



Ministry of
Foreign Affairs
Republic of Latvia

Foreign Minister's Annual Report

on Latvia's Foreign Policy and
European Union Affairs (2024-2025)



Photo: Evija Trifanova,
State Chancellery

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This annual report on plans and achievements in Latvia's foreign policy is a collaborative effort of the ministry's colleagues – the foreign service. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to them for their knowledge, selfless work, patriotism, professionalism, and positive spirit.

Throughout this year, I have been consistently reminded of the beauty and richness of Latvia – its many talents, enterprising people, their wisdom and love for our country. Therefore, our service takes both joy and pride in using every opportunity to defend and represent our country, enhance its prosperity and promote our achievements. We undertake this mission with warm hearts and cool heads.

The years ahead will bring no shortage of challenges.

Russia's policy is war, and it is not going to change in the coming years. This means that long-term tensions with Russia, its threats and desire to influence Latvia's internal affairs are the new normal. This applies to each and every one of us in Latvia and in allied nations – to businesses, government and municipal institutions, all citizens.

Our position is clear: we will continue strengthening our security and our readiness to counter threats, constrain Russia, and increase support for Ukraine. We will pursue these objectives all over the world, seizing every opportunity offered by our diplomatic resources.

Cutting off business and other relations with Russia and Belarus, ceasing travel to these countries, reducing Russia's influence and presence across the Euro-Atlantic space, strengthening sanctions and implementing them in both letter and spirit, is our collective task and the responsibility of every individual. This is about doing what it takes to make our country and society safer and more prosperous.

Allow me to express my gratitude to our allies and friends, colleagues in government institutions, members of Parliament, our armed forces, security services, border guards, customs, police, and many other colleagues for their efforts. My thanks also go to Latvian and international journalists, researchers, and activists who, through their fact-checking and research, keep the focus of the international and Latvian public on the aforementioned topics.

I have visited our external borders, met with the associations of entrepreneurs, exporters, employers, technology companies, businesspeople, scientists, journalists, civil society and many, many others. We are on the same page in our understanding that no one else will take care of Latvia for us. This is our responsibility.

My Latvia. My responsibility.

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Executive Summary

In 2024, the primary objective of Latvia's foreign policy was strengthening the security of the Latvian state and its citizens, as well as promoting economic development and prosperity. Latvia's foreign policy is unified, and was implemented in close coordination with the President, the Saeima, the Prime Minister, ministries, municipalities, social partners, and representatives of civil society, business and academia. Continuity has been maintained in our foreign policy.

Amidst rising geopolitical tensions, Latvia's foreign policy, in cooperation with allies in the Baltic and Nordic countries, NATO and the European Union (EU), and other likeminded partners worldwide, pursued targeted and coordinated action in three main directions:

- 1 **Strengthening national security and defence and the rules-based international order;**
- 2 **Promoting economic development and prosperity, EU competitiveness and global influence;**
- 3 **Protecting the interests of Latvian nationals, involving the public in the development and implementation of foreign policy, and leveraging the potential of our diaspora.**

Latvia currently faces no direct military threat; however, Russia continues to pose a threat to Euro-Atlantic and global security and the international order. Therefore, Latvia prioritises strengthening NATO's allied presence and capabilities, providing support for Ukraine, and limiting Russia's capabilities.

The **NATO** allied presence in Latvia, led by Canada, has been significantly increased, now involving 13 allied countries. For the first time since joining NATO in 2004, Sweden has joined the NATO Forward Land Forces - the NATO Multinational Brigade in Latvia, contributing a mechanised infantry battalion with up to 600 troops. In 2024, together with our allies, we have taken several crucial decisions regarding the implementation of NATO's military strategy, including regional defence plans. In 2025, with **Latvia's defence budget reaching 3.45% of GDP** and additional resources allocated to internal security, our national defence capabilities will grow significantly. EU-NATO cooperation in security and defence has become closer and more practical. For Latvia, it is crucial that this cooperation enhances defence capabilities in the Euro-Atlantic space, addresses capability gaps, and strengthens the defence industry through increased investment in security and defence in the current and upcoming EU multi-annual financial frameworks.

We will continue our close cooperation with our North American strategic partners, **the United States and Canada**, bilaterally, in regional formats, and within NATO, addressing both the

threats posed by Russia and security challenges from China, while also deepening economic cooperation. A key priority for Latvia is strengthening and expanding the presence and deeper engagement of the United States and Canada.

Following the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO, **Nordic-Baltic cooperation** has been enhanced considerably, as has collaboration among Baltic Sea allies on defence and security issues. We will continue to develop this cooperation further.

Ukraine continues its fight for freedom against Russia's imperial aggression. The heroic efforts and strength of the Ukrainian people together with the support of the international community have prevented Russia from attaining its war objectives. The Latvian government and society continue to be among the leading supporters of Ukraine by providing military, diplomatic, economic, and humanitarian assistance. For the people of Latvia, Ukraine's fight is deeply personal it is also a fight for our own security. Therefore, Latvia will continue providing comprehensive support to Ukraine, including for its integration into the EU and NATO, and will actively engage international partners in these efforts.

Despite immense economic and military losses, **Russia** continues its brutal war against Ukraine for the third consecutive year, driven by its imperial ambitions and political objectives. Russia's aggression is enabled by the regime in Belarus, the involvement of Iran and North Korea, as well as by China's provision of economic and other support. This clearly demonstrates that the aggression against Ukraine is not an isolated war, but rather a global threat to peace and stability around the world.

Together with our partners, we succeeded in strengthening EU sanctions and raising import tariffs against the aggressor Russia and its supporter Belarus. Through this effort, we continued to isolate and deter the aggressor as well as limit its military capabilities. Our services are working tirelessly to protect the external borders of the EU and NATO, ensure the comprehensive implementation of sanctions, and prevent sanctions circumvention.

Latvia actively engaged in international organisations to isolate Russia, hold it accountable for its aggression, ensure support to Ukraine, and strengthen the rules-based international order.

Through its campaign for a seat on the **United Nations Security Council** Latvia has seized every opportunity to expand contacts, work with partners worldwide, and promote our interests.

The Lukashenko regime in **Belarus** is an ally of Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine. It continues to carry out repressions and violence against its own people, whilst surrendering Belarusian sovereignty to Russia. We will continue to strengthen EU sanctions and support Belarusian civil society abroad.

Latvia also feels the repercussions of the developments in the **Middle East**.

Iran's actions – supporting Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, carrying out direct attacks on Israel, supporting armed militias in the region, and advancing its nuclear programme – have escalated tensions in the region and adversely impacted global security and economy.

The savage attacks on Israel by Hamas and Hezbollah, the fate of the hostages taken by Hamas, the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, Houthi militia attacks in the Red Sea, shelling of villages and towns in Lebanon, and the events in Syria have not left Latvian society indifferent. The EU, including Latvia, recognises Israel's right to self-defence, which must be exercised in accordance with international and humanitarian law. Latvia calls for the unconditional release of all hostages taken by Hamas, an immediate ceasefire, urgent access to humanitarian aid in Gaza, and the cessation of hostilities in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2735. Latvia calls for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace where two states – Israel and Palestine – coexist peacefully within their secure and recognised borders. Latvia welcomes the ceasefire

between Israel and Lebanon, and directly contributes to stability in southern Lebanon through participation in the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Latvia will continue to support the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and capacity-building of the state of Lebanon. The overthrow of the brutal Assad regime in Syria not only diminishes the influence of Russia and Iran in the region, but also provides a historic window for the unification, restoration, and development of an inclusive and stable state. Latvia emphasises the importance of the fight against terrorism.

Notable developments have also taken place in **Georgia** and **Moldova**. While the decisions taken by the Georgian government have distanced it from EU prospects, Moldova has successfully walked a razor's edge to take a determined step forward toward EU integration. Latvia will continue to support the democratic choices and aspirations of the Georgian and Moldovan people in striving toward a European future. Latvia will not stand idly by when witnessing Russia's attempts to interfere.

Unfortunately, the world is becoming less safe for travellers and our **compatriots** living abroad. For this reason, the consular service has continued working around the clock to assist our nationals in crisis zones and situations. We have consistently and promptly provided support to citizens in distress and groups of nationals stranded abroad.

Last year, the foreign service successfully assisted **entrepreneurs, researchers** and **academics**, and their associations in promoting the export of Latvian goods and services, competitiveness and access to new export markets. This was achieved through close cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economics, and the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (LIAA), as well as by making use of the opportunities provided by the EU. We understand that taking a leap in Latvia's development hinges on our ability to comprehensively support and help attract investors and partners for our technology start-ups, innovators, and scientists. We seek to draw on the openness and talent of our fellow citizens abroad and foster the political and civic participation of the diaspora. We will continue regular dialogue with social partners and civil society.

I would like to express my **utmost gratitude to the entire Latvian society** for working tirelessly to ensure the security and development of Latvia and representing our country in every corner of the world. I am grateful to all those who devote their energy, time and resources to supporting Ukraine. We are a strong and capable nation. We must not waver in the face of current threats, we must stand united, determined and relentless in safeguarding our country and values, and building its future.

Three main directions of Latvia's foreign policy in 2025:

1

Strengthening the security of Latvia and the rules-based international order:

- ◆ To promote further containment of Russia, its international isolation and holding it accountable for crimes of aggression and other war crimes perpetrated against Ukraine. Strengthening sanctions and preventing sanctions circumvention will be an integral part of this policy.
- ◆ To continue providing comprehensive support to Ukraine in its fight against Russia's war of aggression. At the same time, mobilising support for Ukraine's accession to the EU and NATO as the most effective means of ensuring sustainable peace in Europe.
- ◆ To strengthen comprehensive security and economic cooperation, as well as people-to-people contacts with our North American strategic partners – the United States and Canada.
- ◆ To increase the presence and capabilities of NATO allied forces in Latvia and along the Eastern Flank of NATO. By increasing defence spending to 3.45% of GDP, Latvia's own contribution to collective defence and development of military capabilities in Europe will be further strengthened.
- ◆ To enhance NATO and EU interoperability, to increase EU spending on defence and security, to support partnerships and global cooperation.
- ◆ To deepen Nordic-Baltic regional cooperation and continue developing the joint efforts by all Baltic Sea NATO and EU countries in reinforcing the security of our region.
- ◆ To strengthen cooperation with like-minded countries in various regions of the world, particularly those wishing to join or deepen cooperation with the EU and NATO.
- ◆ To strengthen the rules-based international order based on the UN Charter and to promote adherence to international law.
- ◆ To enhance global security by participating in peacekeeping, monitoring, support and training missions under the auspices of the UN, NATO, and EU.

2

Advancing economic growth and resilience, raising the EU's competitiveness and global influence:

- ◆ To support Latvian entrepreneurs in entering foreign markets and to work in “perfect synergy” with the reorganised Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (LIAA) in attracting investments and promoting exports.

- ◇ To support the involvement of Latvian start-ups, tech companies, and scientists in international cooperation projects.
- ◇ In negotiations on the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework for 2028-2034, to advocate for the allocation of requisite funding for strengthening Latvia's security and regional development, enhancing business competitiveness, and ensuring the sustainable development of society as a whole.
- ◇ To promote the EU's competitiveness in the global market and protect the EU's Single Market from unfair competition.
- ◇ To counter efforts by undemocratic states to create economic dependencies, particularly in areas critical to the economy or national security of EU and NATO member states.
- ◇ To commence practical preparations for Latvia's presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2028.
- ◇ To promote the participation of Latvian development cooperation project implementers in projects funded by the European Commission (EC) in the Eastern Partnership countries, Central Asia, Africa, and other regions.

3

Public engagement in foreign policy making, protection of the interests of Latvian citizens, cooperation with the diaspora:

- ◇ In light of the international security situation and possible hostile actions of certain autocratic regimes, to provide Latvian citizens with the maximum protection and up-to-date information on geopolitical risks.
- ◇ To continue protecting incumbent and former Latvian officials from attempts by the authorities of the Russian Federation to have them extradited for persecution due to their support for Ukraine or active efforts in the elimination of the consequences of the Soviet occupation.
- ◇ To involve the diaspora in addressing Latvia's current political, social, and economic issues, to organise the next World Latvian Economics and Innovation Forum in the summer of 2025, and to continue active collaboration with diaspora organisations and Latvians residing abroad.
- ◇ To continue collaborating with non-governmental organisations, civil society, representatives of culture industries and other interest groups in implementing Latvia's foreign policy priorities, including strengthening strategic communication.

Considering the growing challenges and crises in international security, the preparedness, foresight, and crisis response capabilities of Latvia's foreign service must be strengthened accordingly. The foreign service will focus on further enhancing professionalism and efficiency within the existing constraints of financial and human resources. The foreign service has at its disposal excellent professionals who are ready and able to contribute to the shaping of security policy, as well as economic relations and consular issues. The foreign service must retain these valuable individuals by supporting and protecting them, and ensuring opportunities for their professional development. Our mission is to serve for the security and prosperity of the state of Latvia and its people. We will execute this mission anywhere and at any time.

Strengthening the security of Latvia and the rules-based international order

The foreign service plays a crucial role in ensuring the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Latvia, with two main instruments at its disposal: participation in military and political alliances that provide Latvia with necessary deterrence and defence capabilities, and the rules-based international order, which serves to fundamentally prevent the possibility of conflict or promote its peaceful resolution. Clearly recognising that the aggressor state Russia represents a long-term threat to Euro-Atlantic security and global stability, and that Ukraine is currently the first line of defence against this threat, in 2024 Latvia continued to provide Ukraine with all possible assistance and worked actively to consolidate international support for Ukraine. In dialogue with allies and partners, Latvia stressed the need to provide Ukraine with all types of weapons, and to allow Ukraine to use them at its discretion, including against legitimate targets on Russian territory.

Support for Ukraine and countering Russia's aggression

Latvia's support for Ukraine can be divided into two main directions. The first is the political and diplomatic support for Ukraine in the international arena, and the second is practical, primarily material support aimed at strengthening the resilience of the Ukrainian state and society against aggression.

In terms of political support, Latvia has consistently advocated for supporting Ukraine during all visits, meetings, political initiatives within the EU and NATO, multilateral fora, its campaign for the UN Security Council and other platforms. At the first Summit on Peace in Ukraine Latvia supported a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in Ukraine based on international law, including the UN Charter. Latvia engaged in efforts related to specific points of the Peace Initiative.

Latvia hosted the Third Parliamentary Summit of the **International Crimea Platform**, which brought together 56 countries and five organisations. The summit highlighted Russia's aggression, war crimes and their global impact, reinforcing international awareness regarding the need to hold Russia accountable by promoting its isolation and strengthening the rules-based international order.

In terms of practical support, in April 2024 Latvia and Ukraine signed an agreement on long-term support and security commitments. **Latvia has committed to provide Ukraine with military assistance amounting to 0.25% of GDP and EUR 15 million for reconstruction from 2024 to 2026.** The agreement also sets out specific areas of military support, including work in the Drone Coalition led by Latvia, the supply of military equipment and weapons, and training of military personnel.

Latvia has advocated for the extension of the EU waiver of customs duties on Ukrainian products for another year, i.e., until June 2025. These measures complement the trade concessions already applied to Ukrainian goods under the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. Latvia supports the restoration of Ukraine's economy through EU trade instruments and welcomes the initiative proposed by the European Commission on permanent and mutual liberalisation of tariffs with Ukraine after June 2025. At the EU level, Latvia also supported the creation of the Ukraine Facility in the amount of EUR 50 billion until 2027 to support Ukraine's macro-financial stability and the implementation of reforms.

Since February 2024, Latvia has been an observer in the **Ukraine Donor Platform**¹ which was established in January 2023 by the G7, the EC, and Ukraine. The Platform aims to provide Ukraine with coordinated support in finance, reconstruction, and the implementation of reforms.

To streamline the provision of **technical and financial support**, in January 2024, the government of Latvia and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine signed an agreement on technical and financial cooperation, providing a legal framework for the implementation of development cooperation programmes and reconstruction projects in Ukraine. Practical cooperation issues were also discussed at the meeting of the Latvia-Ukraine Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Industrial, Scientific and Technical Cooperation held in Kyiv in May 2024.

The support provided by the Latvian state and society to Ukraine since the beginning of Russia's aggression has reached EUR 830 million, amounting to 0.7% of GDP (see Annex 1).

In 2024, there were no signs that Russia had any intention of stopping its aggression. On the contrary, Russia significantly increased its military expenditures, with plans to raise them further in 2025. Russia has altered its doctrine on the use of nuclear weapons, permitting their use against non-nuclear states, thereby attempting to deter them from helping Ukraine. Domestic developments within Russia and its transition to a war economy indicate plans to continue aggression and a destabilising foreign policy.

Sanctions are an effective tool for constraining Russia, as they contribute to the decline of Russia's economy, reducing its ability to finance aggression. The second objective of sanctions is restricting Russia's access to technologies that can be used for military purposes, thus weakening its combat capabilities. Latvia worked actively and achieved results within the EU, as well as in cooperation with the United States, the United Kingdom, and other partners.

As of the end of 2024, the **EU has adopted** 15 packages of sanctions. A new EU sanctions regime has also been established, allowing the sanctioning of Russian officials for human rights violations. In June 2024, the EU adopted the 14th package of sanctions against Russia, which included Latvia's proposed measures to ban the export and transit of manganese ore to Russia and restrictions on the transshipment of Russian-origin liquefied natural gas in EU ports.

For the first time, restrictive measures have been introduced targeting Russia's "shadow fleet" of vessels, which are crucial to limiting Russia's ability to circumvent resource trade restrictions and generate budget revenue.

The 14th round of sanctions also imposed individual sanctions on more than 100 persons. Finally, in October 2024, a sanctions regime was established to address Russia's destabilising actions in the EU and globally, demonstrating the EU's readiness to curb Russia's ambitions to alter the international order and influence democratic processes and cooperation within the EU and independent third countries. The 15th round of EU sanctions, adopted at the end of the year, further broadened the scope of the existing sanctions regime. This included adding 52 "shadow fleet" vessels on the sanctions list, 11 of which were proposed by Latvia. Individuals and companies from North Korea, China and other countries have also now been listed.

EU Member States bordering Russia regularly exchange experience and information on implementation of sanctions. In addition, Latvia, in cooperation with its partners, is coordinating actions to address the security and environmental risks posed by Russia's "shadow fleet" by sanctioning its vessels.

Latvia's priority for the next rounds of sanctions against Russia is the further reduction of Russia's military capabilities by maintaining pressure on its energy sector, trade of dual-use goods, the financial sector, as well as the operation of its propaganda machinery.

In addition to sanctions, Latvia achieved the imposition of extensive EU-level trade restrictions on grain products originating in Russia and Belarus. In May 2024, a regulation was adopted that raised tariffs on cereals and oilseeds imported from Russia and Belarus, effectively stopping the import of these products into the EU.

Latvia is working with third countries bilaterally and in the EU framework **to prevent their assistance to Russia in sanctions circumvention**. Latvian entrepreneurs are urged to observe due diligence and comply with sanctions in cooperation with all countries neighbouring Russia.

Latvia supports the use of frozen assets of the Russian state and its Central Bank for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

In 2024, Latvia terminated the cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia. Additionally, the Treaty on Legal Assistance and Legal Relations in Civil, Family and Criminal Matters was terminated, as was all cooperation at the municipal level.

Latvia continues to identify undesirable persons who pose a threat to national security, denying them entry into Latvia and thus restricting their movement within the Schengen Area. Latvia continues to freeze the assets of oligarchs and their supporters. Furthermore, Latvia is deterring Russia's hybrid attacks by utilising the new sanctions regime and strengthening the resilience of Latvian society.

Currently, Latvia's relations with Belarus, controlled by the Lukashenko regime, have been reduced to a minimum. The regime openly supports Russia's aggression against Ukraine, allowing the use of Belarusian territory and infrastructure and supplying Russia with materials

necessary for warfare. Belarus is also involved in Russia's illegal deportation of Ukrainian children from temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

Latvia is taking active measures to counter the hybrid attacks of the Lukashenko regime, including the instrumentalisation of illegal migration and information warfare. In 2024, the number of attempted illegal crossings of the Latvia-Belarus border reached 5,388 cases (as of 17 December 2024).

Since October 2020, Latvia, together with the countries of the region, has secured the adoption of eight rounds of EU sanctions against Belarus. In the last package of sanctions, adopted in the summer of 2024, there is further alignment with sectoral sanctions against Russia, with a focus on preventing sanctions circumvention via Belarus. In implementing EU sanctions, Latvia has applied a national ban on vehicles registered in Belarus participating in road traffic in Latvia. So far, the EU has imposed sanctions against 261 individuals and 37 legal entities from Belarus, and an additional 42 Belarusian military personnel have been sanctioned for supporting and participating in Russia's war against Ukraine.

The regime continues politically motivated repression and persecution, social media and the internet are under state control, and civil society has been almost completely destroyed. Despite the trend observed since July 2024 of the release of some political prisoners, their numbers remain staggering – over 1,300 are still in custody.

At the same time, Latvia supports the Belarusian democratic forces abroad and their pro-European stance. In 2024, Latvia maintained an active dialogue with the leaders of the Belarusian opposition: in July, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, leader of the Belarusian democratic forces, visited Latvia, and there is regular cooperation with her office and members of the United Transitional Cabinet.

Holding Russia accountable for its act of aggression is crucial for upholding the rules-based international order and restoring durable peace and security. Latvia is employing all available mechanisms and is taking part in the creation of new ones to prevent Russia's impunity.

Latvia continues to be involved as a third party in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) case *Ukraine v. Russian Federation*, "Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide".

Latvia strongly supports the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC) regarding the investigation of crimes committed in Ukraine. In 2024, financial support was provided to the ICC, and a national expert was seconded to work in the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC. Latvia provides financial support to the Trust Fund for Victims to ensure compensation from Russia for the damages caused to victims.

Together with Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, and Romania, Latvia is continuing work at the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA). The centre coordinates national investigations and stores gathered evidence, thus effectively preparing and facilitating the prosecution of any future perpetrators of the crime of aggression.

Together with 40 countries, Latvia is advancing the work of the Core Group on the Establishment of a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. At its meeting in Riga on 22 November 2024, an agreement was reached on the establishment of a

tribunal, which would have broad international support and legitimacy and would be able to effectively ensure the accountability of Russia's highest-ranking officials.²

Additionally, Latvia, together with more than 50 countries from various regions of the world, is creating a **Claims Commission for Ukraine**, which is the second step towards the establishment of an international compensation mechanism. This body will assess the claims and evidence submitted to the Register of Damage for Ukraine and determine the amount of compensation due in each case.

In 2024, the foreign service represented Latvia's interests at the **European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)**, e.g., in the case *Ždanoka v Latvia (No. 2)*, where the ECHR found that the prohibition of the applicant to run in elections of the Saeima was consistent with the right to free elections guaranteed under Article 3 of Protocol No. 1 of the European Convention of Human Rights. In this case, the ECHR assigned significant importance to the fact that Latvia is a neighbouring country to Russia, which has invaded Georgia since 2008, and has conducted a full-scale invasion of Ukraine since 24 February 2022.

Furthermore, in 2024 Latvia joined as a third party in two ECHR cases³ related to events in the **border area of EU member states and Belarus** in connection with the hybrid attacks conducted by Belarus. Latvia also acted as a third party in cases where the ECHR reviewed the compatibility of Russia's "foreign agent" law with the right to freedom of expression.⁴ On 22 October 2024, the ECHR issued its judgement in these cases, reiterating that Russia's "foreign agent" law, which has been gradually expanded, is incompatible with the rights to freedom of expression and assembly guaranteed by the European Convention of Human Rights.

Strengthening NATO and allied presence

The presence of NATO allied troops in the Baltic region, including in Latvia, is an indispensable element of deterrence and defence for the security of Latvia, Europe and NATO as a whole. Closer transatlantic cooperation is of particular importance in strengthening Latvia's security. At the NATO Summit in Washington, the allies reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing their presence on NATO's Eastern Flank. The Summit also approved changes to the command structures to ensure the capability to synchronise and lead combat operations in the event of collective defence. NATO's alert system was reviewed, and decisions were taken to grant additional powers to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), enabling timely actions and preparations to counter a military invasion of the territory of NATO member states.

Latvia continues to invest in ensuring suitable conditions for the enhanced presence of NATO allied forces and capabilities. Together with our allies, the Canada-led NATO Multinational Battlegroup in Latvia has been scaled up from a battalion to a brigade level (3,500 troops). Sweden has taken a historic decision to join the brigade by deploying a battalion-size contingent. The brigade⁵ is expected to achieve full operational capability by 2026. In the autumn of 2024, the brigade took part in a national comprehensive defence exercise "Namejs 2024", and its capabilities were also evaluated during the first full-scale exercise "Resolute Warrior 2024".

Recognising the strategic importance and potential threats in the Baltic Sea region, Latvia is working closely with the other Alliance member states to strengthen regional security and defence capabilities. Latvia calls for the increased allied land, air and naval presence in the

² [The Vienna-Riga Statement of the Core Group on the Establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine](#)

³ *C.O.C.G. and Others v. Lithuania and R.A. and Others v. Poland*

⁴ *The Insider v. Russia and iStories Foundation v. Russia*

⁵ *Multinational Brigade – Latvia, MNB-LVA*

region. Latvia is taking part in and providing full support to the efforts of the Alliance to enhance defence capabilities, and regularly tests and exercises defence plans and force deployments.

Latvia considers it essential that the capability goals and measures for constraining Russia in the long-term, as defined in the NATO Defence Planning Process, are approved by the NATO Summit in the Hague (24-26 June 2025). In light of the current security landscape and threats, the existing capability targets are highly ambitious, and their implementation will require all allies to significantly increase investments in defence.

NATO and EU capability development. Partnerships

Latvia's main priority at the 2024 NATO Summit in Washington was to strengthen Latvia's security through allied decisions on enhancing their defence capabilities, the collective defence of the Alliance, including air and missile defence, agreeing on the implementation of regional plans, and increasing defence budgets. The allies unanimously confirmed Russia to be the most direct and serious long-term threat to security in the Euro-Atlantic area. The next steps for the allies entail focused efforts to implement the Summit decisions, ensuring that the Alliance and allies are able to successfully adapt and respond to current security challenges.

The geopolitical situation demands that NATO allies in Europe as well as the EU increase investments in their own security to prevent war by deterring potential aggressors or restore peace and international order by force. In 2024, Latvia's defence budget exceeded 3% of GDP, confirming the country's commitment to enhancing its defence capabilities. Latvia is making necessary investments in critical combat capabilities, the National Defence Service, and the development of military infrastructure. Over the next five years, Latvia will invest EUR 303 million in reinforcing its eastern border by building the Baltic Defence Line together with Estonia and Lithuania. In December 2024, the European Commission allocated EUR 17 million to Latvia to improve the surveillance of the Eastern border of the EU. The funding will be used for the construction of smart infrastructure along the Latvia-Russia border.

Latvia strongly supports the decisions of the NATO Summit in Washington aimed at enhancing the interoperability of Ukrainian and NATO armed forces, strengthening resilience, and bringing Ukraine closer to NATO membership. At the Summit, NATO leaders agreed on a new NATO assistance to Ukraine⁶, which will help NATO coordinate the training of Ukraine's Armed Forces, support their development, and coordinate the delivery of material and technical equipment. The Allies agreed to provide Ukraine with military assistance worth at least EUR 40 billion by the NATO Summit in the Hague. The position of NATO Senior Representative to Ukraine was created. The Representative is tasked with heading the NATO Representation and contributing to Ukraine's reform process and adoption of NATO standards.

Comprehensive strengthening of resilience and combating hybrid threats remain prominent issues on the NATO and EU agendas. In light of Russia's malign activities, in 2024 NATO strengthened the operational capacity of the Alliance in the Baltic Sea Region to protect critical infrastructure and the airspace of the Baltic States, while continuing to enhance specific measures for deterring and containing hybrid threats. The EU is committed to developing and implementing the Hybrid Toolbox for countering hybrid threats. By using this toolbox, in 2024 the

6 NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine, NSATU

EU for the first time imposed sanctions on Russian entities and individuals involved in hybrid attacks. Latvia advocates the introduction of a comprehensive EU security policy, which is also reflected in the report drafted by former President of Finland Sauli Niinistö, “[Safer Together: Strengthening Europe’s Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness.](#)”

With Sweden and Finland having joined NATO, the importance of **regional cooperation formats** has grown in Latvia’s security and defence policy. The Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8) format plays a significant role in the security of the Baltic Sea and the defence of the air space and territory of the Baltic states. Furthermore, in 2024 closer cooperation was achieved between the Baltic states and Poland in coordinating decision-making, developing a unified approach, and strengthening joint defence capabilities.

