



Weekly Briefing

**Latvia external relations briefing:
Latvia sets challenging and ambitious Foreign Policy goals**
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Latvia sets challenging and ambitious Foreign Policy goals

Introduction

As the Covid-19 crisis inevitably remains the most important challenge in the international system, Latvia continues to work actively together with other countries in order to mitigate the consequences of the crisis. However, it is important for the European Union (EU) to focus on the regular agenda as well, so that other important issues are discussed. In recent months, Latvia's management of the Covid-19 crisis outbreak has been among the best in Europe and Latvia has showed relatively successful epidemiological results. Government action combined with solid work on behalf of the institutions of the interior and health sectors have led to a well-managed crisis response. Needless to say, there still are many challenges and uncertainties affecting society as whole. Foreign Ministry of Latvia has actively taken part in discussions and decision-making with other EU Member-States in order to work on recovery and budget planning for the upcoming years. Latvia has also set new, challenging and ambitious Foreign Policy goals. Latvia's announcement of the candidacy for the United Nations (UN) Security Council has been an important and brave step towards a new status for Latvia on global scale, however, it is important to analyse and be aware of the main challenges that this candidature will reflect.

Latvia sets its own priorities for the EU regarding the Covid-19 crisis

On July 2020, Foreign Ministry of Latvia took part in several important negotiations with Foreign Ministers from other EU Member States. As the Covid-19 has affected many industries and economies in general, Latvia works closely together with international institutions and EU partners to improve the socio-economic stability. Members of the Latvian Foreign Ministry took part in negotiations where the possible recovery and budget planning were discussed. During the discussions, Latvia emphasized its priorities and its main challenges, also addressing the importance of cooperation between all the EU Member State

Latvia's priorities regarding the recovery plan, is to focus on agriculture as the Baltic farmers receive the lowest direct payments in the European Union.¹ At the same time, Cohesion

¹ Foreign Ministry of Latvia emphasizes the need to ensure sufficient and fair distribution of EU funding for economic recovery <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/aktualitates/zinas/66279-zanda-kalnina-lukasevica-uzsver-nepieciesamibu-nodrosinat-pietiekamu-un-taisnigi-sadalitu-es-finansejumu-ekonomikas-atveselosanai>

Policy will be one of the most important tools for promoting and achieving long-term economic growth for Latvia, as well as to improve national prosperity and reduce regional disparities. The Foreign Ministry emphasized that Latvia is ready to invest funding in sustainable, climate-friendly and modern initiatives. By taking part in funding and supporting different initiatives, Latvia is becoming more competitive internationally. Thus, contributing to the development of Latvia's welfare and economy. It also shows that Latvia is ready to take various actions to achieve internationally agreed goals. For Latvia, it is vital to have sufficient and fairly distributed funding for the economic recovery process for reforms and investments in the medium term.

Latvia aims for seat on UN Security Council

Latvia has set a rather ambitious foreign policy goal – to run for the seat of a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the first time in 2025. According to experts, membership in the Security Council will strengthen Latvia's international image, as well as the role of the state in global decision making will increase. The candidacy also confirms and proves that the State and its leaders are ready to take a step further and become more dominant in the international arena.

However, this candidacy also reflects a number of challenges. Being aware of the fact that Latvia is a small country on a global scale, it will not be easy to collect all the necessary 125 votes. ² The President of Latvia has noted that recognition of the country in Asia, South America and South Africa is relatively low, so it is important to focus on development of Latvia's international image. Its outlines the necessity to set new Foreign Policy goals and plan a strategy how Latvia's recognition could be improved in those specific regions. In the run-up to the Security Council elections, Latvia hopes to use Estonia's experience, which currently serves on the Council.

As the experts emphasized, although the elections will take place in five years' time, Latvia should start preparing for the elections already. This will require resources, diplomatic efforts and publicity campaigns in the international media. Despite the fact that this would be an ambitious goal in shaping Latvia's global image, there are opinions that emphasize the necessity to have a clearer vision for this goal. It would be necessary to analyze whether other

² *lsm.lv*, Latvia's ambitious goal is a seat on the UN Security Council

<https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/latvijai-ambiciozs-merkis-vieta-ano-drosibas-padome.a368511/>

foreign policy challenges and objectives are not a higher priority, also due to the Covid-19 crisis. Nevertheless, according to the experts, the experience of Latvia in the 30 years of independence shows that the country is prepared to take on global challenges and it will definitely open new opportunities for Latvia at national and international level.

