype

¹ As of 2015 the official name of this body is the Russian Federation Armed Forces General Staff Main Department (Главное управление Генерального штаба Вооруженных Сил Российской Федерации), however Russia's official media continues to use its previous name "Main Intelligence Directorate" and the abbreviation "GRU". The change of name can be viewed within the context of the restoration of formal nomenclature from Imperial Russia i.e. "Main Directorate" was the historic name of the military intelligence unit in the Imperial Russian armed forces.

DP considers that in the bygone year the intensity of Russian intelligence activities targeted against Latvia remained at their previous level. The most significant intelligence activities directed against Latvia were conducted by the FSB, which may be connected with the FSB's increased role as an intelligence and security service. Alongside intelligence gathering activities, in the reporting year Russia's intelligence and security services continued to build positions of influence in Latvia and to organise information operations against our country. These activities are aimed at changing public opinion and influencing Latvia's domestic political processes as well as discrediting our country and its officials and institutions.

Information available to DP indicates that in the first half of 2015 Russia's intelligence and security services were most interested in Latvia's Presidency of the Council of the EU, however throughout the reporting period Russia's intelligence and security services continued to take an interest in social-political and economic processes as well as the work of Latvia's intelligence and security services and law enforcement institutions. Russian intelligence and security services also continued working on cross-border cooperation projects which could be used to mask intelligence activities against Latvia.

At present, residents of Latvia visiting Russia are some of the main sources of information used by Russian intelligence and security services. According to information available to DP, during the reporting period FSB officers (also using other Russian state bodies as cover or for support) regularly questioned residents of Latvia (on the border and in the border area and less frequently within Russia) about the socio-political situation in our country, the economic environment and the personnel and tactics used by state intelligence and security and law enforcement institutions.

In most cases, the questioning of Latvian residents entering Russia is limited to general information gathering activities, but such interviews can also be used to select potential candidates for recruitment. DP considers that the greatest risk of recruitment is for representatives of political parties and to middle level state and municipal officials who have access to information of interest to Russian intelligence and security services or important decision-making roles. Russian intelligence and security services also traditionally have a heightened interest in officials from state intelligence and security and law enforcement institutions and persons associated with such institutions who are informed about the personnel, activities (including against Russian intelligence and security service activities), material/technical capabilities and other aspects of these state intelligence and security and law enforcement institutions.

DP considers that counter intelligence risks are associated not just with state or municipal officials. Latvian business people

with interests in Russia are also at risk of recruitment. Taking into account the role of the intelligence and security services in Russia, Russian intelligence and security services can influence the ability of foreign companies to earn profits in Russia, thereby subjecting Latvian entrepreneurs to risks of manipulation.

Persons involved in smuggling excise goods from Russia to Latvia are also exposed to increased counter intelligence risks. From the Russian side such activities are virtually impossible without the consent and control of the FSB, making it easy to influence smugglers and organised crime members.

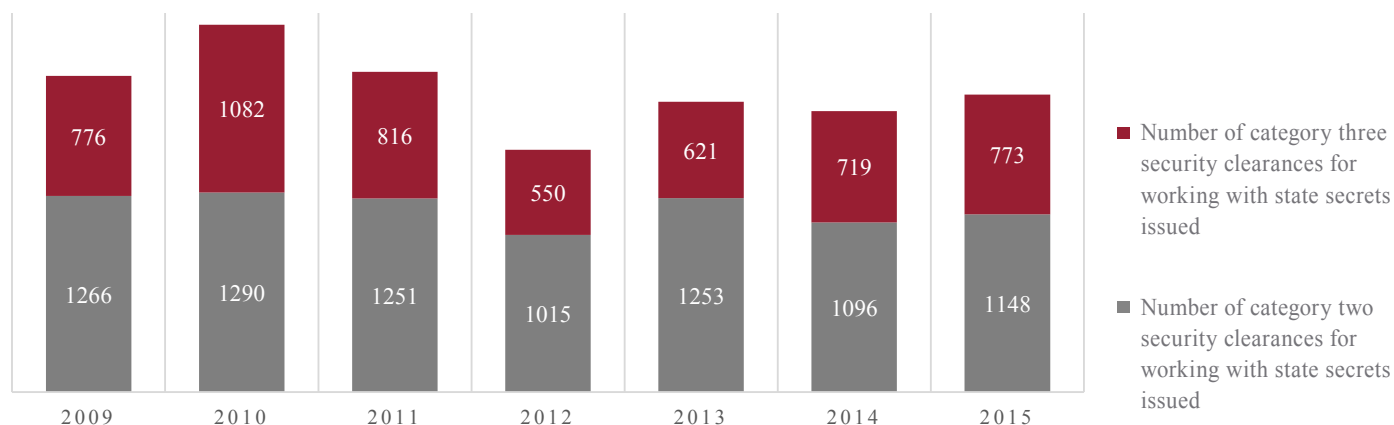
Interest by Russian intelligence and security services in cooperating with supporters of compatriot policy conducted by Russia in Latvia as well as with former members of the Soviet KGB was also observed during the reporting period. Russian intelligence and security services want to use these people to obtain information, strengthen Russia's influence and to conduct propaganda operations against Latvia, the EU and NATO. Young people going to study at universities in Russia are also recruitment risks. Although these persons do not have access to confidential information, in the future they might work for state or municipal institutions and thus be able to provide useful information to Russian intelligence and security services or influence decisions on the basis of orders from Russian intelligence and security services.

During the reporting period, Russian intelligence and security services used Russian research institutions and Russian journalists under their control against Latvia as well as officials from other Russian state institutions directly or as cover. This allows Russian intelligence and intelligence and security services to obtain information from a broader range of persons i.e. those who do not wish to collaborate with intelligence and security services, making it more difficult for Latvia's intelligence and security bodies to promptly identify hostile intelligence activities.

Propaganda operations aimed against Latvia involving Russian intelligence and security services also continued last year. The most prominent example was the report by Russian TV channel NTV on the so-called "unmasked NATO spy", Latvian citizen Andrejs Dudarevs.

During the reporting period, DP in conjunction with the other state intelligence and security bodies (MIDD and SAB) began work on amendments to the Criminal Law, including Article 85 covering criminal liability for spying. This decision was based on the fact that the three intelligence and security bodies consider that the current legal framework significantly impedes state security institutions from using criminal law instruments against persons who collaborate with foreign intelligence and security services. In its current version, Article 85 is difficult to implement in practice, and it is outdated and does not align with the intelligence methods currently being used against Latvia. The result is that although collaboration with a foreign intelligence and security service is classified as an especially serious crime against the state, after identifying possible collaboration between a resident of Latvia and foreign intelligence and security services Latvia's intelligence and security institutions traditionally employ other legal solutions to avert the risks caused by such persons. The amendments to Article 85 will increase the ability of state intelligence and security institutions to counter hostile activities by foreign intelligence and security services using methods stipulated in criminal law, thus raising the efficiency of counter intelligence measures and having an additional preventative effect.

NUMBER OF SECURITY CLEARANCES ISSUED BY DP



1.2. Protection of state secrets

One of the most important components of the counter intelligence system is the protection of state secrets, which encompasses a range of measures. The purpose of the state secrets protection system is to prevent illegal access to information protected by law or its unsanctioned disclosure which could significantly harm national security interests. DP closely cooperates with the other state intelligence and security bodies (MIDD and SAB) in protecting secrets.

DP issues category two (up to confidentiality level SECRET) and category three (up to confidentiality level CONFIDENTIAL) security clearances for working with state secrets. In the reporting period DP issued 1921 security clearances, of which 1148 were category two and 773 were category three security clearances.

Last year, there were 28 cases in which DP ruled not to issue security clearances to persons for working with state secrets. These rulings were adopted because:

- In five cases it was found that the person had been found guilty of a deliberately committing a criminal offence or revealing state secrets due to negligence;
- In one case it was concluded that the person was registered with a medical institution in connection with addiction to alcohol, narcotic, psychotropic or toxic substances or mental illness;
- In 22 cases while investigating the person facts were uncovered which cast doubt on their trustworthiness and ability to keep state secrets confidential (for example, the

person's activities involved deliberately providing false information, addiction to alcohol, narcotic or psychotropic substances, breaching rules on working with objects of state secrecy or disclosing classified information, or committing acts of a criminal character).

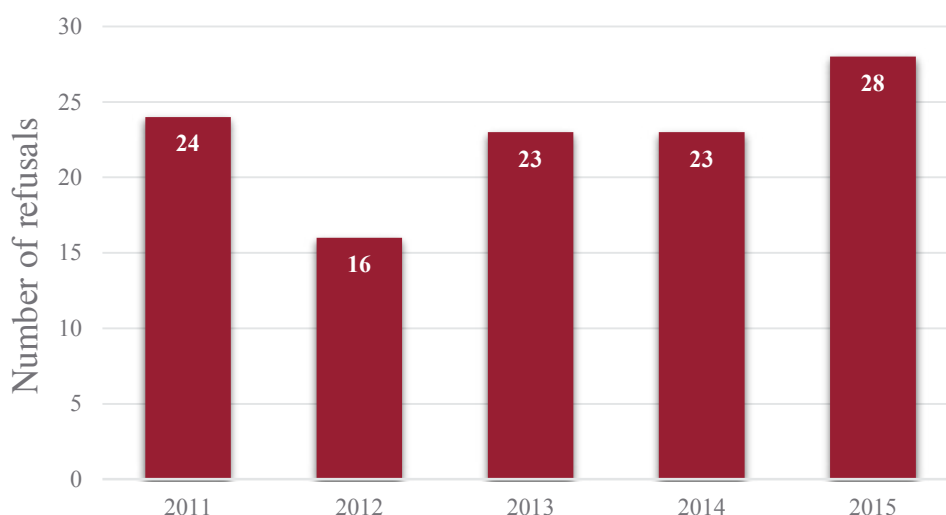
The persons refused permission to work with state secrets included officials of both high, middle and low ranks from institutions in various sectors. A large number of persons denied access to state secrets were employees of law enforcement institutions. There were also cases where DP issued permits for working with state secrets only for limited periods after investigations revealed facts requiring additional checking.

During the reporting period, DP also provided support during the vetting procedure for 48 persons applying for category one (up to confidentiality level TOP SECRET) security clearances for working with state secrets. Decisions on issuing category one clearances are made by SAB. DP also provided SAB with 12 positive and two negative assessments on issuing industrial security certificates to commercial entities.

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the system for protecting state secrets, DP conducted 47 state secret protection checks on various institutions and provided 51 consultations on the operation of the system for protecting state secrets.

In the first half of 2015, DP also performed checks on persons involved in organising Latvia's Presidency in the Council of the EU or who attended these events. In connection with the Presidency events, DP performed checks on 2276 persons in the first half of 2015.

DP REFUSALS TO ISSUE SECURITY CLEARANCES



Conclusions and outlook

- During the reporting period, foreign intelligence and security services continued organising espionage activities against Latvia. The most active espionage activities against our country were conducted by Russia's intelligence and security services, especially the FSB. It is anticipated that hostile activities by foreign intelligence and security services will not diminish and will continue posing threats to our security.
- During the reporting period, intelligence and security services from Russia and other states outside the EU or NATO showed most interest in socio-political and economic processes in our country. In order to obtain data intelligence and security services employ various tactics to obtain information sources and influence decisions in their favour. This tendency will most likely continue in future.
- During the reporting period, Russian intelligence and security services were more active than before in interviewing Latvian residents travelling to Russia. To evade counter intelligence measures, Russian intelligence and security services mainly conducted their recruitment attempts within Russian territory, where by using blackmail or manipulating the possibilities for Latvian residents to conduct their business in Russia there is a greater chance of getting a person to cooperate. It is anticipated that in future Russian intelligence and security services will keep concentrating recruitment attempts outside Latvia's territory.
- As in previous years, last year one of the highest levels of risk of recruitment by Russian intelligence and security services was associated with state and municipal officials with access to state secrets as well as representatives of state intelligence and security and law enforcement institutions. Russian intelligence and security services also continued to seek cooperation with persons favourably disposed toward Russia's proclaimed ideology. This tendency will most likely continue in future.
- To increase the effectiveness of counter intelligence measures, during the reporting period Latvia's state intelligence and security bodies drafted amendments to the Criminal Law, which propose the expansion of the capacity of state intelligence and security bodies to combat hostile activities by foreign intelligence and security services using methods sanctioned by criminal law. Access to such instruments could significantly influence the effectiveness of future counter intelligence measures.
- During the reporting period DP continued strengthening measures for protecting state secrets through stricter evaluation of the suitability of persons and enterprises for working with objects of state secrecy. Considering the intensity of hostile espionage against Latvia, DP believes it is critically important to national security to continue strengthening the system for protecting state secrets, including preventing access to state secrets by persons whose ability to protect such information is demonstrably in doubt.

2. Protection of the constitutional order

The protection of the constitutional order is one of the main tasks of the national security system. To achieve this, DP conducts counter intelligence and operational activities to collect pre-emptive information about potential risks to the constitutional order and prevent them. An important element of protecting the constitutional order is informing top state officials and state and municipal institutions about processes and activities posing risks to our constitutional order. Increasing awareness of these risks by both decision makers and the public is a significant blow to attempts to split society in Latvia, question the country's territorial integrity or cast doubts on the legitimacy of Latvia's statehood and independence.

During the reporting period, the most significant risks to the constitutional order continued to come from activities which, while they are cloaked in legitimate objectives, are in reality aimed at influencing Latvia's domestic and foreign policies in line with Russia's geopolitical interests. Discussions about receiving refugees in 2015 were accompanied by increased activities by radical right wing ideologues, however at present they present a low level of risk to the constitutional order. The number of supporters of left wing ideologues and the level of their activities is extremely low in Latvia, therefore their activities are not discussed in this report.

2.1. Goals and priorities of Russia's compatriot policy

Last year Russia continued to actively use compatriot policy to further its foreign policy interests. The conflict in Ukraine, military operations in Syria (which caused further tensions in relations with the West) and the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II were the events in which Russia most actively used Russians living in foreign countries to legitimize its aggressive foreign policy and to promote interpretations of history favoured by Russia's political elite.

During the reporting period, the main emphases of Russia's compatriot policy remained unchanged: protection of compatriots' rights against discrimination in foreign countries as perceived by officials in Russia (especially in countries where Russia has longstanding geopolitical interests), consolidation of compatriots under Russia's wing, reinforcement of historic memory as desired by Russia, as well as popularisation of Russian language and culture. While many countries care about their compatriots abroad, Russia regularly exploits its compatriot policy as an instrument to force changes in other countries' domestic and foreign policies which suit Russia. Article 2 of the Republic of Latvia Constitution stipulates that Latvia's sovereignty belongs to the Latvian people, therefore Russia's attempts under the cover of compatriot policy to influence political processes to further its own interests rather than those of the Latvian people is a clear threat to our country's constitutional order.

Along with traditional emphases, last year Russia's compatriot policy in reference to youth remained its significance. During the reporting period there were ongoing attempts to attract compatriots living abroad to study at universities in Russia, where they would develop loyalty to Russia and be able to represent and promote Russia's interests abroad in future. Russia's federal agency *Россотрудничество* (RS) continued actively implementing the programs *Новое Поколение* (New Generation) and *Здравствуй, Россия!* (Hello, Russia!), which is aimed at



creating positive impressions of Russia by organising trips to Russia for foreign youth. While it is natural for young people to visit and gain education in Russia, there are concerns over attempts to use these programs and study courses to develop loyalty to Russia and use them as agents of Russia's interests

abroad in future. During the reporting period young people from Latvia were amongst those making such trips to Russia.

In the last year Russia's political elite continued to stress the importance of compatriot policy, however the further expansion of these policies was restricted by Russia's economic problems caused by Western sanctions and world crude oil prices. As a result the main funders of Russia's compatriot policy – *Фонд поддержки и защиты прав соотечественников проживающих за рубежом* (Fund for the Support and Protection of Russians Living Abroad), *Русский мир* (Russian World, hereinafter RM) and *Фонд поддержки публичной дипломатии имени А.М.Горчакова* (the A.Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund) – were forced in 2015 to refuse or reduce funding for several compatriot support projects in foreign countries, including Latvia. Moreover, funding for approved projects was not infrequently transferred later, and due to the



decline in the value of the rouble compatriot activists received less money in real terms. During the reporting period it was also observed that Russia's state institutions tended to demand more detailed reports from funding recipients regarding money spent, thus securing greater control over measures conducted as part of compatriot policy.

Last year saw a continued reduction of the Russian Foreign Ministry's authority over compatriot policy, leading to an even greater role for RS. However, during the reporting period there were also significant personnel changes at this agency. This shows that Russia is seeking new ways to increase the effectiveness of these foreign policy instruments in the context of economic difficulties and increasing awareness abroad regarding Russia's real aims.

2.2. Expressions of Russia's ethnic Russians policies in Latvia

During the reporting period Russian compatriot policy activists² continued working with varying degrees of intensity in Latvia, their goals and activities were closely linked to Russia's foreign policy guidelines and the values espoused by Russia's political elite. Considering that Russian compatriot policy activists in Latvia continued to receive financial support from Russian funds, the close correlation between their activities and Russia's geopolitical interests was probably not a coincidence, but rather a targeted and coordinated series of measures to strengthen Russia's influence.

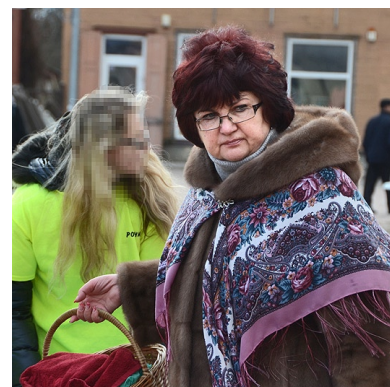
In order to reduce the possibility of hiding the true sources of funding used by organisations supporting Russian compatriot policy, during the reporting period DP prepared proposals for amending regulations in this sphere. DP considers that the public has the right to be informed about organisations and foundations claiming to be part of Latvia's civil society and their goals. Otherwise the situation arises wherein organisations registered in Latvia receive money from funds in Russia and attempt to influence Latvia's domestic political processes, but they only have to account for how the funds are spent to their financiers in Russia.

Compared with previous years, the number of compatriot policy activists and organisations remained about the same in Latvia in 2015. During the reporting period, the same persons continued to dominate the ranks of compatriot organisations in Latvia as before. The most important Russian compatriot activists can be divided into two categories:

- *systemic* (or *professional compatriots*) – active members of Russian compatriot organisations who enjoy constant support from institutions in Russia;

- *non-systemic* activists – persons who disseminate messages supporting Russia's geopolitical interests but who are not members of compatriot organisations and whose links with officials and institutions in Russia are formed independently of the "official" compatriot organisations in Latvia.