In response to the shared security challenges the Euro-Atlantic and the **Indo-Pacific regions are facing**, NATO and the EU are expanding dialogue with partners in the region, especially Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea. NATO cooperation is focused on common cross-border challenges, the threats posed by China to the security, values and interests of the Alliance, as well as the cooperation between China and Russia and its impact on regional and international security. To strengthen practical cooperation between NATO and Indo-Pacific partners⁷, both sides have committed to implementing joint projects supporting Ukraine, enhancing cyber defence, countering disinformation, and addressing issues related to emerging technologies. **Both NATO and the EU are committed to continuing cooperation with partners in the Indo-Pacific region in 2025 on issues affecting shared security interests, especially considering the direct involvement of North Korean forces in Russia’s aggression against Ukraine.**

Based on **NATO’s 360-degree approach** to security and in contributing to the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, Latvia continues consultations on strengthening cooperation with partners in Africa and the Middle East, especially with countries party to the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue⁸ and the NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative⁹. The Washington Summit affirmed the NATO action plan for the southern neighbourhood, establishing a strategic and results-oriented approach to promoting cooperation with partner countries. To coordinate the Alliance’s efforts, the decision was made at the Washington Summit to establish the office of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the southern neighbourhood and open a NATO Liaison Office in Amman, Jordan.

At the NATO summit, an important decision for Latvia was adopted on the gradual alignment of defence industry capabilities to overcome emerging challenges and ensure long-term orders for the military industry. The EU has also taken a meaningful step to strengthen the defence industry: the EC published the European Defence Industrial Strategy, and work continues on drafting a regulation on the European Defence Industry Programme. Latvia advocates for closer EU-NATO cooperation in addressing defence capability gaps, and for innovative approaches to securing financial resources for the defence industry.

Latvia continues to contribute to **EU and NATO initiatives aimed at strengthening military capabilities**. Latvia is taking part in the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) Military Mobility Project aimed at standardising and streamlining border crossing procedures for the military transit of Allied forces within the EU. **In March 2024, the EC allocated co-financing for the establishment of a modular powder charge production facility for artillery ammunition in Latvia. In November, the EC granted EUR 60 million in co-funding for five projects, including two projects aimed at developing Latvia’s military capabilities: procurements of Patria 6x6 armoured vehicles and medium-range air defence systems IRIS-T.** Due to its international experience and expertise in 5G innovation, Latvijas Mobilais Telefons (LMT)

⁷ Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea

⁸ Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia.

⁹ The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar.

is a partner in several EU funded large-scale defence research and development projects, as well as in a NATO project on digital interoperability of various military forces using 5G technology. The foreign service has successfully advocated securing funding for other technology companies and has promoted the involvement of scientists in defence and security projects.

Transatlantic cooperation

Forging close relationships with transatlantic partners, the United States and Canada, is a long-term priority for Latvia in strengthening its security, reinforcing NATO, and addressing global threats.

Transatlantic cooperation has been further intensified through joint efforts to support Ukraine in its fight against Russia's aggression.

Latvia appreciates that its transatlantic partner Canada, as the presiding country of the G7 in 2025, will continue to advance the established priorities, including support for Ukraine.

It is in Latvia's interest to ensure a greater and more permanent US military and economic presence to reinforce security, prosperity, and competitiveness in the Baltic region. The war in Ukraine and the previous experience of the pandemic have placed an increased focus on developing cooperation with like-minded partners and allies in both the economy and supply chains. In this context, Latvia has maintained an active political dialogue with the United States, promoting closer security and economic cooperation. During the past year, the highest-ranking Latvian officials visited the US on several occasions, including a visit by the President of Latvia to the state of California, the fifth largest economy in the world, to expand cooperation in innovative technologies. In 2024, visits by bipartisan US Congressional and Senate delegations provided our partners with first-hand information about Latvia's security situation and the necessary support. The US Congress continued to support the Baltic Security Initiative, which helps strengthen Latvia's military capabilities. USD 228 million were earmarked for the Baltic Security Initiative in 2024.

In 2024, Latvia-US cooperation at the expert level was expanded on matters pertaining to sanctions enforcement, development cooperation, support for civil society and independent media, and countering disinformation. The first US-Baltic foreign ministers' level dialogue was held on the security situation in the Indo-Pacific region and hybrid threats. **Latvia has defined its interest in collaborating with the United States on emerging technologies, including 5G/6G, artificial intelligence, and the military industry.**

An integral element of Latvia's transatlantic relations is close cooperation with its ally, Canada. In 2024, cooperation primarily centred on security and defence, reflecting Canada's commitment to expanding NATO's presence in Latvia under its leadership to brigade level (3,500 troops). Latvia highly values Canada's leadership and contribution to the overall security of the eastern flank of the Alliance and deterrence of aggressors, which clearly demonstrates NATO's unity. In 2024, regular visits by Latvia's highest-ranking officials, including the President of Latvia, speakers of parliaments of the Baltic States, and the ministers of foreign affairs, defence, and culture were organised in Canada. On 2 December in Riga, the ministers of foreign affairs of the Baltic states and Canada met to discuss transatlantic relations, the security situation in Europe and globally, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, support for Ukraine, and cooperation with global partners, including those in the Indo-Pacific region. Cooperation was sustained in the framework of the UN Women, Peace and Security agenda. The Minister of Foreign Affairs took part in the Women Foreign Ministers' Meeting co-hosted by

Canada and Jamaica in Toronto. The first-ever Canada–Latvia Parliamentary Friendship Group was established in the Canadian Parliament, opening up opportunities for closer parliamentary cooperation. Latvia and Canada also continued dialogue on economic policy issues, along with close coordination between the Baltic states and Canada on sanctions issues.

Strengthening the rules-based international order

Russia's aggression against Ukraine poses a challenge to the rules-based multilateral system.

Therefore, in 2024, Latvia, together with like-minded countries, continued efforts to isolate Russia and Belarus in international organisations. As a result, Russia and Belarus were not elected to several international organisations where they had submitted their candidacies.

For example, Russia was not elected to the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Executive Board of the UN World Food Programme, and other bodies. At the Conference of the States Parties to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Russia, for the second consecutive time, was decisively not elected to the Executive Board of the organisation.

Support for Ukraine in international organisations remains a key priority for Latvia. This issue is constantly raised in all formats, including condemning violations of international law, norms and human rights, as well as advocating for mechanisms to ensure accountability and compensation for damages. At the foreign ministers' level, this matter was discussed during the High-Level Segment of the UN Human Rights Council in February 2024, [at the UN Human Right Council Session in July on behalf of the NB8 countries](#), and in September [during the High-Level Week of the UN General Assembly in New York in September](#). These issues have been raised in bilateral meetings with global partners, and addressed in interventions during the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, discussions with representatives of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the Group of Friends for the Review of the Rome Statute, and the UN Group of Friends of Mediation.

Latvia constantly keeps the issue of **human rights violations by the regimes in Russia and Belarus** on the international agenda. The Minister of Foreign Affairs addressed the UN Human Rights Council on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic states, advocating for the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Russia. The minister emphasised that Russia's domestic repressions go hand in hand with its external aggression. Nils Muižnieks has been appointed as the new UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Belarus and will continue to highlight the regime's human rights violations and its involvement in Russia's aggression against Ukraine within international organisations.

In the **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)**, Latvia was among the 45 member states that initiated a fact-finding mission to gather evidence on Russia's arbitrary incarceration of Ukrainian civilians and the deportation of Ukrainian children. One of the three experts on the mission was Latvian human rights expert Dr. Elīna Šteinerte. The mission resulted in the development and publication of recommendations for future action.

At the OSCE ministerial meeting, Latvia, along with like-minded countries, expressed unwavering support for Ukraine and strongly condemned the crimes perpetrated by Russia in

Ukraine, highlighting the importance of holding Russia accountable. Despite existing challenges in attaining unanimity within the OSCE, the ministerial meeting adopted an important decision, thanks to efforts by Malta, on the appointment of four leading OSCE officials for a three-year term.

A crucial element in the support for Ukraine is Latvia's financial contributions to international organisations that monitor human rights, document violations, collect victim testimonies, and provide assistance to civilians and war victims.

The UN system is a key instrument for upholding global security and development.

In 2024, Latvia used the opportunities provided by UN events and conferences to voice its position. At the Summit of the Future during the UN High-Level Week in New York, Latvia affirmed its commitment to reforming the UN system. Latvia signed the summit declaration, "The Pact for the Future", and its two annexes: the "Global Digital Compact" and the "Declaration on Future Generations."

One of Latvia's priorities, as part of its campaign for the UN Security Council, is the promotion of **women's rights and opportunities**, as well as the UN Women, Peace and Security agenda. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to coordinate Latvia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security for 2020-2025, which includes training on gender equality and gender-based violence for Latvia's defence and interior affairs sectors. In collaboration with the non-governmental sector, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised thematic training for employees of the defence and interior affairs sectors. In December, a mid-term review of the implementation of the action plan, drafted in collaboration with line ministries and the non-governmental sector, was submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers.

Latvia participates in formats hosted by international organisation on issues related to the promotion of women's rights and opportunities. In 2025, Latvia will continue its work on the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the Executive Board of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

Latvia **coordinates its positions with the EU and the NB8** to ensure that joint statements garner greater attention and priority in UN human rights formats. Latvia actively participates in drafting statements in the UN Human Rights Council and the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly in an effort to ensure strong language and reflection of Latvia's interests. Latvia is also tirelessly upholding the narrative of Russia's violations to other UN Member States. These outreach efforts are ongoing at the UN Human Rights Council headquarters in Geneva and the UN headquarters in New York, as well as in capitals of countries where Latvia has diplomatic representations.

Latvia has actively advocated for the establishment of the first **permanent UN mechanism to address cybersecurity issues**, which would primarily promote responsible state behaviour in cyberspace and compliance with international law, as well as focus on needs-based capacity-building. In 2025, Latvia will continue to support the creation of a transparent, inclusive cybersecurity mechanism focused on action and cooperation with the private and non-governmental sectors. Latvia has joined the UN network of contact points for facilitating intergovernmental communication on cyber incidents and cyber risks.

Latvia actively participated in the 29th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change** held in November 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan. At the Conference, Latvia drew attention to Russia's war of aggression and ecocide (the deliberate destruction of the environment) in Ukraine. During the COP29, an agreement was reached to increase global funding for climate action from the current USD 100 billion to USD 300 billion to support the global and greenhouse gas emission reduction work programme. An agreement was also reached on adaptation and mitigation of losses and damages, as well

as the promotion of just and inclusive climate action. Latvia has allocated funding for the UN Loss and Damage Fund, which was established at the COP28 to support the countries most severely impacted by climate change.

In 2024, Latvia, alongside more than 100 other parties, contributed its considerations on crucial and topical issues of international law in the area of climate change during the UN International Court of Justice advisory opinion proceedings, thus reinforcing the rules-based international order.

Membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the period 2026-2027 is one of Latvia's long-term foreign policy objectives, as outlined in the National Development Plan 2021-2027. Latvia is vying for a seat on the UNSC at a time when Russia's aggression against Ukraine poses a fundamental threat to the foundations of the international system, upon which Latvia's statehood and security rest. Membership of the UNSC is an investment in strengthening Latvia's security and sovereignty. It represents both an opportunity and responsibility uphold the core principles enshrined in the UN Charter by protecting peace, the rule of law, Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Additionally, it will promote economic relations, diversify trade links, and foster international cooperation for Latvian businesses, educational institutions, and NGOs.

Latvia has hitherto actively used the UN platform to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, as well as international law and order.

The objective of Latvia's UNSC membership is to ensure that issues of paramount importance to our region – support for Ukraine, strengthening international law, eradicating sexual violence in armed conflict, cyber security, opportunities and risks presented by artificial intelligence, combating disinformation and others – are included on the UNSC agenda.

Latvia's candidacy for the UNSC also advances its foreign policy and security cooperation with allies, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and others. It helps to further diversify Latvia's economic ties and creates opportunities for collaboration between Latvian businesses, educational institutions, and NGOs with new partners in the Asia-Pacific, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

In 2024, Latvia intensified its lobbying campaign for the UNSC candidacy in the 2025 elections, working to secure the support of countries worldwide, and raising its visibility and profile within the UN system. To garner broader support for Latvia's candidacy to the UNSC, address Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, and listen to the concerns and needs of partners from more distant regions, Latvia conducted several bilateral visits and participated in numerous multilateral formats, such as the UN General Assembly High-Level Week and the UN Summit of the Future in New York.

Latvia is becoming increasingly visible on the international stage, including in distant regions of the world. **Visits conducted as part of Latvia's campaign for the UNSC** have revealed significant interest from several countries in Latvia's expertise in digitalization, development cooperation, and education projects. **These projects have the potential to become key exports of Latvian services in the future.** The growing visibility and interest in Latvia are also evidenced **by the fact that 30 out of 54 countries in Africa have already accredited embassies for cooperation with Latvia.** In 2024, Oman, Belize, and Kenya appointed non-resident ambassadors to Latvia for the first time. The number of Latvia's honorary consuls around the world also increased. Latvia welcomed several high-ranking officials in 2024, including Paul Kagame,

President of Rwanda, and Dennis Francis, President of the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. To promote political and economic relations, the first Latvia-Africa Forum was held in Riga in June, attended by 18 national delegations from Africa. For Latvia's UNSC candidacy to succeed, it is crucial to continuously demonstrate Latvia as a reliable and responsible international player, who is willing and able to contribute to strengthening the international system. This requires enhancing Latvia's reputation and competence through active, consistent and visible engagement in international institutions, international peacekeeping and civilian missions, development cooperation, voluntary contributions to UN bodies and funds, and other related initiatives.

Latvia continues to make its voice heard on issues related to global peace and security, as well as the challenges and threats of the 21st century: the erosion of international law, the climate crisis, disinformation, gender inequality, and hate speech. For example, since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Latvia has co-authored more than 40 national, Baltic and Nordic state statements at the UNSC and the UNGA. Additionally, Latvia has participated in the drafting and adoption of seven UNGA resolutions on the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine.

In implementing its development cooperation policy, Latvia contributes to international stability and sustainable development around the world. The events of the past decade have demonstrated that unstable security situations and insufficient economic and social development, even in geographically distant regions, can pose threats to Latvia. Illegal migration is a prominent example.

In 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs co-funded 40 projects with a particular focus on Ukraine (15 projects). Latvia continued to implement projects in African countries: Egypt, Cameroon, Ghana, Namibia, South Africa, Rwanda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (8 projects in total). Another 8 projects were implemented in Central Asia, especially in Uzbekistan. The foreign service ensured the alignment of Latvia's bilateral actions with projects implemented by other countries to enhance the sustainability, effectiveness, and visibility of Latvia's contributions, especially in the area of good governance. From a thematic perspective, the majority of allocated funding – approximately 40% was directed toward good governance, 30% for sustainable economic development, 15% for gender equality, and 10% for climate action. Approximately one third of funding was allocated for projects with a digitalisation component.

We are pleased that the establishment of the Latvian Development Cooperation Agency within the Central Finance and Contracting Agency (CFLA) has facilitated the attraction of co-financing amounting to over EUR 4.5 million in 2024, the largest amount in history. With this financing, the CFLA, in collaboration with the German development cooperation agency GIZ, launched an EC co-financed project in Uzbekistan aimed at implementing anti-corruption measures. Additionally, in collaboration with the French development cooperation agency Expertise France an EC-funded regional project on digital connectivity in Central Asia. Furthermore, the CFLA is continuing its previously launched project with GIZ to strengthen administrative capacity in Uzbekistan.

In November 2024, the CFLA obtained accreditation from the EC, enabling it to act as the lead partner in EC development cooperation projects. This will provide wider opportunities for Latvian implementers of development cooperation projects to participate in projects financed by international foreign aid providers. The CFLA is conducting negotiations with international partners on leading an EC-funded agriculture project in Uzbekistan. The CFLA is also engaged in discussions with international partners regarding participation in EC-funded agriculture projects in Moldova and in regional projects focusing on digitalisation (e.g., digital connectivity in Central Asia, women's leadership in the ICT sector, and cyber security).

Latvia's development cooperation involves a wide range of partners – 37 organisations from the non-governmental, public, and private sectors. These partners have been actively

engaged in project implementation, grant project competitions, and other activities under the Development Cooperation Policy Plan. For example, the conferences “Building a Humanitarian Aid Support System in Latvia” and “Development Cooperation of Latvia - 25” were both organised in collaboration with the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation. Partner communication about implemented projects and activities significantly contributes to public diplomacy efforts. Policy planning and implementation is coordinated by the Consultative Council for Development Cooperation Policy, which convenes at least twice a year. Development cooperation activities are carried out in accordance with the [Development Cooperation Policy Guidelines for 2021-2027](#) and the [Development Cooperation Policy Plan for 2024-2027](#), which are both approved by the Cabinet of Ministers.

Unfortunately, the reduction in the budget allocation for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2025 will also impact the planned funding for development cooperation policy. As a result, it will not be possible to fully implement all the activities set out in the initial Development Cooperation Policy Plan for 2024-2027. In the coming years, it is necessary to increase the budget for development cooperation policy to expand bilateral relations and support partner countries.

Latvia is providing **humanitarian aid** through voluntary contributions to international organisations and directly supporting crisis-affected countries in response to partner country requests. In 2024, the humanitarian aid provided by Latvia amounted to EUR 777,000. Extensive humanitarian aid was provided to Ukraine, particularly to ensure the continuous operation of medical facilities.

International missions and operations play a vital role in addressing external crises and conflicts, strengthening security and stability both in the immediate vicinity of the EU and beyond.

In 2024, Latvia took part in nine international missions and operations of the UN, EU and NATO in Armenia, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Kosovo, Lebanon, Ukraine, and the Mediterranean, as well as in two multinational coalitions in Iraq and the Strait of Hormuz. Latvia will continue participation in these missions in 2025.

Civilian experts play an invaluable role in international missions ensuring stability and peace in regions affected by conflict and instability. Their duty is to support local governments and communities in building sustainable security and justice systems, strengthening the judiciary, and ensuring respect for human rights. Four civilian experts from Latvia are continuing their work in the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform in Ukraine¹⁰ even under the conditions of war. Twelve civilian experts from Latvia are part of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia¹¹, and two civilian experts are part of the EU Monitoring Mission in Armenia¹². In 2025, Latvia will continue to provide civilian experts for international missions, thus strengthening global security.

Latvia is part of the EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine¹³, established at the end of 2022, providing training for Ukrainian armed forces. Latvia will continue its participation in the Mission in 2025. Additionally, Latvia will also participate in the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU), a mission established during the NATO Summit in Washington in July 2024.

10 EUAM Ukraine
11 EUMM Georgia
12 EUMM Armenia
13 EUMAM Ukraine

Latvia continues its participation in the NATO-led international peacekeeping mission in Kosovo (KFOR), contributing one light infantry company of the National Armed Forces of Latvia (NBS). This represents Latvia's largest contingent deployed for an international operation. NBS soldiers carry out patrols, provide protection for operating forces, execute rapid response assignments, and take part in tactical exercises. Demonstrating its engagement not only in nearby regions, but also in addressing global challenges, in 2024 Latvian contingents of various sizes continued to participate in the NATO mission in Iraq (NMI) and in the operation of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria¹⁴. Latvia continued to participate in the EU operation in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED IRINI) and in the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation's (UNTSO) mission in Jerusalem. In 2024, Latvia continued participation in the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL), with plans to further expand its contingent in 2025. In August 2024, Latvia began its participation in the EU maritime security operation in the Red Sea region (EUNAVFOR ASPIDES). Until 1 December 2024, Latvia supported the International Maritime Security Construct's maritime security operation Sentinel in the Persian Gulf.

The established system and mechanisms of arms control continue to erode primarily due to Russia's actions and behaviours. Russia persists in employing aggressive nuclear rhetoric and threats in an attempt to deter Ukraine's allies from providing military aid. Russia's decision to suspend its participation in the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty¹⁵, withdrawal from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), revocation of ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and statements regarding the deployment of nuclear weapons to Belarus, violating the Budapest Memorandum and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), repeatedly highlight Russia's nihilist attitude toward its international commitments and obligations. The work of multilateral arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament formats is also regularly disrupted by the politically motivated and destructive behaviour of Russia and its like-minded countries. During a meeting of the 2nd Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference, the Baltic States issued a joint statement highlighting Russia's role in the erosion of existing arms control formats and called for a return to fulfilling its international commitments.

Other negative trends in arms control are also emanating from the actions of certain individual countries. North Korea continues its nuclear programme, increasing the number of missile tests, and continuing its aggressive nuclear rhetoric, including on the subject of lowering its nuclear threshold. Iran is likewise shirking from its obligations regarding the non-proliferation and rapidly advancing toward the development of nuclear weapons. Under such circumstances, it is impossible to return to the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). At the same time, China continues to rapidly develop strategic weapons systems while avoiding transparency and responsible engagement in arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation mechanisms.

Latvia, together with its allies and like-minded countries, believes that China, as a nuclear state, must take responsibility and comprehensively engage in the global arms control mechanisms. Latvia has firmly expressed its strong position, including during sessions of the Second Preparatory Committee of the NPT Review and the First Committee of the UN General Assembly.

Latvia will continue to emphasise the importance of mechanisms of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, for both international and national security. Latvia will continue to draw attention to Russia's behaviour and insist on the need for China to take greater responsibility regarding arms control issues. Working together with other EU member states, Latvia will put pressure on Iran and North Korea to abide by the international norms and obligations on arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation of

14 *Inherent Resolve*
15 *New START*

weapons of mass destruction, including UNSC resolutions, with a particular emphasis on the necessity for full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In the area of conventional arms control, Latvia will continue to advocate for the preservation of existing arms control mechanisms and highlight the failure of Russia and Belarus to comply with these commitments. Recognising the current security landscape, Latvia will continue to emphasise ensuring defence capabilities as a priority vis-à-vis arms control mechanisms. In the context of regional security, Latvia will call at the OSCE level for the preservation of confidence-building measures, drawing attention to the failures of Russia and Belarus to fulfil their obligations.

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has also become part of the foreign policy agenda. The ability of countries to adopt and develop AI technologies will determine their economic competitiveness and geopolitical standing in the future. The EU is currently a leader in AI regulation, yet it lags behind the United States and China in terms of AI innovation, development, and application. At the same time, AI technologies are intensifying the clash between democratic and authoritarian vision of the future. AI can underpin a digital public space that is open, free, trustworthy, and secure. However, these same technologies can reinforce digital authoritarianism, enabling increasingly effective surveillance, censorship and information manipulation, which particularly threaten the information space of open societies. These technological risks bear direct security ramifications: all of the aforementioned AI capabilities are already being exploited by hostile third countries.

Latvia actively seeks cooperation partners among like-minded countries to identify practical solutions to these challenges. **For example, Latvia is working with the United States, a leader in AI development, in jointly establishing the Latvian National Centre for Artificial Intelligence. Another framework for cooperation is the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence based in Riga.** Overall, NATO's actions regarding the risks and opportunities posed by AI have been summed up in the Digital Transformation Implementation Strategy adopted in April 2024.

Latvia is an active participant in the creation of international norms in the field of information integrity by engaging and sharing its experience with AI and disinformation in various formats of the UN. Latvia believes that one of the key objectives is ensuring responsibility and transparency from technology companies regarding the risks their products pose to the information space.

Latvia's contribution to EU external relations

In 2024, Latvia significantly expanded its dialogue with countries across all regions of the world through organising various levels of visits and political consultations, further expanding its network of honorary consuls, expanding the contractual basis for cooperation, and supporting initiatives from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission (EC) as well as their implementation.

Latvia continued to intensify its political dialogue with global partners in the Asia-Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean regions, strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation within international organisations. The dialogue also focused on raising awareness of Latvia's perspective on supporting Ukraine, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and its impact on security in Latvia and the world. Additionally, Latvia worked to deepen its knowledge of pressing security and foreign policy challenges facing its global partners, while exploring new opportunities for economic cooperation. In light of Russia's attempts to exercise extra-territorial criminal jurisdiction, the issue of security guarantees for Latvian citizens abroad was also raised in bilateral discussions.

The political and economic consequences of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine have also affected other regions of the world. Like-minded countries across the globe are stepping

up cooperation, sharing experience and knowledge to strengthen the rules-based international order based on the principles of the UN Charter and to enhance their own security.

It is in Latvia's interests to deepen cooperation with **the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)** bilaterally, within the frameworks of the EU and NATO, and in regional cooperation formats.

The UK is a close ally of Latvia within NATO and in matters related to support for Ukraine. With the permanent presence of its armed forces in the Baltic region, the UK provides a meaningful contribution to Latvia's security. **In 2024, Latvia, together with the UK, established the Drone Coalition. The 17 member states of the Coalition supply drones to Ukraine and enhance allied drone capabilities.** Latvia also takes advantage of opportunities to cooperate with the UK in the NB8 format, especially on security and defence issues. In 2024, this cooperation continued to develop as part of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) initiated by the UK.

The United Kingdom is also an important trade partner for Latvia. In 2024, various projects aimed at promoting bilateral trade and investments were implemented with the involvement of industry representatives from Latvia and the UK. Most of the cooperation projects have been focused on technology-related sectors, especially green and smart technologies. Efforts will continue to foster business cooperation *inter alia* by facilitating the participation of Latvian entrepreneurs in major industry forums and promoting collaboration between scientists from both countries within EU science programmes Horizon and Copernicus.

Latvia advocates for closer relations between the EU and the UK based on shared security and foreign policy interests, as well as opportunities for economic cooperation. In Latvia's view, relations can be deepened by fully implementing existing agreements and establishing new ones in areas such as the economy, energy, defence, security, societal resilience, and other sectors.

Last year, Latvia strengthened its relationships with countries in the Indo-Pacific. There is a growing mutual interest in addressing security challenges in both the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions. In February 2024, upon the initiative of the EU, the Third EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum and the 24th ASEAN¹⁶-EU Ministerial Meeting were held to promote further dialogue between EU Member States and countries in the Indo-Pacific region. The successful state visit by the President of Latvia to the Republic of Korea served to advance mutual cooperation on security, the economy, and education. Visits by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia created opportunities to deepen cooperation with the governments, private, and academic sectors of Australia, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. Latvia welcomes the fact that Australia and New Zealand have joined the Drone Coalition led by Latvia in support of Ukraine. **Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea** are NATO partners in the Indo-Pacific region (IP4), participating in NATO summits with special status since 2022. Cooperation with these countries is based on shared interests, common security challenges and values, developing security dialogue and practical collaboration. In the framework of the EU, Latvia is interested in negotiating free trade agreements, and treaties on other types of cooperation with countries in the region, as well as strengthening security and resilience.

Latvia has actively engaged in addressing issues of key importance for the region, such as the impact of rising sea levels on the statehood of small island states in the Pacific. Latvia willingly shares its experience in preserving statehood and its legal expertise. Opportunities for

16 The Association of Southeast Asian Nations

cooperation with global partners have also emerged in the field of digitalisation, such as implementing the Riga TechGirls project in Fiji and Australia. Latvia has taken every opportunity to voice its opinion at various regional events and formats, such as the Pacific Islands Forum in Tonga, the International Conference on Women, Peace, and Security hosted by the Philippines, the Raisina Dialogue, an international conference on foreign and security policy held by India, the Sydney Dialogue, an international forum on hybrid threats organised in Australia, and the Summit on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain (REAIM) held in the Republic of Korea.

In relations with China, there is mounting concern over its deepening strategic partnership with Russia and its enablement of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. China has also intensified its criticism of the West, challenging the world order based on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, while increasingly advancing initiatives aimed against it. In promoting its agenda, China does not refrain from methods such as influencing foreign politicians, exerting pressure on education and culture institutions, as well as representatives of the private sector. China continues its shows of force in the South China Sea and the wider region, targeting Taiwan and the Philippines in particular.

At the same time, it is important to recognise China's significant international role, which influences the search for solutions to global challenges, such as climate change and health issues.

In 2024, the bilateral dialogue between Latvia and China was enhanced. In July, the Special Representative of the Chinese Government on European Affairs visited Latvia, and in November, political consultations were held in Beijing between the State Secretary and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia and China, respectively.

Latvia's relationship with China remains constructive and open to expanding mutually beneficial cooperation. At the same time, Latvia has not hesitated to raise issues bilaterally, where respective positions differ fundamentally. Latvia considers it imperative that China cease providing support to the aggressor state Russia in its war against Ukraine.

Relations with India were further enhanced in 2024. An important step forward was the opening of a resident embassy of India in Riga. The political dialogue was active, including a joint visit of the Nordic-Baltic foreign ministers to India, participation in the Raisina Dialogue conference and the India-Europe Business and Sustainability Conclave held in New Delhi. In September, the Minister of Foreign Affairs met with her Indian counterpart in New York and jointly participated in a discussion on development issues. Additionally, upon an invitation by India, the Minister of Foreign Affairs participated in the G20 ministerial discussion on global development trends, where she highlighted the importance of upholding a rules-based international order in global governance.

In 2024, cooperation with global partners, particularly **African countries** became increasingly important. Political consultations were held with Morocco, Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire, Namibia, Liberia, and Ethiopia. The President of Rwanda made an official visit to Latvia (the first such high-level visit to Latvia from an African country), as did the Speaker of Parliament of Zimbabwe and the Minister of Defence of Liberia. In June, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised an international forum "Latvia and African Countries: Partners for Peace and Resilience", which served as a strategic platform for dialogue with representatives from African nations.

Dialogue with the African Union and the European Union - African Union summit offer opportunities to agree on future cooperation priorities and conduct a high-level exchange of views

on enhancing collaboration, especially in education and science, security, good governance, migration, and mobility. The next summit is scheduled for 2025.

The Latin America and Caribbean region is, generally, like-minded, opening opportunities for closer cooperation to strengthen the rules-based international system, address global challenges (such as combating climate change), and expand mutually beneficial economic relations. In 2024, Latvia held political consultations with several countries from the region, including Argentina, Brazil, and El Salvador. Latvia was actively involved in the preparation of the 4th International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) by providing financial support and serving as a rapporteur, as well as assuming several other leadership roles during the conference.

Latvia is also affected by developments in the **Middle East**, where the situation continued to deteriorate over the past year. Iran has played a destructive role in the region by launching direct attacks on Israel and supporting various armed groups in Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. Hope for stabilisation of the situation lies in the Israel–Lebanon ceasefire agreement mediated by the United States and France, calling on both parties to fully comply with UNSC Resolution 1701. It is crucial that the international community supports the enforcement and durability of the ceasefire agreement. Latvia contributes to these efforts by taking part in the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) peacekeeping mission.

Latvia calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the unconditional release of all hostages taken by Hamas, urgent access to humanitarian aid across Gaza, and the cessation of hostilities in compliance with UNSC Resolution 2735. At the same time, the current crisis must not divert attention from the search for a long-term solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the two-state principle.

Latvia contributes to achieving this goal by participating in the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) mission and the UN Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution.

The fall of the Assad regime in Syria has significantly weakened the positions of Russia and Iran in the region and opened a historic window of opportunity for the unification and restoration of the Syrian state. Latvia advocates for an inclusive, Syrian-led transitional process in line with the core principles outlined in UNSC Resolution 2254, ensuring Syria's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Latvia will back efforts by the EU and other partners toward the advancement of this objective.

The prospect of EU membership is instrumental to overcoming challenges in the **Western Balkans** by motivating countries to enact reforms, improve relations with neighbours, and enhance regional cooperation. The EU must maintain its close engagement by providing support whilst simultaneously monitoring the progress of reforms.

Latvia supports the countries of the Western Balkans on their path toward EU membership, encouraging them to fulfil the set criteria, carry out reforms and improve neighbourly relations. We are pleased with the progress achieved in 2024. **Latvia supported the decision by the European Council on opening accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and welcomed the rounds of negotiations conducted with Montenegro and Albania.**

Latvia welcomes the fact that the 2024 Rule of Law Report by the EC for the first time included assessments of four candidate countries – Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, thus facilitating alignment with EU standards in the area of the rule of law.

Latvia will continue to support EU enlargement based on an individual approach and the fulfilment of criteria. We expect unequivocal respect for European values and the political will to implement reforms from potential EU member states. Particular attention must be placed on alignment of foreign policy with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), reforms in the rule of law, and media freedom. Latvia will continue sharing its experience in implementing the reforms required for European integration.

The EU's relations with Türkiye are of strategic importance, as Türkiye is both a partner of the EU and a candidate country. We support the development of pragmatic relations with Türkiye by fostering cooperation in areas of mutual interest. We highly value our bilateral dialogue, growing economic cooperation, and collaboration within NATO, the OSCE, and the UN.

In June 2024, the **EU officially launched accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova**. The EC has initiated an assessment of the compliance of Ukraine's and Moldova's national regulations with the EU *acquis communautaire*. The commencement of accession negotiations not only serves as a catalyst for comprehensive reforms, but also sends a strong signal of EU solidarity to the people of Ukraine and Moldova.

To advance Ukraine's integration into the EU, the Baltic and Nordic countries have established a high-level expert group to provide support to the Ukrainian government. Latvia is represented in this group by former EU Commissioner Andris Piebalgs.

In October 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a decision to allocate funding to bolster the resilience of Moldova's energy system. On 15 October 2024, the NB8 foreign ministers jointly visited Moldova to express their support for the country's integration into the EU. In a referendum held in Moldova in October, 50.4% of voters endorsed constitutional amendments, establishing accession to the EU as a strategic goal for their country.

Latvia will remain steadfast in supporting Ukraine and Moldova on their path to EU membership by helping implement reforms and aligning their legislation with the EU acquis.

While **Georgia** received EU candidate status at the end of 2023, in 2024 its government adopted several controversial laws, including expanding control over non-governmental organisations and independent media. These actions have effectively halted Georgia's EU integration process. The foreign ministers of the Baltic States and Iceland visited Tbilisi in May 2024 in an attempt to engage with representatives of the government, the opposition, and civil society to alter the negative trajectory chosen by the ruling authorities. Unfortunately, no progress was achieved. Parliamentary elections in Georgia on 26 October were marred with numerous serious violations documented by international and domestic election observers alike. Shortly thereafter, the government announced a postponement of EU accession negotiations until 2028, which triggered widespread protests. These protests were met with brutal suppression by the authorities.

In light of the Georgian government's repressions against civil society, Latvia, in cooperation with its partners and the EU, has decided to suspend support, impose restrictive measures, and ensure continued assistance to Georgian civil society for participation in EU processes.

The ministers of the Nordic-Baltic states advocated for the implementation of OSCE recommendations regarding the elections, including the possibility of holding new elections.

In 2024, Latvia continued its active political dialogue and cooperation with **countries in Central Asia**, placing particular focus on economic relations and development cooperation. A key element of these relations entails holding regular political consultations on a broad range of topics, including maintaining dialogue on the effective implementation of sanctions imposed on Russia.

Within the framework of its development cooperation policy, Latvia continued to assist the modernisation and reform processes in Central Asian countries. In 2024, six bilateral development cooperation projects were carried out in Uzbekistan. Latvian experts worked on regional projects administered by the EU, USAID, and other international donors. Notably, the State Border Guard of Latvia continued to oversee the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA), while the Central Finance and Contracting Agency (CFLA) became the newest partner in the EU regional project "Digital connectivity in Central Asia".

Regional cooperation

The Baltic states and the Nordic countries are our closest neighbours and allies.

With Finland and Sweden having joined NATO, new prospects for cooperation have emerged in the Baltic Sea region, underpinned by a regional commitment to strengthening security.

Closer partnerships with like-minded countries help shape common positions in international organisations (EU, NATO, UN) and deliver more targeted support for Ukraine. Joint visits by Nordic and Baltic (NB8) officials to third countries, such as the NB8 foreign ministers' visit to Moldova and Ukraine in October, demonstrate shared values, goals and close mutual ties. Together, we continue to oppose Russia's aggression against Ukraine and strengthen the resilience of our societies against the hybrid threats posed by Russia in the region.

In 2024, Latvia coordinated cooperation between the **NB8** parliaments and ministries of defence. The NB8 have expressed unwavering support for Ukraine, collectively serving as the second largest provider of military aid after the United States. At the expert level, NB8 cooperation has been active in harmonising the implementation and enforcement of EU sanctions and identifying "shadow fleet" vessels. Within the UN human rights fora, the NB8 have continued their successful cooperation, jointly drafting and presenting over 100 statements defending the shared values of the region. These efforts included highlighting the crimes perpetrated by Russia in Ukraine, human rights violations in Russia, Belarus, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria and elsewhere, as well as by taking a stance for gender equality, the rule of law, and media freedom.

In 2024, the **Baltic states enhanced** their national security, defence capabilities, and external borders, including through the provision of mutual operational and technical assistance. Joint efforts were also directed toward developing civil protection systems, preparing regional plans for mass evacuation, and ensuring access to healthcare and medicines during crises. **Preparations were completed to enable the Baltic states to disconnect from the Russian electricity grid (BRELL) and synchronise with the European grid in February 2025.**

In 2025, Latvia will chair the **Baltic Council of Ministers** where it will prioritise regional security and resilience, support for Ukraine, improving regional connectivity, strengthening energy security, and attracting investments. Parliamentary cooperation within the Baltic Assembly will also be crucial in coordinating these efforts.

In 2024, Latvia concluded its presidency of the **EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** where it initiated updates to the Action Plan for cross-border and cross-sectoral cooperation to address the region's current security and economic needs. In the framework of the **Council of the Baltic Sea States** (CBSS), the ministers of foreign affairs have strongly condemned Russia's war of aggression and committed to maintaining support for Ukraine and taking measures to counter Russia's hybrid threats and its "shadow fleet", which poses significant security and environmental risks in the Baltic Sea.

In April 2024, Vilnius hosted a summit of the **Three Seas Initiative**, a building block of the region's transatlantic ties with the United States. At the summit, regional leaders highlighted the importance of unwavering support for Ukraine, its reconstruction, and closer engagement in regional infrastructure projects. Key areas of focus included energy, strengthening cyber security, and ensuring sustainable transport connectivity for military mobility. The summit was attended by the largest number of delegations to date, reflecting growing interest in the objectives and priorities of the Three Seas Initiative. Latvia was represented at the summit by the President of Latvia, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with business organisations, actively participated in the **Three Seas Initiative Business Forum**. The forum brought together a wide range of private sector representatives from the transport, energy, and digital industries. More than 30 Latvian companies attended the business forum, underscoring the interest of the private sector in regional cooperation opportunities and in attracting investments for projects in the transportation, energy, and digital projects.

In July 2024, the US Development Finance Corporation announced its first investments in energy projects to be carried out in the Three Seas Initiative region, reaffirming the commitment of the United States to advancing energy diversification and enhancing connectivity in the region.

Advancing economic growth and resilience, raising the EU's competitiveness and global influence

Russia's war in Ukraine and geopolitical challenges continue to shape the EU agenda, necessitating reforms and strengthening of the EU. In 2024, the EU underwent an institutional transition, which, together with the new legislative cycle, has introduced new priorities on the EU's agenda. Latvia's two decades of active participation in the EU have demonstrated its standing as a mature member state capable of significantly influencing the formulation and implementation of EU policies. Latvia is interested in forging a strong EU that can respond swiftly to various security and economic challenges. With the deepening collaboration between the EU and NATO, it is important for Latvia that this cooperation results in enhanced defence capabilities and readiness, supported by increased spending on defence and security in the current and upcoming EU Multiannual Financial Framework. Latvia sees it as crucial to bolster competitiveness both within the EU and globally, including balancing the demands of the green transition and EU competitiveness. Latvia is working to reduce the dependency of Latvia, the Baltic states, and the EU on energy imports from Russia and other third countries. Latvia is interested in advancing the EU's readiness to admit new member states, with institutional and policy adjustments for enlargement already under way.

A more resilient and internally efficient Europe

Promoting economic resilience and competitiveness remains a constant priority for the European Union (EU). The adverse economic effects arising from Russia's war in Ukraine and left behind by the COVID-19 pandemic, disruptions to supply chains, and declining productivity have yet to be fully overcome. Two significant high-level reports on the future of EU competitiveness were published in 2024: [Enrico Letta's report](#) and [Mario Draghi's report](#); which provide comprehensive analysis and recommendations for improving the Single Market and EU competitiveness. In the context of the Draghi report, Latvia's interests align with fostering an EU industrial sector driven by emerging technologies and innovative businesses, particularly in digital technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing. In the energy sector, Latvia wishes to see continued EU support for strengthening energy independence through the development of new power generation capacities and creation of interconnections. With respect to the Draghi report, Latvia has clearly emphasised that a robust defence industry is a key factor in ensuring EU competitiveness. Further advancement of EU competitiveness is unimaginable without substantial changes to the availability of financing. Accordingly, Latvia is actively working at the EU level to streamline access to capital markets and cross-border financing. Latvia is among the Member States advocating for the reduction of excessive EU regulations and a decrease in administrative burden. It actively participates in discussions at various levels on the proposals outlined in the reports to enable the European Commission to develop a new EU competitiveness strategy by 2025.

Latvia places great importance on participation in **EU programmes** aimed at enhancing the Union's competitiveness in advanced technologies and innovations. It is imperative for **Latvia to strengthen its research institutions and its most advanced and export-oriented enterprises, enabling them to compete effectively at the EU level by attracting partners and securing EU financing.** At the EU level, there is a growing trend to increase funding for economic sectors with the potential to compete globally. While Latvia supports this approach, it also expresses concerns that efforts to enhance the EU's global competitiveness could widen the development gap between Member States and negatively impact the principles of equal and fair competition within the EU Single Market. Therefore, when implementing reforms to foster competitiveness, it is essential to maintain fair and equal competition and provide for measures that ensure internal convergence within the EU. **Convergence instruments like the Cohesion Policy must continue to provide significant investments in Latvia's development, helping to bring the country closer to the EU's average level of development. Latvia will strongly advocate for these priorities in the negotiations on the new EU Multiannual Financial Framework.**

In light of the current geopolitical challenges, Latvia made focused efforts in 2024 to enhance **economic security and resilience of the EU.** This is reflected by progress achieved towards the objectives outlined in the previously published European Economic Security Strategy. In January, the EC published a package of initiatives aimed at screening foreign investments, identifying potential risks stemming from outbound investments, controlling exports of dual-use goods and supporting research and development in order to promote the EU's economic security amidst growing geopolitical tensions and profound technological shifts.

In response to the concerns expressed by EU member states, Latvia included, the EC conducted an in-depth risk assessment for four critical technology areas: advanced semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum, and biotechnologies. This is part of the EU's three-pillar approach to economic security, entailing the promotion of competitiveness, mitigation of risks, and creation of partnerships with the broadest possible range of countries to address shared concerns and interests. Moreover, the EU continued to actively engage with the G7 and other like-minded partners. In April 2024, the EU and the United States jointly launched a new cooperation platform – the Minerals Security Partnership Forum bringing together mining countries from across the world. This partnership will promote political dialogue to secure supply chains and accelerate implementation of specific projects.

Latvia welcomes the approach put forth in the Draghi report, emphasising that the objectives of the European Green Deal must be balanced with priorities for EU competitiveness, namely, these targets must be compatible with the need to boost competitiveness and security. In the implementation of the EU Green Deal, Latvia's perspective has been considered: before setting new ambitions, it is essential to meaningfully implement the legislation already adopted. Moreover, it is imperative for the EU to establish itself as a leader not only in defining climate regulations but also in advancing climate-neutral technologies.

In parallel to the potential EU enlargement, **discussions on the efficient functioning of the EU in future will continue.** At the meeting of the European Council in June 2024, Latvia and the other member states adopted a road map for future work on internal reforms of the European Union, which outlines four main areas: values, policies, budget, and governance. The European Council has tasked the European Commission with drafting in-depth policy reviews and recommending necessary reforms by the spring of 2025. It is expected that the most difficult discussions regarding internal reforms will centre on the Common Agricultural Policy and the Cohesion Policy. Latvia has made its position clear: current EU founding treaties provide enough flexibility, and no amendments are needed for enlargement of the Union. Internal reforms of the EU and enlargement need to be two parallel processes, meaning that discussions on internal reforms must not become an obstacle to the enlargement process.

In the current circumstances, Latvia sees it as fundamentally crucial for the EU to maintain unity and the ability to function effectively. To achieve this, it is essential that member states remain committed to our common values and fundamental democratic principles.

The 2024 Rule of Law Report by the European Commission contains specific recommendations for each member state, including Latvia. The report offers a positive assessment of Latvia, underscoring that the Latvian justice system operates efficiently and independently, the level of digitalisation of the judiciary remains high, and further steps have been made regarding legislation on lobbying with a special lobby register scheduled to be established in 2025. The report also finds that media institutions in Latvia function independently, journalists continue to work in an overall safe environment, and civil society functions in an open space. However, challenges remain in improving the access to financial resources and enhancing public participation at the local level.

EU financial facilities remain an important source of investments for Latvia's economy. The mid-term review of the EU MFF was finalised in February 2024. The mid-term revision included the establishment of a new facility for Ukraine, which will not only provide macro-financial support, but also investments in reconstruction, modernisation, and social cohesion, paving the way for the gradual integration of Ukraine into the EU.

Latvia has commenced active efforts to advocate its interests regarding the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework for 2028-2034. These activities involve negotiations with EU institutions, member states and other stakeholders to influence the budget proposal in the initial drafting stage.

Latvia's main priorities for the next EU MFF are: (1) security and defence, (2) cohesion, (3) the Common Agricultural Policy, and (4) funding for Rail Baltica. Latvia supports an increase in the overall EU budget to ensure the availability of financing sufficient for both traditional and newly incorporated priorities.

As Belarus and Russia continue attempts to undermine the security of EU member states by instrumentalising migration, **Latvia is actively involved in shaping EU migration policy and reinforcing the external eastern border of the EU.** Significant progress was made with respect to EU migration policy in 2024. In May, the legislative files of the Migration and Asylum Pact were adopted. During the development of the Pact, Latvia focused on identifying the instrumentalisation of migration as a hybrid threat.

Recognising that migration remains a pressing and sensitive issue for EU citizens, there has been a marked shift in attitudes from an open-door policy to stricter migration controls. The EU's comprehensive approach to migration is multifaceted and includes enhancing cooperation with countries of origin and transit to address root causes and combat human trafficking and smuggling, and to counter the instrumentalization of migration for political purposes.

Latvia, alongside other EU Member States, has actively worked to ensure that the instrumentalisation of migration as a hybrid threat is deemed a priority on the EU agenda.

In 2024, Latvia sent several letters to the EC, calling for appropriate measures for addressing the instrumentalization of migration and requesting permission for the Member States most severely impacted by the crisis to temporarily derogate from EU law due to national security considerations and address the instrumentalisation of migration under national legislation. **Latvia's voice was heard: at the end of 2024, the EC issued a statement expressing explicit support for the members affected by the weaponisation of migration. The Commission acknowledged the potential need for temporary derogation from EU legislation in certain exceptional cases of emergency.**

In order to attain energy independence from Russia, the Baltic states have agreed to synchronise their power grids with the continental European grid in February 2025 – almost a year ahead of the initial schedule.

Latvia has succeeded in stabilising its energy sector following the crisis created by Russia's war in Ukraine. Energy prices have been pushed down, the pursuit of energy independence from Russia has been accelerated and increasingly more energy is being produced from renewable energy sources. The development of green energy needs to be furthered in 2025, ensuring that these initiatives align closely with the expansion of interconnectivity and the development of energy infrastructure.

Latvian embassies abroad have invested considerable effort in bringing new investors to Latvia's energy sector. However, not all investors who had initially expressed interest, have maintained their presence long-term. To address this, Latvia must continue to foster an environment that is conducive to attracting and retaining investors. As part of this effort, work has begun on drafting a strategic energy policy document for Latvia, scheduled for adoption in early 2025. This strategy will generate predictability for investors, thus encouraging positive investment decisions.

Interconnections with other European countries are key factors for the stability of energy supply and energy prices in the Baltic Sea region. In 2024, experts continued evaluating the potential development of the Baltic WindConnector, a transmission interconnector in the Baltic Sea. This interconnection is part of the Ten-Year Network Development Plan drawn up by transmission system operators from Germany, Estonia and Latvia. A letter of intent has been signed by all three Baltic states to move forward with this project.

In 2024, Latvia joined the International Energy Agency which will allow it to participate in global energy policy decision-making alongside other EU member states and other influential countries.

In 2024, Latvia commenced preparations for **Latvia's presidency of the Council of the EU, scheduled for** the second half of 2028. This presidency will coincide with the conclusion of the European Parliament's 2024–2029 institutional cycle, presenting Latvia with an intense workload. Despite these additional challenges, the presidency offers the opportunity to influence the priorities and agenda of the EU and enhance the expertise of Latvia's civil servants. Beyond its immediate benefits, the presidency is an investment in Latvia's long-term representation within the EU. It will also boost Latvia's international visibility, ensuring that the resources allocated for the presidency yield returns for the country's economy.

EU external trade policy

The year 2024 in EU external trade policy was marked by not only the start of the new EC mandate and a shift in economic policy, but also by global trends and disruptions in international trade. This resulted in some partners shifting toward protectionism and introducing various trade barriers to restrict EU businesses from freely accessing markets, which results in economic fragmentation.

A stable and predictable system of international trade, and especially its legal basis, is of vital importance for Latvia and its exporting companies.

Latvia believes that it is important to use all EU instruments – trade agreements, new partnerships, market protection instruments, and other measures – to facilitate the entry of Latvian businesses into new markets.

It is crucial that Latvian entrepreneurs are not subjected to unfair competition. Latvia supports the conclusion of new trade agreements with countries in Latin America and the Indo-Pacific region with particular attention being given to negotiations with the global development hubs, such as the ASEAN countries.

In the global context, the EU was forced to address major challenges in trade policy to maintain its leading role among partners at the bilateral and multilateral levels. The EU continued to work on modernising its existing network of free trade agreements (FTAs) and negotiating new ones. Trade agreements came into effect with New Zealand and Kenya, a political agreement was reached on the finalisation of negotiations with the Mercosur countries (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay). The EU continues to engage in negotiations with Mexico, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, while also considering the possibility of resuming negotiations with Malaysia.

At the same time, supply chain stability and the targets set for the green and digital transition require alternative solutions. Therefore, the EU has expanded alliances beyond conventional trade agreements by establishing partnerships on critical raw materials with countries in Latin America, Central Asia and Africa. Progress also continued within the Trade and Technology Council that the EU currently has set up with the United States and India. The EU-Angola Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement is the first agreement of its kind in the EU portfolio, coming into effect in September 2024.

Digital economy partnership and trade agreements with East Asian countries complement existing FTAs by adding on a set of principles regulating modern digital trade. These agreements are designed primarily to enhance EU business competitiveness in these markets. Such agreements not only facilitate increased trade flow between partners, but also provide greater protection for consumers and legal certainty for businesses engaging in cross-border digital commerce. Talks on the EU-Singapore Digital Trade Agreement were completed in July 2024, with further work still ongoing with the Republic of Korea.

The United States remains the EU's most important trade partner, with strong transatlantic ties serving as the main artery of the global economy. Latvia views economic cooperation with the United States in the broader context of mutual interest and shared values, reinforcing robust security and defence cooperation.

In 2024, the EU and the United States continued to deepen their trade and economic relations, advancing dialogue on several agreements (critical raw materials, steel, and aluminium) and continuing joint work in the Trade and Technology Council (TTC). The 6th high-level meeting of the TTC in April 2024 yielded notable outcomes, including decisions on promoting transatlantic cooperation in technology areas of particular importance to Latvia, such as artificial intelligence, 6G, and critical and emerging technologies, leading to the formulation of a shared vision for 6G and the release of the Digital Identity Mapping Exercise Report. A primary area of concern for the TTC thus far has been economic security, especially as it pertains to export control and sanction-related export restrictions, as well as economic coercion and non-market practices by third countries.

In October 2024, the European Commission published its Annual Report on the implementation and enforcement of EU trade policy confirming that, in the context of a changing global economy and mounting challenges, trade flows between the EU and its FTA partners grew at a faster pace and remained considerably more stable than trade with non-FTA partners¹⁷.

World Trade Organisation

Latvia sees the WTO as a pillar of the multilateral trade system, which is why it considers WTO reform to be a priority. The Organisation must be capable of responding to global disruptions and developing modern trade rules in areas such as digital trade, investments, environment, climate, agriculture and industry to ensure the protection of economic interests and fair competition in global markets.

An important event in 2024 was WTO's 13th Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi where, after a long hiatus, two new member states acceded to the Organisation. The Conference also produced decisions on strengthening the positions of developing countries within the international trade system, adopted rules to improve global trade in services and reaffirmed the collective commitment to restore the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism.

Latvia at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

The OECD remains the leading international organisation providing concrete recommendations for addressing global economic challenges through data-based research, setting policy standards, and sharing best practices.

¹⁷ For example, since commencing the provisional application of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with Canada mutual trade has grown exponentially by over 50%, thus CETA has essentially removed all trade barriers including improving economic opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (as a result of CETA being in place, relatively more European SMEs have started exporting to Canada with more than 2,500 newcomers joining the game in 2016-2019). CETA has boosted the free flow of services and investments and has enabled further diversification of the EU trade thus strengthening supply chain resilience. Latvia was among the first member states to ratify CETA and has successfully taken advantage of the opportunities it provides by bolstering economic ties with Canada (the number of Latvian companies exporting to Canada has grown by 29.3% exceeding the EU average).

Latvia has effectively drawn on OECD expertise to enhance public administration capacity, streamline internal processes and public services, establish an adult education system, create a new model for doctoral studies, improve education quality monitoring, upgrade the digital systems of the Employment State Agency, improve competition oversight in digital markets, promote societal financial literacy, and foster sustainable growth in the Latgale region.

Among the organisation's regular publications, the OECD 2024 Economic Survey for Latvia offers a valuable in-depth look at the structural reforms necessary for the national economy and attraction of investments.

Regarding the external relations of the OECD, Latvia called for the Organisation to intensify efforts within the Eurasia Competitiveness Programme and supported the OECD Ukraine Country Programme as well as closer cooperation with Moldova. In 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made financial contributions to the Ukraine Country Programme and the Eurasia Competitiveness Programme to help Moldova enact necessary reforms. Andris Pelšs, the Latvian Ambassador to the OECD, has assumed leadership of the OECD Friends of Ukraine Group.

With development cooperation policy becoming increasingly important, Latvia decided to join the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Currently, the DAC is reviewing the compliance of Latvia's development cooperation policy with OECD standards, with a decision on Latvia's admission expected in the first quarter of 2025. Full membership of the DAC will enable Latvia to engage in deeper exchange of expertise with other members, prioritise support for Ukraine and EU Eastern Partnership countries, and adopt best practices in development cooperation. This will include alignment with OECD standards, *inter alia* through the introduction of a monitoring and evaluation system.

Bilateral economic cooperation

As a relatively small and open economy, Latvia is deeply integrated into the global economy and international supply chains. The export of Latvian goods and services generates revenue for the national budget and forms the backbone of the country's economy. Over the past several years, the world has experienced significant geopolitical upheavals that have impacted Latvia's exports. Under these circumstances, public administration must support businesses, enabling them to maintain and increase export volumes and enter new markets.

A key factor for national economic growth is the ability to attract investments which allow existing industries to expand and new ones to emerge. The foreign service plays a crucial role in attracting foreign investments by working in coordination with the Ministry of Economics and LIAA to engage potential investors. **The Ministry assists Latvian exporters in resolving issues they may encounter, helps Latvian entrepreneurs establish business contacts around the world through embassies and honorary consuls, and supports the organisation of incoming and outgoing visits by business delegations.** Often, the ideas, needs or concerns voiced by foreign investors are first brought to the attention of the foreign service. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is actively engaged in the work of the Coordination Council for Large and Strategically Significant Investment Projects, sharing information received from potential investors and working together to find solutions. This format has vastly sped up project coordination, thus reinvigorating the process of attracting foreign investments, and enhancing Latvia's appeal as a destination for investors. **The foreign service collaborates with other state institutions and business organisations employing the resources and tools at its disposal to promote exports and attract foreign investments to Latvia.** The Ministry's activities are targeted to address the needs of national economic development and priority economic sectors, such as bioeconomy, biomedicine, medical technologies, pharmaceuticals,

photonics and smart materials, high-tech, information and communication technologies and other high added-value and rapidly developing industries. The foreign service promotes the interests and development of Latvia's defence industry. It showcases Latvia's achievements in science and seeking out new partnerships in the space sector, green and smart technologies, and quantum computing.

In 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs implemented a large-scale public diplomacy campaign abroad aimed at advertising Latvia as an attractive environment for business and foreign investments, a reliable and responsible partner, and as a country with a skilled workforce and sizable intellectual capacity to promote business networking and build collaborative partnerships. For example, the Latvian-German digital conference, "Latvian-German Synergy: Driving Force for Digital Transformation", brought together approximately 200 participants from both countries. The event was followed by a visit of a German business delegation to Riga to explore further cooperation. A meeting of Latvian and British defence industry companies was organised with the support of the Latvian Embassy in London. Events were also held in Australia and the United States seeking to bolster cooperation among businesses operating in the defence industry. Numerous events promoting Latvia's ICT sector were also organised abroad. For example, the Moldova Digital Summit provided Latvian entrepreneurs with an opportunity to offer their solutions for addressing the ICT needs in Moldova. The event was followed by a visit of a Moldovan business delegation to Riga. With the support of the Latvian Embassy, a business delegation took part in ICT WEEK Uzbekistan 2024, the largest ICT industry event in Central Asia. A Latvia-Uzbekistan forum on digital connectivity was also held during the visit. A range of other events were also organised throughout the year to support Latvian businesses both domestically and abroad.

