



2008

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

Riga

2008

LATO Activities 2008

FEBRUARY

Presentation “NATO and Our Security” at Pumpura Secondary School in Jurmala



On **February 12, 2008** LATO had been invited to make a presentation about NATO and Latvia's role in the Alliance for the 9-12th grade school children at Pumpura Secondary School (Jurmala, Latvia). Project manager Irina Ivaskina made a presentation “Latvia and our security” with the following discussion about NATO, Latvia's role in the Alliance and security environment in Europe, Baltic Sea region in particular. Video materials about NATO HQ had been spread among interested pupils.

LATO contributes into the organisation of the Brussels Forum



LATO was involved in the preparation of the annual Brussels Forum, organised by German Marshall Fund of the United States in Brussels, Belgium. At the last phase of preparation work, LATO Secretary General Sandis Šrāders had joined a team of organizers to assist in the preparation of the Forum. LATO Chairman Toms Baumanis attend Brussels Forum as a participant.

Brussels Forum is an annual high-level meeting of the most influential American and European political, corporate, and intellectual leaders to address pressing challenges currently facing both sides of the Atlantic. Participants include heads of state, senior officials from the European Union institutions and the member states, U.S. Cabinet officials, Congressional representatives, Parliamentarians, academics, and media.

www.brusselsforum.org

MARCH

Visit of mass media representatives from Ukraine



On **March 26-29, 2008** LATO in the framework of the project „Latvia – EU and NATO member state”¹ organised a visit of mass media representatives from Ukraine, which was aimed to promote the relationship between Latvia and Ukraine as a possible future member state of NATO and the EU, introducing leading Ukrainian journalists with Latvia's Euro-Atlantic experience. Twelve mass media representatives from five Ukrainian TV Companies, (three national and two regional), one weekly and

one daily newspaper participated in the project and visited Latvia. The importance of the visit was due to the upcoming NATO summit in Bucharest on April 2-4, with the aim to broadcast on TV during prime-time reportages about Latvia as a successful and active NATO and EU member state, thus providing Ukrainian society with the unbiased information about Latvia and benefits of the EU and NATO membership. During the visit, journalists paid visits to the LATO office, met Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs Māris Riekstiņš and Undersecretary of State for Defence Planning Jānis Sārts, visited leading one of the oldest enterprises in the field of manufacturing of perfumery and biocosmetics JSC “Dzintars” and one of the largest and financially most stable fish processing companies in the Baltics JSC “Brīvais vilnis” as well as Secretariat of Special Assignments Minister for Electronic Government Affairs, Rīga Free port authority and a military base of Latvian National Armed Forces in Ādaži. Results of the project: 17 broadcasted reportages about Latvia as well as 10 published articles.

¹ – In order to facilitate the development of democratic values and civil society in the countries of the EU and NATO Eastern neighbourhood – Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and Georgia – as well as to promote Latvia’s image abroad and good neighbourhood relations in political, economic and social spheres between our countries, LATO with the support of Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Latvian Ministry of Defence and Konrad Adenauer Foundation implements a project “**Latvia – EU and NATO member state**”.



The aim of this project is to promote interstate relationship, introducing leading journalists with Latvia’s experience, which is gained through Euro-Atlantic integration process, paying attention to the importance of the state’s economical and political development in these years. In the framework of this project LATO organises 3-4 day visits of mass media representatives to Latvia from the EU and NATO neighbourhood countries, introducing them with the work of Latvian NGO, media and private sector as well as with the work of state institutions and Latvian National Armed Forces, paying due attention to the effects and results of the Euro-Atlantic integration.

LATO publish a book “NATO and Georgia’s Security” for Georgian schoolchildren



By utilizing Latvia’s experience in educating the school youth (school education supplement material book „NATO and Latvia’s Security” produced in 2003 by Uldis Umulis), Latvian Transatlantic Organisation in cooperation with Georgian NGO “new Generation – new Initiative” and with the support of Latvian and Georgian Ministries of Defence published a book “NATO and Georgia’s Security” to educate school children on NATO issues and develop an informed opinion in them about Georgia’s integration into the Alliance. The content of the book has been developed by a Georgian author Soso Tsintsadze, in cooperation with historian Uldis Umulis. In March thirty five thousands copies

of the book were printed, but the book official presentation for Georgian public and media took place on March 25, 2008 in Tbilisi.