Although both *systemic* and *non-systemic* compatriot activists share similar ideological views and support increasing Russia's influence in Latvia, this is not a unified or homogenous environment. During the reporting period, Russia's decreasing ability to finance compatriot support projects led to increasing competitiveness and envy between compatriot activists. This was reinforced by the ambitions of some of the most prominent activists and/or personal antagonisms. Bickering and intrigue also soured relations both within the *systemic* and *non-systemic* groups and between them, with the latter accusing the former of ineffectively using funds given by Russia. The friction could be seen in the arguments over selecting the youth delegate for the World Russian Compatriots Congress in Moscow. The chosen candidate was lobbied by Viktors Guščins, chairman of the *Latvian Council of Non-Governmental Organisations* (LSOP), and Nataļja Čehova, head of the organisation *Rodņik*, but this was strenuously opposed by *PEROM* representative Margarita Dragiļe, who considered herself the best person for the job and went to the event with the mediation of the RM fund.



N.Čehova

During the reporting period, both *systemic* and *non-systemic* compatriot policy activists continued their usual activities, mainly spreading information and organising protests in line with Russia's foreign policy interests. However, last year activists devoted more effort to information campaigns directly supporting Russia and paid less attention to traditional protest meetings. DP believes that this is due to declining attendance at recent public events organised by compatriot activists, making them less cost effective.

During the reporting period, the objectives of compatriot policy activists included creating an impression of supposed "discrimination against minorities in Latvia", giving legitimacy to Russia's aggressive foreign policy, popularising historical interpretations favourable to Russia and promoting the moral superiority of the *Russian world* over the West as per the propaganda espoused by Russia's political elite.

² In this report the terms "activists" and "supporters" in relation to Russian compatriot policies are used as synonyms to refer to the same category of persons.

As in previous reporting periods, Russia's Embassy in Latvia continued providing significant support to compatriot policy activists. Since RS does not have a representative office in Latvia, the embassy advised Russian compatriot policy activists on drafting applications for funding from Russian funds, as well as taking a more active role in the activities of compatriot policy activists by giving instructions on further action. Moreover, the embassy retained the decisive role on the composition of delegations for compatriot policy events held abroad, accompanied by "recommendations" on raising specific questions.

2.2.1. Systemic compatriot policy activists

Despite the fact that *systemic* compatriot activists are united in several political organisations, in practice during the reporting period they focussed more on individual action rather than joint efforts. This was due to the aforementioned competition for funding from Russian institutions, personal tensions as well as ineffective coordination.

During the reporting period, the LSOP, which was established to coordinate the activities of various compatriot organisations, continued to function as a forum for discussion and information sharing rather than as a coordinating structure. The LSOP's ineffectiveness during the reporting period was also demonstrated by its fruitless attempts to attract young people, despite the lack of interest amongst youth in compatriot politics. Another sign of its ineffectiveness was the fact that during the reporting period officials from the Russian Embassy became more regular attendees at its meetings, possibly trying to boost enthusiasm and motivation within the LSOP's ranks.

With the decline in the influence of the LSOP, compatriot organisations outside Riga began seeking consolidation at the regional level. *Ventspils krievu biedrība* (Ventspils Russian Association) and *Liepājas Krievu kopiena* (Liepāja Russian Community) in Kurzeme, the Jelgava organisations *Veče* and *Istok*, the Aizkraukle organisation LAD and the Jēkabpils organisation *Rodņik* in Zemgale, and *Rēzeknes krievu biedrība* (Rēzekne Russian Association) in Latgale became active last year. There were also consolidation efforts on the LSOP model in Jūrmala, where the main initiator was Andrejs Podmazovs.



V. Guščins

However, weak organisational coordination did not diminish the intensity of some individual compatriot activists during the reporting period. Activists tried to exploit Latvia's EU Presidency as well various international forums, which compatriot activists attended thanks to funding from institutions in Russia, in order to bolster their claims about "discrimination against minorities" and "human rights abuses" in Latvia.

Russia's preferred discourse about the "lack of justice and democracy" in Latvia was supplemented during the reporting period with claims about the supposed "persecution of compatriot policy supporters" in Latvia and the other Baltic countries. Some activists consider that this is proven by DP's public reports, criminal cases opened by DP against compatriot activists and other "facts". Activity devoted to popularising this assertion during the reporting period included the unveiling of a new organisation called the *League of Latvia's Prisoners of Conscience*, which brings together a number of activists who believe that DP is "persecuting" them for their pro-Russia views. Another means to this end was the publication of the informational material "Persecution of dissenters in the Baltic countries," and the thesis about the persecution of activists was also accented at international events. During the reporting period, the most active propagator of this myth was the "chairman" of the unregistered organisation *Nepilsoņu kongress* (Congress of Non-Citizens, NK) Aleksandrs Gapoņenko. His activities are motivated by a desire to cast himself as the most active "defender of Russian rights", thus strengthening his position in the battle for funding from Russia. At the same time A. Gapoņenko only paid occasional attention to NK during the reporting period, which remained virtually inactive last year.



A. Gapoņenko (in black) with colleagues

In addition to rights issues, during the reporting period activists also took action to legitimise and support Russia's foreign policy. In the majority of cases this involved informational support for Russian aggression in Ukraine and involvement in Syria and to discredit opponents of Russia's foreign policy. One of the main targets for informational campaigns by compatriot activists was the presence of armed forces from allied NATO countries in Latvia. The demonstration of solidarity by the alliance with the Baltic countries was positioned as "aggression against Russia", rather than as a strengthening of NATO's defensive capabilities

in response to the conflict in Ukraine. A.Gapoņenko exploited the traditionally provocative rhetoric surrounding this issue by describing the presence of troops from the US and other NATO states as preparations for the “armed suppression of Russians in Latvia”.

In addition to public expressions of support, activists also held various events in support of Russia’s foreign policy. During the reporting period, European Parliament Member Tatjana Ždanoka made several visits to illegally annexed Crimea, while her party the Union of Russians in Latvia (LKS) held a vigil in Riga for the victims of the 2014 Odessa tragedy. In both cases, Russia’s desired messages about both historical and current events were dominant. The views expressed at the event “For a Europe from Dublin to Vladivostok” staged during the Eastern Partnership Summit also correlated closely with the views of Russian officials regarding the Eastern Partnership.

In addition to T.Ždanoka, another active supporter of Russia’s foreign policy was A.Gapoņenko, who planned to act as an election observer in the internationally unrecognised Republic of Transnistria. However he was barred from entering Moldova, which A.Gapoņenko viewed as a case of “yet more repression”, since he had allegedly been going to Moldova on a business trip. This contradicted



T.Ždanoka

a later statement by Vladimir Hoerik, the chief organiser of the foreign “observers” group, that one of the observers for the parliamentary elections in the Republic of Transnistria A.Gapoņenko had been barred from entering Moldova. Other compatriot activists from Latvia also participated in observing imitations of electoral processes which were not recognised internationally but received Russian support in the previous years.

During the reporting period, *systemic* activists played an important role in spreading and popularising Russia’s desired interpretations of history. In order to maintain the myth long espoused by Russian propaganda regarding the rebirth of fascism in Latvia, last year saw the traditional protests against the 16 March procession commemorating the Waffen SS Legion. However, the protest by Josifs Korens, unofficial leader of Latvia’s anti-fascist activists, attracted less attention in 2015 than in previous years.



J.Korens

This demonstrates that concerns about the rebirth of fascism in our country are artificially propagated by Russian officials and mass media outlets rather than having any real basis in Latvian society.

Unlike the protests against the March 16 events, which arouse less and less interest even amongst compatriot activists, one of the rare event which consolidated both *systemic* and *non-systemic* activists was the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in May 9. For the first time in Riga, part of this event was the “March of the Immortal Regiment,” a phenomenon borrowed from Russia where it has become one of the main weapons used by the political elite to reinforce the desired collective historical memory. The main credit for organising this march goes to A.Gapoņenko’s colleagues Bronislavs Zeļčermans, Margarita Dragiļe and Elizabete Krivcova, and to a lesser extent the so-called anti-fascists. For her contribution M.Dragiļe



E.Krivcova

received an award at the 2015 World Russian Compatriots Congress. It is important to note that Russia exploits the May 9 celebrations not only to honour World War II veterans but also to stress Russia’s heroism and unique place in history in an attempt to cultivate loyalty towards Russia by compatriots abroad. For this reason, Russia actively supports May 9 events externally both politically and economically.

During the reporting period, compatriot activists continued to popularise morality and traditional values, singling out Russia as the champion of these virtues in contrast to the “morally corrupt” West. Last year saw the debut A.Gapoņenko’s film *Juvenālā justīcija*, in which the authors distort various events to prove that “traditional families are being destroyed in the West as same-sex relationships are promoted, whereas in Russia traditional family values based on Orthodoxy prevail.” During the reporting period, A.Gapoņenko also participated in a conference on traditional values in Moldova, where concerns were raised about the destruction of traditional Christian values and “the growth of homosexualist propaganda”. This subject was raised earlier in Latvia by another compatriot activist, Vladimirs Lindermans, who unsuccessfully sought to initiate a referendum on prohibiting the popularising of same-sex relationships amongst children.

It is noteworthy that some compatriot activists whose names are not mentioned here did not hesitate from preaching about moral values and the “decadent lifestyle” of the West even though they were guilty of the same vices. During pre-trial

investigations, DP found child pornography in the possession of one compatriot activist, while another activist had child pornography as well as materials featuring bestiality, necrophilia and violent sexual acts. Possession of such materials is a criminal offence and the cases have been handed over to the State Police.

