

# **INTERNATIONAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ALLIANCE**

## **2007 SPECIAL 301 REPORT**

### **SPECIAL MENTION**

# **LATVIA**

IIPA specially mentions Latvia in this year's Special 301 filing due to a very recent and disturbing report about possible weakening Latvian Government support for police anti-piracy efforts.

In January 2005, the Ministry of the Interior established a dedicated IPR enforcement division within the Economic Police, specifically tasked with detecting and preventing violations of intellectual property rights. It was planned that there would be 22 staffers in this unit, and that under its supervision, there would be units in each region of Latvia. Notwithstanding those plans, the unit was assigned half of the originally anticipated staff and no units were established in regions of Latvia outside the immediate vicinity of Riga. The unit also lacked technical and logistical support, such as transport. Nonetheless, in spite of inadequate staffing and resources, the industries underscore the importance of a dedicated IPR unit and report that this unit engaged in valuable enforcement work in the greater Riga area during 2005 and 2006, although nationwide enforcement needed to be improved (in large part because regional partners for this unit were not established). In particular, this unit focused much needed attention on business software cases, because there was local industry presence to support such activities. However, this unit appears to be in jeopardy. Unofficial communication from Latvian police sources indicates that the Ministry of Interior Affairs may be proposing to disband this IPR squad. The business software industry in particular views this unit as an important vehicle to support anti-piracy actions in Latvia. If this squad is dissolved, the industry fears that its efforts in Latvia will be severely undermined. For the Government of Latvia to show its anti-piracy commitment to combat both traditional and digital piracy, and make IPR enforcement a priority among the various enforcement agencies, it should not only keep this IPR squad intact and in operation, but should move forward to fulfill its original staffing and regional unit goals for the IPR squad.