

Joint statement by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia Edgars Rinkēvičs and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier

Riga, 17 April 2015

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia Edgars Rinkēvičs and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier met in Riga on 17 April 2015. Bilateral relations, regional cooperation as well as key issues on the international agenda were discussed during the meeting.

Latvia and Germany expressed the intention to strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation on EU issues, particularly in the fields of media, culture, education, vocational training and people-to-people contacts. The Ministers discussed ways to support capacity-building within Latvia to provide independent, balanced and pluralistic media in minority languages and to increase social cohesion between different language groups and regions in Latvia through cooperation in the fields of education, culture, media and communication, youth exchange and civil society. Both countries may extend future bilateral cooperation in other areas of common interest, including EU's external border security and energy security.

Both sides agree that their efforts are intended to complement measures decided within the EU and/or NATO context. As a first step they have identified the following measures:

I. Media and communication

- A. Strengthening independent objective and professional media. This field of cooperation is aimed at boosting the professional skills of media outlets and/or individual journalists, including those who cater to national minorities:
- (1) Support for training programmes in Riga targeting media professionals (including investigative journalists) in public service broadcasting (PSB), with particular focus on those working in the Russian language, to acquire necessary skills (social network content, minority language media and audiences)
 - (2) Scholarship programmes for students via the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD):
 - a) Graduate (Master's) scholarships for Latvian journalism students
 - b) Scholarships for summer courses
 - c) Guest lectureships; in future, this could result in cooperation projects between German and Latvian journalism study programmes
 - d) Group trip by Master's students to Germany

- e) Fact-finding trips to Germany for senior representatives of journalism schools in Latvia
 - (3) Support for journalists and media start-ups in the form of practical workshops
 - (4) Editorial internships from the beginning of June 2015 until end of July in Germany for two interested Latvian journalists via the International Journalists' Programme (IJP)
 - (5) Expertise for the planned restructuring of national media authorities. To this end, experts from Germany and Latvia will meet to examine the structures and organisational forms on the media landscape in Latvia.
 - (6) Expertise on PSB governance
- B. Providing attractive and professional content. This field of cooperation is aimed at increasing the capacities of the Latvian media (broadcasting both in Latvian and Russian) to provide independent and professional media production:
- (1) Support for a possible new public service media platform in Latvia catering for the needs of the Russian speaking audience TV/web programmes by Deutsche Welle for TV stations in the Baltic Region (including content in the languages of national minorities)
 - (2) Encouragement and support for the content exchange between other media outlets (national public broadcasters and private TV stations)

II. Strengthening of civil society

Civil society and civic education. Cooperation towards fostering people-to-people contacts:

A. Schools/academia

- (1) Cooperation in training history teachers by inviting multipliers to participate in training in Germany
- (2) Promotion of pupils' media skills/raising awareness of how to deal with propaganda (media/internet literacy) by inviting multipliers to Germany
- (3) Seminars for multipliers and teachers, including German language teachers from Latvia on media skills and civic education within the framework of further training for teachers of German
- (4) Encouragement for the activities of German political and other foundations in the Baltic Region

B. General public

- (1) Promotion of media literacy and critical thinking
- (2) School theatre project on dialogue with one's own history (history from below/oral history)
- (3) Encouragement and support including exchange of experience for civic education and integration work in Latvia with special focus on the regions
- (4) Promotion of public participation in democratic processes and social inclusion, training activities for NGO leaders

III. Cooperation in the field of education, training and exchanges

- (1) Promotion of youth exchanges between Germany and the Baltic States across language borders
- (2) Intensified youth exchange between Germany and the Baltic States, including the trilateral programmes organised by the German-Polish and Franco-German youth offices
- (3) Support for the International Youth Forum of the European Youth Parliament for participants from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia organised by the Schwarzkopf Foundation Young Europe to take place by the end of 2015
- (4) Tailor-made vocational training projects in cooperation with the German-Baltic Chamber of Commerce in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania
- (5) Elaboration of a mobile vocational training unit to promote vocational training, especially in structurally disadvantaged regions in Latvia in cooperation with the German-Baltic Chamber of Commerce