2.2.2. Non-systemic compatriot policy activists

During the reporting period, various *non-systemic* compatriot activists continued their activities, mainly concentrating on informational measures in line with Russia's propaganda narrative about "discrimination against minorities" in Latvia and supporting Russia's aggressive foreign policy. Although in a few cases *non-systemic* activists joined events organised by *systemic* activists and also supported other *non-systemic* activists, they mostly continued acting independently of other compatriot activists. In comparison with *systemic* activists, *non-systemic* activists traditionally choose provocative rhetoric and forms of protest to draw attention to themselves in both Latvia and Russia.

As in previous years, in 2015 one of the most active *non-systemic* compatriot activists was V.Lindermans, who mainly concentrated on informational activities to publically support



V.Lindermans

Russia's narratives about Ukraine, the presence of allied forces in Latvia, the status of minorities in Latvia and other subjects used in Russian propaganda. During the reporting period he also had a high profile role in supporting members of the unregistered Russian political organisation *Другая Россия* (Another Russia) who were arrested for illegally entering the National Armed Forces base at Ādaži³. This led to criminal charges being

filed against the two citizens of Russia and Lindermans, and at the end of the reporting period the case had been sent to the prosecutor to commence criminal interrogation. DP considers that the aim of this activity was to protest the presence of foreign soldiers in Latvia and to raise the prestige in Russia of *Другая Россия*.

³ On 12 June 2015, two citizens of Russia entered the National Armed Forces base at Ādaži to protest what they view as NATO's aggression toward Russia. Criminal proceedings were begun in connection with this incident, which in the course of investigations was reclassified under Article 231.2 of the Criminal Law (hooliganism committed by a group of persons). On 28 September 2015 DP recommended that criminal interrogation be commenced against the Russian citizens for hooliganism committed by a group of persons, and against V.Lindermans for supporting them.

Another person to gain attention for provocative activities during the reporting period was compatriot activist Ilarions Girss, one of the leaders of compatriot organisation *Russkaja Zarja* (RZ), who publicly renounced his Latvian citizenship and burned his passport. This was a typical tactic by RZ, designed to be provocative enough to earn condemnation from society yet within the bounds of the Criminal Law. The inevitable counter-reaction is used to generate further controversy to popularise the myth of an "ethnocratic regime". Another RZ leader, Jevgēņijs Osipovs, who during the reporting period concentrated on informational actions in support of Russia on the RZ websites and in less popular Russian information outlets, using provocative rhetoric similar in style to that of A.Gaponeko. The said activities were probably motivated by a desire to gain support from Russia, including funding. It is noteworthy that as in previous years, in 2015 RZ did not hesitate to berate *systemic* activists during the forum on Baltic compatriots in Vyborg, Russia, accusing them of incompetence and ineffectively using money from Russia. However, neither provocative rhetoric nor actions have helped RZ gain any significant visibility or support in Latvia.



I.Girss

During the reporting period, the organisation *GVD Baltia*, which was established to collect funds for the residents of the regions of Eastern Ukraine under separatist control, practically suspended its operations. This was largely due to a decline in the number of donors and a loss of interest by the organisation's activists. During the reporting period, the only *GVD Baltia* member continuing his public activities was Staņislavs Bukains, who like other *non-systemic* activists prefers provocative actions and rhetoric. Unlike RZ representatives or V.Lindermans, who carefully consider the consequences of their actions, S.Bukains acted impulsively during the reporting period, resulting in his arrest for damaging the exhibition "People of Maidan". Probably due to Bukains' unpredictable behaviour, both *systemic* and *non-systemic* activists avoided cooperating with him during the reporting period. Bukains also failed to gain much from his "journalistic" activities, since the only outlet to give him a somewhat regular platform was the Russian message supporting *imhoclub.lv*.

In 2015 the activities of *GVD Baltia* were suspended, and there was less interest by residents of Latvia in direct involvement in the war in Ukraine. Although during the reporting period some persons did join illegal military groups fighting against the government of Ukraine, there were fewer such individuals than in 2014. However, last year DP did commence criminal proceedings in two cases for illegally participating in the war in Ukraine.

2.3. Radical right-wing activists

During the reporting period, the situation regarding radical right-wing organisations and activists was significantly influenced by the refugee crisis. As in other EU countries, the decision by Latvia's government to admit asylum seekers caused discontent within some sections of society, and radical right-wing groups tried to exploit these feelings for their own interests. Although protests against refugees in Latvia were legitimate and peaceful, aggressive internet comments affirmed the potential for this issue to radicalise some xenophobic and racist individuals from various ethnic groups.

Last year, opposing the admission of asylum seekers became the main focus of radical right-wing groups. Protests against refugees were joined by both veteran radical right-wing activists (for example members of the banned association *Gustava Celmiņa centrs*), as well as supporters of such ideas who have refrained from public activities in recent years. The protests also saw involvement by individuals and organisations which DP had not previously observed in the ranks of radical right-wingers. Such activities were also attended by Eurosceptics and populists who sought to use the refugee issue to popularise their negative stance toward the EU.

The refugee question is also exploited in Russian propaganda, which depicts asylum seekers as threats to European security and values. This allows Russia to position itself as a true friend of Europe and gain support amongst European radical right-wingers and conservatives. This is shown by the *World National Conservative Movement*, a cooperation network for radical right-wingers and conservatives which was unveiled on the internet at the end of last year by the Russian ultra-right-wing organisation *Русское имперское движение* (Russian Imperialist Movement), and which several anti-refugee activists in Latvia have joined. DP believes such initiatives are aimed at gaining control over radical right-wing and conservative groups to put pressure on European decision makers in line with Russia's foreign policy interests.



“World National-Conservative Movement” logo

Despite various protests against admitting refugees, during the reporting period there was no sign of increased public interest in joining radical right-wing organisations. The protests against refugees occurred without incidents, although there were some internet comments about refugees which were outside the bounds of free speech. Although this indicates the potential for some xenophobic individuals to become radicalised in the future, during the reporting period the risk to the constitutional order posed by radical right-wing activists was relatively low.

Conclusions and outlook

- During the reporting period, Russia continued using the Soviet-era tactic of employing various organisations abroad to further its geopolitical interests. It is anticipated that Russia will continue using this tactic in future, therefore Russia's compatriot policy will continue to be the biggest threat to our constitutional order.
- Due to the worsening economic situation, Russian institutions were forced to reduce funding for compatriot support projects while assessing the expenditure of allocated funds in more detail. It is anticipated that as economic difficulties continue Russia will focus its support for compatriot activities on those activists who show the best results.
- As funding from Russia shrank and Russia focussed more on informational war, last year compatriot activists in Latvia paid greater attention to providing Russia with informational support and less to organising various events. This trend will likely continue this year as it requires fewer resources and organisational effort.
- During the reporting period, the same activists as before dominated the ranks of compatriot activists. Despite Russia's attempts to involve young people more in compatriot politics, interest among young people in Latvia in compatriot politics has not been observed. However, Russia will probably continue to pay heightened attention to working with young compatriots living abroad.
- Last year, the main activities of compatriot activists were popularising the myth of "human rights problems" in Latvia as dictated by propagandists in Russia, legitimising Russia's aggressive foreign policy and promoting interpretations of history favoured by Russia. It is anticipated that compatriot activists will continue these activities, although if required they can reorient to new areas if this aligns with changes in Russia's priorities.
- During the reporting period, the main focus of right-wing activists was protesting against admitting asylum seekers. It is anticipated that protesting against resettlement of refugees will again be the main focus of the radical right-wing this year.
- Although the risks posed by radical right-wing persons remain low, the continued admission of asylum seekers could serve to radicalise xenophobic individuals.

3. Information space security

As Russia's information campaign against Latvia continues, which is aimed at changing public opinion in Latvia in line with Russia's foreign policy interests, the importance of protecting the information space to ensure national security is increasing. In accordance with the principals of democracy, DP's role in protecting the information space is strictly limited. Its role is to promptly identify and inform decision makers, institutions responsible for the sector and the public about information activities which are funded and directed from abroad with the intent of manipulating the opinions of Latvia's inhabitants in line with the foreign country's interests.

3.1. The role of informational influence activities in furthering Russia's foreign policy goals

During the 2015 World Russian People's Congress in Moscow, Russia's President Vladimir Putin announced that henceforth Russia will more actively support Russian-language press and broadcasting platforms abroad which "help in the fight against stereotypes about Russia and information campaigns aimed against it". This aligns with the framework for strengthening and spreading the Russian language abroad approved during the reporting period which aims to strengthen the position of the Russian language abroad and to "activate *soft power* instruments for use in the international arena". This framework gives information platforms a key role in promoting the Russian language abroad. For example, the said document stresses that "it is necessary to promote an increase in the number of broadcasting channels [this means other communication channels in addition to television] in foreign countries, including internet resources".

Russia's National Security Strategy approved at the end of 2015 also states that "the international situation is increasingly influenced by growing confrontation in the global information space", therefore Russia must actively defend its interests in this area. Thus the framework legitimises further use of informational influence activities in foreign countries, which is presented as defence rather than aggression by Russia.

During the reporting period, although Latvia was not a priority target for Russia's informational influence activities, sufficient attention was paid to our country to remind consumers of Russia's mass media outlets in Latvia, Russia and Western countries about Russia's traditional narratives regarding Latvia:

- Our country "discriminates minorities";
- Latvia is seeing "the rebirth of fascism";
- We are "a failed state";
- We are "puppets used by the USA/West against Russia".