In 2024, Latvia's diplomatic missions in 30 countries (Australia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Lithuania, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye, the UAE, the United Kingdom, the United States, Uzbekistan) organised around 60 events to support Latvian entrepreneurs and promote Latvia as an attractive investment destination. These included round-table discussions, business seminars, "Latvia Days", presentations, and events for attracting investors. During the year, Latvian ambassadors undertook around 100 regional visits, which entailed bilateral meetings to discuss economic relations. Latvian embassies supported the participation of Latvian entrepreneurs in more than 100 international trade fairs. The embassies have also organised or attended approximately 300 other trade-related events, thus furthering national economic interests.

As businesses in Latvia adapt and diversify their supply chains and markets, the foreign service has continued to provide them with information and other means of assistance. This enabled Latvian companies to enter new export markets and increase their export volumes. In collaboration with business organisations (the Employers Confederation of Latvia, the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, exporters' association "The Red Jackets", industry associations, etc.) and other government institutions (LIAA, the Ministry of Economics, other sectoral ministries, etc.) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has organised a series of educational seminars on export opportunities in specific countries or regions, such as Japan, the United States, and the Republic of Korea. On the margins of the Africa Forum, the Ministry hosted a business forum to help Latvian entrepreneurs establish further contacts and identify potential partners in African countries. In June 2024, during the meeting of the honorary consuls of Latvia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with LIAA and the Chamber of

Commerce and Industry organised a networking event where more than 90 Latvian companies had the opportunity to establish contacts with nearly 100 honorary consuls from almost 50 countries. Our expansive network of honorary consuls can open doors to partnerships in many countries around the world. Latvia's diplomatic representatives tasked with economic relations are in regular communication with Latvian businesses. For instance, in October 2024, 37 diplomats from Latvian embassies met with entrepreneurs at three separate networking events in Riga, Ventspils and Liepāja.

In 2024, the foreign service continued its active efforts to advance economic cooperation with Ukraine, both in supporting Ukraine and in advocating for Latvian business interests.

The Embassy of Latvia in Ukraine maintained close dialogue with the competent authorities of Ukraine to support the participation of Latvian businesses in Ukrainian procurements, including in the military industry. A significant milestone in strengthening Latvia–Ukraine bilateral economic relations was the meeting of the Latvia–Ukraine Intergovernmental Commission in May 2024, during the visit of the Minister of Economics. In September 2024, the Prime Minister of Latvia visited Ukraine where she discussed potential areas for furthering economic cooperation and other issues important for Latvian businesses. The Latvian Embassy in Ukraine is actively involved in planning such visits, organising meetings between Latvian and Ukrainian entrepreneurs in various formats and assisting in the resolution of existing challenges and issues. In 2024, Latvian-Ukrainian business forums were organised in Ternopil, Kyiv and Vinnytsia.

Latvian businesses have increased their export volumes not only to many European countries (+3.46% to Estonia, +14.92% to Poland, +27.75% to Hungary, +9.19% to Austria, +6.69% to Belgium, +6.33% to France, 4.91% to Slovakia, +4.60% to the Netherlands), but also to more distant markets (+4.05% to the USA, +25.36% to India, +16.66% to Japan, +55.90% to Egypt, +16.16% to the Republic of Korea, +15.75% to Australia, +5.15% to Canada).¹⁸

Latvia's economic capacity, the potential and products and services of our businesses are always promoted during incoming visits by foreign officials. This has allowed export-oriented Latvian companies to gain recognition and establish new collaborative partnerships abroad. In May 2024, the UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Economic and Trade Affairs, Ahmed Ali Al-Sayegh, and the UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade, Thani Al-Zeyoudi visited Latvia. During their visit, the officials heard a presentation about the research capabilities of Riga Technical University (RTU) and its priorities regarding commercialisation of scientific research. They were also introduced to Latvian tech start-ups and new ideas in the field of manufacturing of semi-conductors, and saw a practical demonstration of RTU's advanced technical capabilities. The visit resulted in the conclusion of an agreement on the exchange of experience with the UAE on issues in the field of higher education.

In July 2024, Riga hosted a delegation of officials and entrepreneurs from California led by State Treasurer Fiona Ma. The programme of the visit consisted of various high-level meetings, presentations of investment projects in Latvia, and a Latvia-California business seminar attended by 55 Latvian business representatives.

The foreign service has routinely informed Latvian companies about business opportunities in foreign markets, introduced to potential partners abroad, and provided with opportunities to establish further cooperation.

¹⁸ Total volume of exported goods and services in the first nine months of 2024 as compared to the same period in 2023; data provided by the Central Statistical Bureau and the Bank of Latvia.

Outgoing visits by Latvian officials are equally significant in the promotion of our economic cooperation, featuring regular participation of accompanying business delegations. For instance, a Latvia-Japan business forum was organised as part of the Foreign Minister's visit to Japan, and this provided ample opportunities for businesses on both sides to develop new contacts and cooperation. The visits of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Baiba Braže, in 2024 regularly included an economic component. For instance, during her visit to Australia, she spoke about Latvia's defence industry and drone manufacturing capabilities, in Indonesia she discussed cooperation and skills transfer in the IT sector, while in the Republic of Korea she engaged in discussions about cooperation in defence and other industries. The foreign service also provided substantive and practical support in the planning of visits by other officials and ministers. For the visit of the President of Latvia to the Republic of Korea the accompanying delegation included 19 companies and organisations representing the sectors of biomedicine and pharmaceuticals, wood processing, filmmaking, aviation, design, energy, defence industry, etc. A business forum was also organised as part of the visit with the aim of attracting investments and promoting Latvia's exports.

Efforts by government institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economics, LIAA and other organisations, have resulted in the attraction and implementation of large-scale investment projects, such as Fibenol, Van Oord, Golden Fields, Syfood and others.

The realisation of Latvia's external economic interests requires concerted effort by both the public and private sector. Successful outcomes are only achievable through efficient exchange of information, close and professional collaboration, and coordination of efforts. In 2025, the foreign service will continue to make use of all available resources and instruments to support exports and attract investment.

Public engagement in foreign policy making, protection of the interests of Latvian nationals, cooperation with the diaspora

Public diplomacy and public engagement in foreign policy

In pursuit of its foreign policy objectives, Latvia employs all available channels of strategic communication – active engagement with local and international media, digital communication, public diplomacy, cooperation with researchers, civil society and the wider public.

A key element of foreign policy efforts is the struggle for the “hearts and minds” of allies, partners and the wider public, otherwise known as public diplomacy. Last year, as a result of close coordination between all stakeholders involved in foreign policy, Latvia managed to execute several notable public diplomacy activities, despite limited financial and human resources. These efforts advanced Latvia’s standing as a responsible international actor and an appealing partner for cooperation.

The events organised and promoted by Latvia’s diplomatic missions in 2024 were aimed at promoting Latvia’s visibility in various parts of the world, fostering understanding of our national identity, values, history, and culture, as well as our political, security and economic interests while also reinforcing Latvia’s intellectual and economic potential and competitiveness.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs carried out **a public diplomacy programme as part of Latvia’s campaign for a seat on the UN Security Council**. The main focus was placed on establishing contacts with representatives from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Oceania, presenting Latvia as a reliable, active, and engaged UN member state committed to strengthening multilateral diplomacy and sharing its experience and expertise on key issues on the UN agenda.

Latvia’s diplomatic representations in Europe, North America, Asia, Africa, Australia, and Oceania hosted more than 60 public events, including seminars, conferences, round-table discussions, and thematic events on Latvia’s priorities at the UN. At the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, Latvia supported the event organised by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), addressing the investigation of Russia’s aggression and war crimes in Ukraine, including the return of abducted children and the repressions and human rights violations perpetrated by the Russian and Belarusian regimes.

In the framework of continued cooperation with Riga TechGirls, projects on the role of women in business and the IT sector were implemented in Kenya (Nairobi), Australia (Canberra), and Fiji (Suva).

Several key events in support of Latvia's UNSC campaign were also held in Latvia. For instance, in June, Riga hosted the first major international forum spotlighting Latvia's partnerships with countries in Africa entitled "Latvia and African Countries: Partners for Peace and Resilience".

Amidst the information war waged by countries hostile to Latvia and public concern over national security and personal safety, it is of paramount importance to provide the public with accurate and comprehensive information about ongoing international developments, and to actively explain the actions taken by the government and the foreign service in pursuing set objectives. Access to reliable and trustworthy information is critical to ensuring quality public engagement and public trust in the decisions taken.

For this reason, Latvia participates in major international fora and conferences, and representatives of influential international think-tanks and research institutes are regularly invited to Latvia. Furthermore, interviews are consistently granted to international media and other opinion leaders. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also actively supports the international collaboration of Latvian think-tanks and research institutions.

With the escalation of geopolitical situation following the beginning of Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine, increased attention has been devoted to improving public media literacy to help identify disinformation and attempts at information manipulation. In October 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs co-organised the EU DisinfoLab conference in Riga, where Latvia shared its experience in combating disinformation and facilitating international exchanges of best practices.

The Riga Conference 2024, an international forum on security and defence organised by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence in collaboration with the Latvian Transatlantic Organisation (LATO) brought together a prominent group of participants for open and closed session discussions. This year's conference was mainly focused on the future of European security, Ukraine's victory in the war against Russia, the impact of sanctions on Russia's economy and internal stability, NATO's 360 degree approach and global partnerships, the role of the UN in today's geopolitical reality, the impact of artificial intelligence on national security, the information space, and international relations. The wider public had the opportunity to follow the conference live via an online broadcast in Latvian.

At the *LAMPA* conversation festival, discussions were organised on several pressing foreign policy issues. For instance, during a conversation organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on UN reform and the role of small states in international organisations, participants explored the potential of small states to influence international decision-making, particularly in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Cooperation with the **UN Youth Delegate Programme (YDP)** in 2024 focused on Latvia's candidacy to the UN Security Council. Activities carried out by the UN YDP, including school visits and organisation of simulations, engaged Latvian youth in discussions on global issues and raised public awareness of the UN. On 9 August 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the annual UN YDP National Conference "Future for the Youth", bringing together 80 young people from across Latvia. The conference resulted in the adoption of a resolution on international security, gender equality, climate, and education, which served as the foundation for YDP positions in international formats, such as the UNGA High-Level Week and the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29). In October 2024, with the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UN YDP published the first edition of its Youth Journal featuring articles that examine security issues through the prism of Latvia's UN SC campaign slogan "Together for Peace and Resilience".

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue to support the UN YDP and maintain close cooperation with its representatives.

To inform the Latvian public about current foreign policy developments, the Ministry communicates through its social media platforms, sharing posts, short videos, and infographics. This content includes updates on support for Ukraine, Latvia's 25-year experience in development cooperation and relevant projects, explainers of EU sanctions, and highlights of notable days of observance established by the UN or internationally and dates of significance in Latvian history. A biannual tradition is the consular awareness campaign "Safe Travels", which the Ministry organises to provide travellers with essential information for safe travel.

Alongside Latvia's campaign for the UNSC, Latvia carried out two strategic communication initiatives, "Latvia: 20 Years in the European Union" and "Latvia: 20 Years in NATO".

Numerous public engagement events featuring the logo "LV 20 EU NATO" have been held in Latvia and abroad. From March to April 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised a series of quizzes for youth, "**Latvia: 20 Years in NATO**", hosted in Daugavpils, Riga, Jelgava, Sigulda, and Ventspils. With the collaboration of NATO's Public Diplomacy Division, the winners of the quizzes received the opportunity to visit NATO headquarters in Brussels and meet with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg.

To mark the 75th anniversary of NATO and the 20th anniversary of Latvia's NATO membership, a flash mob event "Run Together – Run for Security" was held in Riga, encouraging active participation from all resident embassies.

In March 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted a conference, "Twenty Years of Latvia's Membership of the European Union and NATO", reflecting on key milestones, analysing their impact on Latvia, and emphasising the importance and benefits of Latvia's membership of the European Union and NATO in various sectors. In November, the Ministry, in collaboration with the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, organised a conference, "The Future of the European Union and Latvia's Interests", to stimulate public discussion on future challenges facing the EU and Latvia in areas such as security, EU enlargement, the economy, and climate. Upon the initiative of the Ministry, the conference also included the launch of a publication organised by the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, "Latvia's Vision for the EU 2030: Towards a European Union Prepared for the Future".

To inform the public on EU matters, regular exchanges of views are conducted with representatives of civil society and social partners prior to European Council meetings and during the development of Latvia's national positions. The key partners of the Ministry in this framework are the Employers' Confederation of Latvia, the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Civic Alliance – Latvia, European Movement – Latvia, the Women's NGOs Cooperation Network of Latvia, the think-tank Providus, the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation and the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments.

Consular work and assistance

Russia's aggressive foreign policy has introduced a new challenge in consular work – protection of Latvian nationals, including incumbent and former officials, from **unfounded and malicious international arrest warrants issued by Russia** as part of its hybrid warfare strategy, and preventing their enforcement in third countries. To address this issue, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has informed all international partners of the illegitimate and abusive nature of the warrants put out by Russia. The consular service stands ready to take prompt action should any third country decide to enforce these arrest orders.

In 2024, the consular service continued to provide practical and informational support for Latvian nationals in distress. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs arranged the repatriation of 141 youths and six adults stranded in Spain and France due to the insolvency of their travel agency. Following missile attacks in Southern Lebanon, the consular service worked in tandem with the honorary consul of Latvia in Beirut to help 10 individuals leave Lebanon on emergency flights chartered by other EU member states. The case of Monika Bukaine is deserving of special mention: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked in close cooperation with other competent Latvian authorities to secure the safe return of the young girl to her legal guardian – her mother in Latvia.

Amidst complex global security challenges, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued its active preventive efforts to inform the public regarding safe travel practices. In 2024, special attention was dedicated to engaging youth audiences through a collaborative awareness campaign with social media influencers. The foreign service also participated in the “Kopums” youth festival in Līvāni and a Youth Days event in Jūrmala. To raise awareness about safe travel and the risks of human trafficking, consular service representatives, in cooperation with the Ombudsman’s Office, visited schools and vocational institutions across Latvia. On the occasion of the EU Anti-Trafficking Day, the Ministry took part in the awareness campaign on labour exploitation “Don’t Let Yourself Be Used”, or “Working abroad”. During the campaign, thematic visuals and videos containing travel and employment safety advice were distributed across digital platforms, airports, bus stations, trains, and other public spaces.

