

Constitution of the Republic of Latvia

Adopted by the Constitutional Assembly of the Republic of Latvia
at their meeting in 15 February 1922

The People of Latvia have adopted, through their freely elected Constitutional (Satversme)
Assembly,
the following Constitution:

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Chapter I

General Regulations

1. Latvia shall be an independent and democratic Republic.
2. The sovereign power of the State of Latvia shall belong to the People of Latvia.
3. The territory of the State of Latvia shall consist of Vidzeme, Latgale, Kurzeme and Zemgale, within the boundaries stipulated by international treaties.
4. The state language within the Republic of Latvia is the Latvian language, the Flag of Latvia is red with a white stripe.

Chapter II

The Saeima (Parliament)

5. The Saeima shall consist of one hundred representatives of the People.
6. The Saeima shall be elected in general, equal, direct and secret elections, on the basis of proportional representation.
7. In dividing Latvia into separate electoral districts, the number of parliamentary representatives to be elected from each district shall be proportionate to the number of electors in that district.
8. Latvian citizens who enjoy all rights and who on the day of elections are attained eighteen years of age, shall be entitled to vote.
9. Any Latvian citizen, who is over twenty-one years of age on the first day of elections, may be elected to the Saeima.
10. The Saeima shall be elected for a period of four years.
11. The Saeima elections shall take place on the first Saturday in October.
12. TThe newly-elected Saeima shall hold its first sitting on the first Tuesday in November, on which day the powers of the previous Saeima shall have expired.
13. Should the Saeima elections, by reason of the dissolution of the previous Saeima, take place at another time of year, the Saeima thus elected shall assemble not later than one month after its election, and its powers shall expire after three years, on the first Tuesday in November, on which day a new Saeima shall assemble.

14. The electors may not recall any Members of the Saeima.
15. The Saeima shall assemble in Riga. It may assemble elsewhere only in extraordinary circumstances.
16. The Saeima shall elect its Board, which shall consist of the Chairperson, his/her two Deputies and Secretaries. The Board of the Saeima shall carry on its work uninterrupted for the duration of the term of the Saeima.
17. The first sitting of the newly-elected Saeima shall be opened by the Chairperson of the preceding Saeima or by any other Board member as assigned by the Board.
18. The Saeima itself shall examine the mandates of its members.
19. The Board shall convene sessions and decree regular and extraordinary sittings.
20. The Board shall convene sittings of the Saeima at the request of either the President of State, the Prime Minister, or not less than one-third of the members of the Saeima.
21. The Saeima shall draw up the Rules of Procedure for the regulation of its internal proceedings.
22. The sittings of the Saeima shall be public. At the request of ten members of the Saeima, the President of State, the Prime Minister or any one Minister, the Saeima may decide, by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members present, to sit off camera.
23. The sittings of the Saeima may take place if at least one-half of the members are present.
24. Except in cases otherwise provided for by the Constitution, the Saeima shall pass its resolutions with an absolute majority vote of the members present.
25. The Saeima shall elect standing committees, determine the number of their members and their duties. The committees shall be entitled to request the respective ministers and local government institutions to supply any information necessary for their work, and also to invite responsible representatives of the respective ministries and local government institutions to their meetings, for the purpose of obtaining explanations. The committees may carry on their work also between the sessions.
26. At the request of not less than one-third of its members, the Saeima shall appoint parliamentary investigation commissions to deal with special issues.
27. The Saeima shall have the right to address the Prime Minister or any other minister with submissions and questions to which they, or responsible officials empowered by them, shall reply. At the request of either the Saeima or its committees, the Prime Minister, or any other minister,

shall provide relevant papers and documents.

28. The members of the Saeima shall be exempt from judicial, administrative and disciplinary prosecution, in connection with their voting and with ideas expressed in the fulfillment of their duties. Even if it is done through the fulfillment of official duties, members of the Saeima are liable to prosecution for:

- 1) the dissemination of defamatory information with the knowledge that it is false;
- 2) the dissemination of defamatory information about private or family life.

29. Members of the Saeima may not be arrested or searched, nor may their personal liberty be restricted in any way, without the sanction of the Saeima. Members of the Saeima shall be liable to arrest, if apprehended in the act of committing a crime. The Board of the Saeima shall be notified of the arrest of any member of the Saeima within twenty-four hours. A report shall be presented by the Board at the next sitting of the Saeima, whereupon the Saeima shall decide as to whether the member shall remain under arrest or be liberated. During the period between sessions, the Board of the Saeima shall determine whether the member of the Saeima shall remain under arrest.

30. The criminal prosecution may not be initiated against the member of the Saeima or administrative penalty imposed on him/her without the sanction of the Saeima.

31. Members of the Saeima shall have the right to withhold evidence:

- 1) concerning persons who have entrusted them, as representatives of the People, with certain facts or data;
- 2) concerning persons to whom they, as representatives of the People, have entrusted certain facts or data;
- 3) concerning such facts and data.

32. Members of the Saeima may not undertake Government contracts or receive Government concessions in their name or in that of any other person. The provisions of this Article shall refer to ministers, even if they are not members of the Saeima.

33. Members of the Saeima shall receive remuneration from state funds.

34. No person shall be charged with liability for circulating reports about sittings of the Saeima or its committees, if such reports correspond to facts. Accounts of sittings off camera of either the Saeima or its committees, may only be published with the permit of the Board of either the Saeima or the respective committee.

Chapter III

The President of State

35. The President shall be elected by the Saeima for a period of four years.

36. The President shall be elected by secret ballot with a majority of the votes of not less than fifty-one votes from the Saeima members.

37. Any Latvian citizen enjoying full rights who has reached forty years of age may be elected President of State. A citizen of double citizenship may not be elected President of State.

38. The office of the President of State shall not be compatible with any other office. If the elected President of State is a member of the Saeima, he/she shall resign from the Saeima.

39. The same person cannot hold office as the President of State for more than eight consecutive years.

40. On assuming office at the first sitting of the Saeima after his/her election, the President of State shall take the following solemn oath:

"I swear that all of my efforts shall be devoted to the good of the People of Latvia. I will do everything in my power to promote the well-being of the State of Latvia and its population. I will hold sacred and observe the Constitution and the laws of Latvia. I will be just to all persons and I will fulfill my duties to the best of my ability."

41. The President of State shall represent the State in an international capacity; he/she shall accredit Latvian representatives abroad, and receive accredited representatives of foreign states. He/she shall carry out the decisions of the Saeima concerning the ratification of international agreements.

42. The President of State shall be the Chief of the Armed Forces of the state. In a time of war, he/she shall appoint a Commander-in-Chief.

43. The President of State shall declare war on the basis of a decision of the Saeima.

44. The President of State shall have the right to take steps indispensable to the military defense of the state, if another state has declared war on Latvia, or if an enemy is attacking the borders of Latvia. At the same time, the President of State shall immediately convene the Saeima, which shall decide upon the declaration of war and the commencement of hostilities.

45. The President of State shall have the right to pardon the sentenced persons, regarding whom the court judgment has taken legal effect. Extent and procedures for applying of mentioned right are stipulated by special law.

46. The President of State shall have the right to convene extraordinary meetings of the Cabinet of Ministers for the discussion of an agenda prepared by him/her, and to preside over such meetings.

47. The President of State shall have the right of legislative initiative.

48. The President of State shall have the right to propose the dissolution of the Saeima. This shall be followed by a referendum. If in the referendum more than one-half of the votes are cast in favour of dissolution, the Saeima shall be considered as dissolved and new elections shall be proclaimed. These elections shall take place within two months after the dissolution of the Saeima.

49. Upon dissolution of the Saeima, its members shall retain their powers until the newly-elected Saeima has assembled. The former Saeima may only assemble on being convened by the President of State. The agenda for such sittings shall be determined by the President of State.

50. If in the referendum the dissolution of the Saeima is opposed by more than one-half of the votes cast, the President of State shall be regarded as dismissed and the Saeima shall elect a new President of State for the remaining period of office of the President who has been dismissed.