These Russian narratives have been used for a number of years and are periodically adjusted to chime with current events. For example, during the reporting period Russian media outlets

presented the presence of allied forces in Latvia or exercises held in Latvia as NATO aggression in which Latvia is used as a springboard to act against Russia. DP believes that the aim of these messages is to split society in Latvia, weaken the sense of belonging by Latvia's residents toward our country and diminish people's faith in the ability of the state to guarantee prosperity and security, simultaneously promoting loyalty to Russia and support for its foreign policy interests in Latvia. The spreading of such messages within Latvia's informational space is against our national security interests.

3.2. Information platforms furthering Russia's interests in Latvia

During the reporting period, a number of information platforms continued working in Latvia which are funded and directed from Russia or are aimed at furthering Russia's geopolitical interests by spreading relevant messages. Compared with TV channels loyal to Russia's political elite which are retranslated in Latvia, the audiences of these platforms are relatively small and they do not have a significant impact on public opinion in Latvia, however some of them can be viewed as long-term projects whose ultimate impact on Latvia's information space has yet to be seen.

3.2.1. Sputnik Latvian version



Last year's most prominent example in Latvia of the goal set out in Russian strategic documents – spreading specific information abroad – was the attempt to establish a representation in Latvia by Russia's state information agency *Россия сегодня*⁴ (hereinafter the agency). Despite the blocking of registration for its representation office (this is being appealed in court), during the reporting period the agency continued to develop the Latvian version of the information platform *Sputnik*, which began operations in February 2016.

Concerns about the agency's real aims are raised by the objectives stipulated in its statutes, including "Provision of operational information to the state organs of the Russian Federation about the socio-economic and political situation in the Russian Federation and abroad". In democratic states this task is usually given to intelligence and security services rather than mass media outlets, whose job is to inform the public rather

⁴ On the basis of Council of the European Union Decision No 2014/145/KADP of 17 March 2014 on restrictive measures pertaining to activities undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine, a list of persons subject to EU sanctions was drafted. This list included the agency's general director Dmitry Kisilev, who played an important part in disseminating propaganda during the conflict in Ukraine.

than gathering information for the authorities. This indicates that *Sputnik* is probably not an outlet for objectively reflecting various opinions, rather it is an instrument for furthering Russia's foreign policy goals.

The person chosen to be the curator of *Sputnik's* Latvian version is Tatjana Kirillova, a person previously unknown in Latvia's mass media community, who did the work to have the representation registered and took part in selecting the platform's staff. The recruitment of personnel for this propaganda outlet was conducted by the agency's representative, citizen of Russia Liana Minasjana, who is also the editor of *Sputnik's* Latvian version according to information available to DP.

T.Kirillova assists L.Minasjana in running *Sputnik's* Latvian version by coordinating this propaganda outlets operations in Latvia, and there is also a small team of "staff" and "freelance" authors, translators and consultants. Several *Sputnik* authors publish under pseudonyms and try to hide their links to the platform. This may be due to desire to extract information without revealing the true beneficiary, or to preserve their reputations in Latvia's journalist community. DP has information that a number of Latvian journalists declined offers to cooperate with *Sputnik's* Latvian version.

Compared with other Russian information platforms operating in Latvia, the audience of the Latvian version of *Sputnik* includes both persons regularly using Russian-language resources as well as that section of society preferring Latvian information sources. For this reason for the first few months of its operation the *Sputnik* Latvian version produced significantly different content for its Latvian and Russian language editions, selecting messages likely to have the most resonance with each of the audiences. For example, the Latvian version emphasizes Russia's narrative that "Latvia is a failed state", while the Russian-language edition cultivates the myth about "discrimination against minorities". Carefully selecting messages to meet the audience's expectations is characteristic of Russia propaganda.

3.2.2. *Baltnews.lv*, *imhoclub.lv* and *Avtoradio*

While *Sputnik's* links with Russia's state institutions are well known, during the reporting period other outlets supporting Russia's informational activities abroad continued working in Latvia. DP considers that attempts to hide such links are grounds for questioning the true objectives of these activities.

During the reporting period development continued on the website *baltnews.lv*. Although this portal broadcast similar messages to the Latvian version of *Sputnik*, *baltnews.lv* did not inform its users of its links with funding from Russia and its informational activities abroad. This creates the impression that messages desired by Russia are broadcast by the so-called "independent" media as well. This gives these outlets a higher degree of believability while also creating the illusion that Russia's messages have widespread support. It is also noteworthy that during the report period contributors to both the Latvian version

of *Sputnik* and *baltnews.lv* began using pseudonyms, despite the fact that many of them, including portal head Andrejs Jakovļevs, are well known to Russian-language readers in Latvia.



Last year the website headed by Jurijs Aleksejevs *imhoclub.lv* continued operating, which functions as a platform for discussion and exchanging views for supporters of compatriot policy and persons sympathising with Russia. Due to its popularity in these circles, during the reporting period *imhoclub* began expanding and it now has a version for Belarus. Information available to DP shows that this portal is also closely linked to funding from Russia and its informational activities abroad. It is noteworthy that Aleksejevs was one of the representatives from Latvia at the June 2015 All Russian Press Congress in Moscow, which traditionally invites representatives from media outlets friendly to Russia to thank them and motivate them to continue broadcasting information desired by Russia.

During the reporting period, messages favourable to Russia were also spread within Latvia's information space by the radio station *Avtoradio*, connected with former European Parliament member Aleksandrs Mirskis, which began retranslating *Radio Sputnik's* broadcasts. Due to the fact that *Avtoradio* has broadcasting rights in Latgale, the distribution of Russian propaganda products in this region could alienate its residents from Latvia's information space and facilitate Russia's information objectives.

3.2.3. Other information platforms

In 2015 other platforms were launched or continued working in Latvia which were not directly connected with Russia's informational activities abroad but nevertheless supported its aims.

During the reporting period, the website *zarya.lv* established by RZ began operating. Its contents are mainly produced by this association's activists (I.Girss and J.Osipovs) and also draw on publications from both Latvia and Russia which are dominated by Russia's desired messages about Latvia and the world. Despite the provocative rhetoric of this association's members, the website did not attract a large audience and therefore missed out on funding for development. As a result, exactly a year after its launch the founders of *zarya.lv* announced it was suspending operations, although this does not mean it may not renew operations in the future.

Last year, Sergejs Malahovskis continued to unsuccessfully seek funding for his portal *baltijalv.lv*. It is possible that the failure to attract funding by Malahovskis, the head of the unsuccessful "Anti-Fascist Front of Latvia," is linked to his poor reputation amongst other compatriot activists, of which Russian officials are probably aware. Without external funding *baltijalv.lv* will most likely remain marginal.

2015 saw the previously predicted reorientation of the media club *Format A3*. *The Culture Line* established in 2014 was used to organise discussion events involving invited guests from the cultural sphere, purportedly in line with the organisation's mission to promote Russian culture. However, during these events both the event organisers and audience members called

on the invited guests to also comment on geopolitical issues. This causes concern that the stated aim of popularising Russian culture is merely a cover for spreading messages desirable to Russia, which was characteristic of *Format A3* and which we wrote about in previous reports.

Conclusions and outlook

- During the reporting period, the most significant risk to the security of Latvia's information space came from Russia's information campaigns, which exploit biased and false information to diminish the feeling of belonging to their country by residents of Latvia while promoting loyalty to Russia and support for its interests in Latvia. Considering that strategic Russian documents state the aim of developing informational influence resources, it can be predicted that Russia will continue its propaganda campaigns against Latvia.
- Although Latvia was not a priority target for Russia's informational influence activities during the reporting period, Russia continued to fund its already established information platforms to broadcast its desired message and to create new ones. It is anticipated that Russia will continue to support the work of various information platforms in our country.
- During the reporting period, information platforms supported by Russia continued working both openly and clandestinely in Latvia. Attempts to hide the connection with Russia's information campaigns are grounds for questioning the true objectives of these activities.
- The most significant element of Russia's information campaigns during the reporting period was the creation of a version of *Sputnik* for Latvia, which was completed this year. It is anticipated that this platform will become the main channel for distributing messages favoured by Russia in the Latvian language.
- Compared with retranslated Russia TV channels, information platforms supported by Russia based in Latvia have small audiences, but they are most likely established as long-term projects and Russia expects results in the long-term from them. Therefore these platforms must be assessed from the long-term perspective.

4. Counter-terrorism

As the threat of terrorism in Europe intensifies, DP is devoting increasing resources to counter-terrorism. In the counter-terrorism sphere, DP conducts counter-intelligence and operational measures as well as cooperating with foreign partner services to promptly identify and prevent potential terrorist threats. As the body coordinating counter-terrorism measures at the national level, DP harmonises cooperation between all involved bodies for planning and implementing preventative and reactive measures, organises counter-terrorism training at various levels, and informs top state officials and other counter-terrorism bodies about current terrorism trends. As the terrorism threat in Europe intensified in 2015, for the first time DP published recommendations for action consistent with terrorism threat levels on its website.

4.1. Terrorism threat trends in Europe

The terrorist attacks which occurred during the reporting period confirm that terrorism is a transnational threat, therefore the threat of terrorism in Latvia must be analysed in close connection with the threat situation in Europe as a whole.

In 2015, European intelligence and security services and law enforcement bodies prevented 18 terrorist acts during their planning stage in a number of countries. There were also arrests of several dozen persons involved in supporting terrorist activities, planning to travel to conflict zones or returning from these areas. However, despite many counter-terrorism operations, Islamist terrorists were able to carry out 12 attacks, of which two were large-scale attacks with many victims.

