

Disclaimer: The English language text below is provided for information only; it confers no rights and imposes no obligations separate from those conferred or imposed by the legislation formally adopted and published. Only the latter is authentic. The principle of gender-neutral language in English translations has been used. The original Latvian text uses masculine pronouns in the singular, which have been translated in the plural. In addition, gender-specific Latvian nouns have been translated as gender-neutral terms, e.g. *chairperson*.

The *Saeima*¹ has adopted and
the President has proclaimed the following Law:

Law on Meetings, Street Processions and Pickets

Chapter I

Right to Organise Meetings, Street Processions and Pickets, as well as to Participate in Them

Section 1.

(1) The expression of the State guaranteed and protected freedom of peaceful assembly is meetings, street processions and pickets.

(2) Meetings are organised assemblies for the purpose of meeting with people and to express some ideas and points of view. Within the meaning of this Law, a gathering, rally or other similar form of assembly shall be the equivalent of a meeting.

(3) A street procession is organised movement along roads, streets, squares, footpaths or other territories built for traffic in order to express some ideas and points of view. Within the meaning of this Law, a demonstration, procession or other similar form of movement shall be the equivalent of a street procession.

(4) A picket is an event during which one or more persons with placards, slogans or streamers express some ideas or opinions in a public place, but during the course of which no speeches are made.

[10 April 2003]

Section 2.

This Law shall not apply to:

1) advertising and recreation events, which are organised by undertakings (companies) in their own or rented (leased) premises or territories;

2) events organised by religious organisations registered according to procedures specified by law in churches, prayer houses, cemeteries, on parcels of land belonging to the church or other places provided for this purpose;

3) performances, concerts, sporting competitions and other similar events in places provided for this purpose;

4) events, which are organised by private persons outside of public places for recreation, celebrations or other purposes of a private nature; and

5) funeral ceremonies.

Section 3.

(1) In conformity with this Law, everyone has the right to organise peaceful meetings, street processions and pickets, as well as to participate in them.

¹ The Parliament of the Republic of Latvia

(2) No restrictions may be placed on the utilisation of these rights except those that are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in order to defend the interests of national and public security, prevent disorder or criminal offences, and to protect the health or morals of society, as well as the rights and freedoms of other people.

(3) The State shall not only ensure the possibility of assembly, but shall also take care that such assembly is not hindered.

[10 April 2003]

Section 4.

The organisers of meetings, street processions and pickets may not be persons who:

1) have not reached 18 years of age;
2) are not Latvian citizens or persons who have the right to the non-citizen passport issued by the Republic of Latvia or also a person who has been issued a permanent residence permit;

3) attempts to utilise the events referred to for the purposes of such organisations the activities of which are prohibited in Latvia;

4) [10 April 2003]

5) have been penalised administratively for violations of the procedures for the organisation of meetings, street processions and pickets or the course thereof, or also for violations of the regulations for the commencement or termination of the activities of public organisations; or

6) has been recognised as lacking the capacity to act.

[10 April 2003]

Section 5.

(1) Legal persons registered according to procedures specified by law in the Republic of Latvia are also entitled to organise meetings, street processions and pickets.

(2) In such case they shall be determined by one or more organisers responsible for the event (hereinafter – organiser) who shall conform to the requirements of Section 4 of this Law.

Section 6.

An organiser is liable for the observance of this Law during a meeting, street procession and picket.

Chapter II General Provisions

Section 7.

(1) Meetings may be organised both in premises and also outside of them.

(2) Meetings may be open and closed.

(3) At open meetings all, who wish to, are entitled to participate, also representatives of the media. Restrictions may be specified on in relation to the area of the premises or territory utilised for the meeting.

(4) At closed meetings only persons invited by the organisers may participate. Closed meetings may be organised only in such places as during the course of the meeting are not being used by the public.

Section 8.

The location of the meeting and route of the street procession shall be selected so that the movement of transport is interrupted as little as possible.

Section 9.

(1) It is prohibited to organise meetings and pickets closer than 50 metres from the residence of the President and the buildings of the *Saeima*, the Cabinet, courts, prosecutor and foreign diplomatic and consular representations. In the organisation of meetings and pickets close to these buildings, the relevant institutions, except the foreign diplomatic and consular representations, may also indicate special places closer than 50 metres.

(2) During meetings, street processions and pickets free access and driveway must be ensured to State and local government institutions in the vicinity of which the relevant events take place.

(3) Meetings, street processions and pickets may not be organised in buildings of private ownership or on parcels of land of private ownership or private use without the written consent of the owner or manager thereof.

Section 10.