51. On the motion of not less than one-half of the members of the Saeima, the Saeima, at the sitting to which the public is not admitted, may decide by a majority vote of not less than two-thirds of their number, to dismiss the President of State. After this decision, the Saeima shall immediately elect a new President of State.

52. Should the President of State resign from his/her office, die or be dismissed before the end of his/her office, his/her duties shall be carried out by the Chairperson of the Saeima, pending the election of a new President of State. Likewise, the Chairperson of the Saeima shall take the office of the President of State, should the latter be absent from the territory of Latvia or in any other way be prevented from fulfilling his/her duties.

53. The President of State shall not bear political responsibility for his/her actions. All decrees of the President of State shall be countersigned by the Prime Minister, or by the minister concerned, who shall thereby assume full responsibility for the decrees, except in cases foreseen in Articles forty-eight and fifty-six.

54. The President of State may be charged with criminal liability if the Saeima sanctions thus with a majority vote of not less than two-thirds of its members.

Chapter IV **The Cabinet of Ministers**

55. The Cabinet of Ministers shall consist of the Prime Minister and the ministers nominated by him/her.

56. The Cabinet of Ministers shall be formed by a person who is entrusted with that task by the President of State.

57. The number of ministers and the scope of their activities, as well as the mutual relations among state institutions shall be fixed by law.

58. The state administration institutions shall be subordinated to the Cabinet of Ministers.

59. In order to fulfill their duties, it is necessary that the Prime Minister and ministers receive the

confidence of the Saeima and they shall be responsible to the Saeima for their actions. If the Saeima expresses a vote of no-confidence in the Prime Minister, the whole Cabinet of Ministers shall resign. If the Saeima expresses a vote of no-confidence in particular minister, the minister shall resign and the Prime Minister shall nominate another person to take his/her place.

60. The meetings of the Cabinet of Ministers shall be presided over by the Prime Minister, or, in his/her absence, by another minister so empowered by the Prime Minister.

61. The Cabinet of Ministers shall discuss all draft laws drawn up by the ministries and all issues concerning the activities of various ministries; likewise all issues of state policy initiated by individual members of the Cabinet of Ministers.

62. If the State is threatened by a foreign invasion, or, if disorders endangering the existing order of the state arise within the state or any part of the state, the Cabinet of Ministers shall have the right to proclaim a states of emergency. In the event of such a states of emergency, the Board of the Saeima shall be notified by the Cabinet of Ministers within twenty-four hours, and the Board shall put the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers before the Saeima without delay.

63. Ministers, even if they are not members of the Saeima, and responsible state officials empowered by ministers, shall have the right to be present at the sittings of the Saeima or its committees, and to introduce additions and amendments to draft laws.

Chapter V

Legislation

64. The right of legislation shall belong to both the Saeima and to the People, within the procedure and extent provided for in this Constitution.

65. Draft laws may be submitted to the Saeima by the President of State, the Cabinet of Ministers, the committees of the Saeima, no less than five members of the Saeima or, in cases and in the procedure provided for in this Constitution, by one-tenth of the electors.

66. Before the commencement of each financial year, the Saeima shall approve the state revenue and expenditure budget, the draft of which shall be submitted by the Cabinet of Ministers.

If the Saeima passes a resolution involving expenditure not foreseen in the budget, it shall specify in this resolution the sources of revenue with which to cover such expenditure.

After the end of the financial year, the Cabinet of Ministers shall submit, for the approval of the Saeima, a statement showing the actual implementation of the budget.

67. The Saeima shall decide on the strength of the Armed Forces of the State in time of peace.

68. The ratification of the Saeima shall be indispensable to all international agreements dealing with issues to be settled by legislation.

69. The President of State shall promulgate laws passed by the Saeima not before the seventh and not later than the twenty-first day after their adoption. If no other term is fixed, the laws shall take effect fourteen days after their promulgation.

70. The President of State shall promulgate laws according to the following formula: "The Saeima (i.e. the People) has adopted and the President of State promulgates the following law: (text of the law)".

71. Within seven days after the adoption of a law by the Saeima, the President of State shall be entitled to ask, by means of explanatory letter addressed to the Chairperson of the Saeima, for the review of that law. If the Saeima does not amend the law, the President of State shall not have the right to raise any further objections.

72. The President of State shall have the right to suspend the promulgation of a law for a period of two months. He/she shall suspend the promulgation at the request of not less than one-third of the members of the Saeima. This right shall be exercised by the President of State or by one-third of the members of the Saeima within seven days after the adoption of the law by the Saeima. The law thus suspended, shall be submitted to a referendum, if not less than one-tenth of the electors so request. Should such a request not be formulated within a period of two months as mentioned above, the law shall be promulgated upon the expiration of that period. The referendum shall not be taken, however, if the Saeima puts this law to a vote once more and if then not less than three-fourths of all the members are in favour of its adoption.

73. The following matters shall not be submitted to a referendum: the budget, laws concerning loans, taxes, custom's duties, railway tariffs, military service, the declaration and commencement of war, the settlement of peace, the declaration of a state of emergency and its termination, mobilization, demobilization, foreign agreements.

74. A law adopted by the Saeima and suspended in the procedure set forth in Article 72, may be annulled by a referendum, if the number of participating electors is at least one-half of those who participated in the previous Saeima elections and if the majority has voted for the annulment of the law. (The March 21, 1933 amendment published: Valdibas Vestnesis No. 71, March 31, 1933)

75. Should the Saeima determine the urgency of a law with a majority of not less than two-thirds, the President of State may not demand a second review of the law; it may not be submitted to a referendum and shall be promulgated within three days after the President has received the adopted law.

76. The Saeima may amend the Constitution at sittings at which at least two-thirds of its members are present. The amendments shall be passed in the course of three readings, by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members present.

77. If the Saeima has changed the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Sixth or Seventy-Seventh Articles of the Constitution, then such amendments, in order to take legal effect, must be affirmed by a referendum.

78. Not less than one-tenth of the electors shall have the right to submit to the President of State a fully elaborated draft for the amendment of the Constitution or the draft law, which shall be submitted to the Saeima by the President. If the Saeima does not adopt this draft law without substantial amendments, it shall be submitted to a referendum.

79. Such amendments to the Constitution submitted to a referendum, shall be adopted, if at least one-half of those who have the right to vote have declared themselves in their favour.

Such draft laws submitted to a referendum, shall be adopted if the number of participating electors is at least one-half of those who participated in the previous Saeima elections and if the majority has voted for the adoption of the draft law. (The March 21, 1933 amendment published: Valdibas Vestnesis No. 71, March 31, 1933)

80. All citizens of Latvia who have the right to vote in the elections of the Saeima are entitled to take part in the referendum.

81. In cases of urgent necessity between sessions, the Cabinet of Ministers shall have the right to issue regulations which shall have the force of law. These regulations may not amend: the law on Saeima elections, laws concerning judicial constitution and procedure, the budget and budget rights, and laws passed by the Saeima then in power; they shall not apply to amnesty, state taxes, customs, loans and they shall become null and void if not presented to the Saeima within three days of the opening of the following session.

Chapter VI

Courts

82. A court judgment within Latvia shall be carried out by district (city) courts, regional courts and the Supreme Court, but in the event of war or an exceptional situation - also by a Court-Martial.

83. The judges shall be independent and bound only by law.

84. The appointment of judges shall be confirmed by the Saeima and they may not be dismissed. The judges may be dismissed from their office against their will by the Saeima only in cases envisaged by the law on the basis of the decision of the Judicial Disciplinary Collegium Board or the court judgment in the criminal case. The retiring age limit for judges shall be fixed by law.

85. The Constitutional Court shall function in Latvia which, within the jurisdiction set forth by law, shall review cases concerning the compliance of laws with the Constitution, as well as other cases

placed under its jurisdiction by law. The Constitutional Court shall be empowered to declare laws and other acts or parts of same as null and void. The judges of the Constitutional Court shall be confirmed by the Saeima for the term set forth by law, upon a secret ballot of the majority of no less than 51 members of the Saeima.

86. Judgment shall be passed solely by such institutions which have been so entitled by law and in the procedure specified by law. The Court-Martial shall function in accordance with a specific law.