Of the terrorist attacks carried out during the reporting period, the 13 November events in Paris are of particular note, as they affirmed the ability of *Daesh* to organise large-scale attacks in Europe, using so-called returnees from Syria. These incidents also showed that terrorists in Europe are prioritising soft targets where large numbers of people gather, as there are no heightened security measures at such sites and there is potential for harming large numbers of victims. These attacks also revealed that the terrorists are capable of using combined attack tactics i.e. simultaneously using a variety of weapons (firearms and improvised explosives) and methods (suicide attacks, shootings and hostage taking).

Last year there were also relatively smaller-scale attacks in Denmark, France, Germany and the UK. Islamist terrorists also carried out attacks against Europeans in other regions, for example at tourist resorts frequented by Europeans and probably organising the bomb blast on a Russian passenger aircraft flying from Sharm el-Sheikh to Saint Petersburg.

The worsening of the security situation during the reporting period was largely due to the Syrian conflict. Since the start of

the war, Islamist terrorist groups (mainly *Daesh*) have attracted several thousand Islamists from Europe, and there is ongoing radicalisation of Muslims in Europe. Many of the European Islamists involved in the conflict have returned home, and some of them have been involved in terrorist attacks in Europe (for example the November 2015 Paris attacks), reinforcing existing concerns about the threat posed by returnees. At the same time, as Western military pressure against *Daesh* increases, this group has intensified its propaganda attacks against the West, particularly on the internet. As a result, there is a real risk that attacks in Europe may be carried out both by persons returning from Syria with combat experience, training in organising terrorist attacks and instructions to carry out attacks in Europe, as well as persons who have not been to Syria but who are inspired by Islamist ideology and may decide to perform acts of terror on their own initiative. In addition, during the reporting period the security situation was also worsened by the refugee crisis in Europe, as radicalised persons used the cover of legitimate refugees to discretely enter the continent.

4.2. The terrorism threat situation in Latvia

During the reporting period there were no terrorist acts in Latvia and the terrorism threat level in our country remained low. At the same time, the radicalisation trends seen in other EU countries also appeared more frequently in Latvia. Although as in previous periods the vast majority of Latvia's Muslim community respect the laws and values of our country, DP has recently noted increasing numbers of radicalised members of the Muslim community.

At the end of 2015, DP initiated criminal proceedings for participation in the conflict in Syria under Article 77¹ of the Criminal Law. This was the first case in Latvia's history that criminal charges were filed over the possible involvement by a resident of Latvia with an Islamist terrorist group in a conflict zone. Currently DP has three ongoing criminal cases against residents of Latvia suspected of illegal involvement in the Syrian conflict. Moreover, DP has information proving that several other Latvian Muslims are in terrorist-controlled areas of Syria/Iraq. There is also evidence that some residents of Latvia who travelled to Syria have been killed.

While travel to terrorist-controlled areas does not automatically mean a person is involved in terrorist activities, the fact that persons heading to conflict zones are already radicalised indicates that involvement in terrorism is one of their travel objectives. It must be noted that potential risks to national security are posed not only by participation in combat, but also by involvement in activities supporting terrorism, for example recruitment, spreading propaganda, collecting funds etc.

DP has information indicating that in 2015 persons fitting a variety of profiles travelled to terrorist-controlled regions of Syria/Iraq. They included both women and men, people of various ethnicities, as well as both individuals who are prominent in the community and have studied Islam as well as persons who were previously obscure with superficial religious knowledge. Persons have travelled to Syria/Iraq together with their families or ideological brethren. The vast majority are converts i.e. persons who have changed their religion to Islam during their own lifetime. This reaffirms that converts are amongst the main groups at risk of radicalisation. Although the number of converts in Latvia is relatively small, it has grown in recent years, including during the reporting period.

There are currently no grounds for considering that there are active recruitment networks in Latvia organising Latvian residents to travel to Iraq/Syria. However, it cannot be discounted that some individuals from Latvia's Muslim community who have gone to Syria/Iraq may have encouraged other community members to become radicalised and travel to these regions.

A terrorist propaganda video featuring the former head of the Latvian Islamic Culture Centre (LIKC) Oļegs Petrovs appeared on the internet for the first time in early 2016. In this video he refuted all of his previous statements condemning terrorism and called on other Latvian Muslims to go to *Daesh*-controlled areas in Syria/Iraq. O. Petrovs only returned to Latvia in 2014 after lengthy studies of Islam and the Arabic language in Saudi Arabia. After returning to Latvia he became the head of LIKC, but he only held the post until summer 2015 when he travelled to terrorist-controlled regions. His appearance in the video confirmed risks that individuals can become radicalised if they spend lengthy periods in countries where conservative or radical Islamist views are widespread or which have a significant presence of Islamist terrorists.

The actions of the former LIKC head emphatically do not reflect on Latvia's Muslim community as a whole. The vast majority of Latvia's Muslims do not support Islamist terrorists or their ideology. However, the leadership of Latvia's Muslim community could do more to guarantee national security by using its authority to more actively prevent radicalisation. Information at DP's disposal suggests that several other members of the community plan on travelling to terrorist-controlled areas in Syria/Iraq or have expressed support for the terrorists' ideology. Moreover, several other residents of Latvia continue to study Islam and Arabic in countries where conservative or radical Islamist views are widespread, which may radicalise these persons.

Latvia's Criminal Law in its current redaction prohibits illegal participation in armed conflicts abroad which are aimed against the territorial integrity or political independence of state or otherwise contravene international obligations binding on Latvia, funding such conflicts, or recruiting, training and sending persons to such armed conflicts. However current regulations do not provide effective preventative measures against persons planning to join such conflicts. Therefore, at present DP has limited scope to prevent actions possibly leading to terrorist attacks even after obtaining information that a person is planning to go to a conflict zone. Considering the increasing numbers of residents of Latvia travelling over the last few years to terrorist-controlled regions of Syria/Iraq, DP considers it essential to have reasonable preventative legal tools allowing for effective and prompt action against plans to become involved in illegal activities.



Screenshots from Daesh propaganda video with O. Petrovs

4.3. Monitoring of entry of foreigners

In conjunction with obtaining information about radically inclined residents of Latvia, during the reporting period DP and other state institutions continued to monitor the entry of foreigners⁵ into Latvia. In 2015, DP performed additional checks of 1874 invitations for visas/residence permits (3174 persons), 1570 visa applications (recommending in 23 cases that visas should not be issued, in 3 cases to reduce the number of visiting days and 554 residence permit applications (recommending that residence permits be declined in 58 cases). It must be noted that none of the rejected cases were connected with terrorism risks.

During the reporting period, one of the reasons why persons from countries in which terrorists are significantly present wished to enter Latvia was to study at Latvian universities. In 2015, around 200 citizens from such countries were studying in Latvia. Although this figure is similar to the previous year, a trend was noticed during this reporting period that marketing campaigns are being directed for profit-making purposes to recruit new students from countries in which terrorists are significantly present. In addition universities check of potential foreign students applying for studies at Latvian higher educational establishments are made in a very superficial manner, thus increasing the risk that radicalised persons may enter Latvia and therefore the Schengen Area generally under the cover of being students.

During the reporting period, DP continued assessing applications for asylum. In 2015 there were 310 asylum seekers in Latvia, a slight drop compared with 2014. However, whereas the previous year the bulk of asylum seekers were from Georgia, Russia and Ukraine, during the reporting period the largest group of asylum seekers were from Iraq (86 persons). The asylum seekers also included citizens of Syria, Pakistan and Afghanistan, which also have significant terrorist groups present.

Although the number of asylum seekers in Latvia is relatively small and the flow of refugees over the eastern border of the EU is tiny in comparison with the south, there is a risk that some radicalised persons may try to enter Latvia under the cover of being asylum seekers. This is confirmed by the fact that during the reporting period one person was expelled from Latvia because of suspicions that he may be involved with foreign terrorist groups.

⁵ Foreigners who are citizens of countries in which terrorist groups are significantly present.

4.4. Preventative counter-terrorism measures

During the reporting period, DP continued to improve the preventative counter-terrorism system. In 2015 DP consulted with institutions involved in counter-terrorism measures to assist the respective bodies in being ready to implement the National Counter-Terrorism Plan in the event of elevated, high or severe terrorism threat levels. DP also organised table top exercises for institutions involved in counter-terrorism measures, in which the scenarios of recent terrorist acts were played out to assess the readiness of the said bodies in the event of high or very high terrorism threat levels.

In 2015 inspections were performed on 61 critical infrastructure objects and recommendations were drafted for improving physical security at these objects. In addition DP organised training for over 656 security staff at critical infrastructure and soft targets.

Moreover, during the reporting period DP established a national contact point for reporting suspicious activities with explosives precursors in accordance with EU regulations on their sale and use. Last year DP also began cooperating and exchanging information with the Association of Latvian Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industry and the State Plant Protection Service on informing commercial entities regarding issues pertaining to the distribution of explosives precursors.

4.5. Passenger Data Register

In 2015, DP in conjunction with the Information Centre of the Ministry of Interior continued work on establishing a Passenger Data Register (hereinafter PDR) system in Latvia. During the reporting period the said institutions began work on creating a new state information system and drafting related regulations. The PDR system will process and analyse airline passenger data to detect and prevent serious and very serious crimes including terrorism-related crimes and threats to state security. It is planned that the register will begin operating at the end of 2016.

Conclusions and outlook

- Terrorist acts carried out or prevented in Europe during the reporting period and early 2016 affirm that terrorism remains one of the main threats on our continent. As the Syrian conflict and Islamist propaganda activities continue, it is likely that the terrorism threat level in Europe will not diminish in the near future.
- The terrorism threat level in Latvia remains low and there are few radicalised persons compared with other EU countries. However, terrorism threat trends in Europe and around the world are increasingly affecting the situation in Latvia and the safety of our citizens abroad.
- During the reporting period, several residents of Latvia travelled to terrorist-controlled areas in Syria/Iraq. This creates long-term terrorism risks since the experience of other EU states shows that persons returning from conflict zones may become involved in terrorist activities at home.
- It is possible that other members of Latvia's Muslim community will follow the example of those who have already gone to Syria. In order to more effectively avert the risks posed by residents of Latvia joining Islamist terrorist groups in conflict zones, preventative legal mechanisms must be introduced to allow security services to act effectively against such travellers. Consistent and firm condemnation by leaders of Latvia's Muslim community of becoming involved in violent activities can also significantly help prevent radicalisation.
- It is anticipated that in 2016 more resources will have to be directed towards assessing asylum seekers since asylum seekers residing in other EU countries are beginning to visit Latvia. To ensure more comprehensive evaluation, DP will cooperate closely with other state institutions, foreign partner services and international bodies.
- Implementation of a Passenger Data Registration system was a new area of activity in 2016, which expands DP's ability to promptly identify terrorism - related travellers to conflict zones.

5. Economic security

In order to protect the country's economic sovereignty, DP performs counter intelligence and operational measures to identify processes causing threats to national economic interests. DP informs top state officials and responsible institutions about the detected risks.

During the reporting period, economic relations between the West and Russia continued to be strained following Russia's annexation of Crimea. Bilateral economic sanctions were extended in 2015, and Russia continued its propaganda campaign about the "devastating effect" of the sanctions on Latvia's economy. Considering that Latvia experienced economic growth last year, the real objective of this message was probably to cause public dissatisfaction and put pressure on Latvian decision makers to lift the sanctions. However, during the reporting period there was little public discussion of the sanctions issue.

DP considers that the most significant risks to national economic interests in 2015 continued to be posed by attempts by foreign interest to gain control of strategic Latvian enterprises in order to exploit their dominant market position to influence political processes in Latvia. At the same time, as Latvian high technology firms and research centres become more competitive the risk of economic espionage increases as foreign interests seek information about technologies created or used in Latvia.

5.1. Energy security

Despite political friction, Russia remains an important partner for both Latvia and the EU as a whole for supplying energy. For a long time Russia has been Latvia's sole source of natural gas, so one of the most important events relating to economic security in the reporting period was the further passage through Parliament of amendments to the Energy Law stipulating that the gas market must be liberalised by 3 April 2017. The adoption of the amendments was opposed by some managers of a/s "Latvijas gāze", who wanted to delay the deadline for liberalisation to 2019.

Opponents of the Energy Law actively lobbied both the institution regulating the gas market and political parties. While there was a reduction in the use of the mass media to promote the opponents' agenda, a new phenomenon is the recruitment of experts from state institutions by the market player shortly before significant decisions affecting the sector are made. Nevertheless, despite active lobbying for the deferral of the market liberalisation deadline, the amendments were adopted by Parliament on their final reading in 2016. This is a significant advance in ensuring energy security since it will reduce dependency on a single supplier. At the same time, in order for gas market liberalisation to have a real impact on energy independence, it is vital that this process is not just a formality and new players really enter the market.

Joint EU energy policy initiatives are another significant boost to Latvia's energy security. During the reporting period, the European Commission issued a directive that by 2020 the European Energy Union must ensure the functioning of a common EU internal energy market. The establishment of such a union is a positive development for Latvia as it provides a platform for further unifying and integrating European energy market. However, in practice the common EU energy initiatives encountered obstacles during the reporting period. For example, the adoption of the EU Energy Security Strategy Report was suspended shortly before a crucial vote in the European Parliament. This report includes a requirement to end the energy isolation of the Baltic countries as soon as possible and to open the common energy market to ensure consumers get the lowest prices. EU common energy policy initiatives can significantly restrict the capacity of Russia's political elite to exploit energy prices and supplies as levers to secure favourable decisions from member states.

5.2. The transport sector

Together with control of the natural gas market, Russia also retains significant influence over Latvia's transit sector. However, despite strained political relations and public pronouncements on rerouting shipments to ports in Russia, there were no significant fluctuations in cargo volumes transhipped through Latvian ports during the reporting period. Moreover, last year Russian entrepreneurs continued investing in Latvia's transit sector, indicating that they plan to continue using Latvian ports in future. At the same time, our economic security may be negatively affected by the fact that some of the owners of companies partnering Latvian ports have ties to Russia's political elite. This creates the risk that if Russia's political elite decides to reroute cargoes to other ports, enterprises loyal to them will probably follow such instructions even if this brings financial losses.



Illustrative photo

Changes in the management of public holding company "Latvijas dzelzceļš" and Russia's railway enterprise "Российские железные дороги" created uncertainty in the second half of 2015 in Latvia's transit sector concerning future volumes of cargo from

Russia and concerns about a decline in volumes in 2016. These concerns were realised regarding cargo volumes in Latvian ports in the first few months of 2016. Russian officials have spoken previously about plans to reorient shipments to Russian ports, but the main brake on such plans to date has been inadequate railway infrastructure in Russia. Therefore diversifying the countries of origin of cargoes remains an important aspect in reducing economic security risks, but little progress was made in this regard during the reporting period.

5.3. Residence permits in exchange for investment

During the reporting period there was reduced interest by foreigners in the program of residence permits in exchange for investment in Latvia pursuant to paragraphs 28, 29, 30 and 31 of Article 23.1 of the Immigration Law⁶. This was largely due to the worsening economic situation in Russia and the devaluation of the rouble. Interest was also affected by the increase in the required amount of real estate investment from 150 000 euros to 250 000 euros, however at the end of the reporting period fewer foreigners also wished to obtain residence permits in exchange for investments in business or financial investments.

⁶ Paragraph 28 of Article 23.1 of the Immigration Law stipulates that residence permits may be issued for a term not exceeding five years on the basis of a person investing at least 35 000 EUR in a company's equity, Article 29 stipulates they may be issued if a person purchases real estate in Latvia valued at not less than 250 000 EUR, while Article 30 stipulates that they may be issued if a person has obligations with a Republic of Latvia credit institution to an amount not less than 280 000 EUR for a term not less than five years. Article 31 which entered into force on 1 January 2015 stipulates that residence permits may be issued for a term not exceeding five years on the basis of investments in interest free government bonds if the person purchases specific government bonds for a nominal value of 250 000 EUR and pays 25 000 EUR to the state budget.

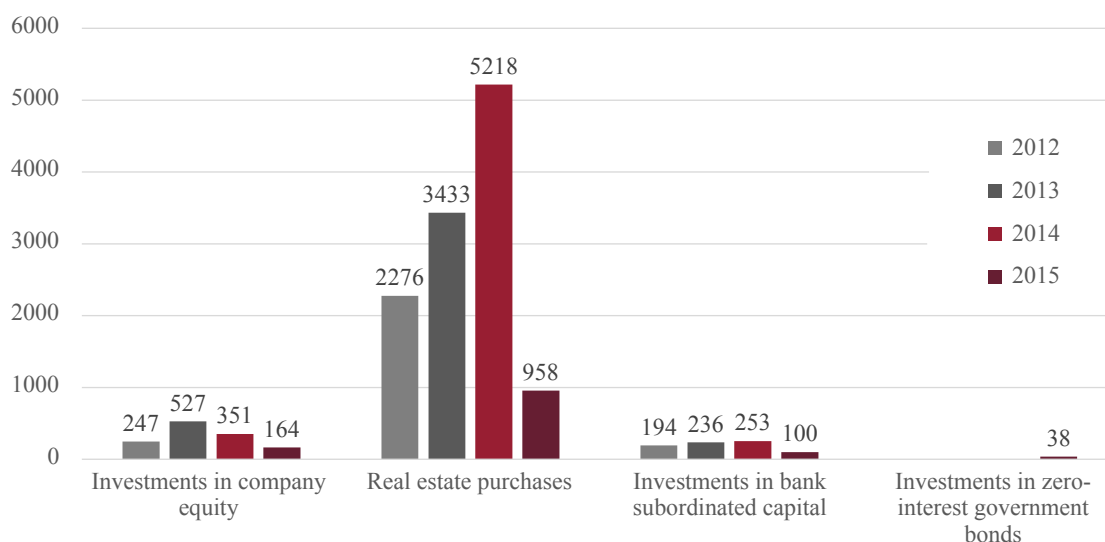
In total 1,260 residence permits were issued in 2015 under this program. The bulk of interest by foreigners was still for residence permits in exchange for investments in real estate. During the reporting period 958 residence permits were issued in exchange for investments in real estate, compared with 164 for investments in business, 100 for financial investments and 38 for investments in government bonds.

During the reporting period, the largest group of persons requesting residency permits were citizens of Russia (61% of all residency permit requests). The second largest group of persons requesting residency permits were citizens of Ukraine (13%), followed by the People's Republic of China (10%), Kazakhstan (5%), Uzbekistan (4%), Azerbaijan (3%) and Egypt (1%).