On March 26 – April 4, 2008 LATO and nGnl organised seminars for Georgian history and politics teachers in seven largest towns of Georgia’s regions – Telavi, Gori, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, Batumi, Akhaltsikhe – where Georgian and Latvian authors presented the book, explained its usability in the teaching process and answered questions. Later in

cooperation with the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science, “*New Generation – New Initiative*” disseminated the book to all Georgian primary and secondary schools: 20 copies for each school library and 5 copies for teachers at each school. There are approximately 1350 schools in Georgia. Other book copies will be used for the presentation purposes and disseminated with the help of the NATO Information Centre in Georgia.

The utilization of the book in the school learning process will contribute to the education of the Georgian school youth on NATO issues and will facilitate in them good understanding of processes in Georgia which are related to integration in the Alliance. Due to the educational information included in the book on the above mentioned topics, Georgian school youth will develop an informed opinion on Georgia’s relation with NATO, NATO’s role in providing security and stability, Euro-Atlantic values and democratic state development processes.

APRIL

LATO Chairman of the Board Toms Baumanis attends Bucharest conference 2008



LATO Chairman of the Board Toms Baumanis attended Bucharest Conference 2008, held on **April 1-3, 2008** in Bucharest alongside the official NATO summit, and continuing the success of the Istanbul Conference in 2004 and the Riga Conference in 2006. This conference provided a forum for leading policymakers, opinion leaders, scholars, and business people from both sides of the Atlantic to discuss the most pressing issues facing NATO and the international community.

www.bucharestconference.org

Debates about NATO in Lugansk National University, Ukraine



LATO was invited by Christian Democratic Youth Union of Ukraine to share its knowledge about Latvia’s way to NATO and perception of the Alliance by Latvian youth with students and lecturers of Lugansk National University located in Lugansk, Eastern Ukraine. On **April 23, 2008** LATO project manager Irina Ivaskina made a presentation “Perception of NATO by Latvian youngsters” in Russian language, introducing students with NATO historical background, Latvia’s way to NATO, and also with perception of the Alliance by Latvian youth, later being involved into fierce, but interesting discussions with Ukrainian students. The following day LATO representative was also involved into the debates “Ukraine-NATO: for and against”, where students, NGO activists and lecturers took part. A video conference had been organised with the head of the NATO Public Diplomacy Division Michael Durey from NATO HQ, which made these debates more lively and interesting. Discussions also continued in informal atmosphere, which resulted in good networking and potential partnership in the future.

Presentation and discussion about Latvia's membership in NATO with Danish schoolchildren



On **April 24, 2008** LATO hosted students age 15-16 from Alternative School of Denmark, holding informal presentation with following discussions about Latvian membership into NATO and its opportunities and vision of Latvian youngsters of the future of Latvia.

JUNE

Visit to NATO HQ of Latvian opinion leaders



On June 2-3, 2008 LATO Secretary General Sandis Šrāders took part in the visit of Baltic opinion leaders to NATO HQ, where participants from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania together with representatives of NATO discussed current issues of international relations and security. The organizer of the visit was Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia.

Public campaign „PEACE in United Georgia”



On the June 6, 2008 LATO in cooperation with Georgian NGO “new Generation - new Initiative” organized public campaign “**PEACE in United Georgia**” as a reaction to the events happened in May 2008 in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, Georgia. The goal of the activity was to call all the involved sides to ease tensions and ask the international community to take strong measures for assuring that actions of all sides comply with norms of human rights, underlining that the resolution of the conflict in the peaceful manner is the only right way out. In the framework of this campaign on the June 6, at 10 a.m. after local time, on the administrative border between Georgia and Abkhazia (a bridge over Inuri river) youngsters from Georgia and Latvia, representing different ethnic groups, let up fly 2008 red, green and white balloons as the symbol of peace. About this activity reported both Latvia's and Georgia's mass media.

AUGUST

March for support of Georgia “Left alone in Caucasus”



As reaction to the military invasion of Russia into Georgia on August 8, 2008, and in order to consolidate civil society on such important foreign and security policy issues, LATO organized a public march for Georgia's support “Left alone in Caucasus”. During this procession, supporters went from the Monument of Freedom to the embassies of Russia and Georgia, thus showing their compassion to the nation of Georgia, honour to the victims and indignation about the action of Federation of Russia. The participants of the march were asked to come with white roses as a symbol of Georgia's freedom, with reference to the Rose revolution and white colour as a symbol of peace. Around 3000 people participated the march.

