

# Press Release

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### **PACE Standing Committee calls for better treatment of non-citizens in Latvia**

Strasbourg, 17.11.2006 – The Standing Committee of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) meeting today in San Marino, called for non-citizens in Latvia to be granted at least the same rights as other EU nationals living in the country.

In a resolution, the parliamentarians called for automatic naturalisation of non-citizens who are elderly or born in the country, as well as those who have made “a worthwhile contribution to the establishment of the newly independent Latvian state”. More flexible naturalisation procedures should be considered, and those applying should not be asked to express convictions that are “contrary to their reading of the history of their cultural community or nation”.

Minorities should also be able to use their language in relations with administrative authorities “in areas where they live in substantial numbers” while all permanent residents should be able to vote in at least local elections, in line with Assembly recommendations.

In the long term, such measures could help the Russian minority in Latvia to serve as “a bridge” to the nearby culture and market of the Russian Federation, the parliamentarians said.

However, they also warned against various Latvian political players exploiting inter-community tensions for purely political purposes.

Around one-fifth of Latvia’s resident population still possesses neither Latvian nor any other nationality, according to the report, although many of them were living in Latvia – with Soviet nationality – when the country became independent.

The adopted text will be available on <http://assembly.coe.int>

[Link to the report](#)

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 315 members from the national parliaments of the 46 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People’s Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).