(1) During meetings, street processions and pickets, the regulatory enactments which regulate public order shall be observed.

(2) During the referred to events, it is prohibited to inveigh against the independence of the Republic of Latvia, to express proposals regarding the overthrow of Latvia's State structure by means of violence, to invite the non-fulfilment of laws, to advocate violence, ethnic or racial hatred, openly the ideology of nazism, fascism or communism, to perform war propaganda, as well as to eulogise or invite the commitment of criminal offences and other violations of law.

[10 April 2003]

Section 11.

(1) Participants in meetings, street processions and pickets during such events are prohibited from:

1) holding within their keeping weapons or other articles, which on the basis of their nature are intended or may be applicable for the committing of bodily injury to persons or the damaging of property;

2) being equipped with passive means of protection (helmets, casques, body armour and similar);

3) concealing their faces beneath masks;

4) dressing in uniforms or similar clothes in order to express specific political points of view;

5) utilising former USSR, Latvia PSR and nazi Germany flags, coats of arms, hymns and symbols (also in a stylised form);

6) performing acts which are contradictory to morals; and

7) acting in such a way as to create a threat to the participants of the meetings, street processions or pickets or the safety and health of other persons.

(2) Organisers of and participants in events are prohibited from delivering to the location of the occurrence of the event the articles which are referred to in Paragraph one, Clauses 1, 2 and 5 of this Section, as well as holding them with persons or means of transport which are located closer than 500 metres from the location of the occurrence of the event.

[10 April 2003]

Chapter III Submission of Applications

Section 12.

(1) For the carrying out of meetings, street processions and pickets if they conform to the requirements of this Law the permission of State and local government institutions is not necessary.

(2) In respect of the organisation of meetings, street processions and pickets, the organiser shall submit an application to the local government of the city or parish in the administrative territory of which the relevant event is intended. If the event takes place in the administrative territories of the local governments of several parishes or cities, the application shall be submitted to all the relevant local governments. A copy of the application shall also be sent at the same time to the local State Police office.

(3) The application shall be submitted not later than three working days before the occurrence of relevant event, but if the event is associated with the interruption of the movement of transport – not later than seven working days beforehand.

(4) Applications, which are submitted that do not comply with these time periods, the local governments are entitled not to consider.

(5) In respect of the time of the submission of the application, local government employees shall make a notation on the copy of the application, which remains with the submitter.

Section 13.

(1) An application does not have to be submitted for:

- 1) closed meetings;
- 2) pickets which are not organised or publicly announced;
- 3) meetings and street processions which are organised by State institutions, as well as local governments;
- 4) meetings which are organised by members of the *Saeima* or local government councillors and candidates thereof in order to meet with voters;
- 5) meetings which are organised by trade unions in the premises or territory of a workplace, as well as in rented premises; and
- 6) open meetings which are organised in premises.

(2) An application shall be submitted in any case where the meetings, street processions or pickets interrupt the movement of traffic.

[10 April 2003]

Section 14.

(1) The application shall indicate:

- 1) the type of event (meeting, street procession or picket);
 - 2) the purpose of the event;
 - 3) the date of the event, beginning and ending time;
 - 4) the location of meeting or picket, route of street procession;
 - 5) the planned number of participants;
 - 6) what support is requested from local governments and the police in order that the event occur without interruptions;
 - 7) the organiser (one or more);
 - 8) the manager of the event; and
 - 9) the assistants to the manager of the event, as well as the keepers of order.
- (2) In submitting an application, a natural person shall present his or her passport, but a representative of a legal person shall present his or her passport and submit an authorisation from the legal person to submit the application.
- (3) All the persons referred to in the application shall indicate their given name, surname, personal identity number and place of residence, but for a legal person – full name, legal address and registration number.
- (4) Only persons of legal age and a capacity to act – Latvian citizens or persons who have the right to the non-citizen passport issued by the Republic of Latvia, as well as a person who has been issued a permanent residence permit may be managers of an event, his or her assistants and keepers of order.
- (5) If the planned number of participants for the event exceeds one hundred, it is necessary for the manager of the event to have at least two assistants.
- (6) The number of keepers of order shall be determined by the organiser on the basis of such calculation that they are able to ensure the peaceful and organised occurrence of the event. In any case there must be not less than two keepers of order for every one hundred participants. The organiser is entitled also after the submission of the application to change individual keepers of order or to increase their number.
- (7) For the keeping of order an organiser may invite a licensed security company. In such case the number of keepers of order shall be determined by such company and information regarding them need not be indicated in the application.
- (8) The manager of the event and his or her assistants shall at the same time as the application submit a notification that they assume liability for the observance of this Law during the event.

