

# Latvia

## Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals – 2022



Report to the UN High Level Political  
Forum on Sustainable Development  
2022

SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT **GOALS**

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2030 Agenda – Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development  
 ALTUM – the national development finance institution  
 CDPCL – the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control of Latvia  
 CEC – Central Election Commission  
 CSB – Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia  
 CSCC – Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre  
 EEA – European Environment Agency  
 ESS – the European Social Survey  
 EU – European Union  
 EU BSRS – European Union Baltic Sea Region Strategy  
 Eurostat – the EU's statistical office  
 GDP – Gross domestic product  
 GHG – greenhouse gases  
 GNI – gross national income  
 HELCOM – Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission  
 IDA – World Bank International Development Association  
 ICT – Information and communication technologies  
 IPDC – International Programme Communication Development  
 IT – information technology  
 LALRG – Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments  
 Latvia2030 – Latvia's Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030  
 LEGMC – Latvian Center for Environment, Geology and Meteorology  
 LIZDA – Latvian Trade Union of Education and Research Workers  
 LU – University of Latvia  
 LULUCF – Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry  
 MEPRD – Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of Latvia  
 MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
 MoC – Ministry of Culture  
 MoES – Ministry of Education and Science  
 MoJ – Ministry of Justice  
 MoT – Ministry of Transport  
 NDP2020 – Latvian National Development Plan 2014–2020

NDP2027 – Latvian National Development Plan 2021–2027  
 NEET youth – young people not in education, employment and training  
 NGOs – non-governmental organisations  
 ODA – Official Development Assistance  
 OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development  
 OSCE – Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
 PREM – Patient Reported Experience Measurements  
 RES – renewable energy sources  
 RIS3 – smart specialization strategy  
 RSU – Riga Stradins University  
 RTU – Riga Technical University  
 SDG – United Nations Sustainable Development Goals  
 SIPCRL – State Inspectorate for Protection of Children's Rights of Latvia  
 SPAs – specially protected nature territories  
 SPKC – Center for Disease Prevention and Control  
 SSIA – State Social Insurance Agency  
 STEM – science, technology, engineering, and mathematics  
 UN – United Nations  
 UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme  
 UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation  
 UNESCO LNK – Latvian National Commission for UNESCO  
 VNR – Voluntary National Review  
 WB – the World Bank  
 WMO – World Meteorological Organisation  
 WHO – World Health Organisation

# Opening Remarks by the Prime Minister Mr. Krišjānis Kariņš



Photo: State Chancellery

Latvia is committed to sustainability. This was explicitly stated in our first VNR in 2018 which emphasised the need to “create an innovative and eco-efficient economy” leaving no one behind. I am pleased that in May 2022 the Government of Latvia adopted the second VNR reconfirming our strong determination to reaching the SDGs in 2030 and supporting Our Common Agenda initiated by the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

However, there can be no sustainable development without peace and consistent global action on climate change. The current geopolitical situation has changed dramatically since Russia’s unprovoked military invasion in Ukraine began on 24 February. Long-lasting peace in Europe ended, millions of Ukrainian people are fleeing their country, and thousands of innocent lives are being lost and immense damage is being wrought on Ukraine’s infrastructure. On a global scale this puts even greater pressure on peace and sustainability and creates immediate imperatives – to help refugees, ensure security, combat disinformation, and safeguard food and energy supplies across the world. We have to withstand and address the challenges from this war started by Russia, stop impunity for war crimes and restore the full territorial

integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Domestically, Latvia has already achieved the binding EU target on the share of total energy consumption covered by renewable sources. In 2020, renewable energy accounted for 42.1% percent of Latvia’s energy consumption. To facilitate environmentally friendly growth through innovation, my government has agreed on the largest funding increase for science in the past 14 years. We are also investing in “Rail Baltica”, a multi-infrastructure cross-border connectivity backbone for Northeast Europe. Our financial sector is putting sustainable financing in place, and in 2021 Latvia issued the first sovereign sustainability bond in the Baltics and Nordics.

We are helping those most in need and promoting equal opportunities for all in Latvia. An administrative territorial reform has reduced the number of municipalities in Latvia from 119 to 43 making them more capable to serve local communities. Quality housing, mobility and other support is being made available to upscale economic growth and decent work outside of the capital city. Latvia is improving access to health care, including significantly increasing salaries for the lowest paid medical practitioners. The minimum income level for support to persons most at-risk-of-poverty has been raised. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the government channelled benefits to individuals and businesses affected by idle time.

We need to help our societies be resilient. In Latvia, we have seen an upswing in activities of individuals, civil society organisations and institutions to help the vulnerable and strengthen cohesion. My government is spending more time in democratic dialogue, discussions and debate, involvement and empowering of the youth. We are financing projects to ensure media independence, information literacy and closely monitoring that we follow the rule of law. Education is key to strengthening both resilience and the sustainability mindset, so we are introducing a new competency-based curriculum in general education, reforming the university system, and increasing the availability of scholarships.

At the global level, all UN member states are responsible for upholding global security, peace and sustainable development, addressing climate change, fighting pandemics, facilitating women’s empowerment and gender balance. To this end, we in Latvia are resolutely committed to mutual support and solidarity, engaging in partnerships and collaborative efforts. We have been significantly increasing our multilateral engagement, bilateral development cooperation, and stand ready to share our transformational experience.

Krišjānis Kariņš  
Prime Minister of Latvia

# Introduction

Latvia presents its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) at a moment when one medium-term national development planning period has been completed and a new one has begun.

Since Latvia submitted its first VNR to the UN HLPF in 2018, Latvia has assessed its performance in achieving its National Development Plan 2014–2020 (NDP2020) goals, and has, in an inclusive multi-stakeholder process, created the Latvian National Development Plan 2021–2027 (NDP2027).

This Report describes accomplishments and future actions needed to implement the SDGs, stakeholder good practices, viewpoints on priorities, and current and future challenges.

The previous VNR concluded that Latvia must transition to an innovative and eco-efficient economy while leaving no one behind. This is also the core theme of this VNR.

**CHAPTER 1** highlights events of the last three years that have influenced the state of the SDGs in national policy planning.

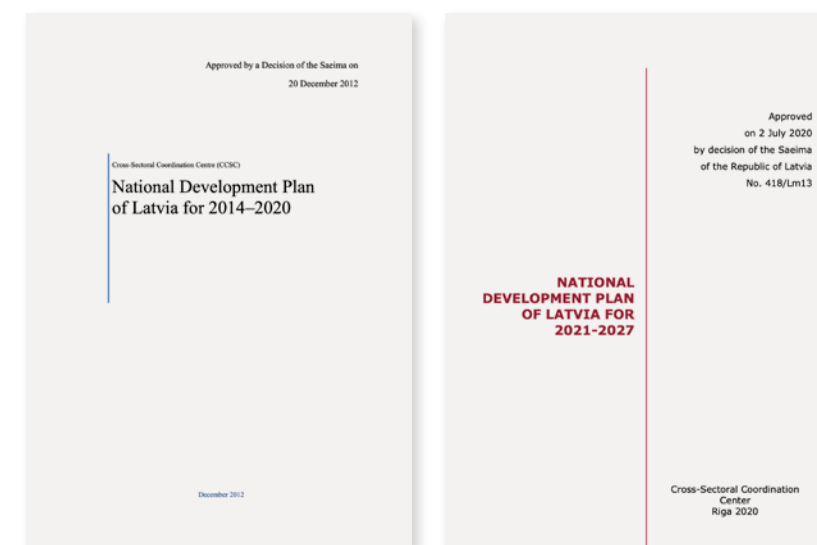
**CHAPTER 2** assesses each SDG at the target level. For each SDG, it lists specific actions taken in recent years, as well as significant new actions and reforms. It also explains Latvia's support for the achievement of SDGs in other countries. The chapter is supplemented by good practice examples, reflections on inclusion, and continuing challenges.

**CHAPTER 3** provides concise summaries of stakeholder views on key challenges in the new programming period, proposals for improving Latvia's role in accelerating the SDGs locally and internationally, and descriptions of stakeholder contributions toward achieving the SDGs. See [LETTERS FROM STAKEHOLDERS](#) for the full texts.

Gaining a comprehensive overview of viewpoints and activities of all stakeholders is a challenge. The Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation (LAPAS) has played an important role in summarising the [VIEWS OF CIVIL SOCIETY](#) on the implementation of the SDGs in Latvia.

**CHAPTER 4** highlights three factors that are less known by Latvian society but that can accelerate progress on the SDGs both in Latvia and globally: sustainable finance, culture as a free and inclusive space for dialogue and building knowledge, and a mission-oriented approach to managing complex systems.

Latvia's Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030 determines the direction of sustainable development in Latvia. The long-term strategy is achieved in the medium



term through the National Development Plan, as well as sectoral development frameworks and plans. Activities to achieve targets take into account available resources, including the state budget, private sector investment, EU funds, and other financing. Latvian municipalities base their development plans on local priorities and national goals. Civil society and other stakeholders work to achieve the SDGs as they deem appropriate and participate in government decision-making processes.

The Latvian planning system is decentralised and follows the principle of subsidiarity. Specific action is initiated by the planning level closest to the respective problem to be solved. The national government addresses issues that cannot be best addressed at the local government, community or individual level. The national and local governments support and encourage citizens' initiatives.

Latvia emphasises that the resources of our land, like the resources of all other countries, are finite, therefore contributions toward achieving sustainability by different stakeholders and the readiness of each individual to defend the rights of future generations are pivotal for successful outcomes.

When the theme “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” was chosen for the UN High Level Political Forum 2022, nobody saw coming the global crisis that was unleashed on 24 February 2022. At present, the rules-based international order and global security, stability and predictability are under serious threat. Russia's military aggression against Ukraine is a clear violation of the UN Charter and international law, and this aggression will have a long-term impact not only on global security but also on sustainable development.

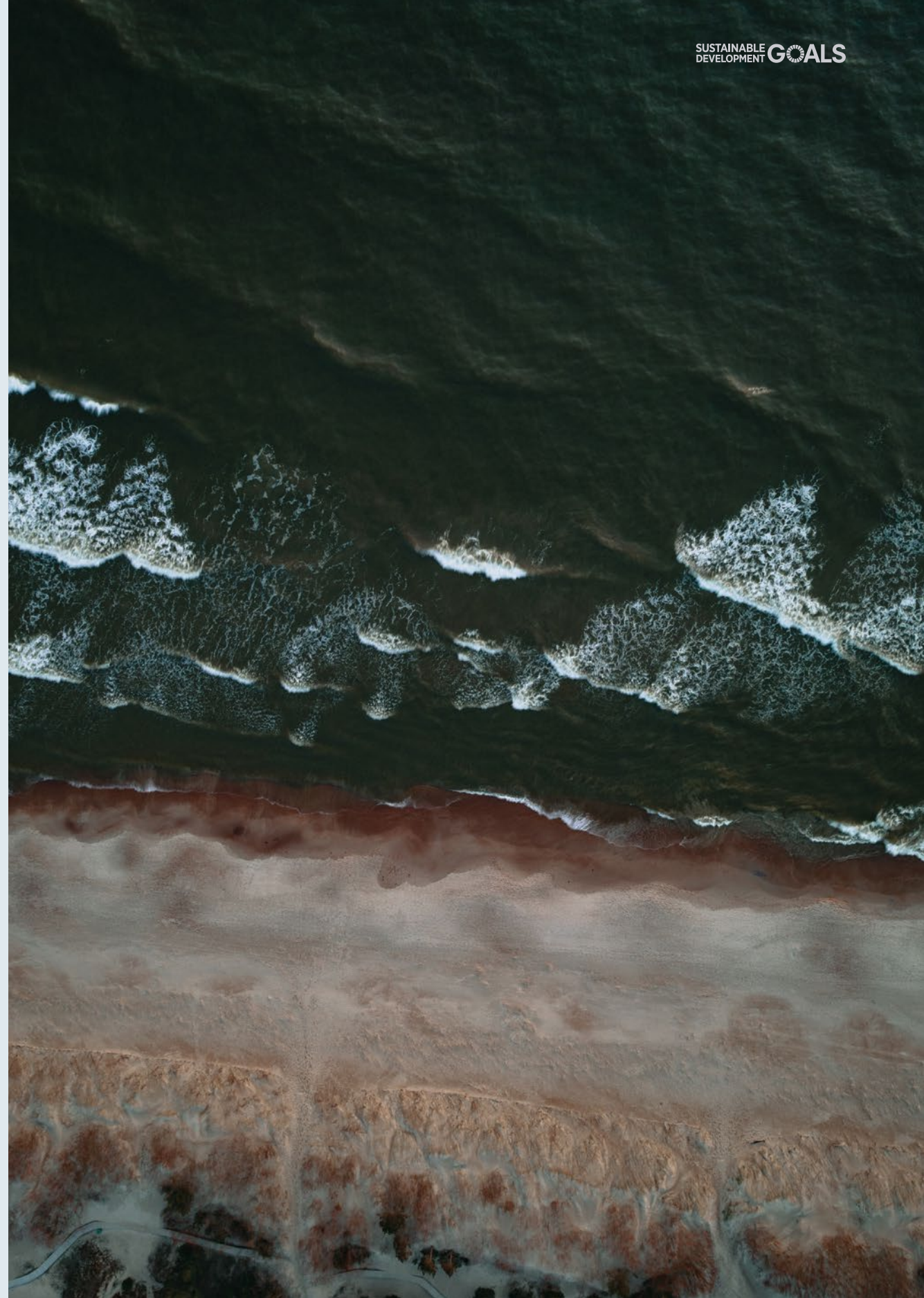


# Summary – Latvian sustainability

Latvia is presenting its second VNR in 2022. The 2018 VNR described Latvia's sustainable development planning system and stakeholder participation in the planning process. It outlined Latvia's approach to each of the SDGs, and concluded that Latvia's main challenge is to transition to an innovative and eco-efficient economy while leaving no one behind.

The second VNR goes a step further by assessing progress at the target level, focusing on Latvia's global partnerships and describing three systemic factors that have the potential to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. The VNR is being prepared at a time when Latvia has completed one medium-term planning period (2014–2020) and is committed to achieving the targets of the next programming period (2021–2027). Here we analyse what has been done since 2018 and briefly outline the main activities and new policy initiatives planned through 2027.

Photo: Kristaps Ungurs, Unsplash



## An analysis of Latvia's progress towards achieving sustainability goals through 2020

shows some improvement on most goals and limited progress in others. Quality Education (SDG 4) is continuously improving. Investments in R&D, transport and housing infrastructure (SDG 9) are underway. Together, these initiatives are having a positive impact on the economy and employment (SDG 8). At the same time, insufficient progress has been made in reducing inequalities (SDG 10), and the risk of poverty among the older generation is increasing (SDG 1). Active employment measures (SDG 8), education reforms (SDG 4), and structural reforms in the minimum income system (SDG 1) will improve the situation for younger generations and reduce the depth of poverty. However, radical improvements could only be made by significantly increasing public expenditures, which would call for a redistribution of the GDP.

Latvia produces high-quality agricultural products, but obesity is a growing concern (SDG 2). Improvements in health (SDG 3) through the health care system have been made since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, including salary increases for public sector medical staff. As society ages and medical technologies and medications improve, funding is always insufficient, therefore next steps include improving health care efficiency and responsiveness and facilitating prevention. There is steady progress on most gender equality (SDG 5) indices, however, the growing gap between men's and women's hourly wages is disconcerting.

Significant steps have been taken in SDG 11, including an administrative-territorial reform that reduced the number of municipalities. Municipalities are now preparing sustainable development strategies and ensuring greater participation of the population in decision-making. Water quality (SDG 6, SDG 14) in Latvia is satisfactory, but international cooperation is essential to reduce the eutrophication level of the Baltic Sea.

Regarding climate, it is important to move forward on SDG 13, SDG 7 and SDG 12 to meet 2030 climate commitments and to develop solutions for net-zero GHG emissions by 2050 while ensuring that low-income households are not disproportionately affected. The availability of data on the impact of economic development on biodiversity poses challenges (SDG 15). Continuous improvement and a strong focus on peace, justice and good governance (SDG 16) have created an

environment conducive to a dynamic civil society and entrepreneurship. This goal is crucial for Latvia's sustainability.

To strengthen Partnerships (SDG 17), Latvia has almost tripled its bilateral development cooperation budget managed by the MFA, thus opening up opportunities for cooperation with new regions, for example, in Africa. The VNR Partnership section provides information on Latvia's contribution to finance and technology, capacity building, trade, co-operation and data, while examples are integrated in the relevant SDG descriptions.

**STAKEHOLDERS** play an important role in Latvian policy planning, and the SDGs are mainstreamed into Latvian politics. This VNR describes actions to be taken until 2027 that were agreed to through a high level of stakeholder involvement in the co-creation of Latvia's National Development Plan 2021–2027. In addition, this VNR includes information on stakeholders' contributions to the SDGs and their views on key challenges and priority areas for action. There was a high response from academic institutions, municipalities, trade unions and other organisations. Stakeholders generally emphasised the need for greater cross-sectoral cooperation and awareness-raising on the importance of sustainable development, and called for evidence-based solutions to meet climate goals.



## Emerging transformative factors

The fourth chapter describes three transformative factors that have emerged in Latvia in recent years that have the potential to accelerate the implementation of all SDGs.

### SUSTAINABLE FINANCIAL FLOWS

Latvia's new Financial Sector Development Plan includes a section on sustainable finance. The Latvian Ministry of Finance, in co-operation with other ministries, established Latvia's Sustainability Bond Framework, and for the first time in Latvia's history, the Treasury issued a Sustainability Bond to finance and refinance green and social government expenditures. Latvijas Banka, the country's central bank, has developed a sustainability strategy that supports sustainable monetary policy as well as risk analysis, data collection and processing on sustainability, etc. The Latvian financial sector has signed a memorandum of understanding, and Finance Latvia, the association representing the Latvian financial sector, describes how finance steers sustainability.

### CULTURE: A SPACE FOR CONVERSATION AND EXPLORATION

The role of Latvian museums and libraries as an inclusive, safe space for visitors to learn about and understand sustainable development has grown significantly over the last three years thanks to the professional training of museum workers and librarians on the SDGs as well as due to regional cooperation. Actions taken include: creating and documenting museum and library activities; the establishment and maintenance of shared databases; the sharing of best practices through international networks and expert groups; and participating in and taking responsibility for the preparation of international reports. Latvia's experience may be useful to libraries and museums in other countries. Cultural heritage, in turn, strengthens sustainability and provides an impetus for sustainable action, for example, by promoting a circular economy.

### MISSION SEA 2030

Baltic Sea countries have long-standing cooperation to reduce eutrophication in the Baltic Sea, however, results have been limited. Latvia is now experimenting with the mission-oriented approach used by the EU in the realm of innovation to solve the most difficult problems.

Latvia's mission Sea 2030 seeks to develop a "blue economy". The biodiversity of the Baltic Sea will be restored, and the sea will be used sustainably for economic growth and the well-being of society. In the process, new industries, new markets and new jobs will be created. Latvia is a country that is small and agile enough to experiment through prototyping missions but large enough that the results can be useful internationally.



## Conclusions and next steps

Activities to achieve SDGs are being implemented in accordance with policies that Latvia set through 2027 and that were developed with broad public participation. Crises call for a reprioritisation of activities within the available fiscal space to support those affected without losing focus on the sustainability goals. Different social networks and platforms contribute to achieving the goals. Raising awareness of sustainable financial flows and culture as a space for discussion and exploration, as well as the mission-oriented approach to solving complex problems, are recent trends in Latvia that can accelerate the pace of achieving SDGs.

Good governance practices in Latvia include public participation in policy-making so that challenges are addressed in a democratic way. An annual budget review process re-channels available budgetary resources towards more effective actions for achieving objectives. However, a certain ceiling for reducing inequality can be reached if there is no societal level agreement on: the depth of redistribution of the GDP, the level of private and public services, the responsibilities of citizens and the state, the tax burden, and solidarity between different groups.

For this reason, Latvia will soon launch a nation-wide discussion to agree on a sustainable development strategy for 2050. Latvia 2050 is projected to enter into force in 2025 and will serve as a guide for future parliaments and governments when deciding on important steps to ensure sustainability.



## Chapter 1

# The Latvian context 2018–2022

Events influencing sustainable  
development policy

Rīga. Photo: Ivars Ulinans, Unsplash



## Agreement on national goals and actions through 2027

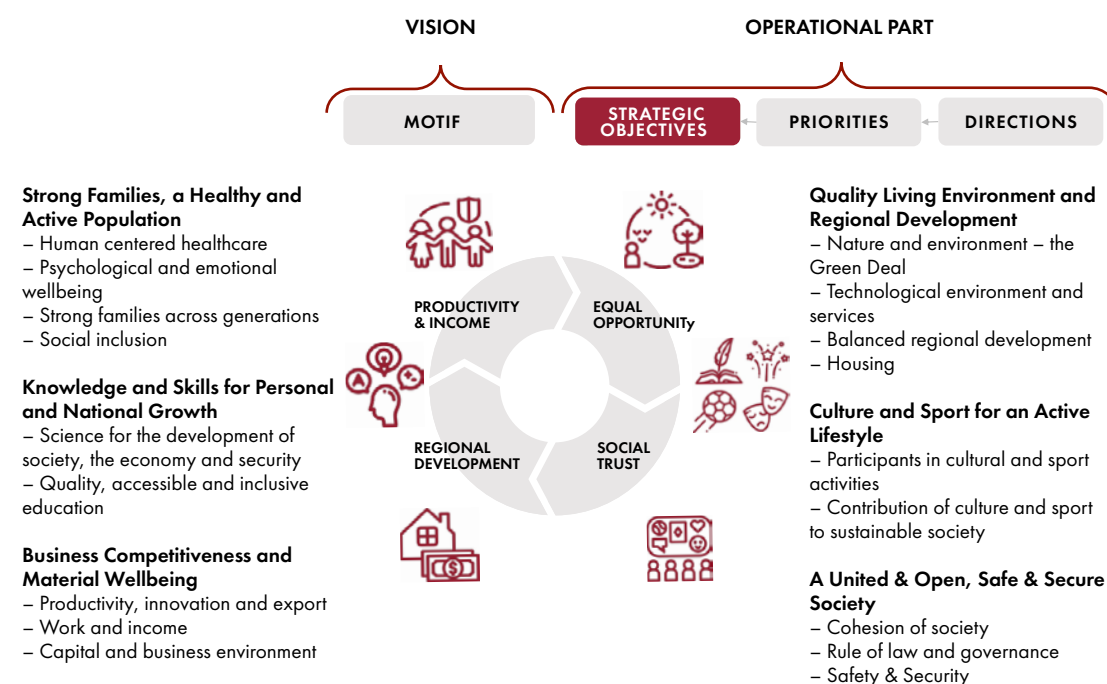
**THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021–2027** (NDP2027) was co-created between October 2018 and March 2020. The initial concept, developed by the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center (CSCC) under the Prime Minister, was reviewed by the National Development Council, the collegial advisory authority established by the Cabinet to monitor and advise the Prime Minister on development planning across all levels. The Cabinet of Ministers then approved a framework for NDP2027. Results of a public consultation were reviewed by the Council. In the summer of 2019, representatives of the scientific community, NGOs, workers and trade unions, business and industry, state and municipal officials and others collaborated in six working groups to develop NDP2027. They set new goals, targets and directions, and designated parties responsible for and involved in a new set of measures. The result was tested in focus groups. A draft version of NDP2027 was discussed in groups across Latvia. A final public consultation of the plan took place in autumn. Additional funding needs were determined and an environmental impact assessment was carried out. In the summer of 2020, NDP2027 was approved by the National Development Council, the Government, and the Saeima (Parliament).

## NDP2027

Latvia's National Development Plan sets out 4 strategic goals, directions for action and measures in six areas that contribute to the implementation of the SDGs. Policy frameworks and plans have been developed in accordance with NDP2027, while some SDG targets are covered by other policies. This set of policies defines government action regarding the SDGs (see Chapter 2).

The most significant additions to national level development commitments include:

- an emphasis on social trust and greater attention to equal opportunities;
- convergence of Latvian policy with the European Commission's Green Deal;
- new national level medium-term priority areas:
  - digital transformation;
  - psychological and emotional well-being;
  - housing policy.



## Political stability

Following the October 2018 elections, Prime Minister Mr Krišjānis Kariņš established Latvia's longest serving Cabinet. It comprises members from diverse parties with a wide range of political views. For this reason, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, government sessions lasted for hours until a consensus was reached.

**THE GOVERNMENT DECLARATION** sets out Government priorities that highlight sustainability.

### Excerpts from the Government Declaration

The Government Declaration (January 2019–present) is the agreement of the parties forming the government on their priorities. These are detailed in a Government Action Plan. Ministries answer to the Prime Minister every 6 months, and the Prime Minister reports to the Saeima annually on progress.

Examples of activities on sustainable development:

- Develop the National Energy and Climate Plan for 2030
- Assess the mechanism for support to producers of electricity at cogeneration plants or with renewable energy resources
- Financial support for automation, research and development, digitisation, process optimisation, and energy efficiency
- Implement the Rail Baltica project
- Make Latvia the most child-friendly country and society
- Gradually improve the minimum income support system
- Strengthen the deinstitutionalisation of children to out-of-home care and adults with mental disabilities to community-based care.
- Strengthen the national media space and provide state support for the development of diverse, high-quality media content

## Structural reforms over the last three years

- The minimum income level reform provides for an increase in the minimum income threshold and its regular review to increase financial means for people with low income.
- Implementation of nursing profession reform through introduction of a university-based education system and reduced barriers to retraining. Giving nurses more independence and responsibility will attract more professionals to the health care system.
- Reform of the higher education system began by defining the typology of higher education institutions and supporting their development in accordance with criteria relevant for the type of institution. Higher education councils are to be established in the institutions to ensure their strategic development and supervision.
- The number of municipalities has been reduced from 119 to 43 as a part of the administrative-territorial reform that took place in 2021 to promote more equal access to services and more efficient use of resources.
- Bi-lateral development cooperation was significantly strengthened by tripling the funding managed by the MFA, and Latvia's development cooperation agency duties were entrusted to the Central Finance and Contracting Agency of the Ministry of Finance.



## The European Green Deal

In November 2019, Ursula von der Leyen took over the Presidency of the European Commission and launched the ambitious **EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL**. The European Commission's Action Plan 2020–2024 aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy in which:

- there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050
- economic growth is decoupled from resource use
- the transition is socially fair, leaving no one behind.

### Latvia – implementing the EU Green Deal together with other member states



Source: The European Green Deal (2019)

## Spread of Covid-19

The first case of Covid-19 in Latvia was identified at the beginning of March 2020. Latvia's experience has demonstrated that perceptions of the best course of action for controlling the spread of the virus vary depending on available data and the need to balance epidemiological safety considerations and public sentiment. Latvia has tried to rely on available scientific research and international best practice to make government decisions that strike an optimal balance between public health and economic and social dimensions of development. It has provided state-funded vaccinations against Covid-19, imposed restrictions on economic sectors to reduce the spread of the virus, and provided support to citizens and businesses with limited working opportunities.

The Cabinet approved NDP2027 before the Covid-19 pandemic started, but the pandemic was well underway when the Saeima began deliberations to approve the plan. To align crisis and sustainable development priorities, the parliament Sustainable Development Commission issued an accompanying statement to the plan known as the Covid-19 Annex. The annex states that resources to stem the pandemic and mitigate the consequences are also to contribute to achieving goals set in the plan.

### Accelerated action under Covid-19 conditions mandated by the parliament

- Public health (SDG 3);
- Social protection and equal opportunities (SDG 1, SDG 10);
- The economy –
  - liquidity and access to working capital for businesses;
  - digital transformation of the economy (SDG 9);
  - sustainable labour market policies (SDG 8);
  - a flexible lifelong learning system (SDG 4);
  - adapting infrastructure and service delivery platforms to new products and services (SDG 8);
  - more efficient use of local resources (SDG 12);
  - investment in infrastructure for public safety and energy efficiency (SDG 9, SDG 11, SDG 7);
  - supply chain security for the domestic economy;
  - the rule of law and investment protection (SDG 16).

Source: The Saeima Covid-19 Annex to the National Development Plan 2027



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“It is in the interests of every state to defend the international system based on rules and rights in order to maintain global security and sustainable growth. The UN is at the heart of multilateralism and the rules-based international order.

No state alone is big enough to resolve the complex challenges we face today.”

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**President Mr Egils Levits**  
on multilateralism

21 September 2021 at the 76th session of the UN General Assembly  
Source: [CHANCERY OF THE PRESIDENT OF LATVIA](#)

## The President of Latvia on the SDGs

President Mr Egils Levits delivered his first address to the United Nations at the 74th session of the General Assembly, where he expressed Latvia's determination to achieve the SDGs. He emphasised Latvia's progress in bilateral development cooperation and gender equality, as well as Latvia's commitment to comply with the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The President has paid special attention to the role of the UN in linking SDG 9 and SDG 16, strengthening the security and rule of law aspects of cyber security and artificial intelligence in the digital environment, and the importance of multilateralism.

## Aggression of Russia and Belarus against Ukraine

The aggression of Russia and Belarus has created geopolitical tensions in the region that will have a long-term impact on regional and global security as well as global development. Since 24 February 2022, Europe has been experiencing an unprecedented influx of refugees. Latvia's government, local governments, businesses, and civil society engage in whole-of-government and whole-of-society efforts to support Ukraine and its refugees in Latvia and on the international level.

## Climate change affects Latvia

The summer of 2018 in Latvia was hot and dry. High temperatures contributed to the spread of a wildfire in the peat bogs of Valdgale. The fire quickly spread underground and into the surrounding forests. Latvia's neighbors helped by providing helicopters to battle the wildfires, drawing public attention to the environmental dimension of sustainability, as well as to need for international co-operation in responding to natural disasters. 52% of Latvia is covered by forests, 9.9% by peat bogs.

## The VNR process

Latvia's VNR is underpinned by Latvia's approach to each SDG, as established in the first Report to the United Nations on the Implementation of the [SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS \(2018\)](#) that was presented in Latvia's centenary year. The content and analysis of this second VNR is based on an assessment of the [National Development Plan 2014–2020 \(NDP2020\)](#) and the [SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY UNTIL 2030 \(LATVIA2030\)](#), the [NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020–2027 \(NDP2027\)](#), the [EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL](#) and recent challenges.

### About Latvia's first report

Latvia mainstreams the SDGs in its policies, therefore the first report reflected both progress toward Latvia's long-term and mid-term (NDP2020) strategy goals. Policies during this period took into account a sizable emigration of the working-age population that left its mark on productivity and the social situation. Latvia was seen as a green country with innovation potential. For these reasons, the first report recommended that Latvia's sustainable development should be concentrated toward:

- 1) the development of an innovative and ecologically efficient economy;
- 2) the reduction of income inequality and inequality of opportunity.

The recommendation, taken into account in the creation of NDP2027, is an underlying theme of this Report. Addressing inequality is especially important in the context of achieving climate neutrality.

<sup>1</sup>An innovative and ecologically efficient economy is a commitment in Latvia's Sustainable Development Strategy through 2030 (approved by the Cabinet and Parliament in 2010) that is similar to the concept of responsible consumption and production.

## The main contributions of Latvia's 2018 VNR

1. Basic information about Latvia's approach to each SDG.
2. A reference for understanding how the SDGs are integrated into Latvian policy.
3. Overview of Latvia's policy planning system, the role of public participation, and decision-making processes to achieve policy coherence.
4. Knowledge dissemination on SDG-related stakeholder activities.
5. Fostering a conducive environment for the emergence of collaborative platforms on the SDGs.

Source: Latvia Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals 2018

## VNR reporting process and stakeholders

The preparation of the Report began with the approval of NDP2027. It includes the following steps.

1. Evaluating the targets, policy outcomes, and activities of the previous programming period.
2. Mapping the SDG targets against NDP2027 performance indicators.
3. Mapping the SDG targets against the ministry level policies and their indicators.
4. Integrating stakeholder opinions and best practice, communicating with stakeholders via letters, Twitter and other social media (COVID restrictions).
5. Preparing information for each SDG and other content.
6. Posting stakeholder materials on the CSCC website.
7. Conducting a public consultation.
8. Presenting and discussing the VNR with the Saeima Sustainable Development Commission.
9. Endorsement of the Report by the Cabinet of Ministers.

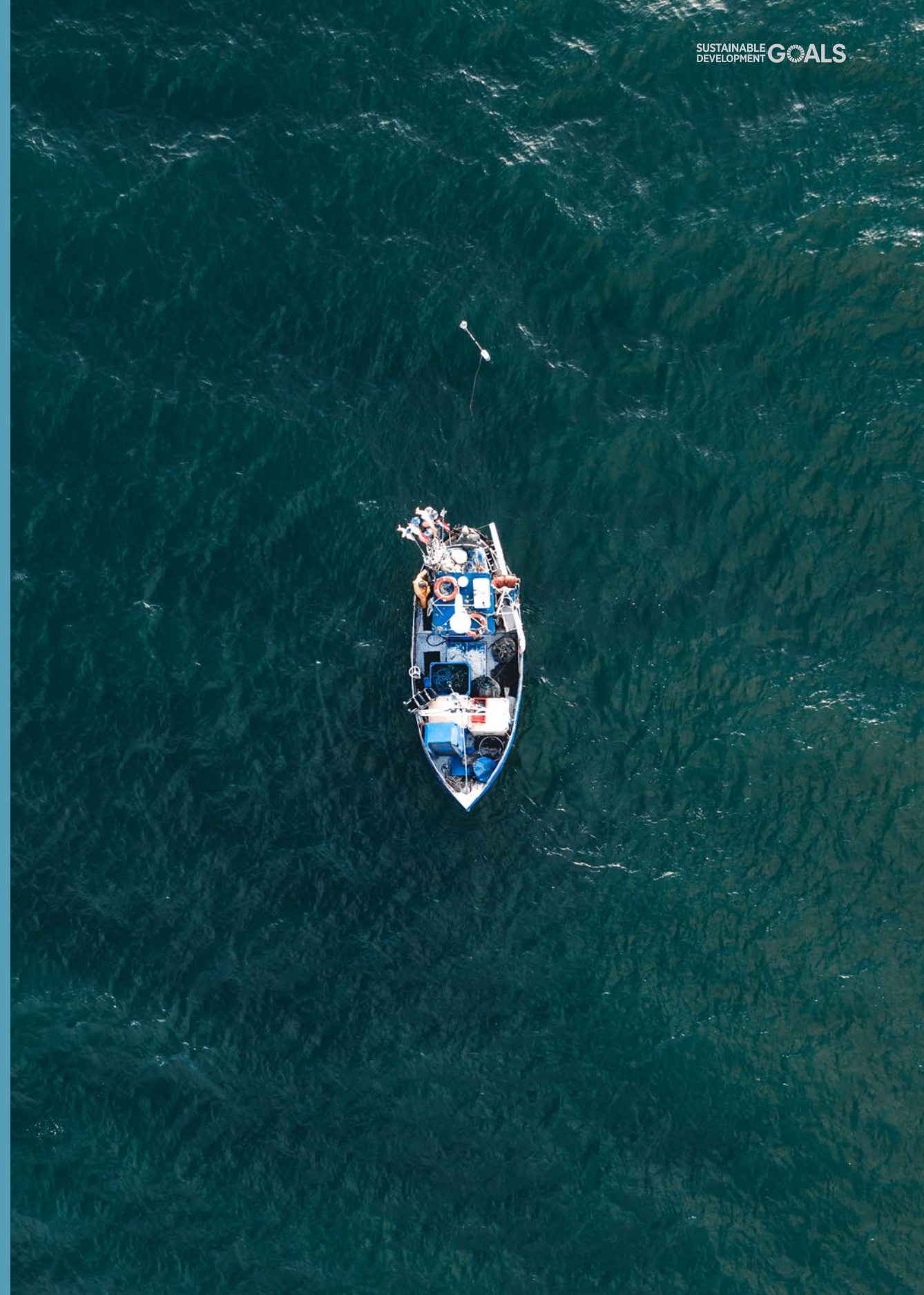
Latvia has not created a separate institutional reporting mechanism for the VNR, since the SDGs are mainstreamed through the national level planning and decision-making processes. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, communication and consensus on the content of the Report was mostly reached remotely.

## Chapter 2

# Implementation of the 17 SDGs in Latvia

This chapter describes how each of the SDGs has been implemented, highlighting results at the target level, major activities, indicators, and good practice. Since Latvia is at the beginning of a new planning period, and next steps have been agreed upon, we provide examples of policy initiatives and reference new policy documents. Future challenges are identified to keep intended activities on course.

Photo: Kristaps Ungurs, Unsplash





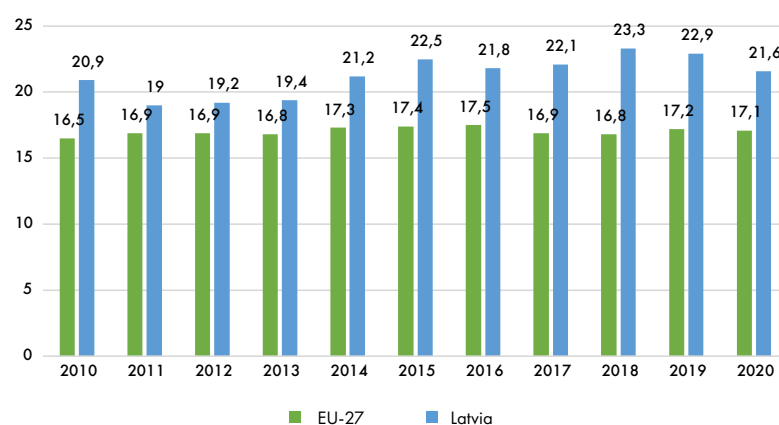


## No Poverty – reducing the depth of poverty



Latvia's goal is to reduce the depth of poverty of the population with the lowest incomes, especially people of retirement age, people with disabilities, and children at social risk. Economic growth, an efficient tax system, lifelong learning, decent work, and appropriate social inclusion measures decrease the risk of poverty. Paying taxes ensures health care services, pensions and other forms of social security. The state helps people improve their circumstances and provides financial support to those on low incomes.

AT-RISK-OF-POVERTY RATE BEFORE SOCIAL TRANSFERS



Data source: Eurostat

### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▲ 1.1 The share of persons with income below the minimum income level has gradually decreased, reaching 7.7% in 2020.
- ▼ 1.2 In 2020, 23.4% of the population was at risk of poverty. The largest group – persons aged 65 and over.
- ▲ 1.3 Starting from 2021, fundamental changes have been made in the minimum income level system to provide monetary support to persons with the lowest incomes.
- ▼ 1.4 Half of households below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold have no savings.
- ▼ 1.5 Low impact of social transfers (17.1%) on poverty reduction, especially for people over retirement age.

### Key actions

- The guaranteed minimum income level almost doubled (from 2021).
- Minimum old-age and disability pension payments increased significantly (from 2021).
- Child benefit payments greatly raised.
- The minimum wage gradually increased.
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, financial support was provided to those most in need.
- From 2018, tax relief for dependents and non-taxable minimum for pensioners was significantly increased.

### REFORM OF THE MINIMUM INCOME LEVEL SYSTEM

The minimum income level reform was launched in 2021 and is one of the country's most significant achievements in reducing poverty over the past 15 years. The statutory minimum income threshold, a reference level for granting various benefits, and its periodic review will improve the situation for persons with the lowest incomes while ensuring transparency of minimum benefit and pension calculations.

Microsimulation data demonstrate the effect on inequality of an annual review of the minimum income level (Scenario 1) compared to a review conducted every three years (Scenario 2).





### DIFFERENT NEEDS OF DIFFERENT HOUSEHOLDS

In 2021, researchers developed a reference budget methodology for determining household expenditures for different types of households. This is the only indicator that reflects realistic expenditure, or consumption, of households in today's socio-economic circumstances taking into account people's daily needs. The reference budget consists of two parts – food basket and non-food expenditure, and it is calculated for different types of households depending on their location. The reference budget is a set of indicators designed to assess the adequacy of existing policies, and it serves as a reference point for the development of various income and expenditure-related policies.

### Good practice

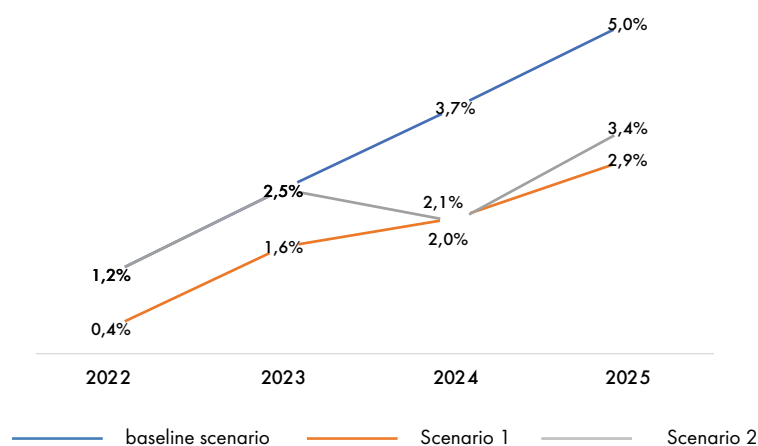
#### FINANCIAL SECURITY

Many people lack knowledge and skills in financial planning, saving, ensuring sufficient income in old age, and avoiding fraud.

Easy-to-use information is especially useful for the unemployed and jobseekers, people with mental or physical disabilities and their family members, young people starting independent life after out-of-home care, people with incomplete primary or secondary education, elderly with limited support, and persons with low incomes.

The Latvian Financial Industry Association and its members have involved non-governmental organisations advocating for these groups in planning the National Strategy for Financial Literacy in Latvia 2021–2027. Activities include annual financial literacy weeks, retirement weeks and other events.

GINI COEFFICIENT SCENARIOS, % CHANGE AGAINST 2021



Source: Latvijas Banka – microsimulation data.

### Key future actions

- Determine in the law the minimum income thresholds as a percentage of the median income and review it annually.
- Increase social transfers and their impact on poverty reduction, i.e. by assessing social benefits, allowances and supplements and linking them to changes in socio-economic indicators.
- Assess the targeting of social benefits and improve coverage.
- Continue to ensure the long-term stability of the state social insurance system, including by reviewing the conditions for retirement, the conditions for financing the state social insurance, and the conditions for universal and personalised support as well as by assessing the possibility of introducing a basic pension.
- From 2022, enable needy and low-income households with insufficient income to cover all of their liabilities due to their social and economic situations to receive debt relief from consumer loans.

### New policies

- Strategy for Social Protection and Labour Market Policy for 2021–2027
- Plan for Improving the Minimum Income Support System for 2022–2024
- Strategy for Financial Literacy in Latvia 2021–2027
- Strategy for the Development of Children, Youth and the Family for 2021–2027 (draft)
- Conceptual Report on the improvement of the pension policy (draft)

### Challenges

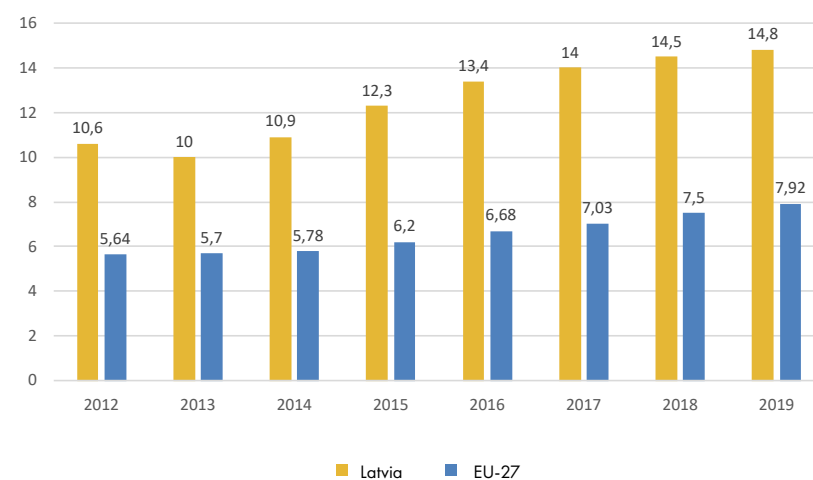
- An aging population and decline in the number of children and the working age population.
- Increased risk of poverty for people of retirement age, the unemployed, and other economically inactive people.
- One of the lowest expenditures on social protection among the EU member states.
- High share of employees who make state social insurance contributions from low-income levels.
- Explicit regional differences in employment and unemployment rates.
- Insufficient financial literacy.



## SDG 2. Healthy nutrition and sustainable agriculture

Fresh, healthy food is in high demand in Latvia. The production of local food, such as rye bread or Midsummer cheese, is important for rural tourism. Craft markets and direct trading are widespread and valued in the urban environment, creating close interaction between urban and rural economies and promoting regional identities (brands). The number of organic farmers and the area of land under organic farming is steadily increasing. However, consumption is hampered by purchasing power and limited information on organic farming methods and products. Obesity exceeds the EU average, necessitating raising awareness on healthy eating habits and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Farms are important players in ensuring healthy nutrition for consumers and quality of life in rural areas.

**AREA UNDER ORGANIC FARMING  
(AS % OF TOTAL AGRICULTURAL AREA)**



### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▲ 2.1 High-quality food that is safe for human health and the environment is readily available, and food support for the needy increased during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ▼ 2.2 One in four women and one in five men in Latvia are obese or overweight, which is above the EU average.
- ▲ 2.3 The Latvian Land Fund leases agricultural land in order to preserve its use for agricultural purposes.
- ▲ 2.4 For years the use of plant protection products per hectare of agricultural land has been one of the lowest in the EU – 0.84 kg/ha compared to the EU average of 2.05 kg/ha.
- ▼ 2.5 Latvia has not precisely defined the allocation of genetic resources.

### Latvia in the world

- The Rural Development Programme supports the economic and skill development of small farmers.
- Plant protection products are controlled, and their effects on different ecosystems are monitored.
- Support is provided for the processing of products under the national food quality scheme and brand recognition through [www.novadugarsa.lv](http://www.novadugarsa.lv).
- Latvia promotes export capacity and competitiveness of small- and medium-sized farmers in partner countries, for example, through the Latvian Rural Advisory and Education Center's projects for agricultural development. In 2021, an E-Consultant was set up to help Ukrainian small- and medium-sized enterprises prepare their products for export to the European Union market.
- Latvia has participated in the UN Food Systems Summit, including its preparatory process. In the summer of 2021, Latvia organised a national dialogue called Resilience of the Latvian Countryside for Food and Future Generations with the participation of President E. Levits. At the beginning of 2022, Latvia submitted its National Pathway.

### Key actions

- The School Fruit, Vegetables and Milk scheme helps schools promote healthy eating habits.
- Primary school pupils in 1st to 4th grade receive free lunches from state and local governments. Products certified under the national food quality scheme or the organic farming scheme are given preferential treatment.
- Food assistance to the most deprived consists of individual food packs delivered to disadvantaged households, as well as hot meals provided at distribution points.



## Good practice

**NOVADA GARŠA** is a system designed to trace the origin and quality of locally produced food products. It creates greater brand awareness for over 6280 local products found under the following quality labels: organic farming, Integrated growing, Green Spoon and Global G.A.P. The system includes a catalogue of Latvian food products, producers and processors. In addition, Novada Garša organises events, conferences, competitions and master classes to raise awareness of local food in Latvia, the European Union, and the world.



Photo: www.ikskile.lv



### THE SCHOOL FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND MILK SCHEME

The school programme provides preschool- and school-age children up to 9th grade with free fruits, vegetables and milk. The scheme contributes to healthy eating habits through the consumption of fresh products. Children and their families not only learn about the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle but also become more aware of agricultural production and related aspects of food and nutrition.



Photo: unsplash

## FLOURISHING IN RURAL AREAS

The Latvian Rural Forum is an association uniting Latvian Local Action Groups that foster sustainable development in Latvia's rural areas and represent the interests of the rural population. Latvian Local Action Groups are key drivers for community development. They include local public and private sector entities that have united to develop and implement community-led local development strategies that:

- develop the local economy, primarily creating non-agricultural jobs
- address social cohesion by involving stakeholders from different sectors, age groups, etc.
- result in territorial cohesion between rural, suburban, urban and coastal areas.

Every year the Latvian Rural Forum presents a Great Projects Award for the year's most successful local projects co-funded by the EU. The Great Projects Award draws national level attention to creative rural initiatives.

## Key future actions

- Promoting knowledge and skills for farmers pursuing environmentally friendly agriculture.
- Targeted development of organic farming.
- Measures to reduce environmental pollution caused by agricultural activities.
- Increasing the uptake of research and development in agri-business.
- Resource efficiency on farms to conserve biodiversity and mitigate climate change.
- Increasing the availability of safe and high-quality local food for all consumers.

## New policies

- Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy for 2023–2027.
- Community-led local development strategies.

## Challenges

- The policy of developing a more productive bioeconomy increases income for larger agricultural farms but displaces much of the rural population. The number of large farms is relatively stable, while the number of smaller, less productive farms is decreasing. This concentration of subsidies and other forms of support on large farms distorts the market for farms of different sizes.
- Organic food is more expensive than conventionally produced food, and both conventionally and organically produced food is safe for human health.
- Programmes aimed at promoting healthy nutrition do not always lead to a change in habits.

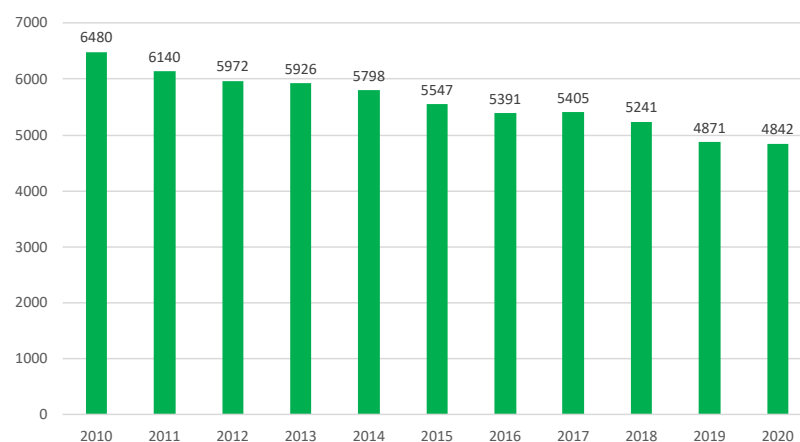
The Latvian countryside is rich in its diversity regarding land use and production. To date, agricultural policy has facilitated the modernisation of production and processing, and increased the visibility and export of certain agricultural product lines to the global market. In turn, small-farm productivity is increasingly being seen in terms of providing a wide array of specialised goods for the local market. Strengthening the visibility of small farms requires smart cooperation and specialisation to respond to ever changing consumer demands.



## Good health and well-being

Affordable and efficient healthcare is one of the major challenges of the last decade. It is important that people take care of their health and that the state improves the availability and quality of health care services. Latvia plans to increase the number of doctors and nurses and reduce waiting times, especially for children. High premature mortality, mainly among men, is largely caused by smoking, alcohol use, and external causes (namely, road accidents, suicides, drowning, and risky behaviours). In the coming years, special attention will be paid to psychological and emotional well-being, reducing the risks of crises, and providing timely support to avoid crisis. At the global level, Latvia donates Covid-19 vaccines to partner countries both bi-laterally and through the COVAX mechanism.

**POTENTIAL YEARS OF LIFE LOST 100,000, TOTAL, PER 100 000 INHABITANTS AGED 0-64**



Data source: CDPC

### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▶ 3.1 Progress in maternal mortality due to pregnancy-related causes is variable and still higher than the European average.
- ▲ 3.2 Child mortality up to five years of age has declined in the last 10 years.
- ▶ 3.3 The incidence of infectious diseases in Latvia has decreased significantly in recent years, with the exception of certain diseases and new infections such as Covid-19.
- ▲ 3.4 Premature mortality from external causes has decreased, but Latvia is still among the EU countries with the highest suicide rates.
- ▲ 3.5 Absolute alcohol consumption among people of working age has fallen but is still higher than the EU average.
- ▶ 3.6 The generation born after 2000 is replacing the traditional use of tobacco products with a variety of nicotine-containing and non-nicotine-containing products, mainly electronic smoking devices.
- ▶ 3.7 The number of people killed in road traffic accidents has not changed significantly, but the decrease in the number of road traffic injuries is significant.
- ▲ 3.8 The total number of abortions and induced abortions is decreasing, and the number of adolescents giving birth is decreasing.
- ▲ 3.9 The availability of national coverage of health care services and medicines has slightly improved.
- ▶ 3.10 Hazardous chemical and air, water and soil pollution and contamination have been declining in the long term. However, recent trends are levelling out upward, and ammonia emissions are increasing.

### Key actions

- Health promotion and disease prevention measures are implemented at national and local levels in relation to healthy nutrition, physical activity, substance abuse and process-addiction, sexual and reproductive health, and mental health.
- From 2022, state-funded vaccination against HPV is also available for boys, and pregnant women and adolescents can receive the vaccine against whooping cough. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the entire population could receive a free vaccine against seasonal flu.
- In 2021, the salaries of doctors and functional specialists increased on average by 25% compared to 2020.
- Attracting doctors, their assistants, nurses, nursing assistants, etc. and specialists to work outside cities in the regions.





- Prices of medicines included on the list of reimbursable medicines and patients' co-payments for reimbursable medicines decreased.
- Improved access to services for oncology patients.
- Wider range of available services to support psycho-emotional health, including to reduce the effects of Covid-19.
- New-born screening was improved for early detection of congenital diseases.

### Latvia in the world

By joining the Developed Countries Initiative, Latvia has donated, both bilaterally and through the COVAX mechanism, Covid-19 vaccines to partner countries, thus promoting the vaccination of the world's population and overcoming the effects of the pandemic. In 2021, Latvia donated to seven partner countries – 326 thousand vaccines doses in total.



Photo: Unsplash



### Key future actions

In order to continue improving health, Latvia undertakes:

- to improve the mental health of the population and to strengthen the emotional and psychological resilience of the population in various crisis situations;
- to develop guidelines and recommendations for schools for the prevention of violence and bullying, as well as raise public awareness on actions to reduce bullying at schools;
- to improve the availability of health care services in oncology;
- to provide successive assistance for reintegration of persons with alcohol and drug addiction;
- to develop new standards for patient care and models for GP practices;
- to improve the availability of dentistry;
- to determine the compensation procedure in cases when a person is suffering from serious or moderate damage to their health or life due to side effects from the Covid-19 vaccine.

### New policies

- Public Health Guidelines for 2021–2027 (draft).
- A new remuneration model for human resources involved in the provision of health care services (requires government decision) and a new human resource strategy in the health sector.
- Plans to: improve conditions and treatment in the areas of mental health, oncology, and rare diseases; prevent and contain the spread

of HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and hepatitis B and C.

- Plan on Improvement of Prevention and Health Care Activities to Reduce the Prevalence of Alcohol and Drug Use for 2023–2025.
- Action Plan to Reduce the Spread of Antimicrobial Resistance for 2023–2027.

### Challenges

- Highlighting health-promotion and disease-prevention measures with a special focus on groups at higher risk of premature incapacity or death.
- Giving a more prominent role in disease prevention to GP practice teams by involving nurses.
- Need for a clearer link between investment and health care outcomes.
- Addressing addiction to nicotine-containing and nicotine-free products, mainly e-cigarettes.
- Addressing addiction arising from the growing use of ICT.
- Digitisation of health care data and improvement of compatibility and quality, including improvement of health care ICT management.



## Good practice

### INCLUSIVE

- To ensure the availability of health care outside the capital Riga, additional funding is provided for employing doctors, their assistants, ergotherapists, physiotherapists, nursing assistants, nurses, midwives, dental hygienists, and dental assistants in the regions; the transfer of GP practices to new doctors is ensured when the previous doctor retires.
- Guidelines and recommendations for schools on the prevention of violence and bullying, as well as public awareness activities, are being planned.
- Remote doctor consultations are provided, and from the summer of 2020, pharmacies are allowed to supply medicines to the general population, including prescription medicines. This is especially important for people with no access or difficult access to a pharmacy, including in rural and less-populated areas, as well as for persons who are unable to leave their homes and cannot use the help of an authorised person to purchase medicines.

### REFORM OF THE NURSING PROFESSION

In order to improve health services and to reduce understaffing, the country introduced the General Care Nurse profession in 2022. Training is now university based. The previous two-stage education system for obtaining nursing qualifications, as well as the rigid retraining process, was abolished. The role of nurses has changed significantly by entrusting the nurses with broader competencies and the independence to diagnose patient-care problems, give counselling, and provide, evaluate and analyse the quality of patient care. This reform is in accordance with recommendations by the European Federation of Nurses Association.

### PATIENT OPINIONS

A national PREM platform has been established in Latvia. PREM (Patient Reported Experience Measures) gathers information on patients' views of their experience while they are receiving care. PREM strengthens patient-centred health care and can be used to follow up on patient feedback, identify patient priorities, and focus on general experiences such as staff attitudes and the hospital environment rather than on the experience related to a particular disease. As a result, practical aspects of care, such as waiting times and communication between doctor and patient, can be improved.

At present, all clinical university hospitals and some regional and specialised hospitals are measuring patient experience using a platform developed for sending patients questionnaires and retrieving data. Although the PREM platform is being introduced at different speeds in the hospital system, the most important thing is that Latvian hospitals are beginning to systematically take into account the views of patients to improve patient care.

### MORE LIGHT!

Kalāči, the memorial museum of Latvia's talented 19th-century poet Eduards Veidenbaums, is launching a series of activities called More Light! to reveal the potential of art in improving the mental health and well-being of young people. The museum is partnering with the local youth community to set up a new permanent exhibition in the poet's family home that reveals the poet's talents and aspirations, troubled relationships with his family and friends, fragile health, ideas on democracy and equality and, of course, his innovative poetry. In collaboration with Norwegian theatre artist Morten Brunn, young people act, resolve conflicts and develop their socio-emotional skills in creative drama workshops. In summer, artists in residence from Latvia and Norway will join young people to create works of art inspired by the museum's collection and local cultural history relevant to the youth of today.



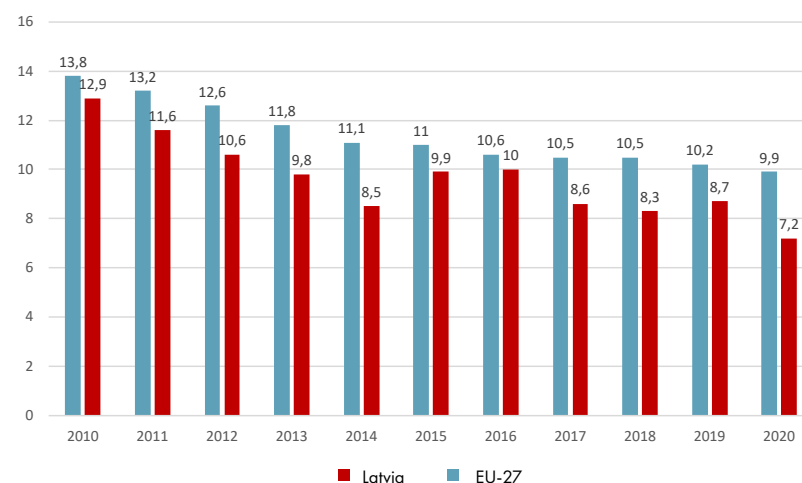
Photo: Youth at Kalāči.



## Quality education

Latvia's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 envisions the following improvements in the education system as a whole. Parents, teachers, educational institutions and students all participate in providing quality education. Education focuses on the development of competences. More attention is paid to mastering digital skills. Life-long learning is enshrined in the public consciousness. The state promotes opportunities for everyone to obtain a quality education, thereby gaining knowledge that will be relevant in the economy of the future, as well as professional and life skills. Education is inclusive and is achieved through early identification of educational needs, timely adaptation of the environment to the special needs of the child, recognition of talent and abilities, and support to reduce socio-economic risks.

SHARE OF EARLY LEAVERS FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING AGED 18–24 YEARS



Data source: Eurostat

### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▼ 4.1 Although all children in Latvia have the opportunity to acquire minimum basic skills, only a small share has excellent learning outcomes.
- ▶ 4.2 Education of children from the age of five is compulsory; access to preschool education is constantly improving.
- ▲ 4.3 A high share of the population has a tertiary education, especially women aged 30–34.
- ▲ 4.4 The share of early school leavers among 18–24-year-olds is declining. A larger percent of young people are opting for vocational secondary education. The popularity of lifelong learning is increasing.
- ▶ 4.5 There are gender differences in education types and levels. The majority of graduates of vocational secondary education are men, and the majority of graduates of general secondary education and higher education programmes are women.
- ▶ 4.6 Latvian students perform slightly above the OECD average in mathematics, average in natural sciences, and below average in reading in OECD tests. There are differences in reading performance between boys and girls.
- ▲ 4.7 Values, virtues and transversal skills that contribute to the understanding of sustainable development goals are included in the new education curriculum for general education.
- ▲ 4.a An increasing number of children with special needs attend general education schools.
- ▲ 4.b The number of scholarships for students in higher education institutions is increasing, especially for students from large families. Latvian national scholarships are also available to students from many developing countries.
- ▼ 4.c Relatively many teachers are of pre-retirement and retirement age, and there is only a moderate increase in the number of recently qualified teachers.





## Key actions

- A competence-based education standard is being introduced at all levels of general education, starting from 18-month-old toddlers in preschool to 12th grade.
- A new competence-based curriculum is being introduced in vocational education, together with new assessment procedures and a modular approach.
- A new student loan system is in place.
- The number of scholarships and the minimum amount awarded has increased, and special social scholarships for students from large families were introduced in 2021.
- New models for internal governance of higher education institutions and for doctoral programmes have been approved.
- Teachers' salaries are gradually increasing.
- Government loans granted to 23 investment projects will provide over 2500 children the opportunity to attend preschool.

## Latvia in the world

- Education is one of Latvia's development cooperation policy priorities. Latvia supports training programmes at Latvia's universities (for example, the Riga Graduate School of Law and the University of Latvia) for young professionals from Central Asia and European Neighbourhood Policy countries. The Ministry of Education and Science is in active dialogue with countries of Central Asia and the EU's Eastern Partnership concerning the field of education policy, supporting the strengthening of their education systems, and mutual cooperation.
- Global education activities promote awareness of global development challenges and the significance of development cooperation. Latvia is engaged in the Global Education Network in Europe.

- Latvia participates in the UNESCO SDG 4 – Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee, the aim of which is to ensure political leadership in the implementation of the Global Education Agenda "Education 2030" and to promote effective cooperation of all international actors towards achieving SDG 4 by managing and reviewing the Global Coordination Mechanism. Latvia is represented in this group by the Minister of Education and Science Mrs Anita Muižniece.

## Good practice

### WELLBEING ROADMAPS

The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the fact that although young people require a favourable psycho-emotional school environment, pupils and school staff often lack the knowledge and skills to make this a reality. In the summer of 2021, teams of student self-governing bodies from all regions of Latvia spent three days together learning about psycho-emotional health, peer support, self-initiative, and change management. Together with teachers, they created "Wellbeing Roadmaps" – activity plans for their schools. For example, the team at Riga Secondary School No. 33 held seminars for class teachers, helped peers solve problems through creative workshops, and established new traditions. School walls were painted with positive messages and a "kindness corner" was arranged. This national initiative may have improved the emotional environment for an entire generation.

### THE LAMPA FESTIVAL

The Conversation Festival LAMPA is an annual celebration of democracy, discussion and debate culture. The festival is a large-scale joint project, an open platform that engages hundreds of stakeholders – non-governmental organisations, companies, state and municipal institutions, media and individuals. Together they create its content and exchange views in a free and relaxed atmosphere, addressing contemporary public issues such as state and society, being human, the environment and sustainability, culture, education, security and justice, technology, etc. Thematic activities take various forms: discussions, debates, live libraries, workshops, cultural events, etc. The festival's hometown is trendy Cēsis. During the pandemic, the festival significantly expanded its audience when it upgraded its digital accessibility by going live and creating an archive of events on the website [www.festivalslampa.lv](http://www.festivalslampa.lv). The festival contributes significantly to achieving SDG 4.7 – education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

### SKOLO.LV

Since the autumn of 2021, the free learning platform skolo.lv provides pre-schools and schools the opportunity to integrate digital technologies in education. The virtual learning platform, suitable for both unassisted and teacher-led learning, consists of specially designed e-courses. Skolo.lv can be used by teachers for planning and leading instruction as well as by teachers and students when studying in person, remotely, or in hybrid formats.



Photo: Juris Ross

### MISSION POSSIBLE

The aim of Iespējamā Misija (Mission Possible), as it is known in Latvia, is to provide quality education for every child in Latvia by bringing needed changes into schools and classrooms. Hand-in-hand with the Ministry of Education and Science, the initiative is implementing the programme TeachingPower. It provides school principals with personalised support to develop leadership skills and re-build their schools into learning organisations. Teach for All is also currently supporting its partner organisation in Ukraine, Teach For Ukraine, which has mobilised and redirected its resources – teacher training and support – to the common goal of reducing the socio-emotional burden and future consequences of the war on Ukrainian children and their mental health. Iespējamā Misija is a part of the Teach for All network.





## Support for NEETs

To provide young persons not in employment, education or training (NEET) with opportunities for the future, local governments in cooperation with Latvia's International Youth Programme Agency customised activities to meet the specific needs and interests of the individual. For example, in Preiļi, a mentor and a programme manager help the young person design and follow up on a 3–4 month programme that includes individual support and group activities (at least 24 hours monthly), such as psychologist and career counsellor consultations, workshops, classes, etc. This extra effort means that 90% of NEET youth who have received such support gain employment or become self-employed, return to school, or become active in an NGO or youth centre.

### INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – AT THE WORKPLACE

People seem to have no time to improve much needed competencies. To promote learning, employers and employees will be offered non-formal online training courses such as specialised training on cyber-security, AI and high-performance computing, and short-term digital training for entrepreneurs.



Photo: Riga Technical University

## Key future actions

- Introduce a monitoring system for vocational education and training graduates to provide data for decision-making by individuals and educational institutions, as it is already in place for tertiary education graduates.
- Develop and integrate a digital learning management platform, digital learning resources, and support materials into the learning process.
- Organise specialised training on cyber-security, AI, and high-performance computing, as well as short-term digital training on specific issues for entrepreneurs – all these measures are aimed to improve the digital skills of the population within the framework of lifelong learning.
- Introduce an induction year and provide mentors to support teachers entering the profession.
- Strengthen cooperation between educational institutions and parents to create an emotionally safe and positive environment.
- Increase the number of vocational education and training students in work-based training programmes, in particular in STEM subjects through medium- and long-term cooperation between vocational education and training institutions and businesses, including micro and small enterprises.

## Challenges

- The teaching profession is insufficiently attractive to replace needed school and academic teaching staff.
- School environments are lacking in inclusivity and provision of emotional safety for all pupils.
- Educational opportunities in urban and rural schools are unequal.
- Young people not in employment, education or training have limited access to support in rural areas.
- Educating girls about career and research opportunities in STEM, becoming interested from an early age.
- Due to a lack of advisors and career counsellors in Latvian school systems, some youth are unaware of their talents and abilities, which may lead to poor choices regarding further education.
- Low motivation for involvement in adult education.
- Insufficient digital skills.
- Incomplete data management and education quality management at the educational institution and national level.

## New policies

1. Education Development Guidelines for 2021–2027
2. National Industrial Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027
3. Digital Transformation Guidelines for 2021–2027

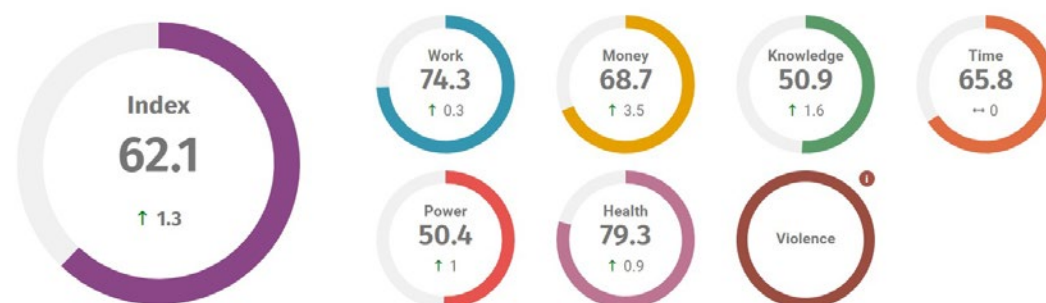


## Achieving gender equality

Equal rights and opportunities for women and men are fundamental human rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia and a horizontal principle for all policies. Latvia aims to ensure equal rights and opportunities in the labour market and education, reduce the gender pay gap, and prevent domestic and gender-based violence. At the same time, Latvia is an active defender of gender equality internationally.

### GENDER EQUALITY INDEX

Latvia v for the 2021 v edition



Source: European Institute for Gender Equality

### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▲ 5.1 There is gradual progress in all areas of gender equality, with the Gender Equality Index rising in 2021.
- 5.2 Specialists have been trained in identifying and dealing with domestic violence and violence against women, and inter-institutional cooperation mechanisms have been established. (No assessment due to a lack of comparable data.)
- ▶ 5.3 Women's participation in the labour market is consistently high, with women more likely to work part-time.
- ▶ 5.4 The employment rate of women in Latvia is on an upward trend, while the pay gap between men and women (22.3% in 2020) is the highest in the EU.
- ▲ 5a. Women's digital skills are gradually improving and Latvia ranked 16th among EU member states in this dimension.
- ▲ 5b. Latvia continues to integrate the principle of equal opportunities and rights for women and men in sectoral policies.

### Key actions

- Understanding of the role of the father in the family has been strengthened, highlighting the benefits of equal parental involvement in child care and family life, and focusing on the everyday lives and challenges of divorced fathers.
- Measures were taken to reduce labour market segregation by putting competence-based education and curricula into practice.
- Since August 2020, a nationwide model of institutional co-operation has been in place for protecting victims of gender-based violence and his or her needs.
- As of 1 July 2021, courts may order perpetrators to undergo a mandatory rehabilitation course to prevent recurrence of domestic violence.

### Latvia in the world

- Gender equality is a long-term priority of Latvia's development cooperation policy. Gender issues are assessed horizontally in all development cooperation projects. Examples of projects supporting equal rights for women and men include Latvian NGO support for the establishment of public service pilot centres for women and other vulnerable groups in rural areas of Uzbekistan in 2021. Support for women and girls has also been an important pillar of Latvia's support to Belorussian civil society since August 2020.
- The National Action Plan on the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in Latvia for the period of 2020–2025



has been approved for implementation.

- Latvia has been elected to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) for the term 2021–2025, and serves as Vice-Chair in the Bureau for the 66th and 67th Session of the CSW.
- Latvia regularly makes annual voluntary contributions to support the work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-WOMEN), and in April 2022 was elected to the UN-WOMEN Executive Board for the term 2023–2025.
- Latvia is active in the UN Group of Friends in Geneva and New York on gender equality and the elimination of violence against women. At the end of 2021, Latvia was one of the founding members of a group of friends of gender equality at the UN in Vienna.

## Good practice

### RIGA TECHGIRLS

The mission of Riga TechGirls is to inspire women and girls to excel in the technology industry. Since 2019, the association organises extensive and free learning opportunities for women. During training, women without any previous experience acquire new digital skills that are necessary to successfully start a career in the IT sector. Women who have lost their jobs, are in low-paid positions, are returning to the labour market after parental leave, or wish to retrain but are not ready to take the first step on their own are particularly encouraged to join.

In the “Get to know technology” programme, 50 lecturers working in the field of IT provided training in Latvian for three months on current technologies. 3000–4500 women apply for the programme every year and 1500 participants

graduate from the programme, 45% of whom change their profession to IT or start in-depth studies in one of the IT fields. Following this training, approximately 200 local and international mentors meet with participants in individual sessions for six months.

In 2021, “Riga TechGirls” in Latvia was one of the 13 organisations selected by Google.org to receive support to provide free training to 1,000 female teachers, 1,000 female medical professionals, and 1,000 representatives of the creative industries. The programme has been developed in cooperation with Lithuanian partners Women Go Tech.

### ASSOCIATION “FATHERS”

The association “Fathers” strives to eliminate stereotypes about the family model. Research shows that fathers want to be more involved in raising their children, but often encounter stereotypical attitudes from school, health care professionals and others. In 2021, a support group for fathers in the divorce process, “Divorce. Me and Others”, was organised; it also provided psychologist support. The association, in cooperation with the Swedish Embassy in Latvia and with the support of the Swedish Institute, implemented the international initiative #globalguytalk, which calls on fathers to start discussions and enhance the involvement of men and their sons to create an equal society, break stereotypes, and improve their quality of life.

## Key future actions

- Improve the legal framework, compile and share good practice on work-life balance from employers, and provide support so that women and men can better reconcile professional and private life;
- Reduce stereotypes regarding professions suitable for women and men;
- Organise leadership skill training for female pupils in general secondary schools (9th–12th grade) and vocational education institutions;
- Organise youth debates on the role of gender stereotypes in gender-based violence and the high tolerance for violence;
- Continue to improve the support services available to women suffering from domestic violence;
- Improve the legal framework for early detection of trafficking in human beings, and train investigators, prosecutors and judges to facilitate the prosecution of perpetrators.

## New policies

1. Strategy for Social Protection and Labour Market Policy 2021–2027
2. Plan for the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and men for 2021–2023
3. Human trafficking prevention plan for 2021–2023

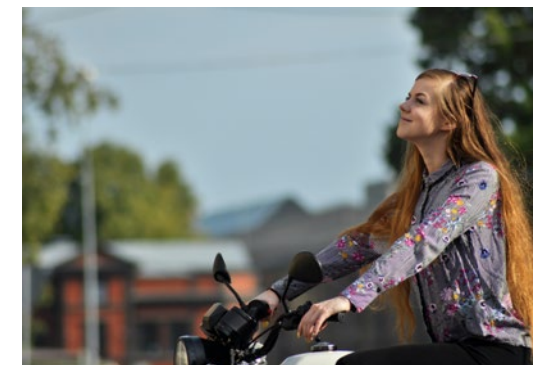


Photo: Mārtiņš Zemlickis, Unsplash

## Challenges

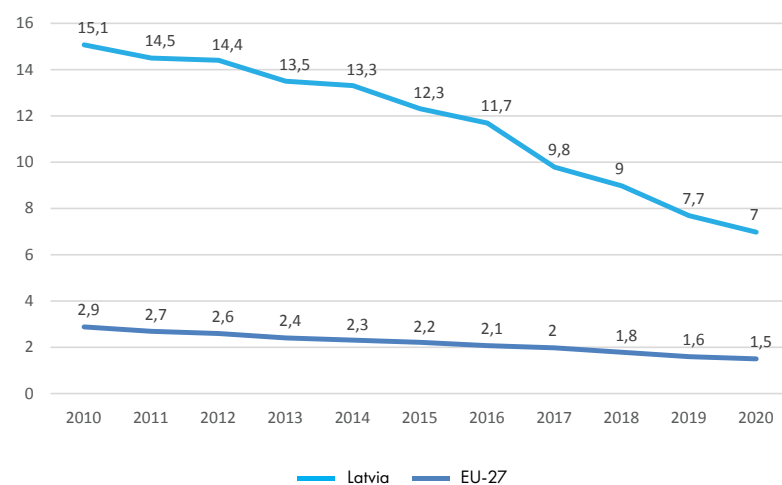
- Reducing the risk of poverty for women of retirement age.
- Reducing the gender pay gap.
- Prevention of gender-based and domestic violence, including identification of violence and the actions to take when facing it. Promoting zero tolerance for violence.
- Reducing work-related gender stereotypes between professions and sectors of the economy. Ensuring gender balance in daily domestic responsibilities.
- Dealing with the Covid-19-pandemic-related increase in the burden of care and unpaid domestic labour for women, especially for women with children under the age of 18, and increase in the risk of domestic and gender-based violence.
- Ensuring availability of affordable care services for children and elderly family members to promote women’s participation in the labour market.



## Clean water and sanitation

Water protection is one of Latvia's environmental priorities. Latvia strives to reduce the impact of economic activities, including agriculture, on the water quality of inland water bodies and the marine environment. Plans for the coming years envisage improving the management of sewage sludge and wastewater treatment plants. Investments will increase the use of central sewerage systems and the availability of centrally supplied drinking water. International co-operation in the protection and management of water resources is also important for Latvia, as 56% of the total river runoff is upstream, in the neighbouring countries of Lithuania, Estonia, Belarus and Russia.

**POPULATION HAVING NEITHER A BATH, NOR A SHOWER, NOR INDOOR FLUSHING TOILET IN THEIR HOUSEHOLD, %**



Data source: Eurostat

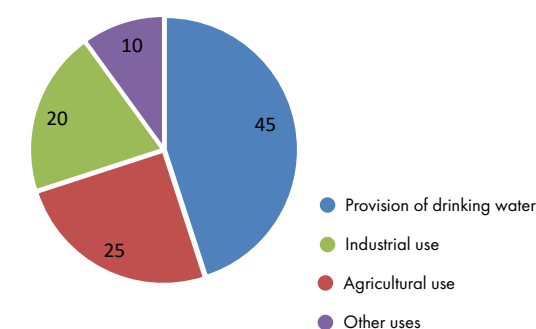
### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▲ 6.1 Virtually all residents of Latvia have access to clean drinking water. A centralised water supply is available to approx. 84% of the population. Water supply companies comply with national mandatory drinking water quality requirements. The share of the population receiving quality drinking water increased from 75% in 2006 to 87% in 2019.
- ▲ 6.2 Adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities are available in Latvia. Most dwellings are connected to centralised sewerage, and other households use proper local collection or treatment of wastewater.
- ▲ 6.3 The quality and availability of surface and groundwater is sufficient for a variety of water uses. However, the ecological quality of most surface waters is poor, as it is adversely affected by shore and bed modifications (for instance, land amelioration, dams and other barriers, shore fortifications), pollution from diffuse sources (for example, agricultural and forestry land, streets and roads) and point sources (namely, sewage pipes).
- ▲ 6.4 Centralised water supply systems provide adequate drinking water, but need to be maintained and modernised. Significant investments are also needed in wastewater collection and treatment infrastructure, for the modernisation of treatment plants, the maintenance and expansion of sewerage networks, and the management of sewage sludge.

▶ 6.5 The current regulations on the use and management of water resources are more than 20 years old and need some modification. Due to the geopolitical situation, cross-border cooperation with third countries might be at risk.

▶ 6.6 Improvements in the protection of ecosystems are needed, in particular by reducing pollution of water bodies with plant nutrients (such as pollution from agricultural land) and the discharge of wastewater from cities and towns.

**TOTAL GROUNDWATER USE BY SECTOR**



Source: LEGMC

**MAP OF LATVIAN RIVER BASIN DISTRICTS**



Source: LEGMC





Photo: Kristaps Ungurs, Unsplash

## Key actions

- Over the past 20 years, more than 840 million euros have been invested in the development of water management infrastructure. Improving wastewater collection and treatment has increased the availability and quality of centralised water supplies and sewerage services.
- Water monitoring is carried out on a regular basis to obtain information on the ecological and chemical quality of surface and groundwater, the quality of marine waters, and the impact of agricultural pollution.
- Latvia continues to enforce EU water legislation (directives). Each of the four management plans for Latvia's river basin districts (Gauja, Daugava, Venta and Lielupe) for the period 2016–2021 includes measures to achieve or maintain “good” status for surface and groundwater bodies.

## Latvia in the world

- Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania exchange information on water quality, river basin management plans, and wastewater management issues on a regular basis.
- Water monitoring results are submitted to various international institutions – the European Environment Agency, the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the UN Environment Programme, the World Health Organisation, and the World Meteorological Organisation.
- Within the framework of Latvian development cooperation, the clean technology cluster Cleantech Latvia is providing assistance for waste management, drinking water and wastewater management, modernisation of municipal public services in Uzbekistan. Through an EU and Latvian co-financed project, Cleantech Latvia provides support to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan engineering industries to ensure high quality standards in the implementation of investment projects, especially in the water management sector.

## Good practice

### VITAMIN W

In order to break the stereotype that drinking tap water is unsafe, in 2020 the Latvian Association of Water Supply and Sewerage Companies partnered with Riga Technical University (RTU) and restaurants and cafés to launch the “W Vitamin” initiative. They called on young people and businesses to change their water drinking habits, pointing out that replacing pre-packaged drinking water with tap water saves money, reduces waste, and promotes an environmentally friendly and responsible lifestyle.

### RENEWABLE ENERGY RESOURCES FOR WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANTS

To increase energy efficiency and create environmentally friendly solutions for the energy intensive process of water supply and wastewater treatment, plants in Latvia have started installing solar power plants.

The water company Liepājas ūdens has been operating two solar power plants since 2018.

In 2020, solar panel power plant equipment was installed in the biological wastewater treatment plants owned by Valmieras ūdens. The enterprise plans to obtain about a third of the electricity required for the daily operation of the treatment plant from solar energy.



Photo: Valmieras ūdens



Free drinking water is being offered in more and more public places. Tapwater in Cesis. Photo: Draugiem Group

## Key actions

In order to improve the quality and availability of drinking water, increase the efficiency of water use, and improve wastewater collection and treatment, Latvia plans to:

- ensure that 92% of centralised wastewater connections meet requirements by 2023;
- ensure that by 2024 at least 87% of the population has access to quality drinking water;
- start implementing the sewage sludge management strategy by the end of 2022;
- maintain 33% of surface water bodies at “high” and “good” ecological quality levels, and 88% of groundwater bodies at a “good” quality level by 2024.

## New policies

- Environmental Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027 (draft)
- Latvia’s Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change by 2030
- Action Plan for the Transition to a Circular Economy for 2020–2027
- Water Supply Investment Plan for 2021–2027
- Wastewater Management Investment Plan for 2021–2027
- River Basin District Management Plans for 2022–2027

## Challenges

- Increased costs and reduced efficiency of further expansion of the wastewater collection network.
- Reducing the costs of providing water management services by creating energy-saving systems, reducing maintenance costs, and increasing tariffs.
- Introducing a risk assessment approach in the provision of water management services.
- Circular economy solutions for use of sewage sludge (for example, by setting up centralised sludge treatment and recycling centres throughout Latvia, larger specialised companies, etc.).
- A systematic solution for water management infrastructure in the newly established administrative territories due to the uneven capacity to treat wastewater collected from decentralised sewage systems.
- Solutions for rainwater management because rainwater and domestic collection systems are not always separated and thus strain treatment plants.

The collection and treatment of wastewater and the preparation of drinking water require significant investments of resources from households, businesses, and state and local governments. Although the situation is good and large investments have been made in Latvia in recent decades, both priority planning and large investments are still needed to maintain the quality of drinking water and implement the latest EU standards in the field of wastewater collection and treatment.

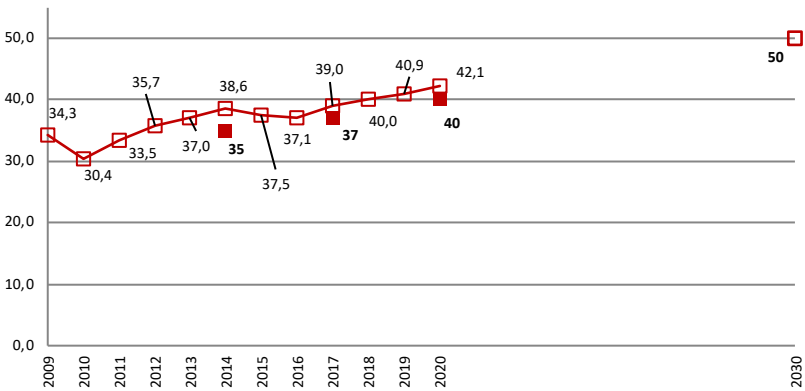




# Available and renewable energy

Energy security, broader sources of renewable energy, and energy efficiency are the three important dimensions of Latvia’s energy policy. Latvia plans to fully integrate into EU energy markets and modernise its energy infrastructure. This will increase the use of RES technologies in industry as well as in electricity and heat supply. Support will be provided to households using RES technologies for electricity and heat production and to encourage the construction of energy-efficient buildings and the renovation of existing ones. By 2027, 47.5% of total energy consumption is expected to come from RES. One of the highest fossil-fuel-consuming sectors is transport, so citizens must make the most of public transport, use bicycles, and drive zero-emission and low-emission vehicles.

SHARE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY IN GROSS FINAL ENERGY CONSUMPTION



Data source: Eurostat



Photo: Shutterstock



### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▶ 7.1 Energy resources and energy services are universally available and respond to changes in energy prices in the region.
- ▲ 7.2 Latvia's share of energy produced from RES is one of the largest in the EU, and has been steadily increasing.
- ▲ 7.3 The energy intensity of the economy has declined steadily over the medium term, becoming more moderate in recent years.

### Key actions

- The National Energy and Climate Plan for 2021–2030 was approved. It sets out measures to be taken by 2030, including promotion of the production and use of renewable energy and the improvement of energy efficiency, the improvement of energy security, and the strengthening of the internal energy market.
- The use of renewable energy sources in the production of electricity and heat, as well as in industry and households, is supported.
- Innovative energy and energy efficiency technology projects are being implemented.
- Increased electrification in the transport sector through subsidies for the purchase of electric vehicles; support for the development of vehicle charging infrastructure.
- The energy efficiency of heating in both residential and public buildings has improved.
- Energy infrastructure was developed and interconnections were established to increase security of energy supply.
- Support to cover costs for energy-intensive businesses and low-income households.

### Latvia in the world

- Latvia has concluded a memorandum of cooperation with Estonia on a joint project to establish an offshore wind farm, thus contributing to Estonia's renewable electricity production.
- Latvia actively participates in the International Renewable Energy Agency within the framework of the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan.
- The synchronisation of the Baltic electricity grids with the continental European grid continues. This promotes integration of the EU internal market and strengthens energy security.
- Latvia is actively involved in the regional gas market of Latvia, Estonia and Finland, which is unique because it is the only three-country gas market model of this type.

### Good practice

#### LIVE WARMER

The Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, and 34 public administration institutions, non-governmental organisations and state-owned enterprises signed a Memorandum of Cooperation more than a decade ago to jointly provide a communication platform for apartment owners, businesses, and building managers about residential, public and industrial building renovation, refurbishment, and energy efficiency issues. The platform remains one of the most important tools for fostering cooperation between stakeholders, sharing knowledge, and co-creating solutions,

and has been recognised repeatedly and internationally for its outstanding performance in promoting energy efficiency.

#### ENERGY FROM A PEAT BOG

The peat extraction and processing company “Laflora” recently completed extraction of peat in the Kaigu peat bog in Jelgava region. The area is now being transformed into a wind farm with a total capacity of 90 MW. This is enough to cover about 5% of the total annual electricity consumption in Latvia, or 300,000 MWh. Electricity production at the wind farm is planned to start by 2025.

The wind farm will both ensure the recultivation or economically viable use of the old peat extraction sites and will be a compensatory measure for greenhouse gas emissions from peat extraction and processing, thereby contributing to the ambitious climate neutrality goals of the European Green Deal.

Green energy produced on the wind farm will be used for the company's own consumption at the peat substrate plant and for its technological processes, as well as for creating an oasis of renewable energy or green industrial zone in Kaigu bog.

The oasis of renewable energy, or green industrial zone, will include: greenhouse clusters for growing vegetables and trees for local markets and export; innovative high-intensity and value-added production facilities; and plants that produce high-tech bioeconomy products and renewable hydrogen.

The wind farm and green industrial zone demonstrate that renewable energy production can be at the heart of sustainable development of the company, the region, and the country.



Photo: jelgavasnovads.lv





## Key future actions

- Promoting communities involved in economically viable local energy production, self-sufficiency, and renewable energy.
- “Greening” the tax system and improving the attractiveness of energy efficiency and RES technologies.
- Support for the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures in private homes or small building complexes and in public buildings, and the integration of non-emission technologies in energy efficiency measures.
- Implementation of transnational projects for the establishment of offshore wind farms.
- Increasing the number of low-emission and zero-emission vehicles, including support for purchase of such vehicles by municipalities, individuals, and businesses, thereby promoting wider use of such vehicles in large cities as well as participating in the establishment of high-capacity charging equipment and infrastructure, etc.
- Support for restructuring of the regional economy to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the transition to a climate-neutral economy, including development of local government “green” territories and the “greening” of products.

## New policies

1. National Energy and Climate Plan for 2021–2030
2. Latvia’s Strategy for Achieving Climate Neutrality by 2050
3. Latvia’s Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change through 2030
4. Long-term strategy for building renovation
5. Regional Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027

## Challenges

- Reducing energy costs for society, including in the context of meeting climate targets.
- Increasing research and innovation capacity in the field of energy, including development and commercialisation of new technologies.
- Increasing the share of RES consumption in the transport sector, the only sector in which the desired result has not been achieved.
- Energy prices rise faster than household incomes, especially for the low-income population.
- Greater public involvement in energy production for self-consumption and in energy efficiency measures.
- Reducing the cost of maintaining public buildings.
- Targeted actions by local governments for use of renewable energy resources and implementation of climate-neutral solutions.

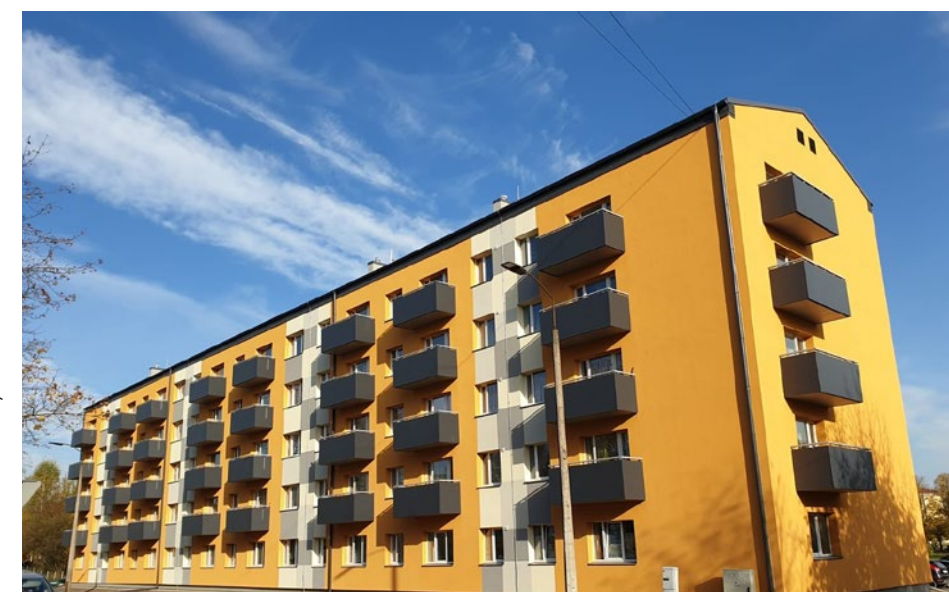
Energy prices continue to rise both because of global geopolitical developments and because we are gradually moving towards climate neutrality – moving away from fossil fuels and getting more of our energy from renewable sources. In the context of rising and volatile energy prices, as well as regarding the transition to environmentally friendly and cost-intensive technologies, it is necessary to provide support to low-income people who will be hardest hit by such rising energy costs as well as support energy efficiency measures on an individual level.

Inclusivity will be improved by increasing public awareness of the fact that there are many other ways of achieving energy efficiency besides insulating buildings, for example, by

making wise decisions on the energy efficiency of products. Encouraging changes in habits will help move consumers and producers towards greener management and lifestyles. Local governments have an active role to play in promoting environmentally and climate-friendly development.

Energy is one of the sectors that directly affects the overall development of the national economy as well as the growth prospects of some sectors, so the most important factor is and will be finding solutions to ensure the lowest possible sustainable energy price while taking into account both the security and quality of supply.

Photo: www.facebook.com/dzivosilak

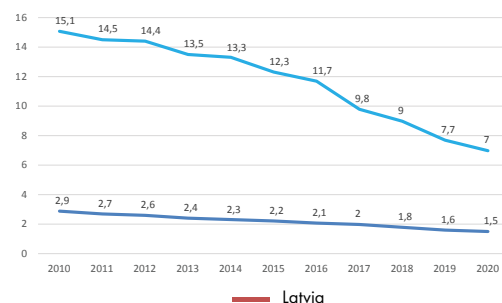




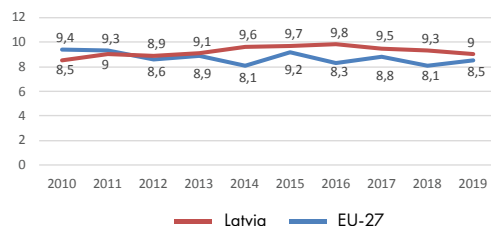
## Decent work and economic growth

Ensuring economic growth is one of the country's strategic goals. We will achieve this by improving productivity, therefore innovation is important, as is professional and higher education that provides opportunities to get a good job and start a business. Businesses will increase profits if they make more use of researchers, new knowledge, and innovation. In order to improve our skills and meet the demands of the labour market, opportunities to study both during work hours and outside of work will increase in the coming years. It is important for young people to find a suitable job or start a business as quickly as possible after completing formal education. Decent work and a secure future in a growing economy are unthinkable without secure jobs and a reduction of the shadow economy.

**GDP PER CAPITA BY PURCHASING POWER  
PARITIES (% OF THE EU AVERAGE)**



**IN-WORK AT-RISK-OF-POVERTY RATE FOR  
EMPLOYED PERSONS AGED OVER 18**



Data source: Eurostat

### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▲ 8.1 Gross domestic product per capita is growing steadily.
- ▶ 8.2 Although GDP per person employed is growing, the required level of technological modernisation and innovation has not been achieved, and there is insufficient structural change for achieving significantly higher productivity and total value added.
- ▲ 8.3 Tax policy, investment support, and the streamlining of administrative processes has had a positive effect on business development.
- ▶ 8.4 Although resource efficiency use is gradually improving, economic growth has not been decoupled from waste generation, underlining the need to upscale waste management and recycling.
- ▶ 8.5 The employment rate of women in Latvia is on an upward trend, while the pay gap between men and women (22.3% in 2020) is the highest in the EU.
- ▲ 8.6 The Youth Guarantee Programme led to a decrease in the number of youth who have not entered education, employment or training. Support for NEET youth was extended during the Covid-19 outbreak.
- ▶ 8.7 The overall number of accidents at work is rising, whereas the number of serious and fatal accidents is falling but still remains higher than the EU average; the share of persons who are victims of labour exploitation is increasing.
- ▲ 8.8 The role of tourism in the total value added into the economy, entertainment, and exports of goods and services has increased.
- ▲ 8.9 Latvia has well-developed financial and insurance sectors.

### Key actions

- Corporate income tax is no longer applied to reinvested profits.
- The Latvian Investment and Development Agency attracts a notable amount of foreign investment.
- The portfolio of financial instruments for businesses of the national financial institution ALTUM has significantly increased.
- The minimum wage has been increased.
- Support was provided to maintain business and replace income for employees to mitigate the effects of Covid-19.
- Support for the long-term unemployed has been intensified, and a social enterprise system has been introduced.
- The Technology Business Centre was established, and funding for higher added-value science and research projects in five smart specialisation areas has been increased.
- A strong and resilient financial system for protection against money laundering, terrorist financing, and weapons of mass destruction has been established.
- Investments were made in cultural heritage and related infrastructure.



- Support has been provided to promote the infrastructure for business development in the regions of Latvia, including for job creation and non-financial assets. Degradated territories have been restored.

## Latvia in the world

Support for economic growth and employment is one of the priorities of development cooperation. The association “New Door” and the Latvian Association of Social Entrepreneurship have been providing support to Georgia and Ukraine, transferring experience in promoting cooperation between traditional and social enterprises as well as strengthening green and resource-efficient economic activity. In Tajikistan, the association “Sustento” provided support for networking for women with special needs to reduce the risks of social exclusion and violence.

## Good practice

### TRADE UNIONS AND EMPLOYERS CREATE EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ON THEIR OWN

The Labour Law regulates in detail labour standards and employment conditions in order to protect both employers and employees. Until recently, the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, the Employers’ Confederation of Latvia, and the Government discussed the minimum wage and other labour law standards within the Latvian National Tripartite Cooperation Council.

Raising the minimum wage is a complex issue, as different sectors have different pay levels and the needs of workers and employers differ. For example, in the trade sector it is

important to increase the minimum wage for workers, whereas in chemicals, where remuneration is already high, support tools are needed to improve the qualification of workers. In the construction sector, the minimum wage must be raised and overtime pay must be regulated. Inadequate labour market conditions create labour shortages and contribute to the shadow economy.

In order to avoid setting a “single standard” for all sectors and professions, Latvia’s social partners decided to enshrine in the Labour Law the opportunity to “make deals” – foregoing some Labour Law norms in return for receiving some compensatory benefit for the employees. The social partners proposed and agreed with the government on amendments to the Labour Law that foresee possible derogating from overtime pay in exchange for a higher minimum wage.

As a result, a collective agreement of the construction sector was signed (2019) that provided for an increase in workers’ pay and paved the way for trade unions and employers to regularly address challenges and disputes and agree on common positions like the next minimum wage increase and the mitigation of Covid-19 impact in construction. Two more collective agreements have been signed – in the fiberglass industry (2019) and in the hospitality sector (2020).

A collective agreement is a written agreement between an employer and employees on more favourable terms for employees than specified in the Labour Law, other regulations, or in employment contracts. In turn, the industry collective agreements set uniform requirements for all employers in the industry, thus promoting fair competition.

### SOCIAL ENTERPRISES PROMOTE INCLUSIVITY

Latvia’s largest producer of natural cosmetics, Mádara Organic Skincare, has involved the social enterprise “4 vēji” (“4 Winds”), which employs people with special needs, in packaging the company’s beauty products. The employees shred paper on a daily basis and make “void fillers” so that customers receive beautifully packaged and undamaged goods. Social enterprise is part of this Latvian brand’s success story.

The Social Enterprise Law came into force in 2018. It defines the concept of social enterprise, criteria for obtaining the status, support to social enterprises, and scope of activity.

Since 2018, social enterprises have the opportunity to submit business plans to the state-owned development finance institution “ALTUM” and apply for grants. The Social Entrepreneurship Association of Latvia unites more than 100 members throughout Latvia.

### SOME OTHER EXAMPLES:

- “Zelta Liepa Debesu Bļoda” employs persons with disabilities in the catering industry in Ogre city.
- “Kustības brīvība” adjusts SUP-boards for persons with movement disorders.
- “EDART” helps people move on from severe addiction through narrative.
- The therapy centre “Sounds and Music” provides services to children with autism spectrum disorders.
- “Social Sports Agency” coaches people with visual impairments and teaches blind children techniques for falling safely.

**SOCIAL ENTERPRISES, % IN PUBLIC BENEFIT AREAS  
140 SOCIAL ENTERPRISES. 31.12.2021.**

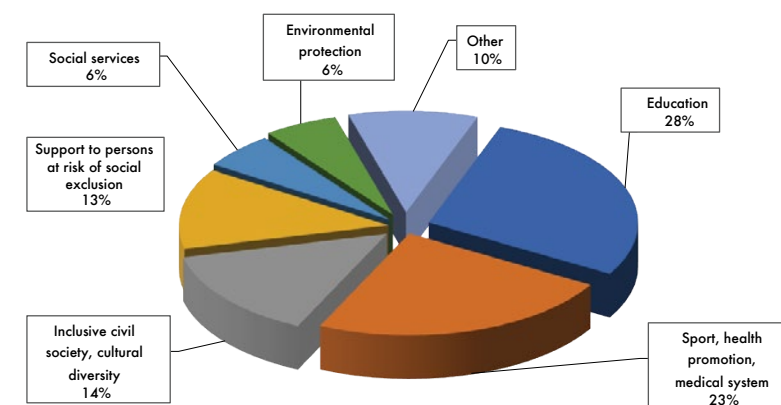






Photo: Ruta Celma, Unsplash

## Key future actions

- Raise awareness and understanding of labour protection, especially for micro and small businesses.
- Develop sectoral need-based adult education.
- Support digital solutions, automation, new decarbonisation technology, and digitalisation infrastructure.
- Provide information, mentoring, and skills development for the digitisation of business processes and the introduction of new products and services.
- Increase the weight of performance when calculating basic research funding by focusing on promoting excellence and by connecting funding to the results of the international evaluation of scientific institutions.
- Extend support for young people not in employment, education or training, given the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Improve energy efficiency and promote the use of RES technologies in production, transport and heat supply through “greening” the tax system.
- Develop municipal public infrastructure for business promotion and development of smart solutions.

## New policies

1. National Industrial Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027
2. Strategy of Social Protection and Labour Market Policy for 2021–2027
3. Regional Development Guidelines for 2021–2027
4. Tourism Development Plan for 2021–2027
5. Guidelines for Cultural Policy for 2022–2027

## Challenges

- Structural transformation of sectors of the economy into higher value-added and high-productivity activities.
- Managing energy prices to remain competitive.
- Addressing labour market supply and demand disparities in the context of demographic trends, taking into account regional labour market differences.
- Reducing the risk of in-work poverty and reducing the pay gap between women and men.
- Raising the employment rate of people with special needs, and reducing the long-term unemployment rate for people who have the most difficulty entering the labour market (due to insufficient qualifications, disability, age, etc.).
- Increasing the role of local governments in the development of entrepreneurship and innovation.

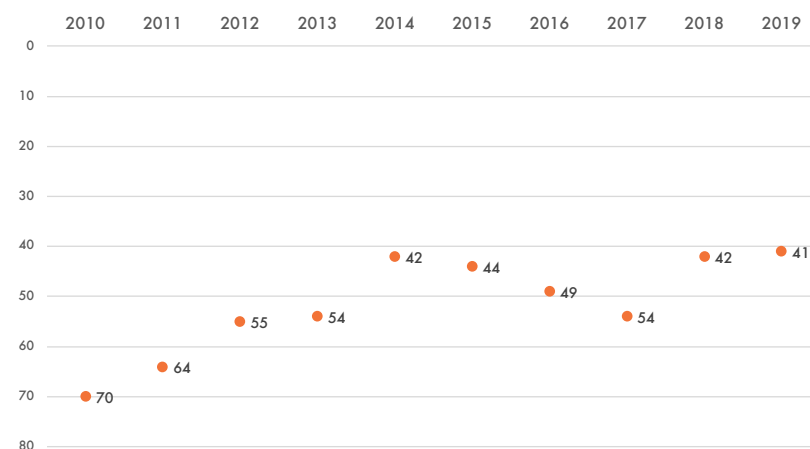




## Production, innovation and infrastructure

Productivity can be increased through targeted investment in innovation as well as by creating and selling higher value-added products and services on the global market. In the future, Latvian companies will attract more scientists and increase investments in research and development in order to achieve higher technology-intensive production. We are in the process of creating modern, environmentally friendly and smart infrastructure through strategies such as Trans-European transport networks, smart energetics, ICT, waste recycling, etc. In order to reduce regional disparities, the government will invest in business support infrastructure and improve the efficiency and accessibility of services in line with demographics and the new reform of municipalities.

LATVIA IN THE GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS INDEX, RANK



Data source: World Economic Forum

### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▲ 9.1 The national transport infrastructure network is sufficient to ensure domestic mobility and international accessibility, but network quality and sustainability needs improving.
- ▶ 9.2 Productivity of the processing industry is growing, yet remains below the EU average. At the same time, the contribution of the processing industry to GDP growth and investment in R&D remain relatively low.
- ▶ 9.3 The capital market in Latvia is rather limited, creating a demand for alternative sources of financial investment. National support instruments for companies need streamlining.
- ▲ 9.4 Strengthening business infrastructure and technology are key elements of Latvia's industrial policy.
- ▼ 9.5 Public and private sector investment in R&D is relatively low, affecting innovation capacity.

### Key actions

- Roads and highways are renovated for improved access to local administrative centres, including for services and employment.
- Riga Airport infrastructure was enlarged to accommodate more passengers and increased cargo volume.
- Modernised e-government – 83% of households use electronic services, 90% of households have Internet access.
- Access to finance for business start-ups and business development.
- Development of industrial zones and support for investments in new production facilities and infrastructure.
- Support for new products and production technologies.
- Development of R&D infrastructure in the fields of smart specialisation and strengthened capacity of scientific institutions.

Latvia's Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) concentrates R&D on:

- 1) Knowledge-intensive bio-economics
- 2) Biomedicine; medical technologies
- 3) Bio-pharmacy and biotechnologies
- 4) Smart materials, technologies and engineering systems; smart energetics
- 5) Information and communication technologies (ICT).



## Latvia in the world

Riga Airport has maintained its leading position in the Baltics, maintaining the existing range of destinations and steadily increasing the number of transit passengers even during the Covid-19 pandemic, which posed a special challenge to the aviation industry worldwide. In 2018–2019, the Latvian national airline “airBaltic” was recognised as one of the most punctual airlines in the world, and during the Covid-19 pandemic, it was able to restructure its operations with state support to adhere to its medium-term development strategy.

## Good practice

### MODERNISATION OF RAILWAY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PASSENGERS

Citizens use public transport when it is convenient. By 2019, twenty-eight train stations were upgraded. New passenger platforms improve accessibility, especially for those with reduced mobility. Renovations increased passenger and train safety, service quality and comfort, and reduced the environmental impact of railway transport.

### INNOVATIONS FOR EXPORT

A leap in the business environment can be achieved if companies create innovative products and services with export potential and invest more in R&D. This can be facilitated through peer learning – in bilateral and multilateral formats – regarding technologies, management of R&D processes, and improvement of innovations and R&D accounting.

In 2018, an innovation platform of Latvia’s outstanding companies was established. It was initiated by the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre (the government body responsible for the coordination of corporate governance of state-owned enterprises), the Prime Minister’s Office, and the Ministry of Economics in cooperation with four innovation leaders – Latvenergo, Latvijas Mobilais telefons (LMT), Lattelecom (now TET), and Latvia’s State Forests (LVM). Several related companies joined later. The initiative resulted in cooperation on several projects as well as government mandated changes in innovation governance.

## Key future actions

- Improve the institutional model of science and innovation governance, ensure availability of funding throughout the innovation cycle, and strengthen cooperation between the public, private and research sectors.
- Establish at least five Smart Specialisation Strategy value-chain ecosystems (at least one in each of the specialisation areas) and ensure the involvement of their actors in global value chains.
- Create an integrated, sustainable transport system that uses the railway as the backbone of modern and environmentally friendly public transport.
- Promote wider use of digital solutions in business and provide infrastructure for the digital transformation.
- Continue to support local governments with business infrastructure and innovation development, provide the regions of Latvia with quality services, and improve the accessibility of administrative centres.
- Expand business support through financial instruments, for instance, by setting up a large investment fund to ensure the re-industrialisation of the Latvian economy.
- Develop air connectivity at Riga Airport and increase the number of passengers and cargo turnover so that Riga can become Northern Europe’s transport hub.

## New policies

1. The Science, Technology Development and Innovation Guidelines 2021–2027
2. National Industrial Policy Guidelines 2021–2027
3. Transport Development Guidelines 2021–2027
4. Digital Transformation Guidelines 2021–2027
5. Financial Sector Development Plan 2021–2023
6. Regional Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027
7. Electronic Communications Sector Development Plan for 2021–2027

## Challenges

- Achieving energy and climate goals in the transport sector.
- Reducing barriers for the private sector to increase R&D investment.
- Ensuring that railways are the backbone of the passenger transport system.
- Synergy and security of transport infrastructure with IT solutions; compliance of the transport system with the new administrative-territorial framework.
- Changing business models to meet the challenges of climate change and move toward a circular economy.
- Improving digital skills and the availability of appropriate tools for the digitalisation of Latvian companies.
- Mitigating the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the development of the aviation, tourism and hospitality sectors in the coming years.

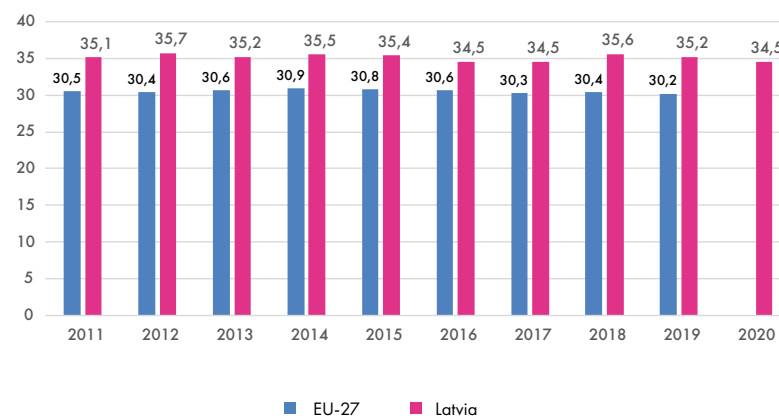
Strategic decisions on investment in the latest technologies as well as innovation, research, and human capital will contribute to the solutions.



## Reduced inequality

Strengthening equal opportunities is key to reducing income inequality in the long term. Everyone in Latvia must have equal opportunity to access quality education, health care and decent work, and to live in a safe environment and be socially protected. Inequalities will also be reduced through timely and targeted support to those most in need, especially low-income groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and at-risk families with children. Productivity and income inequality between the capital city Riga and the regions of Latvia must be reduced.

GINI COEFFICIENT



Data source: CSB

### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▶ 10.1 Income inequality in Latvia is not decreasing overall, and its level is one of the highest among EU member states.
- ▶ 10.2 Social and political inclusion is stable; economic inclusion has territorial, gender and age dimensions.
- ▼ 10.3 Income inequality is higher among people of working age; in 2020, inequality also increased among people of retirement age.
- ▶ 10.4 One tenth of the population says that it experiences discrimination, while one fifth of employees say they have experienced discrimination in the workplace. The most common reasons named are age, health and disability.
- ▼ 10.5 The risk of in-work poverty increased in 2020. The risk is higher for working women, driven by the growing pay gap between women and men.
- ▶ 10.6 Migration and asylum procedures are being improved and adapted to international challenges, ensuring access to legal instruments for the exercise of one's rights and obligations.

### Key actions

- Introduction of a progressive personal income tax rate; increase of the differentiated non-taxable minimum.
- The guaranteed minimum income level almost doubled in 2021.
- Minimum old-age and disability pensions significantly increased from those of 2021.
- Material support for families with children increased.
- Financial support replaced income for businesses and individuals that needed it the most during the Covid-19 pandemic downtime.
- The government provided employment programmes for the long-term unemployed, including customised support to remove various barriers to employability.
- Support for youth not in employment, education or training was introduced.
- Measures have been taken to help businesses and citizens understand and reduce discrimination.
- Improved resocialisation of prisoners, including involvement of their family members to support the resocialisation process.
- Transition from institutional long-term care to community-based services for people with mental disabilities and children in out-of-home care was initiated.
- The Latvian Schoolbag, a state support programme, provides opportunities for pupils to experience Latvia's historic and contemporary culture.



Photo: Latvijas Radio

## Good practice

### HIGH FIVE!

To create a people-friendly environment, an annual charity marathon organised by Public Broadcasting of Latvia takes place in the Old Town of Riga before Christmas. For six and a half days each year, young radio DJs in a specially designed glass studio play requested songs for donations. This musical marathon can be heard on Latvijas Radio 5 (Pieci.lv), which is one of the most influential multimodal platforms for the youth audience.

The yearly donation drives concentrate on one target group needing support. The 2021 campaign focused on accessibility problems for people with disabilities. It sensitised listeners and the general public to daily experiences of people with visual, hearing and mobility impairments. Previous donation drives created awareness about seniors living alone, children

with special needs, victims of domestic violence, and other causes.

The charity marathon provided solutions, encouragement, real-life stories, and information from specialists on how to help people with disabilities integrate into society. This is an excellent example of public engagement that can be achieved through listening, hearing, and supporting people in their efforts to eliminate barriers in creating equal opportunities for all.

## Key future actions

Latvia's overarching strategic goals for the period from 2021–2027 are envisaged in the Latvian National Development Plan 2021–2027. These include promotion of equal opportunities, regional development through balanced economic growth in the whole territory of Latvia, increasing productivity and income, and building social trust.

### IN ORDER TO REDUCE INEQUALITY, LATVIA COMMITS TO:

- Improving the minimum income system.
- Increasing the adaptability of the unemployed, job seekers, and persons at risk of unemployment to changes in the labour market and the current situation.
- Promoting quality and well-paid jobs and decent work.
- Improving the efficiency of public services in regions, taking into account demographic trends and the new administrative territorial structure.
- Reducing barriers to experiencing culture in Latvia, especially in regions and for specific groups such as people with disabilities, members of the diaspora, minorities and immigrants, children and young people, and seniors.
- Developing a system of state-funded legal aid ensuring access to legal instruments so that vulnerable persons are able to exercise their rights and obligations.

## New policies

- Strategy for Social Protection and Labour Market Policy 2021–2027
- Plan for Improving the Minimum Income Support System for 2022–2024
- Regional Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027
- Guidelines for Cultural Policy for 2022–2027
- Resocialisation Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027
- Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Active Civic Society for 2021–2027

## Challenges

- An aging population; the decline in the number of children and those of working age.
- One of the highest rates of income inequality among EU member states.
- One of the lowest expenditures on social protection among EU member states.
- High share of employees who make state social insurance contributions from a low income.
- Pronounced regional differences in the provision and quality of social services.
- Limited funding for active labour market policy measures and low participation of unemployed and inactive persons.
- Employers, employees, and society as a whole have insufficient understanding about issues of labour protection, labour law, and non-discrimination.
- Limited legal support for the vulnerable and insufficient understanding by many of the vulnerable for the need for early resolution of legal issues and information on available protection.

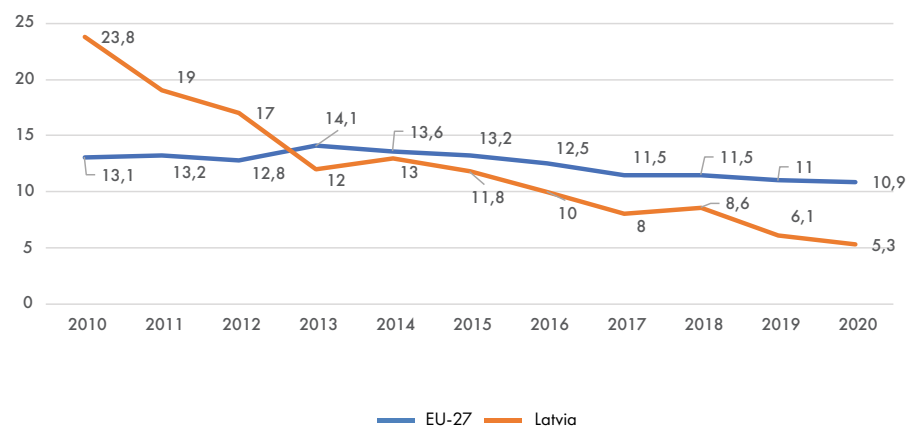




## Sustainable cities and communities

Latvia intends to attract people both to cities and rural areas by creating preconditions for decent employment and access to high-quality services. By 2027, the availability of good, energy-efficient housing will increase. In the future, people will prefer using sustainable transport – public transport, vehicles using renewables, and bicycles. Latvia will maintain and improve highways and roads needed for business and access to administrative centres, work, schools and services. Efforts will be made to continue reducing road traffic fatalities. Air pollution in Latvian cities is dropping, and the use of separate waste collection systems is increasing. Green areas are growing and are being designed to promote a healthy lifestyle.

SHARE OF POPULATION REPORTING CRIME, VIOLENCE OR VANDALISM IN THEIR LOCAL AREA



Data source: Eurostat

### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▲ 11.1 More than a third of Latvia's households live in overcrowded housing, however, the number of people living in decent conditions is gradually increasing.
- ▶ 11.2 Latvia continues to put efforts into ensuring accessibility and sustainability of the transport system, as the existing system does not cover mobility needs. The number of people killed in road accidents is still high, although it is trending downward.
- ▲ 11.3 Integrated development planning and implementation, including public involvement, is ensured at all levels of governance (national, regional and local). Sustainability, including the transition towards climate neutrality, has been integrated into planning documents at all levels.
- ▲ 11.4 Cultural and natural heritage conservation systems are being improved by applying innovative tools. Significant investments are channelled towards the preservation and restoration of cultural heritage.
- ▶ 11.5 Fatalities due to natural disasters in Latvia are low; this might increase however due to climate change.
- ▶ 11.6 Generally air pollution is not high. However, there are some air quality problems in larger cities such as Riga, Liepāja and Rēzekne. Municipal waste management systems are about to be improved.

- ▲ 11.7 Green areas are available to everyone. Parks and recreation areas have recently been significantly improved, as have degraded areas. There is no special assessment of accessibility of green public areas for women with children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

### Key actions

- Programmes to support energy efficiency in residential buildings continue.
- Minimum energy performance requirements for buildings are set.
- Tenant and landlord rights have been legally balanced.
- State support to families for purchasing housing has improved.
- As of October 2020, 60 free bus trips have been introduced on 15 regional routes.
- Large families, families with children with disabilities, and other passenger categories receive fare discounts on public transport.
- The number of municipalities in the country was reduced in an administrative territorial reform to improve the overall capacity of the local government system and to make local governments more efficient and equal.
- Municipalities and regions have created development strategies, including investment plans.
- Air quality is regularly monitored and people are informed about the results.
- The separate waste collection system is being improved to increase the volume of recycled waste.



## Good practice

### MATHEMATICAL MODELLING FOR MUNICIPALITIES

In 2021, with the support of the Latvian Science Council, four Latvian scientists developed a tool that enables municipalities to plan and manage sustainable development. The mathematical model of sustainable urban development is a data-based tool for selecting priority activities and projects. The model, developed in line with the UN sustainable development paradigm, quantifies the level of sustainable development achieved by defined activities using indicators corresponding to the functionality of the municipality. Released in 2022, the model can be used to determine key development priorities, to justify the budget distribution and investment priorities, and to compare projects between different sectors.

### CLOSER TO WORK

Investments are planned for: the creation of productive jobs in the regions; the improvement of population mobility to centres of economic activity; and for the establishment of a financing fund for the provision of affordable rental housing primarily in areas with new job potential. The fund will facilitate access to housing that meets modern construction standards and energy efficiency needs for those who cannot afford it under market conditions. These investments will have a positive impact on labour mobility and the opportunity to find better paid work.

## Key future actions

- Renovate social housing, increase social housing units, and provide housing relocation support for low-income earners to promote their participation in the labour market.
- Issue grants to individuals for the purchase or construction of housing. The grant is calculated according to the number of children in the family.
- Issue long-term loans to municipalities for the construction of low-cost rental housing so as to promote universal access to housing.
- Introduce a single public transport ticketing system.
- Carry passengers in new electric trains, starting gradually from 2022, and establish mobility spots at railway stations. Increase train speeds.
- Establish a disaster damage database.
- Introduce new forms of public participation in municipalities. Provide citizens with participatory budgeting opportunities at the local government level. Establish citizens' councils. Offer citizens the opportunity to submit collective petitions on important issues.

## New policies

1. Regional Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027
2. Guidelines for Cultural Policy for 2022–2027
3. Transport Development Guidelines for 2021–2027
4. Environmental Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027 (draft)
5. Air Pollution Reduction Action Plan for 2020–2030
6. National Waste Management Investment Plan for 2021–2028
7. Long-term strategy for building renovation
8. National Civil Protection Plan
9. Road Safety Plan for 2021–2027
10. Action Plan for the Transition to a Circular Economy for 2021–2027

## Challenges

- Construction of housing at low cost but with high environmental standards and quality.
- Creating affordable and high-quality rental housing to ensure domestic mobility.
- Ensuring sufficient social housing units; setting sufficient housing benefits.
- Public transportation and road infrastructure in areas with shrinking populations.
- Introduction of an integrated approach to improving energy efficiency in cities.
- Electrification of urban transport and improvement of the public transport system to motivate people to use public transport in cities.

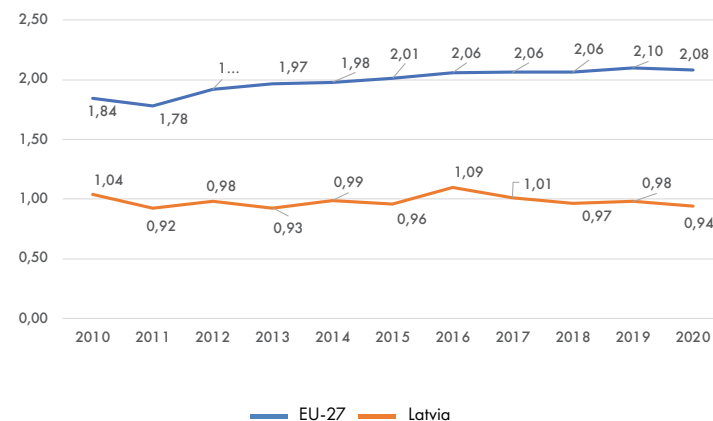
Municipalities have an important role to play in uniting society and promoting urban-rural interaction. As a result of mobility and migration, cities are becoming a venue for tolerance, cooperation and civic awareness. Municipalities compete with each other to become comfortable and enjoyable. Creating sustainable cities and communities in line with the Green Deal creates new job opportunities and reduces regional disparities as society makes the transition from a linear economy to a circular economy.



## Responsible consumption and production

Latvia joins other UN and EU member countries in committing to reduce the negative impact of human activity on the environment by mitigating climate change, natural disasters, and related consequences. Latvia is gradually developing a new climate-neutral economy in which natural resources are used sparingly and rationally. New technological solutions and improvements in waste management and resource management are still needed. Society and investors require companies to become more sustainable and transparent about environmental and social sustainability. Green public procurement is being used more broadly for state and local government financed initiatives. As demand still determines supply, and sustainable consumption is growing, companies are expected to make significant changes to their business practices in the coming years.

RESOURCE PRODUCTIVITY (EUR PER KG)



Data source: Eurostat

### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▲ 12.1 The government has adopted an action plan for the transition to a circular economy. Latvia promotes the development of the circular economy by investing in competitive, inclusive and sustainable growth.
- ▲ 12.2 The efficiency of natural resource use has been increasing recently.
- ▶ 12.3 Latvia generates a relatively constant amount of food waste every year, which makes up about a third of unsorted household waste. The amount of food waste per capita will be halved by 2030.
- ▲ 12.4 Latvia generates a relatively small amount of hazardous waste, and the state is responsible for its management. Most hazardous waste is exported to other countries for recycling, while a relatively small amount of hazardous waste is disposed of in Latvia.
- ▲ 12.5 On average, each inhabitant in Latvia generates one of the lowest amounts of household waste in Europe. As in all other EU countries, importing waste for disposal is prohibited.
- ▶ 12.6 Sustainability is becoming a key to business strategies for Latvian companies. Most large state-owned enterprises show leadership by preparing publicly available sustainability reports.
- ▶ 12.7 Latvia uses public procurement, including green public procurement, as a tool to strengthen environmental protection, sustainability, and innovation.
- ▶ 12.8 The public is informed about sustainable development and is provided opportunities to improve their skills and participate in sustainable development.
- ▶ 12.a The transformation of the economy aims to achieve higher added value, higher productivity, and efficient resource use.
- ▲ 12.b Tourism is a priority for the economy and culture, as evidenced by state support for the aviation industry and the culture and hospitality sectors during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Key actions

- The government adopted the Action Plan for the Transition to a Circular Economy by 2027.
- The guidelines for state-owned enterprise medium-term operational strategies were supplemented with environmental and corporate social responsibility goals, and SOEs are now required to prepare non-financial reports.
- Regulations and guidelines for green procurement and innovative public procurement were adopted.
- A packaging deposit system was introduced.



## Good practice



Photo: Shutterstock

### SORT EASILY

How can a person understand how to deal with waste? In the government public information campaign called “Sort Easily”, people in Latvia had the opportunity to watch four families sort waste for four weeks to find out how much waste they could save if they really tried. In 2019 the popular “Sort Easily” became the national website [www.skiroviegli.lv](http://www.skiroviegli.lv), along with a mobile application that helps you find the nearest sorted waste collection point, provides information on the types of waste accepted at the specific site, and tells you how to notify the site manager about any failures or violations.

### RIGA ECOLOGICAL

Latvijas Finieris, a global leader of birch plywood-based products, has developed RIGA ECOlogical, a “green glue” that uses bio-based renewable lignin to a significant extent as a replacement for the traditional fossil-based phenol. This technological breakthrough, achieved in close cooperation with Stora Enso, the world’s flagship for chemical and mechanical wood processing, is considered the most significant innovation in plywood gluing technology in the last decade. Latvijas Finieris Group will complete construction of a new synthetic resin plant within the next three years.



Photo: Latvijas Finieris

## Key future actions

- Transition from waste management to resource management, including:
  - Establishment of separate collection systems for textiles and household hazardous waste by 2023;
  - Introduction of a bio-waste system throughout Latvia by 2023;
  - Increasing the amount of household waste prepared and recycled for reuse to at least 55% by weight by 2025;
  - By 2025, ensuring the collection of single-use plastic beverage packaging at 77% of volume (by weight) of the relevant packaging marketed in the relevant year.
- Launching a deposit system for beverage packaging.
- Improving resource productivity in all sectors of the economy through innovation and research.
- Promoting regional symbiosis for circular-based waste management.
- Establishing regional platforms for cooperation on the circular economy.
- Ensuring greater public involvement, information and education on the circular economy.

## New policies

- Environmental Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027
- Action Plan for the Transition to a Circular Economy for 2020–2027
- National Waste Management Plan for 2021–2028, which includes the Development Programme for the Reuse and Repair of Goods and the Programme for the Prevention of

### Food Waste

- National Energy and Climate Plan for 2021–2030
- National Industrial Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027
- Latvia’s Bioeconomy Strategy for 2030

## Challenges

- Priority circular economy solutions – insulation of multi-apartment buildings, reduction of vehicle emissions, and emission-free heat production and heat supply.
- Insufficient cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination; lack of an influential driving force for the development of circular economy ideas.
- Public education in the field of responsible consumption and production, including on waste non-generation and management, and prudent use of resources.
- Decoupling waste generation and use of natural resources from economic growth.
- Recycling and reuse of waste.

The introduction of a circular economy requires public involvement, synergies between different sectors of the economy, and effective cooperation at all levels of governance. Traditionally, Latvians use home appliances and other durables as long as possible. A similar mindset is present in the commercial sector, where the reuse of materials in technological processes is an opportunity to reduce operating costs. To promote inclusivity in sustainable consumption patterns, recourse must be given to low-income consumers who otherwise are compelled to choose cheaper, less environmentally friendly goods.



## Climate action

Climate action affects all of the SDGs and Latvia's sectoral policies. Latvia is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and has expressed political commitment to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. By 2030 we will improve energy efficiency, electricity production and transport infrastructure, and waste and wastewater management and infrastructure. Serious preparations must be undertaken to tackle climate-change-related risks, including disaster prevention (floods, coastal erosion, heat waves and heavy rains), and to implement adaptation measures.



Photo: Maayan Nemanov, Unsplash

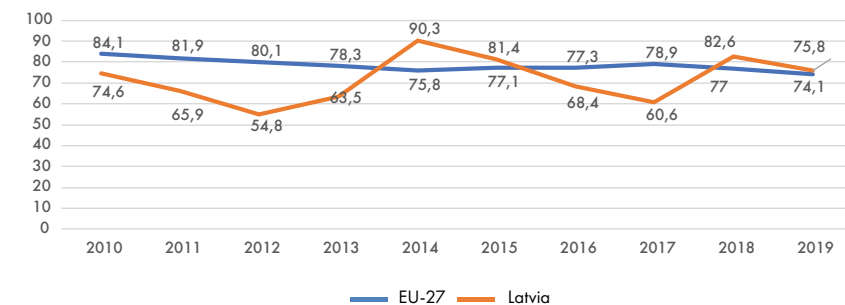
### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▶ 13.1 Latvia has identified measures to mitigate the impact of climate change. Adapting to climate change will require significant investment.
- ▶ 13.2 National policies to mitigate climate change include: measures for reducing GHG emissions; increasing carbon dioxide capture and the share of renewable energy sources in the economy; improving energy efficiency and energy security infrastructure; maintenance and improvement of the energy market infrastructure; and support for increasing innovation, research and competitiveness. Local government long-term strategies also address climate goals.
- ▶ 13.3 The government promotes public awareness on climate change, its effects, and adaptation measures, including through regular public information campaigns. Latvia's scientific community is involved in international research through forecasting and assessing Latvia's nature capital and conducting applied research.

### Key actions

- The government has adopted a series of commitments specifically aimed at climate change: Latvia's Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change by 2030, the National Energy and Climate Plan for 2021–2030, and Latvia's Strategy for Achieving Climate Neutrality by 2050.
- Flood risk assessments and flood risk reduction measures have been carried out.
- The National Civil Protection Plan has been adopted by the Cabinet.
- The early warning system for disaster management now includes obligations for mobile network operators and electronic media.
- The climate change portal klimatam.lv has been created to inform households, local governments and businesses on climate policy issues. It offers a climate change analysis tool for viewing maps and graphs of current and future climate projections in Latvia.
- Latvia is committed to taking part in the reduction of total EU emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 (see section below).

**GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS PER YEAR (AGAINST EMISSIONS IN THE BASE YEAR, 1990 = 100), WITH THE LULUCF**



Data source: Eurostat





## Latvia in the world

- Climate is one of the thematic priorities of Latvia's development cooperation policy. Since 2021, Latvia's funding for development cooperation in the field of water-energy-climate change in Central Asia has reached approximately 16% of the bilateral development cooperation budget managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Latvia is party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement. Latvia's obligations under the Paris Agreement are to promote achieving the joint EU commitment to reduce GHG emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990. This goal was endorsed by all EU member states on 11 December 2020. Latvia also regularly reports to the UN on progress in reducing GHG emissions under the Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- In accordance with the provisions of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Latvia has voluntarily contributed to the Green Climate Fund and is elaborating a policy for promoting cooperation with developing countries under the Paris Agreement.
- Latvia has contributed to and participated in the OECD International Programme for Action on Climate to support countries' efforts to meet climate goals.



## Good practice

### ECO-SCHOOLS

From pre-schools to universities – almost 200 Latvian schools are involved in Latvia's Eco-Schools programme. This programme provides a framework for coordinated and successful long-term work on environmental education in schools. Eco-Schools are open and democratic, enabling students to decide and act on improving the environment at school and at home. The competence-based learning approach used in Eco-Schools helps to achieve learning outcomes defined in the curriculum and the goals of environmental protection and sustainable development.

### RIGA SET TO BECOME THE FIRST CLIMATE-NEUTRAL CITY IN THE BALTIC STATES

Riga joined the Paris Climate Declaration "Cities leading the way to climate neutrality" in 2021 to mark the anniversary of the Paris Agreement (2015). The declaration commits cities to take responsible climate policy decisions that will help limit the global average temperature increase to 1.5° C and achieve climate neutrality

by 2050 at the latest. "Our goal is to make Riga the first climate-neutral city in the Baltic States and to be among the first 100 climate-neutral cities in Europe by 2030," emphasises the Mayor of Latvia's capital city, Mr Mārtiņš Staķis.

Riga's approach is to begin with municipal infrastructure. The main challenges are to renovate at least 2,000 multi-apartment buildings by 2030, to reduce vehicle emissions (which is by far the largest emission source in the urban environment) and to strive for net zero-emission heat production and heat supply. The city plans to rent out the roofs of its buildings for installation of solar collectors and support energy community projects that require minor capital investments and can increase renewables in the city's energy balance.

## Key future actions

- Develop and adopt a Climate Law as a framework to establish general obligations and principles related to Latvia's climate policy in one separate legal act, leaving more specific decisions on implementation up to state institutions.
- Continue to invest in building insulation projects, energy efficiency, promotion of renewable energy use, electromobility, etc.).
- Continue to invest in the digital transformation of the public and private sectors.

- Support the greening of local government territories and locally produced goods in an effort to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the transition in the regions of Latvia.
- Continue to support energy efficiency and renewable energy use in private homes, small building complexes, and public buildings.

## New policies

1. Latvia's Strategy for Achieving Climate Neutrality by 2050 (Report)
2. National Energy and Climate Plan for 2021–2030
3. Environmental Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027 (draft)
4. Latvia's National Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change by 2030
5. Regional Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027

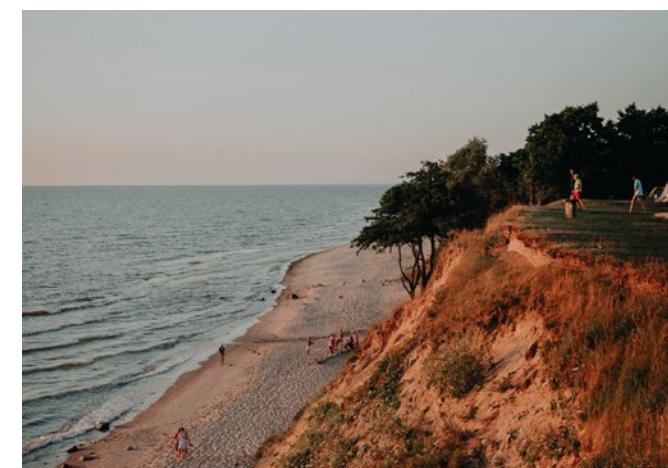


Photo: Kristaps Ungurs, Unsplash

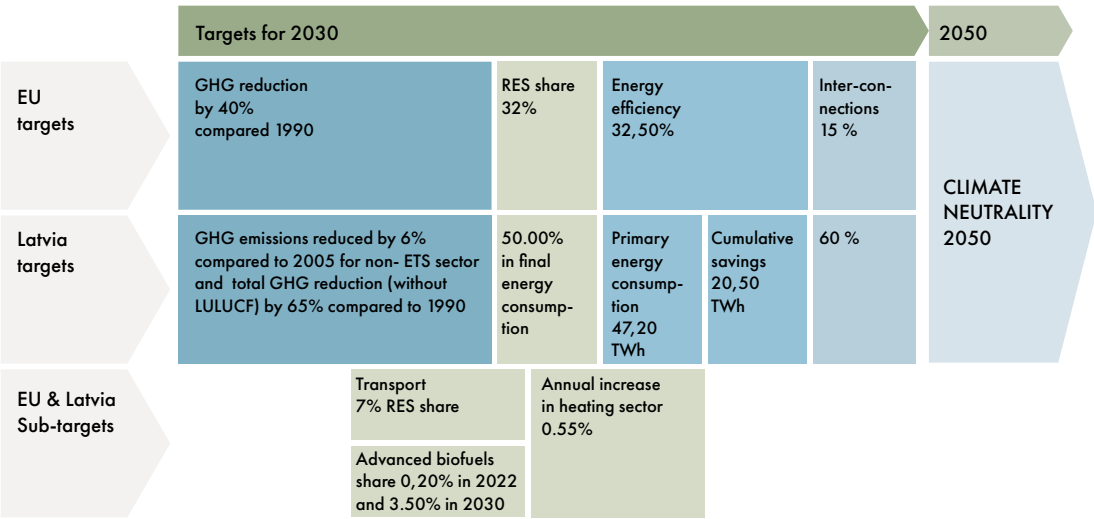




Latvia moves towards climate neutrality

The National Energy and Climate Plan promotes the development of a climate-neutral economy by improving energy security and public welfare in a manner which is sustainable, competitive, cost effective, secure and market principles-based and that enhances security and public welfare.

Targets set by Latvia in the National Energy and Climate Plan 2030 are fully in line with the climate policy of the European Union and the EU’s ambitious objectives for climate policy, as well as with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement, treaties to which Latvia is a signatory.



RES- renewable energy systems  
non-ETS sector - a part of the domestic greenhouse gas emissions that are not covered by the EU Emission Trading Scheme  
LULUCF – Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry

Challenges

- Climate change is often perceived as a global, geographically distant challenge rather than a local one. A survey conducted in 2021 showed that a relatively large share of respondents (38%) agrees with the statement that Latvia cannot influence anything in mitigating climate change.
- Implementing Latvia’s National Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change through 2030 requires coordinated efforts of a broad range of institutions and society. Activities will be financed with state and local government, EU, and private capital.
- Changes in legislation are expected to gradually halt coal and oil extraction and use, reduce fossil fuel subsidies, promote renewable energy production, restrict the sale of internal combustion engines, institute energy efficiency requirements, develop the circular economy, reuse waste, restrict chemical use in agriculture, etc. If the enactment of such legislation is to improve the quality of life of all Latvians, particular attention must be paid to the low-income population.
- Although environmental issues affect the whole of society, the youth will experience the effects of today’s decisions, since the development of climate change is inherently exponential.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation must not lose sight of climate justice. The “leave no one behind” approach is crucial for achieving climate neutrality and climate resilience. Rapid efforts to reduce GHG emissions may fail if citizens believe that this policy is unfair or that their views are not being taken into account, or if actions are planned without considering their impact on all groups. If managed properly, mitigating climate change will create jobs in low-carbon sectors, reduce energy bills for low-income households, and improve air quality, public health and quality of life for all.



## Life below water

The Baltic Sea is one of the most polluted seas in the world, and the goal of the Helsinki Convention to restore its good environmental status by 2021 was not fully achieved. That is why Latvia has a mission to contribute to the restoration of the Baltic Sea marine environment. Latvia, like other countries in the region, plans to actively participate in implementing the renewed Baltic Sea Action Plan updated in 2021. The plan maintains the same level of ambition but adds new actions that are based on the latest scientific evidence. The challenges focus on the four areas most important for the Baltic Sea environment: biodiversity, eutrophication, hazardous substances and litter, and sea-based activities.



Foto: Latvian Nita Jirgensone on an international multidisciplinary all-female ocean plastic research crew. eXXpedition Round the World

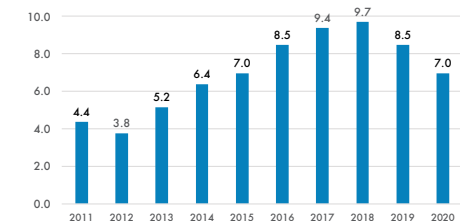
### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▶ 14.1 Although the EU Common Agricultural Policy that underpins Latvia's agricultural policy supports measures aimed at reducing the input of nitrogen and phosphorus compounds into surface freshwater bodies, most measures are not compulsory for farmers.
- ▲ 14.2 The Baltic Sea area is studied to identify specially protected marine habitats of European Union importance.
- ▶ 14.3 Research is being carried out through mid-2022 to collect evidence in order to achieve and maintain good marine environmental status.
- ▲ 14.4 The European Union sets evidence-based annual catch limits for commercial fish stocks for its member states, including Latvia.
- ▲ 14.5 Research is being carried out to identify and establish the need for additional marine protected areas in Latvian marine waters in the European Economic Area, to develop a nature protection plan for all marine protected areas, and to limit invasive marine species.
- ▲ 14.6 Latvia does not subsidise illegal, unreported, or unregulated fishing.

### Key actions

- Latvian researchers map and study specially protected marine habitats of European Union significance in the Baltic Sea area.
- In 2020, nineteen organisations started a joint project to implement Latvian river basin management plans to achieve good surface water status. Nutrient discharges caused by land use are among the issues being assessed.
- A nitrogen flow analysis model and an integrated nitrogen management system suitable for the Baltic Sea region have been developed.
- National requirements for the reduction of pollution caused by agricultural activities have been improved.
- Public awareness of the problem of marine litter has been raised.

### LATVIAN BATHING SITES WITH EXCELLENT WATER QUALITY (% OF ALL BATHING SITES)





## Latvia in the world

Latvia is a member of the New York Group of Friends to Combat Marine Plastic Pollution in Waters, and in 2021 joined the group's statement at the High-Level Thematic Debate in Support of SDG14: Life Below Water at the UN General Assembly, which called for a legally binding global agreement on plastic pollution. Latvia welcomes the decision of the UN Environment Assembly in March 2022 to start work on the development of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

A healthy and diverse Baltic Sea is needed by People and the Planet. Given the intense nutrient efflux, up to 97% of the Baltic Sea suffers from eutrophication. Human activities (overfishing, pollution, increasing effects of climate change, etc.) are changing the ecological balance and reducing the resources available beyond their natural recovery potential. In addition, the Baltic Sea is one of the most heavily used seas on the planet. It is particularly sensitive to environmental pressures due to its closed nature and relatively low biodiversity. The long winter season limits its productivity and the brackish water creates difficult conditions for both saltwater and freshwater organisms.

The Baltic Sea Action Plan (adopted in 2007 by the Helsinki Convention) aimed to restore the Baltic Sea environment to good ecological status by 2021. However, the nine Baltic Sea states have not fully achieved this goal. In October 2021, the renewed Baltic Sea Action Plan was approved by the Meeting of the Parties to the Helsinki Convention.

To achieve its objectives, the plan sets out specific measures and actions to be taken at the national level or jointly at regional or international levels. Each of the measures of the Baltic Sea Action Plan is numbered and includes information about the background, expected results, criteria for assessing progress, links with other measures, the HELCOM working groups responsible for implementation, etc. While the new plan includes target dates, evidence shows that good environmental status in the marine environment would not have been possible by 2020, as it can take marine ecosystems several decades to recover, and the effects of the planned measures will be felt in the longer term. Climate-induced changes, such as rising water and air temperatures, could also hamper marine recovery. The need to act immediately is underscored by the significant decline in the Baltic cod population.

Because water is an environment affecting the viability of other resources, achieving an evidence-based balance between the economic interests of society and the sustainability of natural resources is crucial. Research is underway from 2020–2025 on protected habitats and to determine the protection status in the exclusive economic zone of Latvia in the Baltic Sea. Should there be any scientific basis, the network of protected marine areas might be expanded. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development conducts research in accordance with the European Union and Latvian regulations on the state of the marine environment, the ecosystem, pressures affecting the marine environment and its interactions, social



Photo: Kristaps Ungurs, Unsplash

and economic use of the sea, and costs and benefits. Latvian scientists, for instance, from the Latvian Institute of Hydro-ecology and the Scientific Institute for Food Safety, Animal Health and the Environment BIOR, are also involved in national and international water resource research.

This evidence is key for Latvia and other European Union member states in developing common policy in the field of fisheries, protection of the marine environment, and other areas.





## New policies

- Environmental Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027
- Operational Programme for Fisheries Development for 2021–2027
- Latvia's National Sea Fisheries Control Programme for 2021–2027
- Wastewater Management Investment Plan for 2021–2027
- Programme of Measures for Achieving Good Marine Environmental Status for 2022–2027

## Key future actions

- Completion of the network of Natura 2000 sites
- Expansion of the knowledge-base on the marine environment and continued international cooperation.
- At least 60% of all fishing vessel inspections at sea and in ports are carried out on fishing vessels belonging to fleets in the two highest risk categories.
- The marine environment is monitored at 70 stations.

## Good practice

### CLEAN HOUSE, CLEAN SEA

Clean House, Clean Sea is a slogan that the Ecodesign Competence Centre, in cooperation with the Environment State Bureau, the online portal for parents Māmiņu klubs, and the Eco-Schools network in Latvia, has used to draw attention to ways in which consumers can reduce the pollution of the Baltic Sea. Stakeholders display environmental education posters in Riga and other Latvian cities, while social media profiles of the Ecodesign Competence Centre and other friends of the environment showcase videos and more specific information on how people can take care of their Baltic Sea.



Illustration: Ekodizaina kompetences centrs

## Mission "Sea 2030"

Eight EU member states (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden) and Russia are responsible for the quality of the Baltic Sea. Mission Sea 2030 is Latvia's call for the creation of an environment for innovative solutions to restore the Baltic Sea. The mission-oriented approach to solving complex problems will be piloted to develop a "blue economy" in which the clean sea is both a healthy habitat and a resource used sustainably for economic growth and public well-being. For more information on the pilot programme, see Chapter 4.

## Challenges

- Involving all countries who affect the environmental parameters of the sea in improving the environment of the Baltic Sea.

- Raising awareness among certain population groups on the need to protect, preserve and stop polluting the sea.

The Baltic Sea is a magnet not only for the people of Latvia but also for tourists who visit the coastal areas of Latvia. For some it is a place for recreation or inspiration, for others it is a place to work. During the bathing season, almost everyone is looking for the cleanest spots in terms of water quality. The people of Latvia are proud of having "our own" sea, coast, and its resources. On the other hand, we often ignore the fact that by-products of our lives end up in the sea, which is the only living environment for its inhabitants. Let's get to know the environment, change our habits, and help the sea recover – let's plan big!



Photo: Investment and Development Agency of Latvia



## Life on earth

Natural habitat degradation and biodiversity loss due to human activity is becoming a reality in Latvia. Because natural resources are an integral part of economic activity, protecting life on earth requires innovation, new technological solutions, support for transformation to a greener economy, and public awareness to facilitate change in consumption and production habits. Latvia's local governments and local action groups – local public- and private-sector entities that have united to develop and implement community-led local development strategies – are especially active in seeking various site-specific climate resilience solutions. Local governments take into account specially protected nature territories in their development planning. These are geographical areas that are under special state-level protection in order to safeguard and maintain the biodiversity of nature.

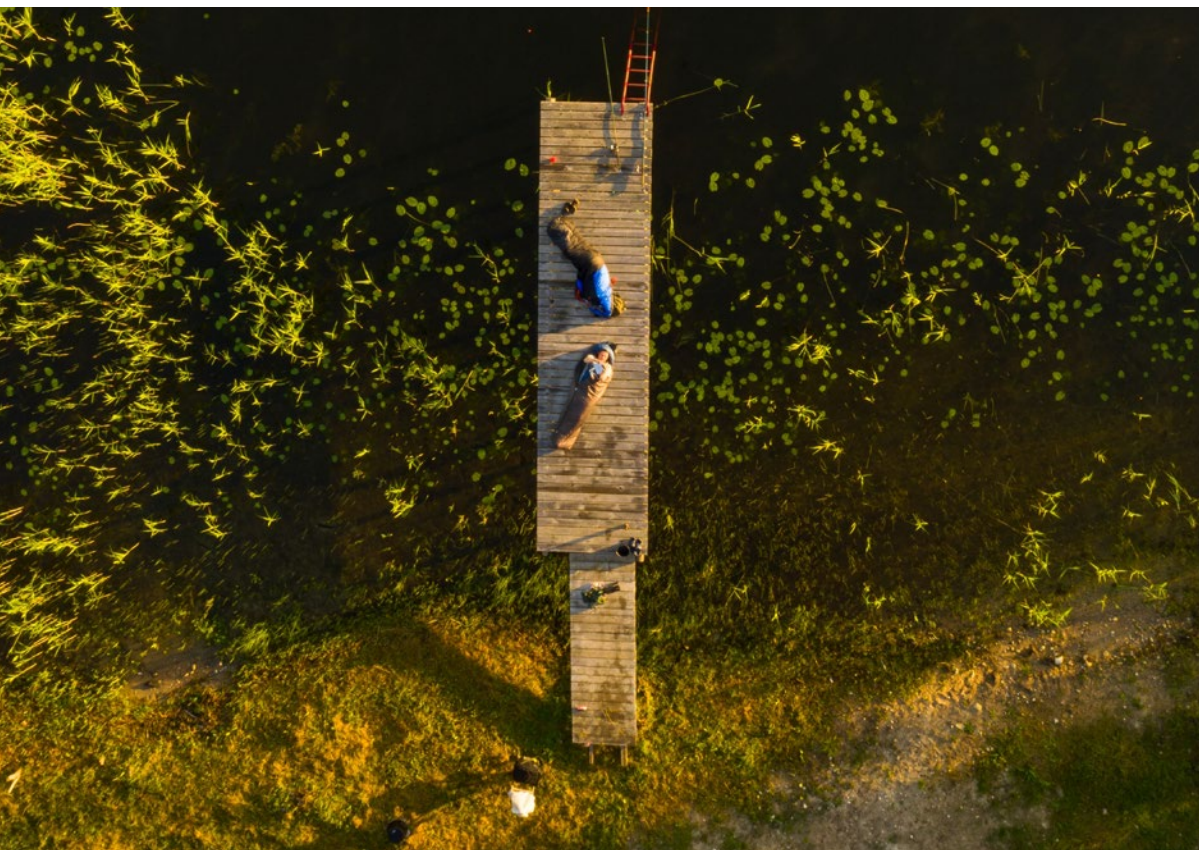


Photo: Kristaps Ungurs, Unsplash

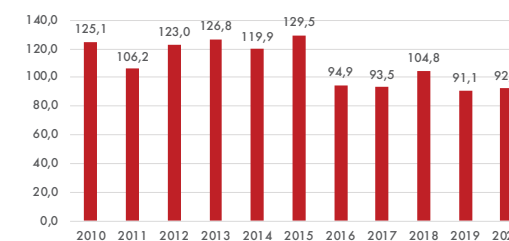
### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▲ 15.1 Latvia has designated specially protected nature territories – national parks, biosphere reserves, nature parks, protected landscape areas, nature reserves, nature monuments, and marine protected areas. Specially protected nature territories cover 13% of Latvia.
- ▲ 15.2 Forests cover 53% of Latvia's territory. 14% of forest area has restrictions on timber production, and more than 7% of forest area has strict restrictions or bans. There are just a few EU-protected forest habitats of poor status.
- ▼ 15.3 About 13% of the land is considered degraded (data from 2000–2015). A register of contaminated sites is maintained.
- ▲ 15.4 In Latvia, 10% of EU-protected habitats and 41% of species are in good condition.
- 15.5 The ratification of the Nagoya Protocol to the Convention on Biological Diversity has been assessed, and the Law on the Use of Genetic Resources has been adopted to ensure sustainable management of genetic resources.
- ▼ 15.6 The capacity of hunting, customs, police and nature protection inspectors to control the exploitation of protected animals and plants needs to be strengthened.
- 15.7 Management plans for certain invasive species have been developed; however, the spread of certain invasive species is not declining.
- ▲ 15.8 Environmental impact assessments of important policies and projects are required by law, and Latvia has started to establish a sustainable financing system for this.

### Key actions

- In 2020, Latvia completed its mapping of habitats of EU importance and began data analysis. Habitat restoration is ongoing.
- Nature protection plans of the specially protected nature territories are taken into account in municipal development planning.
- Anthropogenic pressures are being reduced on Natura 2000 sites, the network of core breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species.
- Degraded ecosystems in an area totalling 2200 ha have been restored.
- The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and active environmental protection organisations provide the public with up-to-date information on environmental policy.
- Natural resource taxes are used to finance environmental protection activities.
- Environmental monitoring programmes are ongoing.
- Criteria and procedures to classify, identify and assess degraded areas and soil degradation are in place, as are prevention plans.

### COMMON FARMLAND BIRD INDEX – LATVIA



Data source: MEPRD





## Good practice

### CHILDREN GROW THE DIGITAL FOREST

Latvia's State Forests, the state-owned forest property and management company, invites schools to go outdoors, annually offering diverse and exciting school programmes for more than 20,000 pupils of all ages and skill levels. The aim is to promote contact with the forest and create an experiential understanding of nature's rhythms.

The digital educational game "Mežotājs", on sustainable forest management, was launched in 2021. Children grow their own virtual forests and explore three interrelated topics – restore, propagate, and create – and discover the environmental, social and economic significance of the forest. Activities include forest restoration, care, and cultivation, as well as protection of nature, all of which require the student to make decisions and learn.

### LATVIA'S SEEDS FOR EVERYONE

As of 2021, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Svalbard, Norway stores 153 samples of agricultural and food plant seeds of Latvian origin, thus strengthening the conservation of Latvia's traditional plant genetic resources. The seeds are mainly for field crops – cereals, legumes, flax, hemp and also vegetables (30 species in total). The varieties of Latvian origin were placed at the largest and safest global plant seed repository in the world. Sustainable seed storage at Svalbard is essential in the context of rapid climate change. Due to their genetic diversity, the seed samples stored at the national seed banks may someday be used to breed new varieties that will be more adapted to future conditions. Genetic resources are the wealth of all humankind, and the storage of seeds for future agriculture is also the preservation of cultural and historical values.

Source: [NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' OFFICE IN LATVIA](#)

## Key future action

- Completion of the Natura 2000 site network in Latvia.
- Plans for specially protected nature territories and species have been developed.
- 25% of habitats of EU importance are being considered to receive favourable conservation status.
- Scientifically based conservation goals have been set for species and habitats of EU importance.
- The free flow of 50 km of previously converted rivers will be restored (by 2027).

- 35% of Latvia's water bodies have been upgraded to high and good ecological quality status.
- Data and information on groups of invasive species, their spread, population size and changes have been obtained and analysed.
- Ecosystem services have been mapped in 25% of the territory of Latvia.
- Scientific data on nature is being obtained and the management system is being improved.

## New policies

- Environmental Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027 (draft)
- Measures to conserve biodiversity will be supported by the EU Structural Funds and the Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy, as well as EU funds, the INTERREG and LIFE programmes, and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

### LATVIA IN THE WORLD

During the 2020 Biodiversity Summit, the President of Latvia joined the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, which aims to prevent biodiversity loss by 2030. In 2021, during the UN Climate Change Conference COP26, Latvia joined the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use to halt deforestation by 2030.

## Challenges

- Climate, energy policy and biodiversity goals are at odds with current resource consumption patterns.
- The cost of conserving biodiversity is high in comparison with the average income of the rural population.
- The lack of data, the fragmented nature of information on the quality of natural resources, and the impact of the economy on natural resources hamper attitude and behaviour change. Information gaps also cause the polarisation of views regarding policy priorities and environmental and biodiversity targets.
- Gaps in information available from various databases add to the confusion on sustainability and citizens' opinions on Latvia as a green country.

Both users and protectors of natural resources are responsible for the richness and diversity of Life on Land in Latvia. A one-stop information shop on the impact of the economy on natural resources would contribute to clarity on the facts and improve debates on policy decisions. The solution is to work on the digitisation of data and data interpretation for all stakeholders in Latvia so that we go down an economic development path that is safe for both people and the environment.

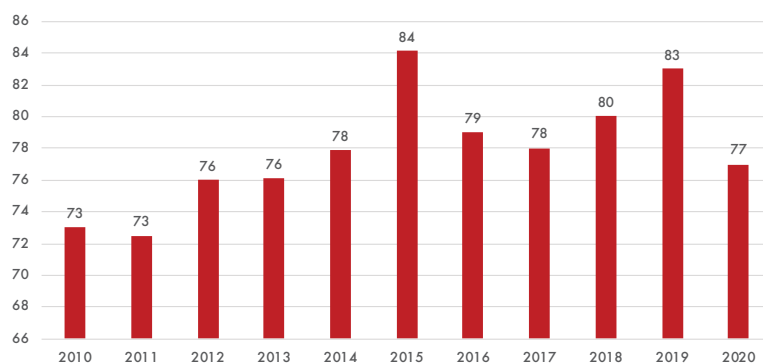




## Peace, justice and good governance

Efficient and responsive public administration and courts are key to successful economic growth and people's faith in the justice system, and they also increase people's motivation to live and work in any country. Latvia continues to improve the efficiency of its public administration by introducing convenient, easily accessible electronic services and by being more responsive to people's needs. Reducing corruption remains a high priority. Governance will improve if we use innovative and evidence-based methods, and if society is more involved in creating solutions.

GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS INDICATOR (GRIC INDEX)



Data source: World Bank

### ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ▲ 16.1 Citizens feel secure in their country. Public safety and trust in law enforcement are increasing.
- 16.2 Inter-institutional cooperation still must be improved upon to reduce domestic violence and violence against children, and to protect victims and provide them with the necessary assistance. (No assessment due to a lack of comparable data.)
- ▲ 16.3 Company perceptions of the independence of courts and judges (EU Justice Scoreboard) has increased (53% of respondents from companies have a positive impression, and the negative views have decreased by 13%, compared to 2020). Among the general public, positive impressions have increased by 11%, reaching 60% of respondents.
- ▲ 16.4 A strong anti-money-laundering system has been established, the capacity of supervisory and investigative authorities has been strengthened, and cooperation with the financial sector to prevent risks has been improved. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) assessment of Latvia in 2020 was positive.
- ▲ 16.5 The Corruption Perceptions Index did not improve significantly between 2015 and 2020. This was linked to shortcomings in the efficiency of investigations and prosecutions, which in turn affected the length of investigations and trials of high-level officials. However, in 2021 the confidence of the private sector in the public sector increased, as did the number of criminal cases sent for prosecution and the number of proceedings on corruption cases involving high-level officials.
- ▲ 16.6 Opinion polls show a high level of satisfaction with public services.
- ▶ 16.7 Active members of civil society increasingly participate in decision-making, while the share of civically less-engaged members of society remains large.
- ▲ 16.8 The independence of the media and the role of Latvian public broadcasters have been strengthened. Social media bubbles are affecting people's access to diverse information.

### Key actions

- Violence prevention, crisis counselling for victims, and rehabilitation support programmes for perpetrators have been launched, including against domestic violence and bullying at school.
- The capacity of court and law enforcement institution personnel has been strengthened.
- A Court of Economic Affairs has been established to deal with efficient processing of complex commercial disputes, economic and financial crimes, and corruption cases.
- The State Audit Office, in cooperation with the OECD, conducted an assessment of the effectiveness of criminal investigations and prosecutions of economic and financial crimes.
- The Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau has strengthened its analytical capacity in detecting, investigating and preventing crime.
- Public participation in Open Government Partnership events has increased. Standards have been developed for public participation at the local government level.
- A whistleblower system has been introduced



- by law. Because whistleblowers spread information internally (at the workplace) or externally (to the competent authority), internal whistleblower systems have been set up in the private and public sectors, and a dedicated Whistleblowers Contact Point has been established at the State Chancellery with a network of contacts in institutions.
- In 2021, the number of municipalities in the country was reduced through administrative territorial reform to improve the overall capacity of the local government system and to make local governments more efficient and equal.
  - The government has cut the number of employees in public administration, reduced the bureaucratic burden, strengthened horizontal strategic communication, and introduced innovation in public administration.
  - Allocations for NGO grant projects by the state-administered NGO Fund are increasing. As of 2020, the Active Citizens Fund, administered by the NGO sector and supported by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, also provides project funding for civil society.
  - The TAP portal – a comprehensive database of proposed and adopted government decisions – has been introduced for easy access to information and participation in the national policy-making and legislative processes.
  - The Media Support Fund promotes media independence of commercial and public service media organisations by supporting different types of projects, for example, content creation for analytical and investigative journalism.
  - The Latvian public service broadcasting media has left the advertising market, thereby improving income revenue streams for private media and freeing up time for public service media content.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MORE TRANSPARENCY

Latvia's positions in the annual Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International improved in 2021 as compared to 2020. At the same time, Latvia still lags behind other European countries. For this reason, Transparency International Latvia (TI Latvia), or Delna, as it is known in Latvia, calls on the government:

- to promote responsible control and use of public funds (including EU funds).
- to implement 2021 OECD recommendations from an audit of the Prosecutor's Office.
- to adopt a comprehensive framework for the transparency of interest representation (lobbying)
- to improve the system for detecting and preventing conflicts of interest of high-level officials. In addition, the organisation encourages businesses to play an active role in tackling corruption by disclosing data and information about their internal anti-corruption systems as well as by participating in political processes through official lobbying, their organisational structure, and international operations.

Source: Transparency International Latvia (TI Latvia)

### Latvia in the world

- Latvia supports multilateralism with the UN at its core, and defends the international system based on the rule of law for maintaining global security, stability and predictability. Latvia is a member of the Alliance for Multilateralism initiated by France and Germany.
- In development cooperation, Latvia supports innovative and proven digital solutions for effective public administration, public participation in decision-making, and the creation of new economic opportunities. For example, the national standardisation institution "Latvijas standarts", in partnership with "Tilde" Ltd, has been providing support for the Georgian standardisation system using machine translation. SunGIS Ltd, in turn, provides support to Uzbekistan in the field of e-governance, advising public authorities on geospatial planning and mapping as well as on the use of modern technological solutions.
- Since the events of August 2020, Latvia has increased support to the democratic movement in Belarus, including civil society outside the country, and expresses its readiness to support economic and social transformation as Belarus moves towards democratic reforms.
- Dr Mārtiņš Pāparinskis is the first representative from Latvia and the Baltic States to be elected to the UN International Law Commission (2023–2027).
- Within the UN, Latvia has strengthened its leadership in combating disinformation and promoting media literacy. In March

2021, the UN General Assembly adopted a new resolution on the promotion of media and information literacy, initiated by Latvia together with other like-minded countries. In 2020, Latvia initiated a UN cross-regional statement on the "Infodemic" in the context of COVID-19, which received wide support.

- Latvia actively advocates for freedom of the media and the protection of journalists. Latvia continues to actively participate in the Intergovernmental Council of the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and makes voluntary contributions to this UNESCO programme. Since April 2021, Latvia has been represented on the UN Information Committee. Latvia actively participates in the Media Freedom Coalition, which provides support to endangered journalists in various regions of the world, as well as in the Freedom Online Coalition, which promotes the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms online. We also participate in Groups of Friends on the Safety of Journalists (UN, UNESCO, OSCE).



## Key actions

- E-files – information and communication technology solutions packages – will ensure a gradual transition to electronic investigation, litigation and enforcement processes, which will in turn speed up the processing of legal cases and improve public access to justice.
- Establishment of a Judicial Training Centre. A new selection process for judges was introduced in 2021.
- As of 2021, courts may oblige perpetrators of domestic violence to undergo rehabilitation courses.
- Public authorities are beginning to use a risk assessment tool to assess the risks of virtual currencies in money laundering, terrorism, and proliferation financing.
- The Public Administration Modernisation Plan 2027 will provide for a more flexible, innovative and efficient public administration.
- New guidelines for public participation in policy making will place civic dialogue alongside social dialogue.
- Sentenced juveniles will always be appointed probation supervision.

## New policies and reports

- Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Corruption for 2021–2024
- Action Plan of the Crime Prevention Council for 2021–2026
- EU Justice Scoreboard 2021
- Corruption Perceptions Index 2021
- Guidelines for the Development of a Cohesive and Civic Active Society for 2021–2027

- Latvia's Fifth National Open Government Partnership Action Plan for 2022–2025
- Plan for the Prevention of Child Delinquency and the Protection of Children against Crime for 2022–2024 (draft)
- Public Administration Modernisation Plan 2027 (draft)
- Regional Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027
- Resocialisation Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027

## Challenges

- Most people say they are satisfied with public services, but that they cannot influence policy-making. In general, people trust each other, public administration, and the UN; trust in politicians is low.
- Latvian law enforcement agencies and citizens have limited experience with virtual currencies and the risks of using them, including in money laundering and international crime.
- New public participation mechanisms that entered into force together with the new Law on Local Governments will require more interface between citizens and local authorities.
- Social network bubbles partially restrict people's free access to information.
- Future labour force shortages could create a risk of labour exploitation and raise the issue of human trafficking in Latvia.
- Many citizens and young people are not very involved in community-led local initiatives and non-governmental organisations.

## Good practice

### THE NATIONAL NGO FUND

A vibrant civil society is crucial for any democracy, and the national NGO Fund is a significant catalyst for civil society groups to become more active. Within the framework of projects financed by the NGO Fund, non-governmental organisations can apply for grants to do advocacy work and organise activities that strengthen civil society. In addition, current specialised programmes include support for NGOs in the regions of Latvia, co-financing for NGO's participating in international projects, and promotion of participation of minority NGOs.

### ETHICS OF PROSECUTORS

The Latvian Code of Ethics for Prosecutors was approved in 1998 and had not been revised or updated until 2021. In 2021, an OECD study on the Prosecutor's Office identified the need to review and update the code of ethics as well as ensure that it is not perceived only as a formal document. An audit report that followed endorsed these conclusions, emphasising the need to "revive" the code of ethics.

The new Code of Ethics for Prosecutors, developed in a collaborative effort between the Prosecutor's Office, Transparency International Latvia (TI Latvia), and experts

from Germany, the Netherlands, the United States and Estonia, clearly defines standards of ethical and professional conduct of Latvian prosecutors.

This joint effort demonstrates that institutions can receive independent views on important issues, show their openness and self-criticism to the public, and increase public confidence – and by doing so, in the long term, foster civic activism.

### YOUNG PEOPLE CAN

Although people in Latvia often say that they cannot influence policy-making, the Latvian Youth Council, which brings together youth organisations and organisations working with youth, believes that today's young people are different. Various organisations, such as Club "The House" – Youth for a United Europe, the Latvian Scout and Guide Central Organisation, "Mazpulki" (an association uniting rural youth), the Development Platform YOU +, Creative Minds for Culture, and other groups actively inform and educate young people about democracy and participation in decision-making, thus encouraging young people to become more involved in shaping the future.





## Partnerships for the Goals

Latvia supports global partnerships and actively promotes the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, especially in the fields of democracy building, good governance, media and information literacy, gender equality, quality education, environment and climate, and smart business and digitalisation. Through development cooperation and Latvia's membership in international organisations and bilateral contacts, Latvia shares its good practice with the international community and partners.



Latvia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and "Un Ponte Per" provide support towards the reduction of violence against women and girls in the Raqqqa region in the north of Syria.  
Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

## Partnership

- ▲ 17.1 Latvia's development cooperation is based on the global development agenda and relevant agreements – the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the Addis Ababa Programme of Action, and the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- ▲ 17.2 The share of official development assistance provided by Latvia continues to grow steadily in absolute terms, remaining at 0.12% of GNI. In 2022, the government tripled funding for bilateral development cooperation managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Latvia continues to gradually increase its official development assistance (ODA) to at least 0.23% of gross national income (GNI) by 2027, aiming to reach 0.33% of GNI by 2030, of which 0.15–0.20% of GNI is foreseen for the least developed countries.
- The significant increase in Latvia's bilateral development cooperation funding has allowed Latvia to expand its geographical scope of support, including to countries in Africa, beginning with 2022.
- Latvia is actively involved in and coordinating its support within EU development cooperation instruments and programmes. Latvia has developed partnerships and jointly funded projects with other donors such as the United States, the European Commission, the United Kingdom, Norway and Sweden.

- Humanitarian aid is provided to Afghanistan, Mali, Tonga, Palestine, and Ukraine.
- Latvia has established a development cooperation agency to upscale the coordination and efficiency of development cooperation.

## Finance

**17.3–17.5** Latvia supports the World Bank in reducing global disparities between countries with different income levels and ensuring a more inclusive global economy. Latvia advocates policies that effectively use Latvia's donor contributions and expand the World Bank's lending capacity in developing countries. This enables countries to strengthen their capacities to build fair and progressive tax systems, reduce illicit financial flows, prevent corruption, and achieve sustainable debt management.

### KEY ACTIONS

- Latvia participates in the World Bank's International Development Association's (IDA) policy-making regarding the world's poorest countries. Following Latvia's initiative, which received widespread support from other donors, the World Bank included in the IDA20 replenishment package the policy challenge of establishing fair and progressive tax systems in poor countries (SDG 10 and SDG 17). The initiative will help countries: increase their tax revenues; improve fiscal sustainability; comply with global tax standards; reduce





their external debt burden; and address inequalities and other sustainability challenges. At the same time, Latvia supports the World Bank's policy measures aimed at reducing illegal financial flows in poor countries by preventing corruption, money laundering, and tax evasion.

- Latvia participates in the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, financing poor countries' late payments to IDA and thus helping them to resume cooperation with the World Bank.
- Latvia has joined the Climate Policy Coalition of Finance Ministers.
- Latvia, Central Asian and EU Eastern Partnership countries work together on education policy. Latvia participated in the EU-Central Asia Education Platform (CAEP) and supports dialogue on volunteering as a way to build young people's skills as well as the exchange of information on digitalising education and peer learning in the field of vocational education. Latvian government scholarships are available to students from Central Asia and the Eastern Partnership countries.

## Technology

**17.6–17.8** Latvia shares best practice and offers joint initiatives for consideration by other countries, for example:

- In 2021, Latvia was engaged in the ECOSOC Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, both as a co-chair of the forum and by participating in the panel discussion.

- The Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre has supported the creation of an "e-consultant" tool for Ukrainian agricultural exporters.
- The national standardisation body, Latvian Standard (LVS), partnered with "Tilde" Ltd to share their experience with Georgia in creating sustainable infrastructure for the use of modern language technologies and on languages in the digital age.

## Capacity building

**17.9** Capacity building is one of Latvia's development cooperation priorities. Latvia is especially actively involved in development cooperation activities on good governance.

### KEY ACTIONS IN CAPACITY BUILDING

- The National Action Plan on the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in Latvia for the period of 2020–2025 has been approved. Under the plan, the MARTA Resource Centre for Women, with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, engages in projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Latvia regularly organises thematic events on Women, Peace and Security in international formats.
- The Constitutional Court supports capacity building of the legal services of constitutional courts.
- The Riga Graduate School of Law Intensive Programme in European Law and Economics trains young professionals from 20 countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy Countries, Central Asia, and the Western Balkans.

- The University of Latvia hosts a European Union Studies – Domestic and Foreign Policy training programme for young professionals from Ukraine.
- The State Audit Office promotes the capacity building of national audit institutions in integrating International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAIs).
- The Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau organises international thematic events. For example, during the UN General Assembly Special Anti-Corruption Session in 2021, it organised an event on international experience in the fight against corruption.
- Latvia's good practice in using digital tools to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, as well as in the involvement of women and girls in technology fields, has been shared with the UN for publication.

## Trade

**17.10–17.12** Latvia is a proponent of a comprehensive, rules-based, open, nondiscriminatory and fair multilateral

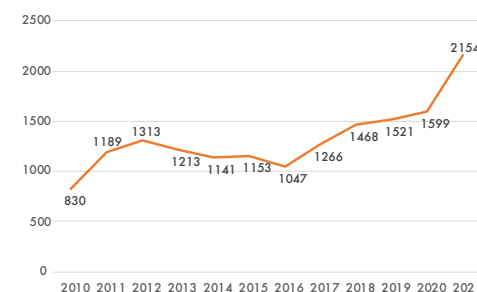
trading system in accordance with the rules of the World Trade Organisation. It supports the transition to duty-free and quota-free market access for all least developed countries. Latvian imports from developing countries are increasing.

### GOOD PRACTICE

Latvia has been elected to the following UN bodies:

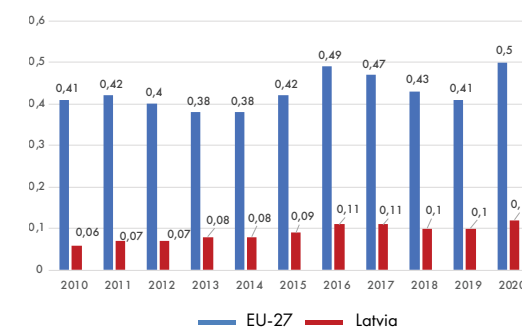
- the UN Economic and Social Council (until the end of 2022) and in its subcommissions, the Commission on the Status of Women (until 2025), and the Commission on Science and Technology Development (until 2022, and reelected for term 2023–2026).
- the UN Information Committee, which deals with Information and Communication issues, and the Intergovernmental Council of the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication (until 2023).
- the UN Peacebuilding Commission (in 2022, for the first time ever).

### IMPORTS FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (MIL.EUR)



Data source: Eurostat

### ODA AS % OF GNI



Data source: Eurostat



#### LATVIAN EXPERTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

- Ms Ilze Brands-Kehris is the UN Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights. To date, this is the highest position in the UN bodies to which a representative of Latvia has been appointed.
- Ms Ilvija Pūce works on the UN Committee for the Prevention of Torture.
- Ms Elina Šteinerte represents Latvia in the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and has been appointed as its Chair-Rapporteur.
- Mr Tālis Juhna is a member of the UN 10-Member-Group of High-level Representatives of Civil Society, Private Sector and Scientific Community to support the UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism (10-Member Group).
- Mr Valts Ernštreits is a member of the UN Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages.
- Ms Rita Ruduša serves on the Intergovernmental Council of the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).
- Ms Signe Mežinska is on the International Bioethics Committee of UNESCO as the representative of Latvia and the Deputy Chair of the Committee's Bureau.
- Mr Ivars Neiders has been elected to the UNESCO Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee.
- Dr Mārtiņš Paparinskis was jointly nominated by the Baltic States and elected to the UN International Law Commission (2023–2027).

## Policy and institutional coherence in foreign policy

**17.13–17.15** Latvia's policy makers seek to assess and prevent the potential negative impact of Latvia's national policies on sustainable development and on developing countries (especially in the areas of security, the economy, environment and finance). To this end, Latvia raises awareness on development cooperation in public administration and society at large.

## Multi-stakeholder partnerships

- 17.16–17.17** Latvia supports multi-stakeholder partnerships
- Verifiable evidence-based information enhances public resilience. In the field of media and information literacy, Latvia actively promotes close cooperation between the state and NGOs, strengthening independent media, protecting journalists, and strongly advocating for media freedom both regionally and internationally.
  - Latvia supports the role of civil society in development cooperation. In 2021, 72% of grants for development cooperation managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs included Latvian civil society organisations as partners.
  - Latvia supports public administration, local government, civil society, academic institutions, the private sector, expert cooperation, and the added value of cross-sectoral activities in development cooperation.

## Data, Monitoring and Responsibility

**17.18–17.19** Latvia recognises the importance of a proper legal framework and adequate financing to produce high-quality and detailed statistics for demonstrating professionalism and fostering innovation so as to provide more timely and detailed data in a safe data ecosystem.

#### KEY ACTIONS IN STATISTICS

- The Central Statistical Bureau and other national authorities provide data for Latvia's SDG indicator framework. The national indicators characterise priority targets from Latvia's medium-term and long-term development policies that envisage strategic priorities for achieving the SDGs. See Annex 2 to the VNR.
- With the launch of the new Official Statistics Portal (hereinafter – the Portal) in 2020, official statistics produced by national statistical institutions, metadata, a dissemination calendar, etc. are available in one place. The Portal provides detailed gender, age, ethnic and territorial distribution statistics. A special section on gender equality and thematic publications focusing on specific age groups, such as the annual publication "Children in Latvia" and "Seniors in Latvia", are available in the Portal.
- Recognising the need for data disaggregation for SDGs and beyond, and with a view to increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data, the Central Statistical Bureau

releases experimental data on socio-economic phenomena by administrative areas, territorial units, and densely populated areas. Latvia's Central Statistical Bureau has continuously confirmed its commitment to evaluate possible new data needs requested by responsible institutions to measure national SDG policies. All data requests are discussed in the process of developing respective policies and, further on, in the process of preparing the Official Statistics Programme.

- In 2021, the Central Statistical Bureau carried out the first fully registers-based Population and Housing Census, which led to the very timely availability of the first Census results.

#### CENSUS DATA AT RECORD SPEED

Latvia has set a speed record in the region. In 2021, the Central Statistical Bureau published its first Census data in May, within five months after the Census date of 1 January 2021. The 1 km<sup>2</sup> grid data set with detailed population figures was published in July 2021.

The Central Statistical Bureau has wholly changed its approach to the Population and Housing Census, switching from traditional census data collection methods to a fully registers-based census.

The Central Statistical Bureau invested its knowledge and professional skills in developing the methodology, strengthened cooperation with administrative data holders, improved the quality of registers, and informed society in an entertaining way about the change in methodology.

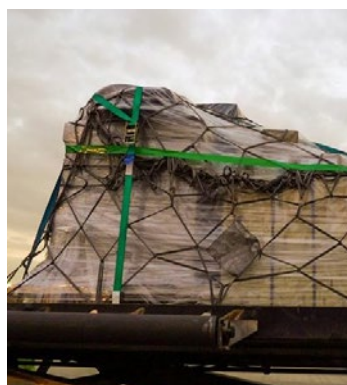
## Thematic priorities of Latvia's development cooperation

In order to promote global cooperation, Latvia has committed to:

- increase Latvia's official development assistance (ODA) to 0.23% of GNI by 2027;
- by 2027, increase the share of bilateral development cooperation funding managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to 9% of the total ODA.

By 2027, bilateral development cooperation managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be directed to the following areas:

- 65% – for the promotion of good governance, the rule of law, and democratic participation;
- 20% – to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth;
- 16% – with the main or important goal of promoting gender equality;
- 30% – to support the digitalisation of public administration, society, or the economy;
- 30% – with the main or important goal of mitigating and/or adapting to climate change.



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs archives

*Latvia's development cooperation policies are founded on the commitment enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia that Latvia "promotes the sustainable and democratic development of the world".*

## Challenges

- The aggression of Russia and Belarus against Ukraine has created geopolitical tensions in the region that will have a long-term impact on both regional and global security and economic trends, and has caused an unprecedented influx of refugees into Europe.
- Unresolved regional conflicts, disputes, and tensions that resonate internationally.
- Declining effectiveness of multilateral international organisations, their inability to respond adequately to existing challenges, the questioning of the international rule of law, and the readiness of countries to ignore democratic values.
- The rise of hybrid threats, especially in the area of disinformation and cyber security, given the rapid pace of digitalisation.
- Internationally, the threat of terrorism remains high.
- Climate change (rising sea levels, drastic changes in temperature, etc.).
- The widening gap between developed and developing countries, cities and rural areas.
- The possibility of increased flows of migration caused by the interaction of various factors in different regions of the world will remain.

### THE UN YOUTH DELEGATE PROGRAMME

Latvia promotes the involvement of young people in global processes. The UN Youth Delegate Programme, launched in Latvia in 2019, provides Latvian youth with knowledge about UN processes, including the achievement of SDGs, and creates an opportunity for Latvia's youth to express their views to the international community. The engaged enthusiasts organise an annual conference, workshops and discussions on issues related to sustainability. In 2022, a team of 15 young people are working with SDG-related topics, identifying challenges relevant to youth as well as potential solutions.

## New policies from 2021

1. Development Cooperation Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027
2. Development Cooperation Policy Plan for 2021–2023
3. Financial Sector Development Plan for 2021–2023



# Stakeholders' views on Latvia's SDG priorities

A wide range of stakeholders are active in sustainable development. Stakeholder initiatives can be seen on various social networking platforms, websites, and in remote and face-to-face meetings. This chapter summarises the views received from the scientific and academic community, local authorities, social partners, non-governmental organisations, and other stakeholders during the preparation of this VNR.

Photo: Aivars Silņš





## Stakeholders were asked two sets of questions.

### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

Which SDGs pose the biggest challenges for Latvia in the coming years and require larger inputs from Latvia?

### SDGS – ACTION!

What are your views and proposals on how public, non-governmental and private sectors can improve, expand and promote Latvia's contribution to achieving the SDGs in Latvia? Please outline specific areas and specific actions to be taken.

Complete stakeholder answers can be found in [LETTERS](#). Excerpts are published below.

In addition, the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation LAPAS has compiled the opinions of NGOs and youth in its publication "[LOCAL SOCIAL RESILIENCE AS AN ENABLER FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE, JUST AND PEACEFUL WORLD](#)".



Photo: Toms Grinbergs, University of Latvia

## THE SCIENTIFIC AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

### University of Latvia

#### CONTRIBUTION AT A GLANCE

The vision and mission of the University of Latvia envisages the university as a leader and a role-model for science-based sustainable development. The LU Strategy for 2021–2027 identifies the strategic goals and main objectives for this period and describes the essence, actions and results in a number of areas.

#### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

- Public education on sustainable development issues, climate change, and education for sustainable development.
- Climate change, biodiversity loss.
- The science of sustainable development.

#### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

- SDG 4 Contribute to researching the nature of Latvia's development: study productive capacities and innovative actions while positioning sustainable development science in the fields of climate, nature protection, and social affairs to be a priority LU research area; participate in the process of planning and analysis of Latvia's development, and inform legislators, the executive branch, and the public about the findings.
- SDG 15 Develop research and education in the fields of ecosystem services and biodiversity protection; contribute notably to the protection of Latvia's biological diversity; develop policies and procedures for ensuring use of local organic food.
- SDG 13 Strengthen preparedness and resilience to climate-related natural disasters and adaptability; improve education and awareness; increase capacity in the areas of reducing climate change, adaptation, mitigation, and early warning; develop and offer research and study programmes on climate-neutral development and its management, especially regarding the natural sciences and socio-economic principles.

## Latvian Academy of Sciences

### CONTRIBUTION AT A GLANCE

The Latvian Academy of Sciences (LAS) is a science centre of national significance with elected members. LAS has cooperation agreements with scientific institutes, associations, foundations, scientific and technical organisations, universities and colleges.

### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

- Reducing the risks of climate change and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and awareness-raising, especially among farmers.
- Focusing on achieving better results in physics and mathematics in Latvian schools and society.
- Scientists and all necessary resources must be involved in tackling the development challenges.

### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

- Recognise Latvia's scientific achievements and their relation to the SDGs.
- Carry out research in line with the SDGs (see letter for details of specific studies).
- Organise discussions, seminars, forums and other events on innovations in the energy sector, economic transformation, and raising productivity.

## Daugavpils University

### CONTRIBUTION AT A GLANCE

The Centre for Sustainable Education of the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences of Daugavpils University (DU) has so far focused on: educating students on the need for sustainable change and increasing their understanding of the SDGs at all levels; participating in international alliances and consortiums; and strengthening cooperation with NGOs.

### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

- Action at the local and regional community level.

### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

- Continue with educational activities in the local community on the relevance of the SDGs and how to achieve them in the local community by strengthening cooperation with the non-governmental sector.

## Liepaja University

### CONTRIBUTION AT A GLANCE LIEPĀJA UNIVERSITY (LIEPU)

LiepU works in three directions – public education on sustainability transformations, reducing the ecological footprint of the university, and research on the sustainable use of existing resources and pollutant replacement. Liepaja University participates in the Baltic University Programme <https://www.balticuniv.uu.se/>. The mission of this programme is sustainable development of the Baltic Sea region.

### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

- Transition to green energy; emissions reduction; sustainable use of natural resources; reduction of pollution; creation of sustainable cities and communities (permanent practice instead of short-term projects); and establishment of efficient, transparent institutions that respect the rights of all.

### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

- Higher education that is free of charge.
- Introduction of environmental / sustainable development education at all levels.
- Other countries with much slower progress on sustainable development need to be encouraged and supported both through peer learning and professional training (designing and implementing training programmes for experts from different countries).

## Riga Stradins University

### CONTRIBUTION AT A GLANCE

In 2020, Riga Stradins University ranked 301–400th in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings 2020, and ranked 56th for its contribution to SDG 3. A year later, Riga Stradins University retained its position in the 301–400th ranking range in the overall rating of THE Impact while it jumped to 28th place for its contribution to SDG 3.

### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

- Consider financial support or incentives for energy efficiency and renewable energy in both the public and private sectors.
- Increase funding available at the national level for project implementation.
- Raise public awareness of the SDGs and their role.



## Riga Technical University

### CONTRIBUTION AT A GLANCE

Riga Technical University has mapped the contribution of its scientific research to the SDGs. In 2021, GreenMetric World University Rankings recognised RTU to be the 50th greenest university in the world. Within the framework of the climate change initiative "Race to Zero" and the "Climate Ambition Alliance", the university is developing a detailed climate neutrality plan. Within RTU's Green Concept for 2018–2023, the university is introducing "Green Kipsala", a project to transform this student community into a sustainable engineering centre. RTU priorities for UN Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 4, SDG 6, SDG 7, SDG 9, SDG 11.

#### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

- For sustainable economic development in Latvia: SDG 4, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9.
- For a modern and progressive nation: SDG 5, SDG 7, SDG 13, SDG 16.

#### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

- Information on climate change, the European Green Deal and sustainability goals needs to be fully integrated into higher education curricula.
- Latvia needs support mechanisms for promoting renewable energy in the private and public sectors.
- Consumers must be informed about the importance of protecting the Planet, gender equality, and responsible consumption.



Photo: Student Campus in Kipsala, Riga Technical University



Foto: Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments

## LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

### The Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments

#### CONTRIBUTION AT A GLANCE

The Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments has held a number of seminars, published several reports, supported the production of videos, conducted webinars and exchanges of experience between Latvian local governments on SDGs, and has included colleagues from Eastern Partnership countries in their events.

#### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

- Pay more attention to policy and planning documents, as well as SDG 11. Today 56% of the world's population lives in cities, and by 2030 this will reach 60%. It is therefore particularly important to focus on sustainability in urban development, from inclusive and sustainable urbanisation to the planning and management of inclusive, integrated and sustainable neighbourhoods.

#### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

- Follow the principle of innovation ecosystems by including entrepreneurs and representatives of the state, local governments, NGOs, educational institutions of various levels (formal / non-formal education; pre-school to university) in activities concerning sustainable development. As a result, the activity will reach different audiences with a wide range of interests and offer a diversity of views and proposals.

## Daugavpils

### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

- Economic inequality in Latvia's regions, especially in Latgale, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic slowed down economic growth and initiated the need for economy recovery measures.
- A notable challenge is Latvia's progress towards reaching climate neutrality goals by 2050. Speaking of local governments, institutions lack the competence to apply technological solutions in public services that would hasten the move toward climate neutrality. Companies (especially the most energy-intensive companies) need a lot of knowledge, time and financial resources to implement both new energy-efficient and innovative technical solutions and renewable energy projects.

### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

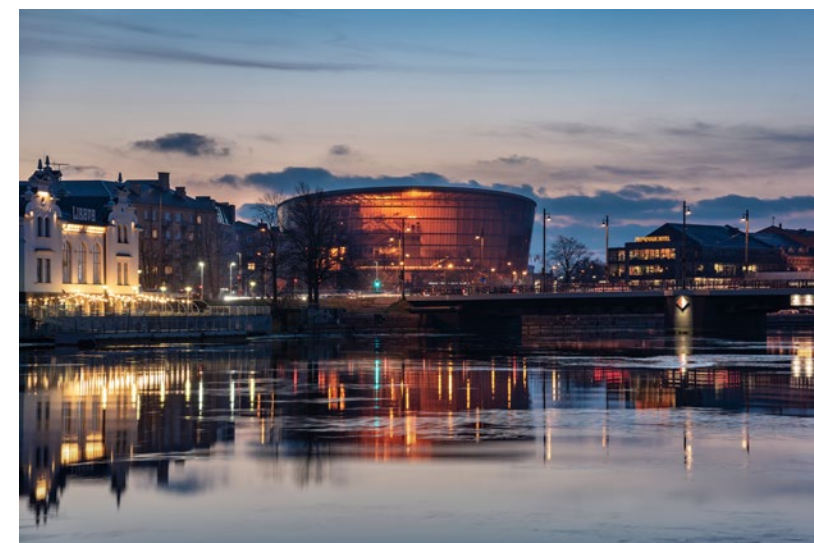
- To increase Latvia's contribution to achieving the SDGs, the skills and knowledge of various sectors and levels of government concerning global challenges and possible solutions that can be applied at the local level need to be strengthened. This can be done by integrating this knowledge into everyday work and processes in both the public and private sectors.

## Ogre region

### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

- SDG 1 Inflation and the impact of Covid-19 on people's income aggravates the situation of certain groups in terms of poverty.
- SDG 3 Forecasts warn that after the Covid-19 pandemic, the general health of the population is expected to worsen. The health care system will have to deal with the consequences of not addressing early prevention and not treating chronic diseases in a timely manner.
- SDG 4 The pandemic has caused gaps in pupils' knowledge. Socialisation problems in children and young people is an issue. There is a pronounced lack of teachers.
- SDG 7 The introduction of innovative and sustainable solutions for increasing the energy efficiency of buildings and the use of renewable energy sources should be promoted.

(The letter describes the activities for implementation of SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 10, and SDG 17).



Liepāja is designated European Capital of Culture for 2027. Photo: Shutterstock

## Liepāja

### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

Liepāja's challenges:

- Ensure equal access to high-speed Internet for everybody.
- In the context of SDG 11.2 – launch an electronic transport ticket payment system in Liepāja.
- Becoming a Climate-Neutral and Smart City.
- Raising public awareness of different types of violence so as to achieve zero tolerance and eradicate violence and its negative consequences.

The letter from Liepāja details activities for achieving each SDG.

## Riga

### SDGS – IMPORTANT SOCIAL CHALLENGES

- Reducing public health inequalities in line with the “leave no one behind” principle. Promotion of digital health literacy, healthy urban environments, and climate resilience.
- The prices of everyday goods and services (food, housing, medicines, etc.) are rising faster than the criteria for basic social assistance benefits.
- Population aging and the growing number and percentage of people with care needs.
- Increase in the number and percentage of persons with disabilities.

### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

Implement activities with multiple benefits (for example, in terms of both the environment and public health):

- raising the guaranteed minimum income;
- national co-financing for social assistance and social services (ed. covered by local governments in Latvia);
- creation of a fund for the development of innovative social services;
- increasing minimum pensions and social security benefits;
- ensuring environmental accessibility.

### SDGS – IMPORTANT CHALLENGES REGARDING LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT

- Implement comprehensive energy management, efficiency, and emission reduction measures; increase the share of renewable energy; support innovation for energy, climate and the environment; improve the energy literacy of the urban population; and promote climate-friendly lifestyle changes to the public.
- Develop and integrate regional transport infrastructure in the urban environment.
- Promotion of: quality and sustainable renovation of existing housing stock; availability of new housing; stabilisation of the rental market.
- Rehabilitation and revitalisation of degraded territories.
- Ensuring the multifunctionality and connectivity of the public outdoor space.
- The gender pay gap in Latvia.

### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

- Localise and integrate the SDGs into the development plans and medium-term operational strategies of planning regions and local governments and their institutions. This would provide comprehensive information on the implementation of the SDGs in Latvia.
- Set an additional project evaluation criterion – the impact of achieving the SDGs.

## Valmiera

### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

- Standardising requirements for product packaging and limiting use of non-recyclable packaging for promotion of a circular economy.
- Strengthening energy independence and the diversification of energy sources.
- Solving decentralised sewerage system issues at the national level, maintaining healthy soil with sustainable use of nutrients, and preventing increased eutrophication of water bodies (including the Baltic Sea).
- Preservation of biodiversity by strengthening support and compensation mechanisms for the establishment, preservation and maintenance of protected natural areas.
- Linking the education system to current labour market needs and providing qualified teachers.

### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

- According to NDP2027, most practical support and investments should strengthen a knowledgeable society. Ensuring equal access to education for all creates the preconditions for knowledge-based, responsible business and an overall increase in quality of life through: reducing the consumption of natural resources; reducing our impact on the environment; and addressing current environmental and social challenges.

## Ventspils

### CONTRIBUTION AT A GLANCE

- Construction of the National Ventspils Music Secondary School (with a concert hall) and the contribution of this project to education, culture and sustainability.
- The contribution of the Science and Innovation Centre “VIZIUM” to education and employment.

### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

- Support for business activities to promote regional employment and achieve SDG 8 is required.



## OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

### Latvijas Banka (Latvia's central bank)

#### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

Given the current need for rapid transformation of the economy, the challenges for Latvia are in the following areas:

- Reduced inequality (SDG 10)
- Responsible consumption and production (circular economy) (SDG 12)
- Climate action (SDG 13)
- Life on land and Life below water (SDG 14 and SDG 15)
- Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16)

The sustainability strategy of Latvijas Banka is regularly updated.

### Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia

#### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

##### SDG 3

- Ensure salary increases for doctors and paramedical staff.
- Provide health insurance and health care services to all.

##### SDG 4 (see LIZDA, below)

##### SDG 8

- Review the minimum wage regularly.
- Support raising the non-taxable minimum of the minimum wage.
- Improve the collective bargaining system.
- Deal with new and different forms of employment and introduce control mechanisms to balance the tax burden on different forms of employment and reduce the tax on labour.
- Involve employees in company decision-making.
- Strengthen trade union rights in practice; improve strike procedures.
- Provide health insurance and health care services to all.

##### SDG 10

- Establish a common mechanism for setting the minimum wage in EU member states.
- Reduce inequalities through wage and social protection policy.
- Reduce the shadow economy (especially in regards to undeclared workers evading taxes), which is subject to significant growth risks due to Covid-19 and poses the threat of labour force migration away from Latvia.

##### SDG 5

- Promote work-life balance, including support for paid carer's leave.

### Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees

#### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

- Eliminate inequality in employment conditions and in pre-school teachers' pay (e.g. in comparison to educators).
- Develop and implement a support system for new teachers.
- Review the educational requirements for teachers to increase the prestige of the profession and ensure professionalism.
- Decouple social guarantees in the education sector from the financial capabilities of local governments by ensuring equal conditions throughout Latvia.
- Provision of full stipends or state-guaranteed study loans for which repayment is waived providing that the student works in the teaching profession for a certain period of time after graduating.

### Latvian Youth Council

#### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

- Reduce high regional development disparities.
- Improve the mental health of young people, which was in decline during the Covid-19 pandemic, and reduce bullying at schools.
- Reduce mortality among young people through public health measures.
- Ensure the role of non-formal education alongside formal education.
- Promote youth employment, reduce job search barriers, and eliminate labour discrimination.
- Reduce gender roles in society by teaching domestic science, crafts and technology to both genders in schools.
- Reduce the risks of discrimination, for example, against the Roma, in access to health care.
- Find a solution for sustainability of the social protection system and ensuring adequate support.
- Develop and use renewable energy sources as the primary energy source.
- Expand youth access to infrastructure and environmental accessibility.
- Lay the foundations for an active civil society by strengthening participatory mechanisms in planning, decision-making, and the implementation processes of various initiatives, and increase the status of volunteering in society.

The UN Youth Delegates Programme, as a body representing the views of young people, draws attention to the fact that the youth will experience the effects of today's decisions, since climate change is inherently exponential.

## Latvian National Commission for UNESCO (LNK)

### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

- More attention ought to be paid to SDG 16, and the SDG 16.10 target in particular, which ensures public access to information and the protection of fundamental human freedoms. Achieving this goal is closely linked to public media and information literacy to limit misinformation. The “pandemic of misinformation” caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences for public safety demonstrated the urgency of this goal. The significance of the problem is further underscored by the geopolitical situation in Latvia’s neighbouring countries, which poses a threat to Latvia’s information space. SDG 16 emphasises the importance of the rule of law and good governance, and promoting this is one of the milestones for building public trust in the country, thus strengthening national security.

### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

- In order to measure the contribution of culture to the achievement of SDGs at national and local levels, UNESCO encourages using the UNESCO report “Culture / 2030 Indicators”, issued in 2019, for discussion (Culture | 2030 indicators).



The National Library of Latvia. Photo: Shutterstock

## The National Library of Latvia

### SDGS – IMPORTANT!

- Issues: economic development, the rise in prices, recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, prosperity, and people’s quality of life. These issues permeate SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 3, SDG 8, and SDG 12, which is important in saving resources. SDG 8 – receiving a decent salary, especially in the cultural and educational sector, including libraries.

### SDGS – TAKE ACTION!

- Promote co-operation via participation in the Inter-sectoral Coalition for Sustainable Development, and stakeholder co-operation under the umbrella of a unifying body for coordinated action.
- Pay more attention to municipal sustainability strategies and plans, as well as public participation in the development of the strategies, so that the plans of cultural institutions are linked to municipal plans and help in the achievement of goals.
- Continue building an inclusive society and look for ways to increase individual understanding of the SDGs, engage in dialogue, and address minorities so that they feel both secure and that they belong in Latvia.

## THEMATIC INDICATORS FOR CULTURE IN THE 2030 AGENDA



Source: UNESCO



## Chapter 4

# Factors accelerating SDG progress

Three factors are emerging in Latvia that have great potential to improve Latvia's ability to accelerate progress on sustainable development. Sustainable financial flows are designed to channel investment into an eco-efficient and fair economy and reduce poverty. The cultural space is increasingly becoming a safe place for raising awareness of inclusive sustainable development. The mission-oriented approach calls for economic transformation of the Baltic Sea region into a "blue economy" by involving society in the changes from which it will benefit.

The People's Bookshelf in the National Library of Latvia. Photo: Joao Marcelo Martins, Unsplash





## Sustainable financial flows or "money talks"

Although the transition to a climate-neutral economy will require significant public investment, this change will be successful only if the private sector also shifts financial resources to sustainable investment.

Latvia has started laying the foundations for a sustainable finance system. The Ministry of Finance, Latvijas Banka, and representatives of the private sector (including large companies and their associations) have taken steps to focus financial flows on investments that improve environmental quality, are socially responsible, and exhibit good governance. As a result, sustainable economic activity is on the rise.

Latvia's 2018 VNR describes the early steps in sustainable finance by Latvian stakeholders – corporate social responsibility initiatives in the private sector, green public procurement, and green bonds issued by state-owned enterprises. Three years ago, the financial sector and academia were already partnering on sustainability, for example, the Finance Latvia Association, representing banks and other financial sector providers and businesses, had started work on sustainable financing, and the Centre for Sustainable Business at the business school SSE Riga was organising educational events and discussions on the topic.

### FINANCIAL SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021–2023

In March 2021, the government adopted the Financial Sector Development Plan 2021–2023, which envisages an innovative and accessible financial sector that promotes and supports sustainable economic development. This will be achieved by: creating an institutional framework for sustainable financial goals; creating a sustainable government bond framework; and ensuring availability of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) data for assessing sustainability. An Ecolabel for financial products will be created, and consumers and businesses will be provided information to better understand the concept.

### STAKEHOLDERS UNITE

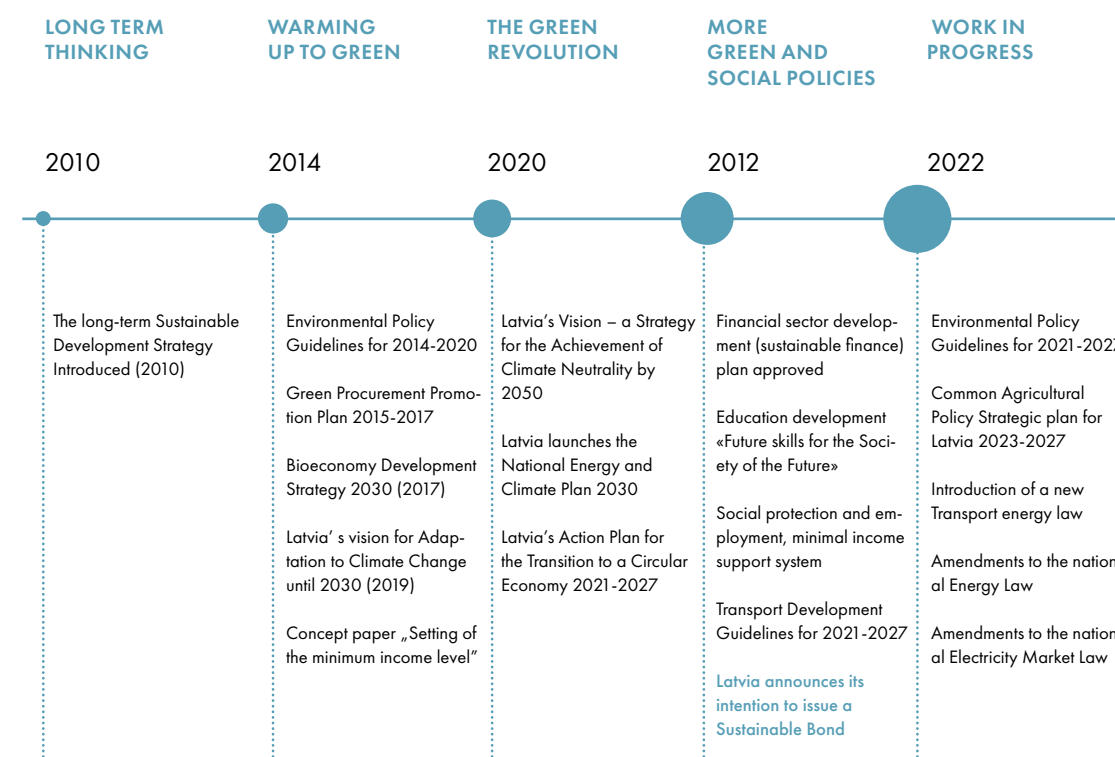
The Finance Latvia Association, the Financial and Capital Market Commission, Latvijas Banka, Nasdaq Riga, the Latvian Leasing Association, and the Latvian Insurers Association signed a Memorandum of Understanding in May 2021 to join forces in raising public awareness on the principles of sustainability and sustainable finances for use in business and daily life. The agreement sets out specific actions:

- development of a unified policy for assessing the sustainability of public and private investment;
- promoting investment of pension and insurance funds in the sustainable development of Latvia's economy;
- development of stress tests on climate change scenarios in specific sectors and assessing their impact on the financial sector, the economy, and the insurance sector.

### LATVIA'S SUSTAINABILITY BOND FRAMEWORK

In light of national policy goals in the fields of environment, climate, transport and social issues, in November 2021 an inter-institutional working group headed by the Ministry of Finance created a Sustainability Bond Framework for Latvia to steer the economy towards decarbonisation and sustainable growth, and to fund investments with tangible environmental benefits and feasible social benefits. A Second Party Opinion provider issued an assessment certifying the framework's compliance with ICMA Green Bond Principles 2021, Social Bond Principles 2021, and Sustainability Bond Guidelines 2021.

### LATVIA'S POLICY PATHWAY TO A GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



STATE TREASURY ISSUES LATVIA'S FIRST SUSTAINABILITY BOND

The net proceeds of the Sustainability Bond issued in December 2021 are allocated to state budget expenditures carried out and planned in 2020–2022 for: environmentally friendly transport; the preservation of Latvia’s forests, waters and biodiversity; reducing inequalities and poverty; and other measures aimed at achieving the SDGs. Latvia was the first among the Baltic and Scandinavian countries to issue sustainable government bonds, and investor demand exceeded supply more than four times. Bonds were bought mainly by European investors.

OVERVIEW

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Sustainability Bond issuance date | 13th December 2021  |
| Bond Maturity                     | 8 years   |
| Amount                            | EUR 600 million   |
| Coupon                            | 0.250%  |
| Yield                             | 0.263%  |
| Joint lead managers               | Barclays, BNP Paribas un Credit Agricole CIB  |
| Second Party Opinion              | ISS ESG – complies with the principles of ICMA green, social and sustainability bonds |

EXPENDITURE PORTFOLIO

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Green</b>                                       | <b>71 %</b> |
| Clean Transportation                               | 45 %        |
| Land Use and Living Natural Resources              | 10 %        |
| Terrestrial and Aquatic Biodiversity Conservationa | 10 %        |
| Others (green)                                     | 4,37%       |
| <b>Social</b>                                      | <b>29%</b>  |
| Access to essential services: Social Inclusion     | 20,54%      |
| Others (social)                                    | 8,51%       |

*"Latvia is facing global climate challenges. This Sustainability Bond issue will positively contribute to the transition to a climate-neutral and socially responsible economy while facilitating long-term solutions for climate, environmental and social policy and their impact on future generations. The Sustainability Bond Framework was established through close inter-ministerial cooperation and represents a milestone in Latvia’s path toward achieving the country’s sustainability goals."*

Minister of Finance Mr Jānis Reirs

### LATVIJAS BANKA (LB) LAUNCHES A VISION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Latvijas Banka has started to include risks to sustainability within its monitoring and assessment framework of the financial system. The country's central bank has approved its Sustainability Strategy, which defines the Bank's approach to sustainability and describes the impact of expected changes to the operations and tasks of Latvijas Banka.

#### THE SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY:

- commits to active participation in the implementation of climate goals outlined in the monetary policy strategy of the euro area, including monetary policy operations and playing an active role in its implementation;
- provides for the analysis of sustainability risks – both the physical and transitional ones – within the framework of monitoring and assessing financial stability risks. This includes further development of the financial sector stress test methodology by incorporating climate change effect scenarios in the stress tests;
- reduces the ecological footprint by promoting sustainable cash circulation;
- integrates sustainability objectives into the policy of Latvijas Banka for management of foreign reserves and other financial assets;
- improves financial statistics in the field of sustainability;
- integrates sustainability objectives into various areas of the bank's operational activities.

As a member of the Eurosystem and the Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS), Latvijas Banka, together with the Financial and Capital Market Commission (FCMC), announced a joint pledge to coincide with the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) – “to contribute, within their field of responsibility, to decisive policy action to implement the Paris Agreement and mitigate the consequences of climate change.”

See [LATVIJAS BANKA SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY](#)

### THE FINANCIAL SECTOR: ACTING TO ACHIEVE THE SDGS

Banks and branches of foreign banks registered in Latvia, financial technology start-ups, experienced technology companies, and companies in related industries that have joined the Finance Latvia Association point out the following contributions of finance towards the SDGs:

**SDG 1.** No Poverty: long-term savings; raising awareness on saving for retirement (third-tier private pension plans). The financial sector actively promotes availability of affordable housing (customer participation in state programmes), including in the regions. It supports measures to alleviate the impact of Covid-19 (including moratoriums and credit holidays).

**SDG 4.** Quality Education: The financial sector participates in various financial literacy initiatives. The Financial Literacy Index was developed in Latvia based on the Financial Literacy Survey conducted in Latvia as part of the OECD / INFE international survey. For additional information, see SDG 10.

**SDG 7.** Affordable and Clean Energy: Funding for investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency, and specialised products with simplified requirements to meet these targets.

**SDG 8.** Decent Work and Economic Growth: Funding for entrepreneurship through products from international financial programmes (COSME, EASI), and promotion of digital inclusion.

**SDG 9.** Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure: Investments in business infrastructure and production facilities, support for innovation infrastructure (hackathons, accelerators) and digital banking products.

**SDG 10.** Reduced Inequalities: Access to finance and banking services in the regions. The financial sector processes various state support programmes, including access to education through various types of student loans.

**SDG 11.** Sustainable Cities and Communities: Funding for renovating apartment buildings and private homes, as well as the energy efficiency of housing.

**SDG 13.** Climate Action: green leasing, green credits, sustainable development standards in pension plans, and green bonds. Regular advice is provided to companies and industry associations on sustainability and regulation, for example, Swedbank provides businesses a guide – “Step by Step Towards Sustainability”.

**SDG 16.** Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions: Latvia has established a strong financial crime prevention system in the international battle against money laundering, terrorist financing, and the proliferation of weapons. Law enforcement mechanisms in the financial sector have been significantly strengthened. The system suspends, freezes and subsequently confiscates assets, thereby preventing access by criminals. This ensures effective compliance with international sanctions and strengthens peace in the world.



### THE EUROPEAN UNION: DEFINING SUSTAINABLE FINANCING TOGETHER

The European Commission launched preparatory work on developing an EU Taxonomy in 2018. The European Green Deal and the European Commission's Action Plan on Financing Sustainable Growth calls for sustainable economic activities and emphasises the need for long-term signals to divert financial and capital flows to investment in line with the EU Taxonomy. The Taxonomy is a classification system that defines green investments, creates the conditions for environmental, social and governance risk management, and allows investors to better understand the carbon footprint of their investments.

The Taxonomy Regulation entered into force in 2020. It sets out 4 overarching conditions that an economic activity has to meet in order to qualify as environmentally sustainable, and establishes six environmental objectives: climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, the sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources, the transition to a circular economy, pollution prevention and control, and the protection and restoration of biodiversity and the ecosystem.

Under the Taxonomy Regulation, the Commission must list environmentally sustainable activities by defining technical screening criteria for each environmental objective through delegated acts. The first delegated act is in force from January 2022.

EU-level discussions continue on how to strengthen the social dimension of the taxonomic approach to sustainability and link it to the environmental dimension.

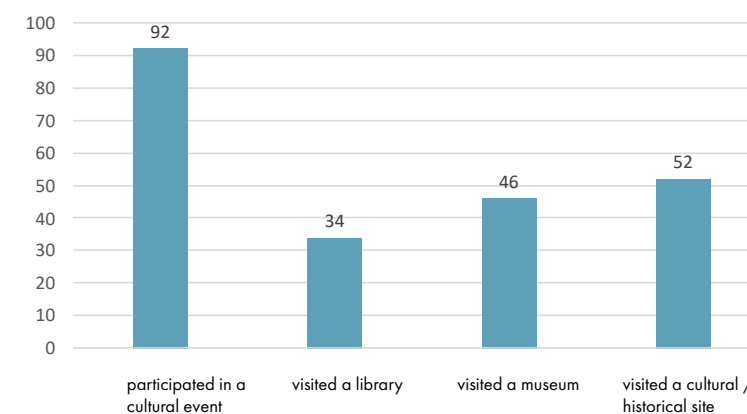
Source: The European Commission

### Culture: Safe space for dialogue and exploration

Culture is a source of positive change and knowledge, it connects people and places, fosters a sense of civic responsibility, belonging and solidarity, and enables peaceful conflict resolution. Culture and creativity permeate the Latvian society. Nowadays, when polarisation of societies is a trend the world over, and people often communicate within limited social media "bubbles", Latvian cultural space has proven to be a safe and inclusive environment for people to discuss and solve challenges of Latvian and global significance.

Libraries and museums stand out as drivers of sustainability that, over the last three years, have helped people understand not only sustainable development goals and information in general, but also each other. Given the extensive library and museum infrastructure in Latvia, the potential of this cultural safe space can continue to grow. And given the trust in these institutions, it most likely will.

#### APPRECIATING CULTURE, % OF POPULATION THAT HAS IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR (2018)



Source: Latvian Academy of Culture

This VNR shares the steps that libraries and museums in Latvia have taken to achieve this capability:

- Employees of libraries and museums participate in professional training on the SDGs organised by the Library Association of Latvia and the Latvian Museums Association (2018–2021), and start designing projects and activities in accordance with the 2030 Agenda.
- Latvian library and museum staff join forces nationally and with colleagues from the other Baltic States. Latvia initiates and hosts a **CONFERENCE** entitled Localising Sustainable Development Goals in Baltic Museums and Libraries – Ask Your Library! Ask Your Museum! (2021).
- The Latvian Museums Association creates an open **DATABASE** of museum projects that contribute to the SDGs.
- The Latvian Librarians' Association publishes a report on the contribution of the libraries to the SDGs, explaining the role of libraries and summarising the most successful initiatives, such as:



Photo: Latvian National Museum of Art

#### COME TO THE MUSEUM!

The Latvian National Museum of Art programme – Come to the Museum! – promotes museum accessibility and social inclusion. Schoolchildren with and without special needs meet at the national museum regularly during the school year to learn about the museum's permanent and current exhibits, discuss art, and create together. Exploring shoulder to shoulder, young people get to know each other, and gaps and prejudices melt away. The atmosphere in the museum helps the adults facilitate empathy, understanding and cooperation.

#### RURAL AND REGIONAL LIBRARIES – LOCAL FAMILY BUSINESS CENTRES

In a two-year effort with partners from five other countries, Jelgava City Library promoted the establishment of family businesses in rural areas using regional and rural libraries as a platform. Librarians, in collaboration with partners, created an e-learning module on entrepreneurship for use in libraries as well as a mentoring methodology and an e-learning course module for librarians.

#### ZENITH – UNDERSTANDING THROUGH THE LENS

It's easy to start talking about photos. The National Library of Latvia, in cooperation with the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO, Latgale Central Library, Jelgava City Library, Liepāja Central Scientific Library and the British Council, invited young people to view family albums and interview their relatives about the 1960s to 1980s, recording their life stories. The people who shared their stories were mostly migrant workers from (what was then) the Soviet Union who were entering Latvia at that time. As a result, young people's understanding of life in Latvia in the 1960s and 1980s has improved, as has intergenerational communication, a sense of belonging for the older generation, and dialogue between different ethnic communities and groups in society. In turn, the library collection was supplemented with photographs and stories.



Photo: The National Library of Latvia

- A representative of the National Library of Latvia (NLL) started working in the **ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND LIBRARIES** (ENSULIB) section of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), which was established in 2021.
- The European Libraries and Sustainable Development Implementation and Assessment Expert Group set up by The European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA) also includes an NLL representative. The NLL was the lead partner in preparing the association's Second European Report on Sustainable Development Goals and Libraries published in 2021.

Cultural heritage also provides a safe space for exploring and initiating sustainable action. Humane solutions are needed to mitigate climate change effects caused by ill-considered human activities and to address other sustainability issues. Preservation and judicious use of cultural heritage contributes to public awareness about past and present threats to People, the Planet and Prosperity. The legacy that we receive from the past, enjoy in the present, and will pass on to future generations gives insights and opportunities for recovery and renewal, and serves as a beneficial resource that has been at the disposal of mankind throughout history.



*"Latvian libraries, like every library in the world, are sustainable in nature and mission. The library is a place for everyone, regardless of social status, gender, and beliefs. A library provides reliable information and preserves cultural heritage; it is a repository, a meeting place, a place for lifelong learning, and a conduit of change."*

Lecturer, Department of Information and Library Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Latvia Ms Baiba Ivāne

### KULDĪGA RESTORATION CENTRE

Master craftspersons have a circular economy mindset. Kuldīga Restoration Centre was established in the historic town to conserve old buildings and provide residents with advice. Visitors can watch the artisans work as they learn about traditional methods, tools and materials. One of the most popular events is a regular window maintenance campaign. This is a practical event in which the residents of Kuldīga Old Town learn to maintain the windows of their own homes. The municipality provides tools and covers the costs of an expert's instruction, linseed oil, putty, and linseed oil paint. Residents, in turn, first listen to the craftsperson's story about the significance of restoration work, watch a demonstration, and then restore windows themselves. This approach is fun and can be used to preserve the cultural heritage of any town, raise awareness of architectural heritage, and support responsible consumption and production.



Photo: Restoration centre of Kuldīga

*"The essence of heritage preservation lies in the ability to spot what is good and of high quality, and to not turn it into garbage, but to give it new meaning and use. Extending the lifetime of crafted valuable assets improves people's quality of life. Restoration teaches us to live with responsibility towards the future – to understand the meaning of the site and monument, to appreciate, preserve and properly restore it using environmentally friendly local materials, and to reuse the materials recovered in the process. If society were to refrain from replacing things with new objects that are often temporary and of little value, only then would change really take place."*

Head of the National Cultural Heritage Board, Mr Juris Dambis



## Mission Sea 2030

Latvia supports access to clean water for every inhabitant of the world. To contribute to this vision, Latvia is driving the mission Sea 2030.

The aim of mission Sea 2030 is to create an environment for innovative solutions to restore the Baltic Sea in the long term. Today, the Baltic Sea is one of the most polluted seas in the world, and the nine countries around it are responsible for this condition – a result of industrial, agricultural and other commercial practices, the way we manage urban areas, our habits, and the customs of our societies.

In a world with many seemingly unsolvable challenges, a mission-oriented approach provides opportunities and strategies for building solutions by redefining challenges into actions and approaching solutions through adapting, testing and prototyping. The mission-oriented approach stresses public sector leadership. Missions are characterised by ambitious goals, measurable results, and transnational, cross-sectoral, public-private and non-governmental cooperation, as well as public participation under conditions when solutions are discovered incrementally and piloted before implementation.

The mission will develop a blue economy. The clean sea will be an environmental habitat and a resource used sustainably for economic growth and public well-being. Co-creation and cooperation to address the challenges of the Baltic Sea will result in new industries, new markets and new jobs, and the conditions for preserving and restoring the diversity of the Baltic Sea environment.

### MISSION SEA 2030 HAS BEEN LAUNCHED. THE FIRST STEPS HAVE ALREADY BEEN TAKEN.

- The government has entrusted the Latvian Investment and Development Agency (LIAA) to create an environment for innovative solutions for the Baltic Sea. LIAA analyses investments in development through economic, environmental and social dimensions, and has the necessary organisational culture, contacts in Latvia and abroad, and a qualified team to lead the mission.
- Creation of the ecosystem is now in progress and includes a green corridor for pilot initiatives.
- LIAA announced the launch of the Baltic Sea Digital Twin at Europe's leading 5G ecosystem forum 5G Techritory in 2021. It is being developed in partnership with local and international technology companies as well as Latvian universities.

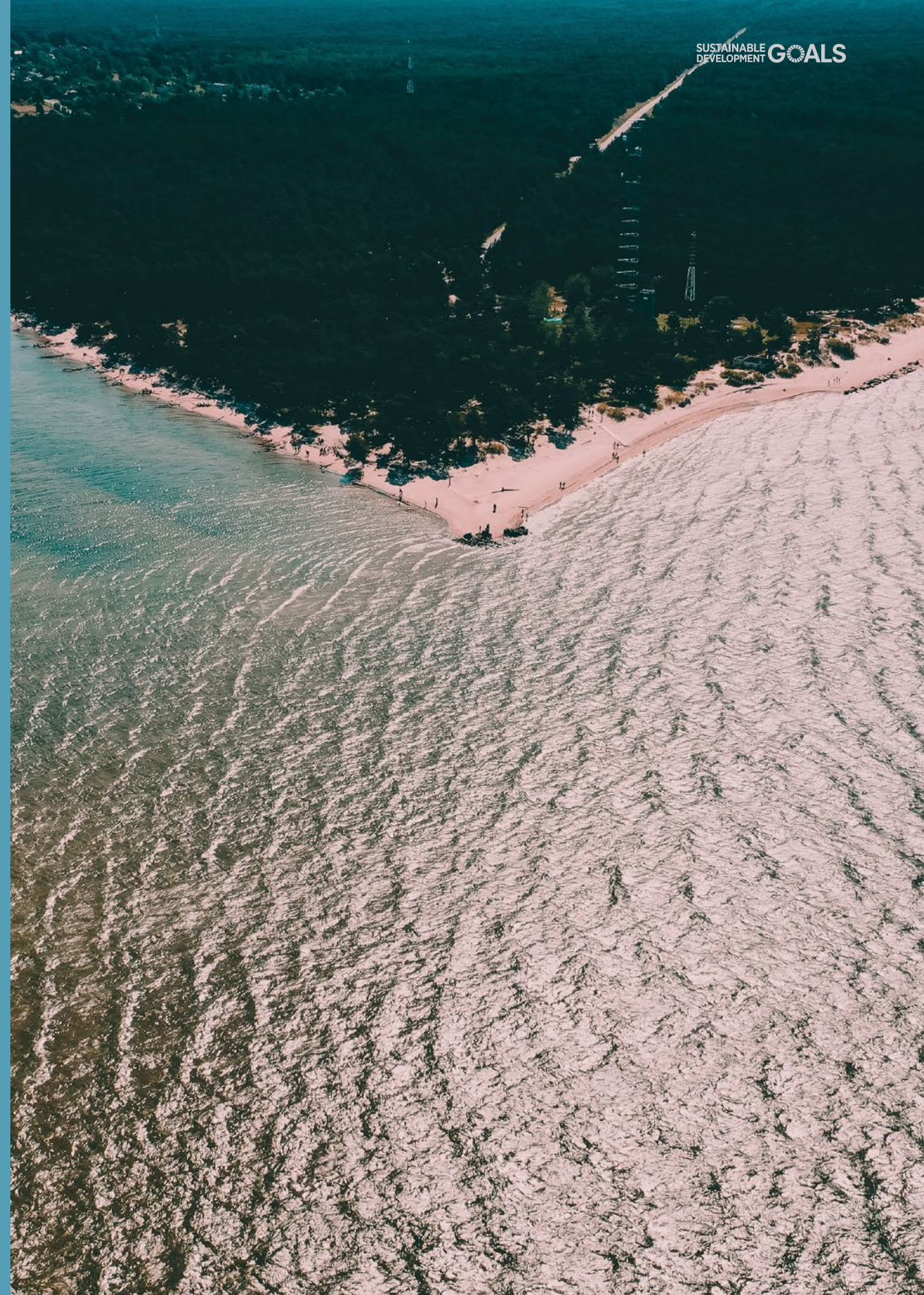


Latvia is small enough to experiment with prototyping new solutions, yet big enough for the results to be useful internationally.



# Making Sustainability Last: Conclusions and Next Steps

Cape Kolka. Photo: Kristaps Ungurs, Unsplash





Both the previous and the current VNRs focus on the challenge of achieving an innovative and eco-efficient economy while leaving no one behind.

The previous VNR was used in the creation of the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021–2027 (NDP2027). This plan determines Latvia's pathway almost up to 2030, and includes measures to increase social inclusion and balance regional development. The goals have been set, action plans have been developed in all key areas, and implementation has begun.

Latvia has and, in the future, will probably continue to face both internal and external challenges. However, crises will not deter us from our sustainable development goals. These goals were agreed in a lengthy, inclusive and democratic process, and Latvia remains committed to its promise to society to achieve them.

By consistently promoting sustainability in Latvia, we also purposefully contribute to the overall sustainability of the world, making it more prosperous, greener and safer.

#### TO KEEP OURSELVES ON COURSE, WE NEED TO:

- continue and improve good governance practices;
- make greater use of factors that accelerate change; and
- conduct a comprehensive public discourse regarding the reality we want in 2050.

#### GOOD GOVERNANCE

Firstly, we can already address many of the challenges through existing processes because the goals and needs are clear, as are our commitments. Should transition towards climate neutrality require investment, then the state should provide support to people with lower income as well as to companies so that they can transition to the use of renewable energy sources. The budgetary review process in Latvia provides opportunities for discontinuing the financing of lower priority issues so as to channel resources towards more pressing concerns.

