Republic of Latvia

Order of the Minister for Foreign Affairs No. LV-126

Adopted 11 June 2020

**Regarding the Procedures for the Provision of Consular Assistance and Consular Services**

1. In accordance with Section 27, Paragraph one of the Law on the Management of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection and considering the Annex “Catalogue of Consular Function to be Exercised in Diplomatic and Consular Representations” to the Order of the Minister for Foreign Affairs No. LV-207 of 17 May 2019, I shall lay down the following procedures for the provision of consular assistance and consular services for the duration of the validity of the Law on the Management of the Spread of COVID-19 Infection:

1.1. the provision of consular assistance shall be continued in full amount by substituting types of communication in person with distance communication to the extent possible and where this does not reduce the amount of the provided assistance, including to substitute visits to foreign authorities with remote receipt of information regarding developments therein, and also distance communication shall be maintained with the recipients of consular assistance;

1.2. when providing consular assistance in person, an employee and, as fas as possible, also the recipient of the consular assistance must use personal protective equipment, the communication must be carried out only in the premises for the reception of visitors where the working place of the employee is separated with a glass;

1.3. provision of consular services shall be organised in person where the presence of the person is necessary for the provision of the service by complying with the following conditions:

1.3.1. services must be provided only upon registration in advance, and the service provision time planned for one person must be extended in the registration system in order to eliminate people-to-people contacts;

1.3.2. fulfilment of the distancing conditions determined in the country of residence must be ensured, but where such do not exist – keeping a distance of at least 2 meters in the waiting premises. Where this is not possible, waiting premises must be closed;

1.3.3. the disinfection of the premises accessible by visitors must be ensured, as well as the availability of hand disinfectants in the premises for visitors;

1.3.4. to the extent possible, it must be checked that visitors use the personal protective equipment specified in the country of residence;

1.3.5. when handling visitors and documents, employees must use all personal protective equipment, communicate with visitors only in premises for the reception of visitors where the working place of the employee is separated with a glass;

1.4. visa applications shall be accepted and examined (in the representations which issue visas) to a limited extent in accordance with instructions of EU institutions and the applicable laws and regulations. Acceptance of visa applications shall be organised through external service providers. Where the cooperation with an external service provider is not possible, visa applications shall be accepted in person according to the provision of Paragraph 1.3 of this Order, and the necessary interviews shall be organised remotely.

2. If in the country of residence such epidemiological safety measures which limit the provision of services in person or the movement of persons are applicable or if there are grounds to believe that the actual epidemiological safety situation in the country prohibits the provision of services in person without endangering employees, the head of a representation may decide to further provide only those consular services which can be provided remotely. A representation shall immediately inform the Consular Department of such decision.

3. In the case referred to in Paragraph 2 of this Order, consular services shall be provided remotely only by complying with the following types of provision and exceptions:

3.1. registration of a notified fact of birth or death – acceptance of applications shall be organised through post, including, by sending originals of the documents via post;

3.2. issuing of civil status registration documents – acceptance of applications shall be organised remotely by the person authorising through www.latvija.lv or using the e-signature; the documents shall be issued by sending them via post to the address indicated by the person;

3.3. issuing of multilingual forms – acceptance of applications shall be organised remotely by the person authorising through www.latvija.lv or using the e-signature; the documents shall be issued by sending them via post to the address indicated by the person;

3.4. acceptance and examination of applications for local border traffic permits (in representations where such permits are issued) – acceptance of applications shall be discontinued;

3.5. acceptance of applications for the issuing of personal identification documents and issuing of personal identification documents – acceptance of applications shall be discontinued, the received personal identification documents shall be sent via post to the address indicated by the person in accordance with the requirements of Paragraph 18 of Cabinet Regulation No. 134 of 21 February 2012, Regulations Regarding Personal Identification Documents;

3.6. acceptance and transfer of applications for the determination or change of the legal status of persons – acceptance of applications shall be organised remotely by the person authorising through www.latvija.lv or using the e-signature;

3.7. acceptance and transfer of applications for the acquisition of the status of a repatriate – acceptance of applications shall be discontinued;

3.8. issuing of statements (consular statements, statements from the Population Register, statements from the Punishment Register, etc.) – acceptance of applications shall be organised remotely by the person authorising through www.latvija.lv or using the e-signature if personal data must to be included in the statement; in other cases acceptance of the application shall be organised through post or e-mail correspondence, and documents shall be issued by sending them visa post to the address indicated by the person;

3.9. legalisation of documents – provision of the consular service shall be discontinued, except when the document needs to be submitted for legalisation to the Consular Department as a matter of urgency, in order to ensure the implementation of the fundamental rights of persons and also fulfilment of the requirements specified in laws and regulations regarding the emergency situation or the provision of services;

3.10. acceptance and transfer of applications for the requisitioning of documents – acceptance of applications shall be organised remotely by the person authorising through www.latvija.lv or using the e-signature;

3.11. performance of notary activities – provision of this consular service shall be discontinued;

3.12. acceptance and transfer of requests for residence permits – provision of this consular service shall be discontinued;

3.13. replies to requests for information regarding consular services – requests shall be accepted and replies shall be provided remotely through the use of a solution which is the most accessible in the specific situation;

3.14. visa applications shall be examined in accordance with Paragraph 1.4 of this Order;

3.15. a consular officer may exceptionally decide to provide a consular service in person if this is needed for the provision of consular assistance.

4. The Order shall come into force upon signature.

5. The Order shall be sent for publication in the official gazette *Latvijas Vēstnesis*.

Minister for Foreign Affairs E. Rinkēvičs