



Weekly Briefing

Latvia external relations briefing:

Latvian External Relations in 2024

Institute of Economics of the Latvian Academy of Sciences


China-CEE Institute

Kiadó: Kína-KKE Intézet Nonprofit Kft.

Szerkesztésért felelős személy: Ju Weiwei

Kiadásért felelős személy: Feng Zhongping

 1052 Budapest Petőfi Sándor utca 11.

 +36 1 5858 690

 office@china-cee.eu

 china-cee.eu

Latvian External Relations in 2024

Summary

In 2024, Latvia navigates a complex geopolitical landscape marked by significant military conflicts and shifting alliances with a strategic and multifaceted external policy aimed at promoting stability, economic resilience, and democratic values. Amidst rising tensions, notably Russia's aggression in Ukraine, Latvia reinforces its commitment to sovereignty and international law, advocating for peace and supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity. The country's achievements in bolstering international relations through cultural exchanges, economic partnerships, and global peace efforts highlight its adaptability and leadership on the world stage. Prioritizing national security, Latvia supports the rules-based international order and seeks economic growth through strategic partnerships and diversification. Protecting the interests of its citizens and engaging the Latvian diaspora are central to its policy, reflecting a comprehensive approach to foreign affairs. Latvia's initiatives in economic cooperation and cultural diplomacy aim to strengthen its global standing and foster cross-cultural understanding. Additionally, Latvia's dedication to supporting global stability and humanitarian aid underscores its role as a proactive international actor. Through these efforts, Latvia's external policy in 2024 embodies a commitment to shaping a stable, prosperous, and just world, demonstrating its strategic vision and constructive role in addressing contemporary international challenges.

Introduction

As the geopolitical landscape enters a pivotal moment in 2024, the world grapples with the highest number of military conflicts since the Cold War. Amidst this tumultuous backdrop, Latvia's external policy stands as a beacon of strategic foresight and commitment to maintaining stability, fostering economic resilience, and promoting democratic values. The ongoing war in Ukraine, instigated by Russia's aggression, alongside the Israel-Hamas clash in the Middle East, delineates the contours of international relations, pushing nations towards a brink where diplomacy and conflict intersect. Latvia, navigating through these complex dynamics, aims to reinforce its support for Ukraine, advocating for sovereignty and territorial integrity against the backdrop of Russian expansionism. Meanwhile, the potential diplomatic negotiations and

ceasefire talks in both conflict zones signal a glimmer of hope in a landscape marred by violence and geopolitical rivalry. The year 2023's dark chapters underscore the fluidity of international alliances and the critical role of middle powers in shaping global geopolitics. With Europe facing significant political and economic challenges, Latvia's external policy in 2024 is poised to adapt to the bifurcation of the global system, emphasizing the importance of a rules-based international order, economic innovation, and the well-being of its citizens. Amidst the strategic realignments and the emergence of a new 'Iron Curtain,' Latvia's diplomatic endeavours and foreign policy objectives reflect a deep understanding of the current geopolitical shifts, underscored by a commitment to fostering peace, stability, and prosperity on both a regional and global scale.

Achievements in 2023

In 2023, Latvia significantly advanced its international relations through strategic achievements in cultural exchanges, economic partnerships, and contributions to global peace efforts, set against the backdrop of an evolving security landscape. At the heart of these accomplishments was Latvia's response to regional challenges, most notably Russia's aggression in Ukraine, which catalysed a profound shift in the regional and global security paradigm. Latvia, in close collaboration with NATO and the EU, adeptly navigated these complexities, reinforcing its defence mechanisms and contributing to the collective security framework that underpins the Eastern flank of NATO. This effort underscored Latvia's commitment to mutual defence and deterrence strategies, aimed at maintaining stability and peace within the region.