OCTOBER

Riga Conference 2008 "Europe Whole and Free: 90 Years in the Making"



For the third year in a row, LATO organised the annual Riga Conference which brought together over 180 international policy experts, academics, politicians, representatives of NGOs and journalists from all over the world and took forward the tradition established by the NATO Riga Summit - to hold an international debate on security of the transatlantic community and on foreign policy issues. The main aim of the project is to make Riga one of the main analytical centre in

Europe and promote the Latvia's image abroad. This year Riga Conference 2008 "Europe Whole and Free: 90 Years in the Making" took place on the eve of Latvia's 90th anniversary, from October 31st till November 2nd. Besides experts and politicians, such prominent persons as President of Latvia Valdis Zatlers, President of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili, Deputy Prime Minister for the EU Affairs of the Czech Republic Alexander Vondra, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia Maris Riekstins, State Secretary of Ministry of Defence of Latvia Janis Sarts, Deputy State Minister for Reintegration of Georgia David Rakviashvili, as well as former president of Latvia Vaira Vike-Freiberga, former deputy prime minister of Russia Boris Nemtsov, Director of Policy Planning in the Private Office of the Secretary General of NATO Jamie Shea and many others participated the conference. More than 80 journalists from Latvia and abroad took care about broad coverage of the conference in local and international mass media.



www.rigaconference.lv

NOVEMBER

Visit of mass media representatives from Georgia to Latvia



From November 17th till November 20th LATO in the framework of the project "Latvia – EU and NATO member state" organized a visit of leading Georgian mass media representatives to Latvia. Together 10 journalists from four television companies (IMEDI, RUSTAVI 2, Georgian Public Broadcasting, ALANIA), as well two printing mass media (military analytical journal „Arsenali”, and newspaper „24 saati”), as well as Secretary General of Georgian NGO “new

Generation - new Initiative”, Mikhail Devdariani as the leader of the group, visited Latvia’s enterprises and institutions in Riga and regions, as well as made reportage about Latvia’s 90th anniversary celebration. As the result of the visit four channels broadcasted several reports about Latvia, as well two mass media published corresponding articles.

Second visit of mass media representatives from Ukraine to Latvia



Almost a week after the visit of mass media representative from Georgia, in the framework of the project „Latvia – member state of the EU and NATO”, LATO welcomed another group of journalists from the EU and NATO eastern Neighbouring region – this time Ukraine. The goal of the project is to transfer Latvia’s Euro-Atlantic experience, improve political, economic and social interstate relations, as well as promote the development of the democratic values and civil society in the countries of the EU and NATO Eastern Neighbourhood region. Thus from

November 23rd till November 27th twelve journalists from six leading television companies of Ukraine stayed in Latvia and visited such official institutions as Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Armed Forces military base in Ādaži, Agency of Investment and Development, Liepaja City Council, Baltic Diving School and training centre, as well as famous enterprises as “Latvijas Balzams”, “UPD holdings” and “Laima”. As the result, six biggest television companies of Ukraine broadcasted the reports about Latvia and its political, economic and social development after joining the EU and NATO.

LATO organizes Akhaltsikhe International Security Seminar in Georgia



From November 24th till November 26th LATO in cooperation with the Georgian NGO “new Generation - new Initiative” as well as with the support of Ministry of Defence of Latvia and Ministry of Defence of Georgia organized an international security seminar in Tbilisi, Georgia, where participated twenty four youngsters from Latvia and Georgia. The main topic of the seminar was Russian-Georgian conflict and its impact on the European and Black Sea region security with the following topic discussed – Russia-Georgia

War: Lessons Learned and Future for the EU and NATO, Energy Aspect in the New Security Environment, Black Sea Regional Security and others. During the seminar youngsters listened to the lectures of prominent speakers, participated in group discussions with the leadership of international experts, as well as went for study trips to Gori city and villages damaged during the August war. Several prominent officials and experts participated in the seminar, including Deputy State Secretary for Defence and Planning of Latvia Janis Garisons, Minister for Reintegration of Georgia Temuri Yakobashvili, Deputy Director of Latvian Institute of International Affairs Andris Spruds, „Jamestown foundation” policy analyst Vladimir Socor, Harvard University Black Sea Security program director Sergei Konoplyov, deputy head of European Union Monitoring Mission Darius Jurgelevicius and others.

In order to promote Georgia's integration into NATO, LATO with the support of Ministry of Defence of Latvia has been implementing its initiatives together with Georgia NGO "new Generation-new Initiative" since 2007". Thus, from September 2007 till April 2008 LATO organized a project "Publishing of the book for Georgian secondary schools "NATO and Security of Georgia". On December 2007 LATO and Ministry of Defence of Latvia took a patronage over "NATO corner" at the Akhaltsikhe State University located in the town of Akhaltsikhe. LATO is determined to continue to develop Latvia's and Georgia's cooperation in the sphere of society's information and education about NATO and issues of security and defence, actively cooperation with local NGO sector.