Latvian Teachers Participate in CIVITAS

The Social Studies Development Center hosted five visitors from the Republic of Latvia in February and March. The visitors, Guntars Catlaks, Liesma Lapina, Irena Saleniece, Valts Sarma, and Aija Tuna, are educators. They were here to participate in the SSDC's newest project, "CIVITAS: An International Civic Education Exchange Program." The program is administered by the Center for Civic Education at Calabasas, California, in cooperation with the United States Information Agency and its affiliated offices in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The U.S. Department of Education provided the funding.

This winter, CIVITAS brought delegations of educators and other professionals from the Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland, Hungary, and Russia to sites in the United States. The delegations developed lesson plans for teaching civics in their newly-democratized countries and devised instructional materials for teachers in the United States to teach about emerging constitutional democracies.

Hosting the delegation in Bloomington were John J. Patrick, IU professor of education and director of the Social Studies Development Center, Robert Leming, director of the Indiana Program for Law-related Education at the Social Studies Development Center; and, Laura Pinhey, co-director of the ERIC Adjunct Clearinghouse for International Civic Education in the SSDC. The three are director, co-director, and project associate respectively for the SSDC branch of CIVITAS.

In Bloomington, the Latvian delegation observed primary-, secondary-, and tertiary-level classes. They also visited the Indiana Attorney General's Office, the Monroe County Justice Building, and the Monroe County Jail. The group participated in seminars led by Patrick and other experts in civics, law-related education, and economics.

The delegation also served as guest speakers at "Democratization in Latvia: Issues and Prospects," a symposium presented by the Department of Central Eurasian Studies, The Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center, and The Russian and East European Institute. In March, the group visited Chicago and Washington, D.C. before returning to Latvia.

The second phase of the project occurs in June, when a delegation of educators from the United States, led by Professor Patrick, will travel to Latvia. The Latvian host organization for the American delegation will be the Democracy Advancement Center. He will be sponsored in this role by the USIA. 

— Laura Pinhey