

*Voice of the People*

**Manuscript**  
**EU and labour in Latvia**  
**TVMV, Denmark**

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Places of shooting:

Jurmala, Latvia

Riga, Latvia

Mazozolis, Latvia

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## **Translation**

### **EU and labour in Latvia**

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0.02

The first of May is a day that awakens a lot of different emotions, good as bad, in the Latvian people.

0.08

As a part of the Soviet Union the day was a significant marking of military power and a celebration for the common worker. Today it is 12 years ago that the military power existed in the country, but the first of May is still a celebration to the worker.

0.23

The conditions for the Latvian worker are going through a great transformation. Here at a firewoods factory in Mazozolis, about 80 kilometers east of the capitol Riga. The factory has risen on the ruins of a former Soviet co-operative.

0.35

But it is not just the market economy that changes the life of the workers. When joining the European Union several of the conditions of the workers will be improved.

0.42

In this programme we will try to answer some of the questions that will appear about the conditions of the workers.

0.48

We have asked the people in the streets of Riga, and the answers will be delivered by the liberal member of the European Parliament, Ole B. Sørensen and Ditte Staun, who is a candidate to the European Parliament for the Peoples Movement against the Union.

0.59

Voxpop, Janis Bruns, Riga:

"So how will it be for the Latvian workers that Latvia joins the European Union?"

1.06

Interview, Ole B. Sørensen, Liberal member of the European Parliament:

"Well, first they have to settle the accounts for the bad effects of the Soviet planned economy. The experience shows that then naturally the prices will go up, but so will the wages. And I think that the wages will rise even more than the prices so the Latvians will get a total lift in the standard of living. And that is exactly one of the objectives by joining the Union."

1.42

The wages of the workers will slowly adjust to the European average, and there will be changes at the factories. For example at the firewood factory in Mazozolis.

1.53

Here the buildings will be renovated for administration, showers and dressingrooms for the workers. Goods conditions for the workers are at a high priority in the EU.

2.04

Interview, Ole B. Sørensen, Liberal Member of the European Parliament:

"I think that in terms of their working environment it will improve. Because in the EU we have really high standards according to the working environment, and those standards all the EU countries will have to follow. So I think that their daily life, also at work, will be better!"

2.25

Latvia is an area with low wages. Foreign companies have through the latest ten years moved large parts of their production to the Baltic area. But now a lot of Latvians fears that the open borders will intensify the competition of cheap labour.

2.38

Interview, Roman Sulackis, Jurmala:

"So many people will come to our country to work and we will have so much competition with workers from Arabia or Poland or other countries."

2.54

Especially the younger Latvians are concerned how the labour market will be in the future.

3.00

Vox, Roman Sulackis, Jurmala:

"How can I compete with people from other countries to have a new job?"

3.06

Ole B. Sørensen does not think it is a problem. More jobs for both workers and highly educated will be the result of the new extended Union.

3.12

Interview, Ole B. Sørensen, Liberal Member of the European Parliament:

"The countries in Eastern Europe have generally the advantage that they can offer cheap labour, so we will discover that companies from the existing Union will move their production overthere. They will manufacture more goods and create more jobs."

3.30

The free movement of the workforce has always been very important in the European co-operation. Now the Latvians get the change to get a job in another European country.

3.40

Vox, Dmitrijs Antipenko, Riga:

"How big chance is that I will have a job in european countries like denmark or germany or some other countries?"

3.47

Interview, Ditte Staun, The Danish Movement against the EU:

"Unfortunately the Danish government has imposed a seven years rule. It means that the countries of Eastern and Central Europe not until seven years will be equalised with other citizens from the union. We think that it is apartheid - we think that the countries should manage themselves how the conditions for their own workers and for foreign workers should be."

4.16

The seven years period of transition was a part of the agreement in the extension of the Union. Somehow it shows that not just the Latvians are fearing competing in the job market.

4.24

Interview, Ole B. Sørensen, Liberal Member of the European Parliament:

"I do not think that it would have made any difference if the borders had been open from the beginning. I do not think that we will see an invasion from the applicant countries, but there have been a political fear in some countries and therefore they have chosen to make the seven years periode of transition."

4.40

Latvia will be the pourest country in the European Union. A Latvian worker earns in average just a third of the wages of an average European worker. But the economy of the country is quickly improving, so there might be a reason not to leave Latvia and go to Europe.

4.54

Interview, Ditte Staun, The Danish Movement against the EU:

"It is very important that the people who does not have the opportunities to go abroad, should have the possibilities to get a good education in their own country. So it is very important that the single country invests in education and research."

5.05

The first of May this year, the display of military will be replaced by choral singing at the squares of Riga. It is the starting signal to a new proces that will change the daily life of the Latvian worker. The hammer and sickle has been replaced by golden stars on a blue banner.