Section 15.

- (1) An application for the organisation of a meeting, street procession or picket shall be examined by the chairperson of the relevant local government city council (parish council) or his or her authorised official (hereinafter – local government official) within a period of three days, but not later than 48 hours before the commencement of the event.
- (2) The organiser shall be notified in respect of the time for the examination. If necessary representatives of the police and other interested organisations shall be invited to the examination.
- (3) In examining the application, the local government official shall verify whether:
- 1) the organiser has complied with all the requirements of this Law;
 - 2) the event will not interfere with other events regarding which an application has been submitted already earlier; and
 - 3) the organisation of the event at the intended time and place will not cause significant interruptions to the movement of traffic, will not threaten public safety or public order.

(4) If the local government official determines that the applied for meeting, street procession or picket conforms to the requirements of the law, he or she shall without delay issue to the organiser a statement, which certifies that the local government has no objections to the organisation of the event, and shall perform the necessary activities in order to ensure the uninterrupted occurrence of the event. The statement shall indicate the type of event, time, place, the manager and his or her assistants.

(5) If the organiser has not complied with the requirements of this Law, as well as if the event threatens State and public security, public health and morals, as well as the rights and freedoms of other people, creating disorder or criminal offences, the local government official shall without delay issue a justified written refusal to the organiser. The organiser has the right to rectify the indicated deficiencies and to submit a new application according to the procedures specified in Section 14 of this Law.

(6) If a local government official considers that the event cannot occur at the time or place indicated in the application, he or she might propose another time and place. If the organiser agrees to the offered time and place, a statement shall be issued without delay, which certifies that the local government has no objections to the organisation of the event. If the organiser does not agree to the time and place proposed, a justified written refusal shall be issued to him or her.

[10 April 2003]

Section 16.

An event may not be organised if the organiser has not been issued with a statement, which certifies that the local government has no objections to the organisation of the event.

Section 17.

The written refusal issued by the local government official may be appealed to a court. Similarly, the actions of a local government official may be appealed to a court if he or she does not examine an application in the time period and according to the procedures specified in Section 15 of this Law. The court shall adjudicate such matters within a period of three days according to the procedures provided for in Chapter 24-A of the Civil Procedure Code of Latvia.

Chapter IV Course of a Meeting, Street Procession or Picket

Section 18.

- (1) A meeting, street procession and picket may not commence before the announced time.
- (2) The referred to event may begin only if the manager, his or her assistants and the keepers of order indicated on the application have arrived in sufficient numbers.
- (3) The manager of the event must have with him or her, the statement issued by the local government official, which certifies that the local government has no objections to the organisation of the event, and shall, on the basis of a request from a representative of the local government or police employee present it.
- (4) Keepers of order must have with them an identification document written by the organiser of the event, and shall, on the basis of a request from a representative of the local government or police employee present it. During the event they must wear an armband or other clearly visible recognition signs.

Section 19.

At meetings, street processions and pickets there is freedom of speech and language.

Section 20.

(1) The manager of a meeting, street procession or picket and his or her assistants are liable for compliance with the provisions of this Law and for keeping order during the event. They shall ensure the keeping of order both personally and with the assistance of the keepers of order.

(2) Participants in the event must avoid activities which may hinder the peaceful and organised course of the event, as well as must obey the instructions of the manager of the event, his or her assistants, keepers of order and police employees.

(3) A speech may be made at a meeting only with the permission of the relevant manager or his or her assistant.

Section 21.

At open meetings, street processions and pickets, compliance with the provisions of this Law shall be controlled by representatives of the local government, as well as police employees.

Section 22.

During an open meeting, street procession and picket it is permitted to make audio and video recordings, to photograph and to film.

Section 23.

(1) If in a meeting, street procession and picket, its participants violate the provisions of this Law and do not obey the instructions of the manager of the event, his or her assistants or keepers of order, the manager shall either announce the closing of the event or turn to the police employee or the representative of the local government with a request to renew order.

(2) If the participants of the event do not obey the instructions of the police employee or representative of the local government regarding compliance with the requirements of this Law, the police employee or representative of the local government shall announce that the event is closed and request that its participants leave the location of the event without delay.

Section 24.

The police shall not allow such meetings, street processions and pickets, which are organised not observing the requirements of this Law.

Chapter V Liability for Violation of this Law

Section 25.

The organiser of a meeting, street procession and picket, the manager and his or her assistants, as well as other participants shall be held to the liability provided for by law for non-compliance with the provisions of this Law.

This Law was adopted by the Saeima on 16 January 1997.

President

G. Ulmanis

Rīga, 30 January 1997