In 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with other institutions continued to improve the accessibility of consular services for Latvian nationals abroad. Over the course of the year, the consular service provided around 175,000 paid consular services. There remained a high demand for passports and ID cards. A total of more than 50,000 personal identification documents were issued via Latvian embassies. To facilitate easier access to identity documents for Latvian nationals in countries with large diaspora communities, embassies organized 16 mobile passport workstations in 2024.

Due to employers’ continued high interest in foreign labour, a substantial number of working visa applications were received in 2024. Similarly to the previous year, around 11,000 working visa applications were processed in 2024, accounting for approximately 35% of all visa applications received by the embassies. In total, in 2024, Latvia’s representations processed approximately 32,000 visa applications.

In 2024, as in 2023, the consular services provided by the embassies generated approximately EUR 6 million in state and consular fees.

In 2025, efforts will continue to enhance the emergency preparedness and crisis response capabilities of the consular service.

Strengthening ties with the diaspora

More than a fifth of Latvian citizens are currently either temporarily or permanently residing abroad. This situation is the result of the historical events of the 20th century, as well as modern-day globalisation trends. Maintaining ties with our people abroad and preserving the Latvian language and culture among the diaspora is a crucial element in ensuring the sustainability of Latvia as a state. Collaboration and support for the Latvian diaspora represent a significant area of national policy and a key area of work for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On 23 January 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the second comprehensive cross-sectoral diaspora policy planning document – the Plan for Working with the Diaspora for

2024–2026. This document outlines specific measures to be implemented by public administration bodies and the budgetary needs for the execution of these activities.

The plan includes activities and directions in accordance with the four action areas defined in the Diaspora Law:

- ◆ **Strengthening of Latvian identity and sense of belonging to Latvia, preservation of Latvian language and culture outside Latvia.**
- ◆ **Promoting civic and political participation of the diaspora.**
- ◆ **Engaging the diaspora in the development of the Latvian economy and science.**
- ◆ **Supporting remigration.**

The plan supports the diverse needs of the diaspora to achieve the objectives of the diaspora policy as defined by law. It encompasses both previously implemented and planned initiatives by the state, diaspora, and non-governmental organisations, and highlights tasks and priorities set by the dynamic development of the diaspora in the context of globalisation.

In 2024, four meetings of the Diaspora Advisory Council (DKP) were held, involving representatives from both the public and non-governmental sectors. The establishment of the DKP has created an effective consultative collaboration platform to ensure the broadest possible representation of the diaspora in the development of laws and regulations, as well as in making decisions significant for the advancement of diaspora policy.

To further progress towards the targets set by the diaspora policy, the following thematic expert groups have been established and are successfully operating in 2024: the Latvian Language and Education Working Group, the Remigration Coordination Working Group, and the Diaspora Media Working Group.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with embassies and diaspora organizations implements average of 100 smaller-scale projects annually. These projects are aimed at strengthening the diaspora's ties with Latvia, engaging more than 15,000 diaspora representatives in nearly 30 countries around the world. Activities supported include those in the fields of culture, education, science, economy, sports, and other areas, as well as initiatives that promote communication, diaspora self-organization, strengthening Latvian identity, and maintaining ties with Latvia that cannot be realized through other programmes. In 2024, 144 project applications were submitted, with a total funding request of EUR 408 857.84. Of these, 84 projects were approved, receiving a total funding amount of EUR 164 261.72.

To ensure the representation of views of the diaspora members not involved in diaspora organisations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has for several years collaborated with the Centre for Diaspora and Migration Research at the University of Latvia (UL DMPC) which has accumulated an extensive knowledge base of the current situation and needs of the diaspora and remigrants. Research conducted by the Centre supports the development of evidence-based policymaking in the fields of diaspora and remigration policy. In the autumn of 2024, after a five-year hiatus, the UL DMPC launched its third comprehensive diaspora survey. This edition of the survey focused on the diaspora's political engagement, social and economic ties with Latvia, and explored why Latvian citizens living abroad choose to vote or abstain from elections. It also

examined other activities through which they influence processes in Latvia and their expectations of political parties. The main factors affecting diaspora voter engagement, as revealed by the results of the survey, are **voter awareness** and **accessibility of polling stations**. These issues will be the key areas of focus in 2025 and 2026. The study also looked at the role played by diaspora media and political parties in raising voter activity. Moreover, the study also brought to light the main reasons why people choose to move away from Latvia, how these factors have evolved over time, and what are the barriers preventing people from returning to Latvia. It also addressed the issue of the diaspora's economic ties with Latvia and its willingness to invest in Latvian businesses.

In August 2024, in partnership with the State Chancellery, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised the **third forum for Latvian professionals working in international organisations**. The **event** brought together more than 80 Latvian professionals working in international organisations from around 25 countries to discuss priorities for Latvia's development and foreign policy priorities. The forum aims to build closer informal cooperation between professionals working in Latvia and those in international organisations, which already contributes valuable input for the development of an internationally oriented and dynamic public administration.

The Ministry and the World Federation of Free Latvians (PBLA) are continuing to co-host events aimed at promoting Latvia's economic growth. To facilitate networking among diaspora entrepreneurs, the exchange of ideas, and provide diaspora entrepreneurs with the latest news about processes in Latvia, the PBLA together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (LIAA), and the Ministry of Economics organised three side events within the framework of the 2024 World Latvian Economics and Innovation Forum. This series of "business breakfasts", entitled "Focus on Latvia", was organised in Stockholm, Amsterdam and Paris, bringing together Latvian professionals, diaspora entrepreneurs, specialists in various areas, and students to discuss current security and economic challenges.

Annexes

SUPPORT PROVIDED BY LATVIA TO UKRAINE IN RESISTING RUSSIA'S AGGRESSION

Annex 1

Military support for Ukraine

The total amount of military support provided since the start of the war has now reached EUR 400 million. Latvia has sent to Ukraine unmanned aircraft, helicopters, howitzers, weapons and individual equipment, ammunition, anti-tank weapons, anti-missile defence systems, radars, food rations, IT equipment, land vehicles, and fuel.

- ❖ Latvia is providing a training programme for Ukrainian forces. In 2024, up to 4,000 Ukrainian troops were trained in Latvia. It is planned that in 2025 a similar number of military personnel will be trained, depending on the needs of the armed forces of Ukraine.
- ❖ In 2024, Latvia also continued supporting Ukraine in the framework of the European Peace Facility, where it took a strict stand on the continuity and long-term commitment in the provision of military support. In 2024, Latvia backed the creation of the Ukraine Assistance Fund, a financing envelope specifically intended for Ukraine.
- ❖ The NATO Washington Summit confirmed Ukraine's irreversible path to NATO. In Washington, Latvia resolutely supported the decisions aimed at promoting interoperability of Ukrainian and NATO armed forces, strengthening resilience and Ukraine's path to NATO membership. At the Summit, member state leaders agreed on the establishment of a new NATO assistance mission to Ukraine, through which NATO will jointly contribute to the coordination of training of Ukrainian armed forces and supporting their development. It will also oversee delivery of material and technical equipment. The Allies agreed to provide Ukraine with military assistance worth at least EUR 40 billion leading up to the Hague Summit scheduled for 2025. A NATO Senior Representative in Ukraine was appointed to head the NATO Representation to Ukraine, serving as the chief coordinator for the Secretary-General on cooperation with Ukrainian officials and institutions to contribute to the reform process in Ukraine and its transposition of NATO standards.
- ❖ Latvia is a contributor to NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine. In 2023 and 2024, Latvia's annual payment totalled EUR 2 million, with a similar payment earmarked for 2025.
- ❖ Together with the UK, Latvia has assumed leadership of the Drone Coalition which aims to ensure that the armed forces of Ukraine have the broadest possible access to drone capabilities. In 2024, Latvia allocated **EUR 20 million** for the Drone Coalition and supplied 3,000 combat drones. Latvia will assign another EUR 200 million for advancing the objectives of the Coalition in 2025.
- ❖ Latvia joined the Czech initiative of purchasing ammunition for Ukraine and the Estonia-led IT Coalition for Ukraine. This Coalition aims to develop secure, reliable and resilient information and communication infrastructure for use by the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine and its Armed Forces. Latvia is also taking part in the Lithuania-led Demining Capability Coalition which trains demining specialists and delivers demining equipment to the Ukrainian army.

Support for Ukraine's energy sector

- ❖ In October 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a contribution of **EUR 400,000** to the Ukraine Energy Support Fund set up by the Energy Community.
- ❖ In 2024, Latvia's leading energy companies donated two power generators, 18 transformers, 128 electricity meters, 1,000 disconnectors, specialised equipment (tractors, boats, boat-carrying trailers for passenger vehicles, forklifts) to Ukraine and provided assistance to their Ukrainian counterparts.

Support for Ukraine's reconstruction

◆ Latvia continued to be involved in Ukraine's reconstruction processes with a particular focus on the Chernihiv Oblast.

In 2024, four social infrastructure facilities were put into service in the Chernihiv Oblast, following reconstruction under the UN Development Programme with funding of **EUR 2 million** allocated from the state budget by the government of Latvia. These were the Talalaivka village school, Kyinka village kindergarten, Stary Bilous village school, and Preschool No.19 in Chernihiv City.

IN 2024, LATVIA ALLOCATED EUR 5 MILLION FOR RECONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN UKRAINE

◆ The CFLA is administering EUR 2.9 million

- Contracts have been concluded with three non-governmental organisations on the use of the reconstruction funds: Entrepreneurs for Peace (reconstruction of Chernihiv Regional Children's Hospital and Chernihiv Polytechnic National University, general construction and piping and instrumentation for residential building reconstruction in Yahidne village, Chernihiv Oblast), Tavi Draugi (reconstruction of the secondary school in Novy Bykiv and the Chernihiv Regional Primary Healthcare and Social Care Centre), and MARTA Centre (operation and improvement of facilities of the women's support centres opened in 2023 under project "Chernihiv: Empowering and Supporting War-affected Women").
- **EUR 100,000** have been allocated for the CFLA construction supervision project and upskilling training for Chernihiv Oblast experts (also on EU affairs).

◆ **EUR 2 million** have been granted to the Ministry of Economics for promoting involvement of Latvian businesses in the reconstruction of Ukraine by supplying furniture for recently reconstructed facilities and boiler house equipment for education institutions in Chernihiv Oblast.

◆ **EUR 100,000** have been granted to the Ministry of Transport to meet its commitments under the Memorandum of Cooperation on digital connectivity.

◆ In October 2024, based on a request from the Chernihiv Oblast administration, additional funding in the amount of EUR 100,000 was allocated to MARTA Centre for the reconstruction of the Chernihiv Office of the Human Rights Protection Centre under the Ombudsman's Office of Ukraine. Administered by the CFLA, this activity furthers Latvia's involvement in the reconstruction of Chernihiv Oblast.

◆ Latvia will continue to actively help with the reconstruction of facilities in Chernihiv Oblast by also allocating further budget resources for the purpose in 2025. Pursuant to the Agreement between Latvia and Ukraine on Long-Term Support and Security Commitments, Latvia has earmarked **EUR 15 million** for the period from 2024 to 2026 to finance reconstruction projects with a focus on community infrastructure, psychological support for women and provision of expertise, especially on EU integration.

Development cooperation projects

Implementation of development cooperation projects continued in Ukraine in 2024, with **EUR 650,000** allocated for this purpose in the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

◆ Latvia provided assistance in areas such as psycho-emotional support for women, rehabilitation, microsurgery, financial supervision, judicial expertise and documentation of war crimes, SME development, EU integration, and agriculture.

◆ The projects were carried out in partnership with MARTA Centre, National Rehabilitation Centre Vaivari, the Ministry of Finance, the State Forensic Science Bureau, the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Investment and Tourism agency of Riga, NGOs: Latvian Standard, Baltic Human Rights Society, New Door Association, Latvian Hand and Microsurgery Association, the University of Latvia, the Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre, Riga Graduate School of Law, the State Audit Office and the State Probation Service.

Support provided in the framework of international organisations and financial institutions

- ◆ In 2024, Latvia provided support for Ukraine through programmes implemented by international organisations. Contributions made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to international organisations in support of Ukraine totalled **EUR 1.5 million**.
- ◆ Latvia has contributed EUR 4.3 million to the European Peace Facility for support to the armed forces of Ukraine.
- ◆ Since the beginning of the war, Latvia has provided additional financial support to the government of Ukraine **exceeding EUR 36 million** paid as contributions to international financial institutions: the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Private sector support

The civil society, the business sector and non-governmental organisations in Latvia are continuing to provide both humanitarian and military aid to Ukraine.

- ◆ Charity organisation Ziedot.lv has received donations from the general public and Latvian companies totalling **over EUR 26 million**. The donated funds have been used for supporting the defenders of Ukraine, for medical assistance to hospitals and assistance provided in Ukraine by Latvian micro-surgeons, for the needs of Ukrainian civilians and municipalities, as well as for helping Ukrainian refugees in Latvia.
- ◆ Association “Tavi Draugi” has provided **more than EUR 7.3 million** in support of Ukraine by delivering humanitarian and military aid and assisting Ukrainian refugees in Latvia.
- ◆ The Twitter Convoy organised by the Agendum association is making weekly deliveries of vehicles to Ukraine, the majority of which are used by Ukraine's defence sector. **More than 550 vehicles** were sent in 2024, bringing the total number of vehicles delivered since the start of Russia's aggression to 2,000.
- ◆ Foundation Entrepreneurs for Peace is consistently supporting Ukraine's armed forces and has delivered humanitarian aid worth **over EUR 11 million**.







Support for Ukrainian refugees

From the very first day of the war, Latvia has been providing comprehensive assistance to Ukrainian civilians fleeing the war by helping them with their immediate needs and also through long-term support and assistance **equal to that available to Latvian citizens**. The annual budget allocation intended for supporting Ukrainian refugees has been at least EUR 70 million. EUR 65 million have been earmarked for assistance measures planned for 2025.



LATVIA
STANDS WITH
UKRAINE

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COLLECTED REVENUES

Type of service/revenue	2021	2022	2023	2024
 Total volume of paid consular services	133 765	186 169	204 535	154 209
 Applications for personal identification documents (passports/eID cards)	29 815	50 647	61 422	46 731
 Mobile passport station trips	11	15	32	16
 Visas (total)	27 760	35 316	33 326	26 521
 Work-related visas	13 244	14 566	11 333	10 258
 Revenue (duties and consular fees), EUR	4 240 762	5 689 257	6 185 029	5 027 857



Ministry of
Foreign Affairs
Republic of Latvia