



LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE EUROPEAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE SAEIMA OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

In November 1995, the European Affairs Committee was established as a standing committee of the Saeima. In January 2001, the Rules of Procedure of the Saeima were amended to set forth the role of the Saeima and its European Affairs Committee in dealing with European Union affairs. The European Affairs Committee decides on national positions elaborated by the government before they are communicated to the EU institutions. Such an oversight of the national positions began during the time when Latvia was acceding to the European Union. The European Affairs Committee performs the oversight function by approving the national positions presented by the government at the Council of the European Union, but during the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union by approving presidency mandates. This means that all the national positions elaborated by the government are considered at the European Affairs Committee, which decides on authorising the government to present the relevant national position at the Council of the European Union.

THE PROCEDURE OF OVERSIGHT IS SET FORTH IN THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE:

- 185¹.** (1) The Saeima shall participate in EU affairs through the European Affairs Committee unless the Saeima has ruled otherwise.
- (2) The European Affairs Committee sets forth the rights of the Members of the European Parliament elected from Latvia to participate in the work of the Committee.
- 185².** The European Affairs Committee shall be composed of at least one Member from each parliamentary group in the Saeima. The composition of the Committee should be a proportionate reflection of the parliamentary groups represented in the Saeima.
- 185³.** The European Affairs Committee shall examine the official positions of the Republic of Latvia prepared in accordance with the procedure set by the Cabinet of Ministers and shall rule on them before they are communicated to European Union institutions.

185⁴. The European Affairs Committee may send the official positions of the Republic of Latvia, as well as legislative proposals of the European Union and documents of other EU institutions, to other Saeima committees for them to consider and hand down decisions.

- 118³.** (1) Not later than by 16 January, the Minister for Foreign Affairs shall submit to the Saeima the annual report on the performance and planned future activities in foreign policy which contains information on the performance and planned future activities regarding European Union issues and which has been approved by the Prime Minister. Copies of the report shall be distributed to Members without delay.
- (2) If there is no proposal or request to convene an extraordinary session or sitting of the Saeima, the Presidium shall include the annual report of the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the agenda of the regular Saeima sitting scheduled as close as possible to the date of international (de jure) recognition of the Republic of Latvia.
- (3) When the above-mentioned report is being examined at the Saeima sitting, first the Minister for Foreign Affairs shall be given the floor, and then a debate shall be opened. After the debate, only the Minister for Foreign Affairs shall be given the floor if he/she so wishes.

GENERAL PROVISIONS SET FORTH IN THE CONSTITUTION AND THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

The Saeima oversees the work of the government on the grounds of the general provisions of the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure. It means that the general procedure envisaging access to information can also be applied to the matters related to the European Union.

ARTICLE 25 OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Saeima shall establish committees and determine the number of members and their duties. Committees shall have the right to require of individual ministers or local government authorities information and explanations

necessary for the work of the committees, and the right to invite to their sittings responsible representatives from the relevant ministries or local government authorities to furnish explanations.

PARAGRAPH 1 OF ARTICLE 172 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

A committee shall have the right, without the Presidium's mediation, to directly request the information and expla-

nations necessary for its work from the respective minister and the institutions subordinated to or supervised by him/her, as well as from local governments. The committee itself may summon the appropriate officials to provide the required comments.

More detailed procedure for drafting, harmonising, approving and updating national positions and mandates of the presidency is set forth in the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers.