

Abstract

This diploma thesis deals with the process of the formation of the Latvian Citizenship Law in the context of European integration. The main aim of the thesis is to analyze the influence of European organization (primarily the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) on the law creation and the approval of its amendments. The aim of the study is also to analyze how the representatives of the Russian Federation influenced the process of law creation and its changes. Latvia was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, it remained its part until 1991. During the Soviet period, many Russian-speaking people moved to the territory of Latvia. Latvian citizenship law from 1994 was highly restrictive, it was based on the principle of legal continuity between interwar Latvia and restored Latvia after 1991. Therefore, the law only restored citizenship, which meant that only people who had been citizens before 1940 were granted automatic citizenship. Many inhabitants of restored Latvia, especially Russian speaking inhabitants, remained without citizenship. There was a possibility to acquire citizenship through the naturalization process, but the pace of the naturalization was too slow due to the system of so-called „naturalization windows“. The system permitted only certain age groups to acquire citizenship each year. Representatives of European organization and the Russian Federation urged Latvia to liberalize the law. This study shows that European organizations influenced the process of law liberalization, especially because the aim of the Latvian foreign policy was to integrate Latvia into those organizations. The thesis is based on the analysis of primary and secondary sources, it shows how the Latvian government and Parliament followed the recommendations of Western organizations.