#### TRANSFORMATIVE FACTORS THAT ACCELERATE CHANGE

**STAKEHOLDER INITIATIVE** accelerates the achievement of the goals, and stakeholders act to achieve the 2030 Agenda by flexibly creating social networks and platforms, implementing transformative projects, conducting research, creating awareness, and developing local sustainable development plans for balanced development of Latvia's regions.

Latvia's recent work on shaping **A SUSTAINABLE FINANCE SYSTEM** can help direct investments where they best contribute to climate goals and the reduction of poverty and inequality. Latvia's success in issuing its debut (green and social) sustainability bond, which includes support to Latvia's reform of minimum income levels, is a great example. Reforming the minimum income level has a long-term impact on poverty reduction. In the coming years, Latvia will continue the development of its sustainable finance system.

Culture provides a **SAFE SPACE** for understanding through inquiry and dialogue. Creating understanding among different groups in society can be the key to changing people's behaviour and strengthening social trust.

Innovative approaches need to be applied to complex challenges that do not have evident solutions. Therefore, Latvia will continue to pilot **THE MISSION-ORIENTED APPROACH** by facilitating multi-stakeholder cooperation for innovations to create an eco-efficient "blue economy" around the Baltic Sea. Latvia envisions creating a supportive environment for the discovery, testing and implementation of commercial, social and environmental innovations in areas that, while offering many opportunities, also harbour many unknowns.



**LOOKING ONE STEP FURTHER**

From time to time, it is necessary to renew public consensus on the future of Latvia. Latvia 2030, our long-term development strategy, was created over a multi-year process that was completed in 2010. At that time, those who are now university students (or already in the workforce) were only about 10 years old. Youth has every right to participate in the collective discourse about our future.

The Latvian economy is on the path to becoming innovative, digital and climate-neutral. We invest in new education curricula, infrastructure, and smart specialisation to drive growth and sustainability. This requires public discourse on how flexible we are, how ready we are to change, and how we gradually become aware of new goals for growth and common values.

The VNR demonstrates that although deep material deprivation and economic tensions are falling, poverty among the elderly continues to rise, and inequalities between individuals and regions remain high. This impacts trust and cohesion in society. In part, poverty and social inequality are a generational factor. When Latvia regained its independence, people lost their pension savings. The pension system had to be rebuilt simultaneously with the complete restructuring of the economy. However, part of the challenge depends on balancing Latvia's economic performance with social support. And here the state may reach a glass ceiling if no agreement can be reached on the redistribution of the gross domestic product in regards to issues such as: the division of responsibilities between the private sector and the public sector; the level and depth of public sector services; the tax burden and solidarity of various groups; and cohesion, which includes development of the Latgale region as well as reaching an optimal degree of cooperation between urban and rural areas.

As Latvia's overarching long-term planning document, Latvija 2050 will be developed with extensive public involvement (including communities, young people, and those who tend to avoid participating in discussions on the future) and debated among various stakeholders.

Latvia 2050 is projected to enter into force in 2025 as the country's sustainable development strategy for the next 25 years, serving as a social contract and mandate for future parliaments, governments and local governments. As such, it will serve as a guide for decision-making at critical junctures regarding reforms and investments.

Latvia contribution to the sustainable development of the planet cannot alone fundamentally change the course of events in the world, but we, along with all UN member states, have a moral obligation to ensure global sustainability for the benefit of future generations.

# Statistical annex

## Statistical annex

The list of indicators for the national sustainable development goals was developed by the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre with the support of the Central Statistical Bureau. It is based on official statistics available in Latvia from the Central Statistical Bureau and other national agencies and international organizations. The Annex takes into account the indicators drawn up by the UN working group, Eurostat (the Statistical Office of the European Union), indicators from the Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030, the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014–2020, the National Development Plan 2021–2027, sectoral policy documents, and other public databases.

Tables for each of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals include indicator values from 2010 and the latest available values. Trends were assessed by policy experts in compliance with the principles of sustainable development as follows:

- 1 – significant progress; the trend fully complies with the sustainable development goal;
- 0 – insignificant positive or negative changes, the trend does not ensure the implementation of the sustainable development goal;
- 1 – significant negative changes; the trend moves against the achievement of the sustainable development goal.

## SDG 1. No Poverty

| Indicator (data source)  | Year of baseline value/Year of current value | Unit | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessment |
|--|--|------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1. At-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers (CSB)   | 2010/2020                                    | %    | 19             | 23,4          | 0                |
| 2. Economic strain in households (CSB)   | 2010/2020                                    | %    | 66,3           | 32,3          | 1                |
| 3. In work at-risk-of-poverty rate for persons aged between 18 and 64 (CSB)                          | 2010/2020                                    | %    | 9,6            | 8,4           | 0                |
| 4. At-risk-of-poverty rate for single persons with dependent children (CSB)                          | 2010/2019                                    | %    | 37,6           | 30,6          | 1                |
| 5. At-risk-of-poverty rate for households with two adults and three or more dependent children (CSB) | 2010/2019                                    | %    | 37,1           | 17,7          | 1                |
| 6. At-risk-of-poverty rate for households with dependent children (CSB)                              | 2010/2019                                    | %    | 21,2           | 15,6          | 1                |
| 7. At-risk-of-poverty rate for persons at preretirement age (50-64) (CSB)                            | 2010/2020                                    | %    | 20,9           | 24,0          | -1               |
| 8. At-risk-of-poverty rate for elderly people (65+) (CSB)  | 2010/2020                                    | %    | 9,1            | 44,6          | -1               |
| 9. People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Eurostat)  | 2010/2019                                    | %    | 40,1           | 26,0          | 1                |
| 10. Severe material deprivation (Eurostat)   | 2010/2020                                    | %    | 27,6           | 7,3           | 1                |
| 11. Share of general government expenditure on social protection in total expenditure (CSB)          | 2010/2020                                    | %    | 30,7           | 31,3          | 0                |

## SDG 2. Zero Hunger

| Indicator (data source)  | Year of baseline value/Year of current value | Unit  | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessment |
|--|--|-------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1. Area under organic farming (as % of total agricultural area) (Eurostat) | 2010/2020                                    | %     | 9,2            | 14,8          | 1                |
| 2. Share of utilised agricultural area (CSB)                               | 2010/2020                                    | %     | 74,5           | 86,2          | 1                |
| 3. Agricultural factor income per annual work unit (2000=100) (Eurostat)   | 2010/2021                                    | %     | 100            | 205,41        | 1                |
| 4. Government support to agricultural research and development (Eurostat)  | 2010/2020                                    | EUR   | 2,1            | 5,7           | 1                |
| 5. Ammonia emissions from agriculture (Eurostat)                           | 2010/2020                                    | kg/ha | 6,8            | 7,7           | -1               |
| 6. Harmonised risk indicator for pesticides (HRI1) (Eurostat)              | 2011/2020                                    | %     | 92             | 140           | -1               |

## SDG 3. Good Health and Well-being

| Indicator (data source)  | Year of baseline value/Year of current value | Unit   | Baseline value  | Current value   | Trend assessment |
|--|--|--------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Availability of health care services (unmet needs for health care services) (Eurostat)            | 2010/2020                                    | %      | 15,1            | 5,3             | 1                |
| 2. Out-of-pocket payments on health as percentage of total health expenditure (Eurostat)             | 2017/2019                                    | %      | 41,7            | 35,6            | 1                |
| 3. Avoidable mortality (preventable and treatable) (CDPCL)   | 2011/2018                                    | number | 369,9/<br>236,2 | 325,5/<br>196,4 | 1                |
| 4. Average life expectancy for new-borns (women/men) (Eurostat)                                      | 2010/2020                                    | year   | 77,9/67,9       | 79,5/70,4       | 1                |
| 5. Healthy life years, average (women/men) (Eurostat)  | 2010/2019                                    | year   | 56,4/53,1       | 54,1/52,2       | -1               |
| 6. Potentially lost years of life per 100,000 inhabitants (CDPCL)                                    | 2010/2020                                    | year   | 6480            | 4842            | 1                |
| 7. Percentage of working population who at least once in last year have attended family doctor (CSB) | 2010/2020                                    | %      | 65,1            | 74,7            | 1                |
| 8. Inhabitants who mentioned inability to use health care services (women/men) (Eurostat)            | 2010/2020                                    | %      | 17,2/12,4       | 6,3/4,0         | 1                |
| 9. Last year's percentage of excessive alcohol users in working age (OECD)                           | 2011/2020                                    | %      | 43,7            | 32,0            | 1                |
| 10. Death rate from external causes, per 100,000 inhabitants (CDPCL)                                 | 2010/2020                                    |        | 100,5           | 74,6            | 1                |
| 11. Infant mortality rate (0 days till 1 year) from 1000 live births (CDPCL)                         | 2010/2020                                    |        | 5,7             | 3,5             | 1                |
| 12. Standardized preventable mortality, per 100,000 inhabitants (Eurostat)                           | 2011/2018                                    |        | 606,08          | 521,88          | 1                |
| 13. Household consumption expenditure on health as percentage of total health expenditure (CSB)      | 2010/2019                                    | %      | 5,9             | 7,1             | -1               |



## SDG 4. Quality Education

| Indicator (data source)   | Year of baseline value/<br>Year of current value | Unit | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessment |
|---|--|------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1 Employment rates of 20–34-year-olds who have recently (from 1 to 3 years) graduated from upper secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary and tertiary levels of education (Eurostat) | 2010/2020  | %    | 63,4           | 79,1          | 1                |
| 2 Participation in early childhood education (children aged 3 and over) (ISCED 0) (Eurostat)  | 2013/2019  | %    | 91,3           | 94,1          | 1                |
| 3 Share of early leavers from education and training aged 18–24 years (Eurostat)  | 2010/2020  | %    | 12,9           | 7,2           | 1                |
| 4 Share of adult learning participants (last 4 weeks) aged 25–64 years (Eurostat)   | 2010/2020  | %    | 5,4            | 6,6           | 1                |
| 5 Share of population (aged 30–34) with higher educational attainment (CSB)   | 2010/2020  | %    | 32,6           | 49,2          | 1                |
| 6 Students at the highest levels of proficiency in reading (OECD PISA Level 5 or 6) (OECD)  | 2009/2018  | %    | 2,9            | 4,8           | 1                |
| 7 Underachieving students in reading (OECD PISA Level 1) (OECD)   | 2009/2018  | %    | 17,6           | 22,4          | –1               |
| 8 Share of upper secondary pupils in general and vocational education programmes (MoES)   | 2010/2020  | %    | 62,2/37,8      | α.9/40.1      | 0                |
| 9 Share of adults having at least basic digital skills (Eurostat)   | 2015/2019  | %    | 49             | 43            | –1               |

## SDG 5. Gender Equality

| Indicator (data source)   | Year of baseline value/<br>Year of current value | Unit   | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessment |
|---|--|--------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1 At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers (women) (CSB)  | 2010/2020  | %      | 18,3           | 26,3          | –1               |
| 2 At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers (men) (CSB)  | 2010/2020  | %      | 19,8           | 20,1          | 0                |
| 3 Gender pay gap in unadjusted form (Eurostat)  | 2010/2019  | number | 15,5           | 22,3          | –1               |
| 4 Gender employment gap (20–64 years) (Eurostat)  | 2010/2020  | year   | –0,6           | 3,8           | 0                |
| 5 Share of females receiving minimum wage or less in total number of females having income from labour (CSB)          | 2010/2020  | year   | 25,9           | 19,3          | 1                |
| 6 Share of females receiving minimum wage or less in total population having income from labour (CSB)                 | 2010/2020  | year   | 13,9           | 9,9           | 1                |
| 7 Share of males receiving minimum wage or less in total number of males having income from labour (CSB)              | 2010/2020  | %      | 27,3           | 16,7          | 1                |
| 8 Share of elected females in the Parliament of Latvia - the Saeima (Eurostat)  | 2010/2021  | %      | 19             | 28            | 1                |
| 9 Share of female board members in largest Latvian companies (Eurostat)   | 2010/2021  | %      | 23,5           | 22,2          | 0                |
| 10 Victims of intentional homicide (males/females), per 100,000 inhabitants (Eurostat)                                | 2012/2019  |        | 3,53/3,33      | 2,60/4,06     | –1               |
| 11 Victims of rape (males/females), per 100,000 inhabitants (Eurostat)  | 2012/2019  |        | 0,00/4,32      | 2,15/8,50     | na               |
| 12 Victims of sexual violence (males/females), per 100,000 inhabitants (Eurostat)                                     | 2010/2019  |        | 2,14/7,21      | 0,79/6,96     | 0                |
| 13 Inactive population (males/females) not seeking employment due to caring responsibilities (20–64 years) (Eurostat) | 2010/2020  | %      | 12,5/35,1      | 24,8/45,9     | –1               |

## SDG 6. Clean Water and Sanitation

| Indicator (data source)  | Year of base-line value/<br>Year of current value | Unit                         | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessment |
|--|---|------------------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1 Population having neither a bath, nor a shower, nor indoor flushing toilet in their household (Eurostat)   | 2010/2020   | %                            | 15,1           | 7,0           | 1                |
| 2 Biochemical oxygen demand in rivers (Eurostat)   | 2010/2019   | mg per litre                 | 1,53           | 1,37          | 0                |
| 3 Phosphate in rivers (Eurostat)   | 2010/2018   | mg PO <sub>4</sub> per litre | 0,025          | 0,056         | -1               |
| 4 Water exploitation index (Eurostat)  | 2010/2017   |                              | 0,27           | 0,22          | 0                |
| 5 Bathing sites with excellent water quality by locality (Eurostat)  | 2011/2020   | %                            | 64,29          | 66,67         | 0                |
| 6 Dwelling supply with cold water (CSB)  | 2010/2020   | %                            | 89,2           | 94,7          | 1                |
| 7 Dwelling supply with sewerage (CSB)  | 2010/2020   | %                            | 86,6           | 93,0          | 1                |
| 8 Share of population indicating unsatisfactory housing conditions (leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation, or rot in window frames or floor) (Eurostat) | 2010/2020   | %                            | 24,7           | 17,5          | 1                |

## SDG 7. Affordable and Clean Energy

| Indicator (data source)  | Year of base-line value/<br>Year of current value | Unit         | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessment |
|--|---|--------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1 Energy dependence (Eurostat)   | 2010/2020   | %            | 45,5           | 45,5          | 0                |
| 2 Energy intensity (Eurostat)  | 2010/2019   | kg/1000 EUR  | 260,2          | 206,0         | 1                |
| 3 Primary energy consumption (Eurostat)                                  | 2010/2020   | PJ           | 195            | 184           | 1                |
| 4 Energy productivity (Eurostat)   | 2010/2020   | mg per litre | 3,68           | 5,06          | 1                |
| 5 Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption (Eurostat) | 2010/2020   | kg ne        | 30,375         | 42,132        | 1                |
| 6 Share of renewable energy in transport (CSB)                           | 200/2020  | %            | 4,0            | 6,7           | 1                |
| 7 Share of zero emission vehicles (CSB)                                  | 2018/2021   | %            | 0,1            | 0,3           | 1                |
| 8 Primary energy consumption (index 2005=100) (Eurostat)                 | 2010/2020   | %            | 101,4          | 94,9          | 1                |
| 9 Final energy consumption (2005=100) (Eurostat)                         | 2010/2020   | %            | 102,5          | 95,9          | 1                |
| 10 Share of population unable to keep home adequately warm (Eurostat)    | 2010/2020   | %            | 19,1           | 6,0           | 1                |

## SDG 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth

|    | Indicator (data source)  | Year of base-line value/<br>Year of current value | Unit | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessment |
|----|--|---|------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1  | GDP per capita in purchasing power parities (Eurostat)   | 2010/2021   | EUR  | 13 403         | 23 100        | 1                |
| 2  | GDP per capita by purchasing power parities (% of the EU average) (Eurostat)   | 2010/2020   | %    | 54             | 70            | 1                |
| 3  | Regional differences of GDP per capita – dispersion of regional GDP per capita (MEPRD)   | 2010/2019   | %    | 42,0           | 40,2          | -1               |
| 4  | Productivity per hour worked (share of EU-27 average) (Eurostat)   | 2010/2020   | %    | 51,1           | 60,1          | 1                |
| 5  | Exports of goods and services (as % of GDP) (CSB)  | 2010/2020   | %    | 53,3           | 60,4          | 1                |
| 6  | In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate for employed persons aged over 18 (Eurostat)   | 2010/2020   | %    | 9,4            | 8,2           | 1                |
| 7  | Share of investment in GDP (Eurostat)  | 2010/2020   | %    | 19,05          | 24,46         | 1                |
| 8  | Employment rate % (20-64 years) (Eurostat)   | 2010/2021   | %    | 64,3           | 75,3          | 1                |
| 9  | Employed persons with temporary contract as percentage of total employment (20-64 years) (Eurostat)                                      | 2010/2020   | %    | 5,1            | 2,0           | 1                |
| 10 | People killed in accidents at work (per 100 000 employed persons) (Eurostat)   | 2018/2020   |      | 30             | 2,78          | 1                |
| 11 | Share of socially insured persons whose object of compulsory state social insurance contributions is below the minimum wage level (SSIA) | 2011/2020   | %    | 35,5           | 29,3          | 1                |

## SDG 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

|    | Indicator (data source)  | Year of base-line value/<br>Year of current value | Unit    | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessment |
|----|--|---|---------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1  | Knowledge and Technology Output (Latvia's Rank in the Global Innovation Index) ( <a href="https://www.globalinnovationindex.org">https://www.globalinnovationindex.org</a> ) | 2019  | ranking | 45             | 45            | 0                |
| 2  | Latvia in Global Competitiveness Index (WB)  | 2011/2019   | ranking | 64             | 41            | 1                |
| 3  | Transport infrastructure (rank) (WB)   | 2017/2019   | ranking | 61             | 52            | 1                |
| 4  | Share of roads with black surface in total regional state roads (MoT)  | 2009/2020   | %       | 75,4           | 85,2          | 1                |
| 5  | Reduced length of state regional roads with black surface in bad and very bad condition (MoT)  | 2012/2020   | %       | 0              | 33            | 1                |
| 6  | Reduced length of state main roads in bad and very bad condition (%) (MoT)   | 2012/2020   | %       | 0              | 67            | 1                |
| 7  | Passenger turnover at Riga airport (annually, mil.) (CSB)  | 2011/2019   | mil.    | 5,1            | 7,8           | 1                |
| 8  | Households with Internet access (CSB)  | 2011/2020   | %       | 63,6           | 89,7          | 1                |
| 9  | Share of exports of high-tech sectors in total exports value (CSB)   | 2010/2020   | %       | 11,0           | 11,4          | 0                |
| 10 | Researchers in business enterprise sector (% of national total, in full time equivalent) (CSB)   | 2011/2020   | %       | 14,0           | 20,8          | 1                |
| 11 | Share of new doctors from the population aged 25–34  | 2013/2019   | %       | 0,5            | 0,3           | -1               |
| 12 | Gross domestic expenditure on research and development (% of GDP) (Eurostat)   | 2010/2020   | %       | 0,61           | 0,71          | 0                |
| 13 | Private sector investment in research and development (%) (CSB)  | 2010/2020   | %       | 38,8           | 27,0          | -1               |



## SDG 10. Reduced Inequalities

| Indicator (data source) |  | Year of base-line value/<br>Year of current value | Unit | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessment |
|-------------------------|--|---|------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1                       | Gini coefficient (CSB)   | 2010/2020   |      | 35,1           | 35,7          | 0                |
| 2                       | Income quintile share ratio S80/S20 (CSB)  | 2010/2020   |      | 6,5            | 6,6           | 0                |
| 3                       | Income share ratio P90/P50 (CSB)   | 2010/2020   |      | 2,24           | 2,07          | 0                |
| 4                       | Regional differences of GDP per capita – dispersion of regional GDP per capita (MEPRD)         | 2010/2019   | %    | 42,0           | 40,2          | -1               |
| 5                       | Net migration, focusing on increasing return migration and decreasing emigration (CSB)         | 2011/2020   |      | -20077         | -3150         | 1                |
| 6                       | Share of persons under minimum income level (%) (CSB)  | 2010/2020   | %    | 9,8            | 7,7           | 1                |
| 7                       | Share of 1st income decile population income in overall amount of household income, % (CSB)    | 2010/2020   | %    | 2,1            | 2,3           | 0                |
| 8                       | Share of 40% of population with the lowest income in overall amount of population income (CSB) | 2010/2020   | %    | 18,5           | 18,1          | 0                |
| 9                       | At-risk-of-poverty rate for households with 2 adults and 3 and more dependent children (CSB)   | 2010/2019   | %    | 37,1           | 17,7          | 1                |
| 10                      | At-risk-of-poverty rate for adults aged above 65 (CSB)   | 2010/2020   | %    | 9,1            | 44,6          | -1               |

## SDG 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities

| Indicator (data source) |  | Year of base-line value/<br>Year of current value | Unit   | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessment |
|-------------------------|--|---|--------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1                       | Population in Riga planning region as percentage of total population (CSB)   | 2010/2021   | %      | 49,7           | 53            | -1               |
| 2                       | Annual attendance of cultural events, per 100 inhabitants (MoC)  | 2010/2019   |        | 197,5          | 325           | 1                |
| 3                       | Members of amateur performing units, per 100 inhabitants (MoC)   | 2010/2019   |        | 3,2            | 3,3           | 1                |
| 4                       | Share of population living in households indicating the noise pollution, share from whole population (Eurostat)    | 2010/2020   | %      | 17,5           | 12,5          | 1                |
| 5                       | Share of population reporting crime, violence or vandalism in their local area (Eurostat)                          | 2010/2020   | %      | 23,8           | 5,3           | 1                |
| 6                       | Number of persons killed in road traffic accidents per 100 thousand population, per 100,000 inhabitants (Eurostat) | 2010/2019   | number | 10,4           | 6,9           | 1                |
| 7                       | Pollution of particulate matter in cities (µG/m3) (Eurostat)   | 2009/2019   |        | 15,8           | 12,1          | 1                |
| 8                       | Recycling rate of municipal waste (of generated) (CSB)   | 2010/2020   | %      | 47,0           | 43,6          | -1               |
| 9                       | Passenger turnover in public transport (passenger kilometres in regular bus lines) (CSB)                           | 2010/2019   | mil.   | 2311           | 2191          | -1               |
| 10                      | Share of roads with black surface in total local state roads (%) (MoT)   | 2009/2016   | %      | 19,8           | 23,6          | 0                |

## SDG 12. Responsible Consumption and Production

| Indicator (data source)   | Year of baseline value/<br>Year of current value | Unit                     | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessments |
|---|--|--------------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. Resource productivity (Eurostat)   | 2010/2020  | EUR                      | 1,038          | 0,9407        | -1                |
| 2. Municipal waste generated per capita (CSB)   | 2011/2016  | kg                       | 350            | 476           | -1                |
| 3. Hazardous waste generated (CSB)  | 2010/2020  | thsd t                   | 55,1           | 150           | -1                |
| 4. Share of reused materials (Eurostat)   | 2010/2020  | %                        | 1,2            | 4,2           | 1                 |
| 5. GHG emission intensity of energy consumption - change compared to 2000 (2000 = 100) (Eurostat) | 2010/2019  | %                        | 96             | 83,8          | 1                 |
| 6. GDP per kg of oil equivalent of energy available (2000 = 100) (Eurostat)                       | 2010/2020  | EUR/<br>kg ne            | 10,4           | 6,9           | 1                 |
| 7. Average CO <sub>2</sub> emissions from new passenger vehicles (Eurostat)                       | 2010/2020  | CO <sub>2</sub> g/<br>km | 162,0          | 119,2         | 1                 |
| 8. Energy gross final consumption per household member (kg oil equivalent) (Eurostat)             | 2010/2020  | Kg ne                    | 662            | 587           | 1                 |

## SDG 13. Climate Action

| Indicator (data source)  | Year of baseline value/<br>Year of current value | Unit               | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessments |
|--|--|--------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. GHG emissions per year (versus baseline year 1990 = 100) (Kyoto Protocol), excluding the LULUCF sector (Eurostat)         | 2010/2019  | %                  | 47,6           | 44,5          | 0                 |
| 2. GHG emissions per year (versus emissions in baseline year, 1990 = 100), including the LULUCF sector (Eurostat)            | 2010/2019  | %                  | 74,6           | 75,8          | 0                 |
| 3. Share of the population living in municipalities- signatories to the European Convention on Climate and Energy (Eurostat) | 2010/2020  | %                  | 37,7           | 59,3          | 1                 |
| 4. Total GHG emissions per Mt CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent per capita, including the LULUCF sector (Eurostat)                  | 2010/2019  | Mt CO <sub>2</sub> | 4,9            | 5,5           | -1                |
| 5. GHG emissions from the energy sector to gross domestic energy consumption (2000 = 100) (Eurostat)                         | 2010/2019  | %                  | 96             | 83,8          | 1                 |
| 6. National total emissions of air pollutants for nitrogen oxides (NO <sub>x</sub> ) (MEPRD)                                 | 2010/2020  | t                  | 39,97          | 26,16         | 1                 |
| 7. National total emissions of air pollutants for ammonia (NH <sub>3</sub> ) (MEPRD)   | 2010/2020  | t                  | 15,2           | 16,06         | 0                 |
| 8. National total emissions of air pollutants to volatile organic compounds (MEPRD)  | 2010/2020  | t                  | 43,39          | 30,42         | 1                 |
| 9. National Total Air Pollutant Emissions from Particulate Matter (MEPRD)  | 2010/2020  | t                  | 21,70          | 18,05         | 1                 |
| 10. National total emissions of air pollutants for sulphur dioxide (MEPRD)   | 2010/2020  | t                  | 4,34           | 3,52          | 0                 |

## SDG 14. Life below Water

| Indicator (data source)  | Year of baseline value/<br>Year of current value | Unit            | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessments |
|--|--|-----------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. Annual discharge of nitrogen/phosphorus compounds in surface freshwater objects (MEPRD)   | 2012/2020  | t               | 2330/240       | 1520/180      | 1                 |
| 2. Maritime spatial plan based on ecosystem approach (MEPRD)   | 2007/2020  |                 | 0              | 1             | 1                 |
| 3. Protected marine territories with elaborated plans of nature protection or individual use and protection regulations as a share of all protected marine territories (MEPRD) | 2010/2021  | %               | 40             | 40            | 0                 |
| 4. Share of sea water observation stations observing eutrophication decline trend (MEPRD)  | 2013/2016  | %               | 0              | 50 %          | 1                 |
| 5. Area of protected marine territories (MEPRD)  | 2010/2021  | %               | 16             | 16            | 0                 |
| 6. Area of protected marine territories (MEPRD)  | 2013/2020  | km <sup>2</sup> | 4387           | 4388          | 0                 |
| 7. Catches in major fishing areas  | 2010/2020  | thsd t          | 165,4          | 104,3         | 1                 |
| 8. Number of "Blue Flag" eco-certificates awarded to Latvian sea bathing areas (MEPRD)   | 2013/2020  | pcs             | 7              | 14            | 1                 |
| 9. Latvian bathing sites with excellent water quality (MEPRD)  | 2011/2020  | %               | 43,75          | 69,7          | 1                 |
| 10. Area of sea area subject to eutrophication (MEPRD)   | 2010/2019  | km <sup>2</sup> | 0,02           | 0,13          | -1                |

## SDG 15. Life on Land

| Indicator (data source)  | Year of baseline value/<br>Year of current value | Unit | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessments |
|--|--|------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. Share of specially protected nature territories in total territory (MEPRD)  | 2015/2021  | %    | 18             | 18            | 0                 |
| 2. Share of forest area (CSB)  | 2009/2020  | %    | 49,4           | 50,2          | 0                 |
| 3. Common farmland bird index (MEPRD)  | 2010/2021  |      | 124,87         | 96,86         | -1                |
| 4. Common forest bird index (MEPRD)  | 2010/2021  |      | 85,81          | 84,47         | 0                 |
| 5. Compensation for restrictions on economic activities in protected areas (MEPRD)   | 2013/2021  | %    | 47             | 100           | 1                 |
| 6. Share of specially protected nature territories with nature protection plans and started implementation thereof (MEPRD) | 2013/2020  | %    | 30             | 51            | 1                 |
| 7. Share of species and biotopes of EU importance (designated under the EU Habitats Directive (MEPRD)                      | 2013/2019  | %    | 0              | 0             | 0                 |
| 8. Change in built-up areas (2006 = 100) (Eurostat)  | 2009   | %    | 101,3          | 109,5         | -1                |



## SDG 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

| Indicator (data source)   | Year of baseline value/<br>Year of current value | Unit   | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessments |
|---|--|--------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. Efficiency of Latvia's public administration (GRICS index) (World Bank)      | 2010/2020  | %      | 74             | 77            | 0                 |
| 2. Latvia in Corruption Perceptions Index (Eurostat)                            | 2010/2019  | points | 43             | 57            | 1                 |
| 3. Hearing of civil cases up to 12 months in all courts of first instance (MoJ) | 2011/2017  | %      | 73,2           | 88,9          | 1                 |
| 4. Perceived independence of the justice system (Eurostat)                      | 2016/2021  | %      | 42             | 56            | 1                 |
| 5. Participation in national parliament election (CEC)                          | 2010/2018  | %      | 59,45          | 54,56         | 0                 |
| 6. Participation in non-governmental organizations (ESS)                        | 2009/2020  | %      | 2,8            | 7,1           | 1                 |
| 7. Mutual trust ratio (ESS)   | 2009/2015  | %      | 46             | 51            | 0                 |
| 8. Criminal offenses, per 10,000 inhabitants (CSB)                              | 2010/2020  | number | 243,7          | 204           | 1                 |
| 9. Custody rights discontinued by orphans' and custody court judgment (SIPCRIL) | 2010/2020  | number | 1953           | 1170          | -1                |
| 10. Homicide, per 100,000 inhabitants (CSB)                                     | 2010/2020  | %      | 6,7            | 4,0           | 1                 |
| 11. Civic engagement ratio (ESS)  | 2009/2020  | %      | 7,4            | 11            | 1                 |
| 12. Political trust ratio (ESS)   | 2009/2015  | %      | 3,23           | 3,3           | 0                 |

## SDG 17. Partnerships for the Goals

| Indicator (data source)  | Year of baseline value/<br>Year of current value | Unit    | Baseline value | Current value | Trend assessments |
|--|--|---------|----------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. Share of general government revenue in GDP (CSB)  | 2010/2020  | %       | 37,2           | 38,6          | 0                 |
| 2. Share of general government debt in GDP (Eurostat)  | 2010/2020  | %       | 47,7           | 43,2          | 1                 |
| 3. Share of ODA in GNI (Eurostat)  | 2010/2021  | %       | 0,06           | 0,12          | 1                 |
| 4. Imports from developing countries) (Eurostat)   | 2010/2016  | %       | 8,3            | 9,2           | 0                 |
| 5. Imports from developing countries   | 2010/2020  | mil.EUR | 830            | 1599          | 1                 |
| 6. Share of environmental tax (Eurostat)   | 2010/2020  | %       | 10,47          | 9,82          | 0                 |
| 7. Bilateral ODA managed by MFA used for public administration development and capacity building, including anti-corruption measures (MFA)                               | 2015/2021  | %       | 62             | 50            | 0                 |
| 8. Bilateral ODA managed by MFA, the main goal of which is support for judicial and home affairs systems, including strengthening of customs and border structures (MFA) | 2015/2021  | %       | 6              | 4             | 0                 |
| 9. Bilateral ODA managed by MFA that includes civil society in partner countries (MFA)   | 2015/2021  | %       | 76             | 60            | -1                |
| 10. Bilateral ODA managed by MFA supporting business development and export capacity (MFA)   | 2015/2021  | %       | 14             | 14            | 0                 |
| 11. Bilateral ODA managed by MFA, the main goal of which is gender equality (MFA)  | 2015/2021  | %       | 0              | 11            | 1                 |