Latvia's first National Action Plan for the implementation of the goals of UN Security Council has been approved

On 14 July 2020, the Cabinet approved Latvia's first National Action Plan on the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in Latvia for the term of 2020-2025.³ The implementation of women's rights both in Latvia and everywhere else in the world is an essential precondition for a safe, sustainable and prosperous society, which confirms that for Latvia this is a significant step forward to work on eradication of gender-based violence. The Plan was drafted under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and envisages three main tasks. The first task is to raise public awareness of gender equality issues and the elimination of gender-based violence, especially among the younger generation. To achieve this, the involvement of educational institutions will be important, as well as the development of various informative materials. It is also necessary to organise training for the defence and interior sector, as well to establish a gender adviser's position. The planned measures will be implemented in cooperation with ministries and non-governmental organizations. General Statistics Office in Latvia shows that 38.6 % of women have suffered from physical or sexual violence, and 60 % of women have been subjected to psychological violence.⁴ These data confirm how significant problem this is for Latvia, so it is very vital to address this problem and work on reducing and eliminating gender-based violence. Implementation of the Plan will not only improve the image of the State, but also serves as a contributor for deeper integration and acceptance of UN values.

³ *mfa.gov.lv*, Latvia's first National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in Latvia 2020-2025 has been approved. <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/aktualitates/zinas/66274-apstiprinats-latvijas-pirmais-nacionalais-ricibas-plans-ano-drosibas-padomes-rezolucijas-1325-par-sievietem-mieru-un-drosibu-merku-istenosanai-latvija-2020-2025-gadam>

⁴ *csb.gov.lv*, Gender Based Violence, <https://www.csb.gov.lv/en/gender-equality-indicators/Violence>

Latvian Foreign Minister discusses the European Union, security and current international affairs

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Edgars Rinkevics, took part in the annual meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Baltic States and Germany. Issues of current importance for the European Union, NATO and European security, and topics on the international agenda were discussed. Latvia has expressed support for the priorities set by the German presidency of the Council of the EU, commending the focus on the European Green Deal, digitalization and the rule of law, as well as the intention of strengthening the Single Market.⁵ The Minister of Foreign Affairs has emphasized Latvia's position on collaborating with Germany, saying that it has been an important strategic partner for the Baltic region and has made a significant contribution to NATO's collective defence and the strengthening of security in the Baltic region. Furthermore, Latvia's position stands on the fact that although overcoming the COVID-19 crisis is a priority, it is necessary to return to the regular agenda of the European Union.

Conclusion

The current situation in the international system shows that dealing with Covid-19 crisis is still a priority, however, it is also very important to focus on regular agenda of the European Union. Latvia has set ambitious foreign policy goal – to run for the seat of a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2025. On global scale, it confirms and proves the maturity of the State, as well as shows that the country is prepared to take on global challenges. However, the low recognition of Latvia internationally may affect the possibility to get all the necessary votes from 125 countries. Furthermore, a great success has been the approval of Latvia's first National Action Plan on the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in Latvia for the term of 2020-2025. The plan outlines very clear and achievable goals, that focuses on reducing and eliminating gender-based violence. Latvia has also been active in working closely together with other EU Member States to mitigate the negative consequences of Covid-19. Latvia has stated that its priorities regarding the recovery plan is to focus on agriculture and cohesion policy, as well as to have sufficient and fairly distributed funding for the economic recovery process for reforms and investments in the medium term.

⁵ *mfa.gov.lv*, Foreign Minister discusses current affairs of the European Union, security and international politics <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/aktualitates/zinas/66296-arlietu-ministrs-tallina-parruna-ciropas-savienibas-drosibas-un-starptautiskas-politikas-aktualitates>