Economically, Latvia's initiatives were characterized by resilience and solidarity, particularly in mitigating the repercussions of the Ukraine conflict. The country played a pivotal role in the international community's response, advocating for comprehensive support for Ukraine and the imposition of sanctions against aggressors, thereby reinforcing the rule-based international order. Latvia's unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, coupled with its push for Ukraine's integration into the EU and NATO, highlighted its dedication to upholding democratic values and the principles of international law.

Culturally, Latvia engaged in numerous exchanges and cooperation projects that not only bolstered its diplomatic ties but also showcased its rich heritage and commitment to fostering mutual understanding and respect among nations. These cultural diplomacy efforts

complemented Latvia's broader foreign policy objectives, enhancing its global profile and influence.

Additionally, Latvia's active participation in development cooperation projects and international missions underscored its contributions to regional stability and peace efforts. The country's candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2026–2027 term was a testament to its ambition to play a more significant role in shaping international peace and security policies.

Through these multifaceted achievements, Latvia demonstrated its strategic foresight, adaptability, and leadership on the international stage. Its efforts in promoting economic resilience, cultural diplomacy, and support for global stability, amidst challenging geopolitical dynamics, highlighted Latvia's proactive and constructive role in international affairs, contributing to a safer, more stable, and interconnected world.

Priorities in 2024

In 2024 and beyond, Latvia's foreign policy is set to navigate a path defined by a comprehensive framework, aiming to bolster national interests while addressing regional and global challenges. At the forefront of its strategic agenda is the reinforcement of Latvia's security and the steadfast support for the rules-based international order. This priority reflects Latvia's dedication to enhancing its national defence capabilities in response to regional adversities, particularly those posed by Russia, and underscores a deep-seated commitment to collective defence mechanisms, especially through its active engagement in NATO. The scope of security is broad, encompassing the imperative to fortify cyber defences and counteract hybrid threats, marking a responsive stride towards the dynamic landscape of contemporary security challenges.

Parallel to its security ambitions, Latvia is equally focused on propelling economic growth and resilience. The nation is poised to elevate its economic competitiveness within the European Union and the global marketplace, steering towards diversifying its economy, spurring innovation, and embracing sustainable development practices. Strategic economic partnerships stand as a cornerstone of Latvia's agenda, aimed at amplifying its influence on the global stage, investing in the green and digital transitions, and shaping EU policies to foster economic stability and growth.

Furthermore, safeguarding the interests of Latvian citizens remains a pivotal aspect of Latvia's foreign policy. This encompasses a robust initiative to protect Latvian nationals both domestically and internationally, while also fostering a deeper engagement with the Latvian diaspora. The intention is to weave the societal fabric more intricately into the formulation and execution of foreign policy, leveraging the diaspora's potential to bolster Latvia's international standing and enhance its cultural diplomacy. Through these strategic endeavours, Latvia aspires to adeptly maneuver through the intricacies of international relations, solidify its global presence, and make meaningful contributions towards regional and global stability, reflecting a versatile and forward-looking approach to its engagement on the world stage.

Economic Cooperation

In 2024, Latvia's economic strategies and cooperative initiatives within the European Union (EU) and globally are poised to significantly enhance growth and competitiveness. The country's approach is meticulously planned, focusing on fortifying economic resilience, expanding its influence on the global stage, and cultivating strategic partnerships and trade agreements.

Central to Latvia's economic agenda is its active involvement in the EU's strategic work program for 2024–2029. This involvement underscores a commitment to a comprehensive economic security strategy, highlighting the importance of diversifying supply chains to reduce reliance on singular sources and boost the EU's overall economic resilience. Adaptation of institutional and policy frameworks will be essential for Latvia to navigate the future successfully, especially considering the EU's potential expansion and the evolving nature of global economic dynamics.

Latvia's pursuit of new trade agreements is a cornerstone of its strategy to broaden economic partnerships and access new markets. The country is set to support the finalization of pivotal trade agreements with Mercosur countries in 2024, alongside exploring potential agreements with Australia, Mexico, India, Indonesia, and Thailand. These endeavours aim not just to diversify Latvia's trading partners but also to stimulate its economy by enhancing its export potential.

