

Catholic TV studio in Latvia inspired, shocked by audience's support

WASHINGTON - After an unexpected outpouring of support, a small Catholic TV studio was able to continue airing its weekly 26-minute program on Latvia's state-owned television station.

Inta Zegners, one of four staff working at the Riga-based TV Studio Emmanuel, told Catholic News Service in a telephone interview she was overwhelmed when 10,000 Latvians signed a letter urging state TV to continue airing the program.

In October state TV had informed the Catholic studio it wanted to eliminate its show from the 2009 Sunday schedule to make room for more entertainment programs, Zegners said. The show is the only Christian program on state TV and it features people who "discover Christianity in everyday life," she said.

When viewers got word of the plan, they bombarded state TV with their support by signing a letter appealing for the show to stay. Catholic, Orthodox and Lutheran leaders also sent a letter on behalf of the studio.

State TV eventually returned the show to the schedule.

"It was really very inspiring to us," Zegners told CNS Jan. 7, adding that the staff was surprised that other denominations and Latvian migrants in Ireland joined the campaign.

American Catholics, through the Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern

Europe, help fund TV Studio Emmanuel.