In 2015, after checking applications received DP recommended not issuing residence permits to 38 foreigners, four times the number for 2014. This increase is connected with the strengthening of DP's capacity in the residence permit sphere, as well as a drop in the total number of residence permit applications, allowing DP to assess the risks posed by every applicant in much greater detail.

During the reporting period in around 60% of cases DP decided not to issue residence permits to foreigners due to established economic risks, for example there were suspicions of money laundering, the person was facing criminal charges in their home country for economic crimes etc. In 30% of cases national security risks were identified i.e. there were suspicions that the applicants might misuse their residence permit to conduct espionage activities against Latvia's interests, or the person is connected with Russia's compatriot policy or is involved in international organised crime activities.

RESIDENCY PERMIT REQUESTS BY INVESTMENT TYPE



In 2015 DP began to re-assess those foreigners who had received residence permits five years before and who needed re-registration. In the course of these checks DP ruled that residence permits should be annulled for 25 persons.

DP considers that the 2015 results show that the reinforcement of the services capabilities and changes to laws

have achieved their intended effect i.e. checks of applicants have become more effective and opportunities to use this program for fictitious purposes have been reduced. Thus a balance has been achieved between the need to attract foreign investors for Latvia's economic growth and protecting national security.

Conclusions and outlook

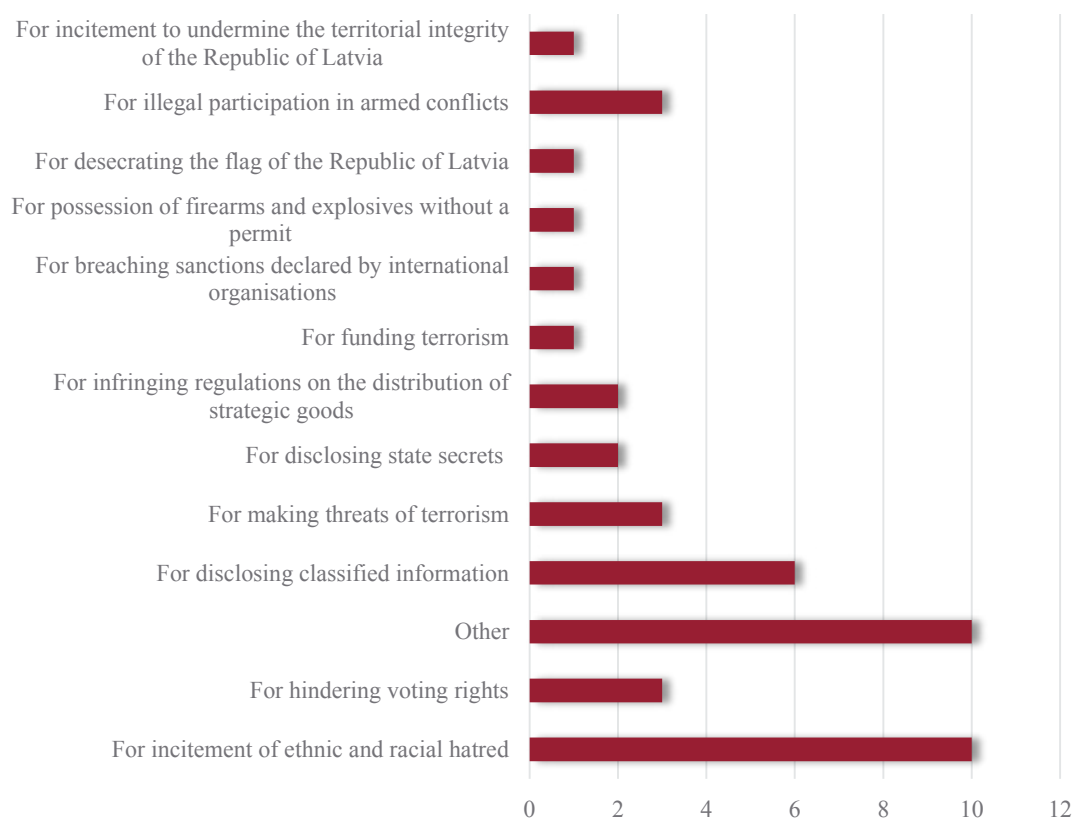
- During the reporting period, the amendments to the Energy Law stipulating liberalisation of the natural gas market from 3 April 2017 will reduce dependence on a single supplier, thereby strengthening Latvia's energy security. However this will only happen if market liberalisation is substantial and not merely a formality.
- The total volume of cargo transhipped through Latvian ports did not change significantly last year, with cargoes originating in Russia retaining a significant position in the total volume. Considering that Russian officials have repeatedly declared their intention to reorient cargoes to ports in Russia, insufficient progress by Latvian port in diversifying their cargoes can have a negative effect on economic security in the long term.
- During the reporting period there was reduced interest by foreigners in obtaining residency permits in exchange for investing in Latvia's economy. This was due to the economic situation in Russia as well as an increase in the required amount of investment in real estate.
- Last year there was a significant increase in the number of foreigners denied the right to obtain residency in exchange for investments due to security concerns. This was due to an earlier government decision to increase DP's capacity in this sphere, resulting in more effective checks by DP.
- DP considers that the current rules for issuing residency permits ensure a balance between the need to attract foreign investment and protecting national security. Considering that over the next few years significant numbers of foreigners will need to re-register the residency permits they received five years previously, changes in the current rules are not desirable as this would negatively affect DP's ability to perform detailed and effective checks of persons. This would also increase the risk that persons threatening the security of Latvia or its allies could enter and reside in Latvia and other EU countries under the cover of this program.

6. Pre-trial investigation

DP is the only one of the three Latvian security services which also conducts pre-trial investigations alongside its counter intelligence and operational work. DP investigates criminal acts which threaten national security (for example crimes against the state, its constitutional order, territorial integrity, criminal acts within state intelligence and security bodies, espionage, illegal participation in an armed conflict, terrorism, revealing state secrets etc.) or which the general prosecutor assigns to DP.

During the reporting period DP initiated proceedings in 36 criminal cases, and another eight criminal cases were assigned to it from other institutions in accordance with institutional jurisdiction. The criminal proceedings were initiated based on information obtained by DP, submissions by natural persons or legal entities and information provided by other law enforcement institutions, as well as through separating such cases from other cases in the files of DP and General Prosecutor's Office.

NUMBER OF CRIMINAL CASES INITIATED IN 2015



In 2015 DP initiated the first ever criminal proceedings pursuant to Article 77¹ of the Criminal Law, which stipulates criminal liability for illegal participation in an armed conflict abroad. Considering that residents of Latvia continue to be illegally involved in an armed conflict abroad, the legislature's decision to criminalise such activities significantly improves DP's ability to use criminal justice instruments against the threat

to Latvia's security and possibly that of other European states posed by returnees from conflict regions.

During the reporting period, DP forwarded 23 criminal cases to prosecutors to commence criminal interrogation, of which two were returned for additional investigation. In total, last year DP recommended criminal interrogation of 48 persons, of whom 13 were officials of state institutions from various sectors.

Criminal interrogation was initiated for publicly calling for the liquidation of Latvia's state sovereignty with the purpose of incorporating Latvia in another state, deliberate disclosure of state secrets, deliberate hindering of a person's right to freely vote in Parliamentary elections, incitement of ethnic hatred (on internet news sites and in social media), illegal transportation of strategic goods across the borders of the Republic of Latvia and other criminal acts.

In 2015 DP terminated criminal proceedings in 18 cases. In 15 cases the decision was made because investigations did not

uncover evidence of criminality, while in three cases the statute of limitations had expired. A further 11 criminal cases were forwarded to the State Police.

During the reporting period, DP investigators received five requests for legal assistance from foreign law enforcement bodies, and DP also participated in an international investigation group.

At the start of 2016, DP had 86 criminal cases on its files, including 27 criminal cases initiated in 2015.

7. Protection of dignitaries

DP is responsible for providing security for Latvia's prime minister and speaker of Parliament, as well as for officials from foreign governments and international organisations visiting Latvia.⁷ Furthermore, in the first half of 2015 DP was the institution responsible for security at high level events during Latvia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

During the reporting period, DP provided security for Latvia's prime minister and the speaker of Parliament during public events and foreign visits by the aforementioned officials. Last year DP provided security for the speaker during 16 foreign visits and 23 visits within Latvia, and for 15 foreign and

21 national visits for the prime minister. DP also provided security for both officials at 19 public events.

Last year DP also planned and implemented security for 51 foreign officials visiting Latvia. In connection with Latvia's Presidency of the Council of the EU, in conjunction with other institutions DP was responsible for planning, coordinating and implementing security at 25 events, in the course of which security was provided for 654 officials. During the Presidency DP also provided close protection for 125 officials visiting Latvia.

In terms of planning and providing security, the biggest challenge in DP's history was the Eastern Partnership Summit held in Riga during the Presidency. In total 66 officials requiring security took part in this event, and their security was ensured by DP, Military Police and State Police. Moreover, compared with the 2006 NATO Summit in which a similar number of protected officials took part, much fewer restrictive measures were put in place during the Eastern Partnership Summit so as not to inconvenience residents and visitors to the city as much.

Despite the large number of events during the Presidency and the intensity of the work involved, the fact that no security incidents were recorded during the Presidency testifies to the effective cooperation between DP and other institutions involved in providing security. DP would also like to thank all the residents and guests of Riga for the success of this event for showing understanding of the job of DP and other bodies to protect visiting foreign officials.



⁷ Security for the Republic of Latvia State President and protected officials of foreign military and international defence organisations is provided by the National Armed Forces unit the Military Police.

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