Moreover, Latvia's economic diplomacy will reach beyond the borders of the EU, emphasizing strengthened cooperation with non-EU countries. This will include robust support

for Latvian enterprises seeking new export markets, particularly in technology and defence sectors, showcasing Latvia's ambition to solidify its presence and influence in the global market.

Investment attraction and economic cooperation are integral to Latvia's future strategy. The country is preparing for a significant role in the World Trade Organization's 13th Ministerial Conference in 2024, with a focus on shaping trade rules that address contemporary challenges such as environmental sustainability, digitalization, and food security. Additionally, Latvia's engagement in developing and implementing OECD standards and recommendations will play a crucial role in promoting good governance, business environment improvement, and social inclusion.

Latvia's economic cooperation and growth strategies are not only geared towards enhancing its standing in international trade and investment but also safeguarding the interests of its nationals and encouraging public engagement in foreign policy decision-making. This includes maximizing the diaspora's potential to represent Latvia's international interests and contribute to the nation's economic development.

In conclusion, Latvia's economic cooperation and growth agenda for 2024 and beyond is marked by a proactive, strategic engagement with both the EU and global partners. Through pursuing new trade agreements, focusing on economic security within the EU, and fostering broad-based economic diplomacy, Latvia aims to strengthen its position as a resilient and competitive economy on the world stage. These strategies reflect Latvia's commitment to a sustainable, prosperous future, enhancing the well-being of its economy and its people amidst the complexities of the global economic landscape.

Cultural Diplomacy

In 2024, Latvia is poised to enhance its cultural diplomacy and international relations through an ambitious array of initiatives, focusing on cultural exchanges, bolstering educational programs, and showcasing its heritage and innovation at prominent international cultural events. These efforts are strategically designed to deepen Latvia's diplomatic ties, enrich its international image, and promote cross-cultural understanding.

A cornerstone of Latvia's cultural diplomacy strategy for 2024 is the launch and participation in specific cultural exchange programs. An exemplary initiative is the "Riga-Berlin Art Bridge," a program designed to facilitate artistic collaboration and cultural

showcases between Latvian and German artists. This initiative aims to foster dialogue and mutual appreciation, providing artists with platforms in both cities to exhibit their work. Similarly, the "Latvian Literature Abroad" project seeks to introduce Latvian literature to international audiences, with a special focus on participation in the Frankfurt Book Fair, the world's largest trade fair for books, which represents a significant opportunity to promote Latvian authors and literary works on a global stage.

In the realm of education, Latvia is set to expand its scholarship program significantly, specifically targeting fields that highlight the nation's academic strengths and cultural assets. The "Latvian Culture and Language Fellowship" is one such initiative, offering international students opportunities to immerse themselves in Latvia's rich cultural heritage and language at Latvian universities. Moreover, Latvia plans to strengthen its educational partnerships through the "Baltic Sea Region Academic Exchange Program," promoting joint research projects and academic mobility with universities in the Nordic and Baltic countries. These educational programs are instrumental in building a global network of individuals with first-hand experience of Latvia's vibrant culture and academic excellence.

2024 will also see Latvia actively participating in renowned international cultural events to promote its cultural sector and foster cultural exports. A highlight of this effort is Latvia's participation in the Venice Biennale, one of the most prestigious cultural events in the world, where Latvia will present a curated exhibition of contemporary Latvian art. Additionally, Latvia is set to feature prominently at the "World Music Expo (WOMEX)," showcasing the diversity and richness of Latvian music traditions and contemporary musical talent to an international audience. Participation in these events not only enhances Latvia's cultural visibility globally but also opens new doors for Latvian creatives in international markets.

These cultural diplomacy initiatives are expected to significantly impact Latvia's international image and relations. By presenting its culture and educational opportunities on these international platforms, Latvia not only fosters a deeper understanding of its cultural identity but also strengthens its soft power. The "Riga-Berlin Art Bridge" and the "Latvian Literature Abroad" project, among others, serve as bridges of cultural exchange, enhancing Latvia's reputation as a hub of creativity and innovation.

Furthermore, these efforts contribute to the strengthening of Latvia's diplomatic ties. Cultural and educational exchanges create durable connections, fostering goodwill, which is essential for robust international relations. Participation in the Venice Biennale and WOMEX,

for example, positions Latvia as an active participant in the global cultural dialogue, enhancing its profile and fostering international collaborations.

In conclusion, Latvia's cultural diplomacy and international relations plans for 2024 are poised to use the universal appeal of culture to foster international goodwill, enhance cross-cultural understanding, and solidify Latvia's place on the global stage. Through specific initiatives such as the "Riga-Berlin Art Bridge," participation in the Frankfurt Book Fair, the Venice Biennale, and WOMEX, Latvia aims to project its cultural vibrancy and educational excellence, thereby enriching its own society and fostering a more interconnected world.

Supporting Global Stability and Peace-keeping Efforts

In 2024, Latvia is set to intensify its commitment to supporting global stability, humanitarian aid, and peacekeeping missions, reflecting its dedication to contributing positively to international peace and security. Through a multifaceted approach that includes diplomatic engagement, participation in international organizations, and direct support for humanitarian and peacekeeping initiatives, Latvia aims to strengthen its role as a proactive and responsible member of the international community. This commitment is aligned with Latvia's foreign policy goals of promoting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law on a global scale.

Latvia's efforts to support global stability in 2024 are anchored in its active diplomatic engagement and participation in multilateral forums. As a member of the United Nations (UN), Latvia continues to advocate for effective multilateralism and the reinforcement of international norms and agreements that underpin global peace and security. Latvia's engagement with the UN's peacekeeping and political missions exemplifies its commitment to contributing to the organization's efforts to maintain peace and security worldwide. Additionally, Latvia's involvement in the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions underscores its dedication to contributing to international peacekeeping efforts and crisis management in regions affected by conflict.

A significant component of Latvia's support for global stability in 2024 is its humanitarian aid initiatives. Latvia plans to allocate increased funding for humanitarian aid projects, focusing on regions most affected by conflict, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises. Through bilateral channels and contributions to international organizations such as the UN's World Food

Programme (WFP) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Latvia aims to provide essential support to vulnerable populations, emphasizing the importance of solidarity and compassion in addressing global challenges.

Latvia's contribution to international peacekeeping missions is a testament to its commitment to global stability. In 2024, Latvia is set to continue its participation in NATO-led peacekeeping operations and EU military and civilian missions, providing personnel, expertise, and logistical support. This involvement not only demonstrates Latvia's readiness to contribute to international peace efforts but also highlights its capacity to work alongside international partners in complex and challenging environments. Latvia's participation in peacekeeping missions reinforces its stance on the importance of international collaboration in maintaining peace and preventing the escalation of conflicts.

Latvia's role in international organizations and forums is crucial to its strategy for supporting global stability and peace in 2024. Latvia actively participates in discussions and initiatives within the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Council of Europe, among others. In these forums, Latvia advocates for dialogue, conflict resolution, and the strengthening of international cooperation to address security challenges. Without revealing detailed strategic information, it is clear that Latvia's engagement in these organizations is geared towards promoting principles of collective security, human rights, and democratic governance.

In addition to its direct support for peacekeeping and humanitarian initiatives, Latvia is committed to capacity building and educational programs aimed at promoting peace and stability. In 2024, Latvia plans to host and support training programs for diplomats and peacekeepers from conflict-affected countries, focusing on mediation, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills. These programs are designed to build local capacities for peace and stability, reflecting Latvia's belief in the power of education and training in fostering long-term peace.