Chapter VII

State Control

87. The State Control shall be an independent collegiate institution.

88. The state controllers shall be appointed and confirmed in the same procedure as the judges, but only for a definite period during which they may be dismissed solely upon the decision of the Court. The organization of the State Control and the competency thereof shall be fixed by a specific law.

Chapter VIII

Fundamental Human Rights

89. The State recognizes and protects the fundamental rights of a person in accordance with this Constitution, the laws and international agreements binding on Latvia.

90. Everyone has the right to know his/her rights.

91. All persons within the Latvia are equal before the law and the courts. Human rights shall be implemented without any discrimination.

92. Everyone can protect his/her rights and legal interests in a fair court. Everyone shall be considered as not guilty until his/her guilt is recognized in accordance with the law. In the event of a groundless offense of rights everyone has the right to a corresponding compensation. Everyone has the right to the assistance of a lawyer.

93. The law protects everyone's right to life.

94. Everyone has the right to the freedom and inviolability of the person. To no one may freedom be deprived or derogated otherwise, only as in accordance with the law.

95. The state protects the honor and dignity of persons. Such behavior against a person as torture, other cruelty or abasement of dignity is prohibited. No one may be subjected to a punishment which is merciless or debasing to the dignity of a person.

96. Everyone has the right to the inviolability of a private life, place of residence and correspondence.

97. Everyone who is legally residing within the territory of Latvia has the right to freely migrate and to choose a place of residence.

98. Everyone has the right to freely leave Latvia. Everyone who has Latvian passport is under the protection of the state outside of Latvia and he/she has a right to freely return to Latvia. A citizen of Latvia may not be extradited to foreign countries.

99. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion, consciousness and religious conviction. The Church is separate from the state.

100. Everyone has the right to freedom of speech, which includes the right to freely acquire, hold and distribute information and to express his/her own opinions. Censorship is prohibited.

101. Every citizen of Latvia has the right, in the manner prescribed by law, to participate in the activity of the state and local governments as well as to perform state service.

102. Everyone has the right to unite into unions, political parties and other public organizations.

103. The state protects the freedom of previously-announced peaceful meetings and processions as well as pickets.

104. Everyone has the right to turn to the state and local government institutions with applications and to receive an answer in point of fact.

105. Everyone has the right to property. Property may not be used against the interests of society. Property rights may be restricted only in accordance with the law. A forced alienation of property for the needs of society is permissible only in exceptional cases on the basis of an individual law, for fair compensation.

106. Everyone has the right to freely choose an occupation and a working place in accordance with his/her own abilities and qualification. Forced labor is prohibited. Involvement in the rectification of disasters and their consequences and employment in accordance with a court decision shall not be considered as forced labor.

107. Every employee has the right to receive a remuneration appropriate to the performed work which shall be no less than the minimum determined by the state, as well as to weekly holidays and annual paid vacation.

108. Employees have the right to a collective agreement as well as the right to go on strike. The state protects the freedom of trade unions.

109. Everyone has the right to social guarantees for old age, work disability, unemployment and other cases determined by law.

110. The state protects and supports a marriage, the family, the rights of parents and children. The state especially helps disabled children, children who are left without parental care or who have suffered from violence.

111. The state protects the health of people and guarantees to everyone a minimum of medical assistance.

112. Everyone has the right to an education. The state shall provide an opportunity to acquire elementary education and secondary education free of charge. An elementary education is compulsory.

113. The state recognizes the freedom scientific, artistic and other creative works as well as protects copyright and patent rights.

114. Persons who belong to minority nationalities have the right to maintain and develop their own language and ethnic and cultural originality.

115. The state protects everyone's right to live within a favorable environment by providing information about the status of the environment and taking care about its maintenance and improvement.

116. Those rights of a person which are determined in Articles ninety-six, ninety-seven, ninety-eight, one hundred, one hundred and one, one hundred and two, one hundred and three, one hundred and six and one hundred and eight may be limited in those cases prescribed by law in order to protect the rights of other people, a democratic state system, the safety of society, welfare and morals. On the basis of the provisions mentioned in this Article, the expression of a religious conviction may be limited also.

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