Voice of the People

Manuscript
EU and the Enlargement in Latvia
TVMV, Denmark

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Jurmala, Latvia
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Translation
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0.01
While the ice at the river in Riga slowly melts, the inhabitants of Latvia are becoming citizens of Europe.
The European influence is gradually beginning to influence the Latvian capital. The countdown has begun.

0.12
But as the minutes ticks away, the number of questions are growing. It is just twelve years ago that the country left another, involuntary union. There are countless concerns about how the new union will affect the daily life.

0.30
In this programme we will try to answer some of the questions asked by the Latvians. We have met the Latvians in the streets of Riga, and we have asked what are their concerns about joining the European Union.

0.39
soundbite musicians

0.46
Nature and culture are really important for the Latvians. Especially music and song plays a mayor role in the Latvian identity.

0.54
vox, Anda Mize, Riga:
"What will happen with the Latvian culture when we join the European Union?"

0.58
One of the politicians we have asked to answer the questions are the Danish member of the European Parliament, Ole B. Sørensen.

1.06
Interview, Ole B. Sørensen, Liberal Member of the European Parliament:
"EU has a slogan: "united in differences". And exactly that means that we try to preserve the cultures of the member countries. It is independent countries that now joins EU, so the Latvian culture will not be touched at all."

1.22
Riga is enriched with several 19th century art nouveau buildings. Some of them are now being renovated, and the Latvians can be confident that such national cultural projects will be supported by the EU.

1.33
Interview Ole B. Sørensen, Liberal Member of the European Parliament:
"It is an issue that I have also seen in the other applicant countries. They are really worried about their culture. I had the pleasure of being in Hungary and there they feared that the black pudding and certain cakes would disappear. But of course you can preserve it in spite of joining the EU. On the contrary the EU supports regional and national projects of culture."

1.55
A giant market is situated close to the rail station in Riga. Foods and other articles are sold from little booths. Compared to European level the goods are cheap, but just the price level offers the maybe largest dilemma in the daily life of the Latvians.

2.10
Interview, Kristine Korolkova, Riga;
"I think that the good is that now we can go to other European countries without any visa but it is bad that everything is going to be more expensive in Latvia. milk and sugar and our salaries are not so high and that is bad."

2.40
Ditte Staun is running for parliament as an opponent to EU. She underlines that the balance in wages and the price level also is narrow connected to the politics followed by the Latvians in their own country.

2.53
Interview, Ditte Staun, candidate for the European Parliament:
"A lot depends of which politicians you elect. They have to be prepared to control the development in wages. They have to make the decisions of a pace that fits the economy of the country."

3.10
Interview, Ole B. Sørensen, Liberal Member of the European Parliament:
"The prices will naturally rise, but the wages will follow up and probably rise more than the prices, so it means totally a boost in the standard of living. And that is one of the objectives by joining the Union. They will increase their productivity and get a boost."

3.32
So Ole B. Sørensen really believes that the Latvians standard of living will get better through an increased productivity.

3.40
Interview, Ole B. Sørensen, Liberal Member of the European Parliament:
"We will also see that companies from the current EU countries that they move their production over there. That will create more jobs - more jobs means higher wages and in that way the standard of living will rise."

3.55
The young people are mostly positive regarding the EU.

The young ones consider the EU as a market of opportunities.

4.02
soundbite

4.05
Not at least regarding education.

4.07
Interview, Eduards Petrovs, Riga:
"Young people like I can have many opportunities and we can study in many European countries and for me that is a great chance."

4.25
But how does the system works? How easy will it be for the Latvian youth to step into the holy cathedrals of learning in Europe?

4.35
Vox; Eduards Petrovs:
"Will it be easy for me to study in European countries and in Denmark?"

4.38
Interview, Ditte Staun:
"We think that it is really positive that there exist programmes for education in Europe, it is one of the good things about an European cooperation. So if you speak English go French and work hard at your course, then you will have equal opportunities to anybody in the European Union to study or find a job."

5.00
But the opening towards Europe can make an intellectual backfire. Several people fears that highly educated Latvians will be tempted of better payed jobs abroad.

5.08
Interview, Ole B. Sørensen:
"We cannot avoid it completely, but on the other hand new possibilities will arise when new companies establish over there. There will be new challenges that will make you stay."

5.22
Interview, Ditte Staun:
"Our fear is that the highly educated will travel to the countries where the salaries are largest. And that can be a mayor problem. Therefore it is really important that you use resources to upgrade your own systems in your own country."

5.38
The new membership offers opportunities, but it also demands that Latvia does something in return. Only time will show exactly how Latvia will be influenced by the new membership of Europe.