In conclusion, Latvia's plan for supporting global stability and peace in 2024 is a comprehensive approach that leverages diplomatic engagement, humanitarian aid, participation in peacekeeping missions, and involvement in international organizations and forums. Through these efforts, Latvia aims to contribute to a more stable, peaceful, and just world, underscoring its commitment to international solidarity and cooperation.

Prospects for Continuing Support for Ukraine

In 2024, Latvia plans to sustain and potentially expand its support for Ukraine amidst ongoing Russian aggression. Building on its substantial contributions in previous years, Latvia is set to continue its multifaceted support strategy, emphasizing military, humanitarian, and reconstruction aid.

Latvia's commitment involves ongoing military support through the provision of critical defence equipment and training to bolster Ukraine's defence capabilities. This support aligns with Latvia's participation in international frameworks such as the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, signalling a coordinated effort with allies to ensure Ukraine remains equipped to defend its sovereignty.

On the humanitarian front, Latvia is likely to continue offering substantial aid to address the immediate needs of Ukrainian citizens affected by the conflict. This includes medical supplies, basic necessities, and support for refugees, reinforcing Latvia's role in alleviating the humanitarian crisis.

Moreover, Latvia's focus on Ukraine's reconstruction will remain a priority, with an emphasis on rebuilding critical infrastructure and public services in war-impacted regions. Through partnerships with international organizations and direct financial support, Latvia aims to contribute to the recovery and stabilization of Ukraine, fostering a conducive environment for peace and rebuilding.

Latvia's ongoing support for Ukraine exemplifies its steadfast commitment to upholding democratic values, supporting international law, and contributing to European security and stability. This approach reflects Latvia's broader foreign policy objectives, underscoring the importance of solidarity, resilience, and international cooperation in facing global challenges.

Conclusions

In 2024, amidst a tumultuous global landscape marked by escalating conflicts and shifting geopolitical alliances, Latvia's external policy stands as a beacon of commitment to international peace, stability, and democratic values. Guided by strategic foresight, Latvia navigates these complexities with a multifaceted approach aimed at bolstering national security, advocating for a rules-based international order, and driving economic resilience. Central to its

policy is unwavering support for Ukraine, reflecting a steadfast dedication to sovereignty and the principles of international law, amidst Russian aggression.

Latvia's priorities extend to reinforcing its security mechanisms, enhancing economic competitiveness, and safeguarding its citizens' interests, leveraging diplomatic engagement and cultural diplomacy to foster global stability and cooperation. Through active participation in international peacekeeping efforts and contributions to global peace, Latvia underscores its role as a proactive and responsible global actor.

As Latvia engages in economic partnerships and cultural exchanges, it seeks not only to bolster its international stature but also to promote cross-cultural understanding. In 2024, Latvia's external policy embodies a commitment to a stable, prosperous, and just world order, highlighting the nation's role in addressing contemporary international challenges and contributing to a more interconnected and peaceful global community.

References

1. *Shifting sands: Navigating the new geopolitical landscape in 2024*. Orfonline.org. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/shifting-sands-navigating-the-new-geopolitical-landscape-in-2024>
2. *Geopolitical & economic outlook 2024: Democracy and the splintering economy* - Thomson Reuters Institute. Thomson Reuters Institute. <https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/global-economy/geopolitical-economic-outlook-2024-democracy-economy>
3. “*Latvijas ārējā un drošības politika. Gadagrāmata 2024*”. Latvijas Ārpolitikas institūts. https://www.lai.lv/publikacijas/latvian-foreign-and-security-policy-yearbook-2024-1188?get_file=1
4. “*Ārlietu ministra ikgadējais ziņojums par paveikto un iecerēto darbību valsts ārpolitikā un Eiropas Savienības jautājumos 2023. gadā*”. Ārlietu ministrija. <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/media/11481/download?attachment>