



FACT SHEET

National referendum for Draft Law “Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia”

Referendum day: 2 August 2008

On Saturday, 2 August, a national referendum will take place for Draft Law “Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia”.

On the referendum day, polling stations will be open from 7 AM till 10 PM. A voter needs a passport of the citizen of Latvia in order to vote. Regardless one’s place of residence voters can visit any polling station in Latvia or abroad in order to vote.

In order the draft amendments to the Constitution would be adopted as a law, at least half of the electorate having the right to vote must support it in the national referendum. (According to the data provided by the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, there will be 1,515,213 citizens with the right to vote on 2 August 2008.

Why the national referendum is organized?

National referendum must be organized because the *Saeima* rejected, on 5 June, the draft amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia which were supported by voters’ signatures and submitted for review to the Parliament. Law “On Referendum and Initiation of Laws” provides that, in this case, a referendum must be held not earlier than one month and not later than two months from rejection of a draft law by the *Saeima*.

Right of vote

All citizens of Latvia having the right to vote and having the right to elect the *Saeima* are entitled to participate in a national referendum, i.e., citizens of Latvia starting from the age of 18.

Procedure for registration of voters

A previously prepared voters’ register is not used for national referendums in Latvia, same as for elections of the Parliament. In case of a national referendum, voters are registered at a polling station on a day of the referendum. A stamp in passport of a voter is used for ensuring the principle “one voter – one vote”, for participation in a national referendum. This procedure ensures that a voter can visit any polling station in Latvia or abroad regardless of his or her place of residence. But a passport of the citizen of Latvia is a mandatory document for voting in this case.

Question in the national referendum

In the referendum, voters will have to answer the question: “Do you support adopting Draft Law “Amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia?”. Possible answers are “For” and “Against”.



Procedure of voting in polling stations

- ✓ When arriving at a polling station, a passport of the citizen of Latvia must be presented.
- ✓ A voter must register him or herself in the voter's register in order to receive a voting list.
- ✓ Upon receipt of a voting list, a voter must sign in the voters' register.
- ✓ One must ascertain whether a voting list for the national referendum contains a stamp of a relevant polling station.
- ✓ A voting booth or compartment must be used when voting.
- ✓ A voter can put "+" for answer "For" or answer "Against" in a voting list. Answer "For" must be selected if the voter supports adoption of the draft amendments to the Constitution. Answer "Against" must be selected if the voter does not support adoption of the draft amendments to the Constitution.
- ✓ A voting list must be folded and put in a voting box.
- ✓ One must take into account that a voting list shall be invalid in case, if:
 - 1) It does not contain a stamp of a relevant polling station,
 - 2) Both answers – "For" and "Against" have been marked in the voting list,
 - 3) No answer has been marked in the voting list.

Exceptions from the general voting procedure

The procedure for national referendum provides several additional possibilities of voting. Voters abroad can vote at polling stations established in foreign countries or by postal mail, and voters in Latvia can vote at their location in specific cases.

The opportunity to vote at the location of a voter can be used by those voters who, due to their health condition, are unable to visit a polling station on a referendum day, carers for such voters, as well as suspects and defendants to whom custody has been applied as a security measure.

The opportunity to vote by postal mail in a national referendum can be used by those citizens of Latvia who are abroad at the period of the referendum. Polling stations abroad accepted applications for voting by postal mail by 11 July. 60 applications were received during the said period.

On the referendum day of 2 August, 47 polling stations will be open abroad where voters can vote from 7 AM till 10 PM local time.

Election commissions

Different level election commissions are involved in organizing the national referendum. The Central Election Commission conducts and organizes the national referendum. Election commissions of 7 cities of the Republic, 26 districts, 52 cities, 428 civil parishes and 37 territories ensure the course of the national referendum.

998 polling stations will provide services to voters at the national referendum, and totally more than 10,000 members and employees of election commissions will be involved in organizing the national referendum.

Observers

Observers who are authorized by political parties and associations of political parties may observe the course of national referendum and counting of votes at polling stations. Election observers can be authorized also by the Central Election Commission and election commissions of districts. Representatives of mass media are also allowed to follow the course of voting and counting of votes at polling stations.

In order to observe the course of voting and counting of votes, observers from political parties and associations of political parties must present an authorization from the decision-making body of a political party or association of political parties, as well as a personal identification document.

Representatives of mass media may visit polling stations by presenting a work certificate and a personal identification document.

Campaigning

Political campaigning is allowed on a referendum day in Latvia. It is prohibited to campaign in the premises of voting and closer than 50 meters from entrance to a building of a polling station. Members and employees of election commissions are prohibited to campaign.

Participation of voters

On the referendum day of 2 August, the Central Election Commission will summarize data about participation of voters as of 8 AM, 12 AM, 4 PM and 8 PM. The Central Election Commission will publish such information also on the homepage of the national referendum (www.tn2008.cvk.lv) where the information will appear, on average, one hour later needed for summarization of the data, respectively, at 9 AM, 1 PM, 5 PM, 9 PM.

Counting of votes, results of the national referendum

Counting of votes will start immediately after closing the polling stations. Commissions of polling stations will count the votes. Observers and representatives of mass media may follow the process of counting of votes.

Results of counted votes in a polling station will be announced to the Central Election Commission in the night of the national referendum, and the Central Election Commission will publish them on Internet homepage www.tn2008.cvk.lv.

The Central Election Commission will summarize the final results of the national referendum and will publish them within two weeks that are required in order to receive and verify original documents from polling stations in Latvia and abroad.

Information about the national referendum

www.tn2008.cvk.lv – on the referendum day of 2 August, information will be provided about participation of voters, as well as provisional results of the national referendum.

www.cvk.lv – Internet homepage of the Central Election Commission where additional information about the procedure for national referendums, regulations, addresses and opening hours of polling stations is available.

[67049999](tel:67049999) – 24 h info-line of the Central Election Commission for voters; provides information about polling stations and the procedure of national referendum.

Central Election Commission
Information Department, ph.67814900