

COUNTRY PROFILES

Latvia

The research into literature on Latvia's approach to international cultural policy suggests a positive attitude towards cooperation with other European countries vis-à-vis the rest of the world. However, the lack of financial resources has limited the extent to which Latvia has been able to develop its international cultural policy. Kalnins notes that the promotion of Latvian cultural activities to international audiences has been handicapped by a lack of state coordination and the lack of financial resources (Kalnins, 2003).

For Latvia, an increase of European cultural cooperation with third countries should respect the integrity of European national cultures and keep a balance between the instrumentalisation of culture for foreign policy and economic objectives and culture as a goal in itself.

The responsibility for international cultural policy is shared by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They sign and implement international and bilateral cultural exchange and cooperation programmes. Bilateral cultural treaties have been signed with nineteen countries.

M i n i s t r y o f C u l t u r e

The Ministry of Culture's Department of Foreign Affairs undertakes organisational duties in collaboration with state and public institutions that are under the Ministry's supervision. The Ministry of Education also collaborates with the Ministry of Culture in the sphere of cultural education and participation in EU educational programmes.

The Latvian government finances and/or supports various agencies and social organisations that are active in the promotion of international cultural cooperation, such as the Literature Information Centre, the Music Information Centre, the Theatre Information Centre and the Latvian Contemporary Art Centre. Furthermore, municipalities and non-governmental organisations actively engage in international cooperation.

The Culture Capital Endowment was established in 1997 as a state-owned shareholding company that derives its income from taxes on lotteries and gambling. It is the foremost source of funding for culture-related projects. The purpose of the Endowment is to promote culture within Latvia, but it also funds international cultural projects. It finances the government programme 'Important International and National Events' that is administered jointly by the Ministry of Culture and the National Board of Culture.

The Latvian Institute was established in 1998 as a non-profit state-funded organisation. Its main purpose is to provide information about Latvia abroad. It collaborates closely with government institutions and social organisations in Latvia and participates in the development of conferences, festivals and other international events in order to promote awareness of Latvian culture. It works directly with Latvia's embassies in the coordination of promotion and media coverage of Latvia abroad. It does not have branch offices abroad.

In 2003, a proposal was submitted for establishing a National Image Council under the supervision of the Latvian Institute, in collaboration with representatives from the Ministry of Culture, Foreign Affairs, and Economics, government agencies, NGO's and leaders from the business and arts community. Its task would be to provide coordination for all state information activities on international level, thereby making better use of limited state resources, and undertake long-term strategic planning. The underlying rationale is that cultural activities could receive more effective exposure through coordination with diplomatic and economic activities. It is not clear how the proposal has been followed up.

P o l i c y f o c u s

The promotion, protection and preservation of Latvia's national culture is a priority, but Latvia also recognises that in a globalised world, marketing is an essential element of political and economic diplomacy. Therefore despite a low budget, culture is recognised as an essential international policy area. Latvia expects that culture, as a powerful marketing tool, will play an increasingly important role in preserving national identities within the EU.

In 1996, the Latvian parliament adopted a document on Latvia's cultural policy, called 'The State Culture Policy Postulates'. It is a joint public-private agreement on the goals, principles and guidelines of Latvia's cultural policy. It deals mostly with cultural policy within Latvia, i.e. the promotion of Latvian culture within Latvian society, but one section (section VII.5) outlines government policies with regard to international cultural cooperation. The aims of Latvian international cultural policy are:

- to promote Latvian culture in Europe;
- to (re)introduce European culture in Latvia.

The strategic objectives of Latvia's cultural policy are:

- to ensure the continuation of the culture processes in Latvia, maintaining the cultural heritage as the basis of national identity and facilitating the manifold expressions of creativity as the precondition for culture development;
- to facilitate the access to culture and opportunities for all inhabitants to participate in cultural life;
- to develop and consolidate the role of cultural education in increasing the creative potential of the person and the quality of their social life;
- to enhance a wider involvement of the culture of Latvia in the common European culture process, enriching it and facilitating understanding between the states, nations and individuals.

G e o g r a p h i c a l f o c u s

The EU and interregional cooperation with the Baltic States provide a firm focus for Latvia's international cultural policy.

In countries such as Sweden, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Australia, émigré communities play an important role in promoting Latvian culture, especially in North America and Australia where large communities exist. Since 1991, émigré cultural organisations have collaborated with the Ministry of Culture and Latvian cultural organisations and often organised joint projects. The World Federation of Free Latvians is an international umbrella group that represents Latvian organisations throughout the world.

Latvia participates actively in interregional and multilateral cooperation structures such as the Baltic Assembly, Baltic Sea Region and the Nordic Council.

In summary, Latvian international cultural relations are focused on the Baltic States, Member States of the European Union, and countries where large émigré communities reside, especially North America and Australia.

H i g h l y r e c o m m e n d e d r e a d i n g

Kalnins, O., (2003) Latvia's international cultural relations,
E-Doc Link: http://www.ifa.de/europa-akp/konferenz/download/eu_kalnins.pdf
Latvian contribution to the conference "Europe- a Union of Culture?" of the German Institut fuer Auslandsbeziehungen, Berlin, October 2003. Includes an abstract in English.

Ministry of Culture, (2005) Official website,

E-Doc Link: www.km.gov.lv

The Ministry of Culture is the state governing institution, which organizes and coordinates state culture policy and cultural-educational policy. The central apparatus of the Ministry of Culture consists of three departments: Department of Cultural Policy; Department of Regional Development; Department of Finance and Economy and five independent divisions: Audit Division; Division for International Relations; Legal Division; Division of Copyrights and Neighbouring Rights and Division for Personnel matters. This website includes a section on International cooperation.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Latvia's values and interests in the European Union,
E-Doc Link: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/eu/EuStrategy/ValuesAndInterests/#values>
Discussion document for the consultation round on a "Latvia in the EU" strategy.

Pabriks, Artis, (2005) Address on the preparation of a "Latvia in the European Union" strategy by the Minister of Foreign Affairs,

E-Doc Link: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/speeches/2005/July/15-1/>

The address launches a consultation round that should contribute to Latvia's strategy in the EU. It calls for: "a discussion about values. What are the overall values of the Member States of the European Union in which we have joined? What are the national values in Latvia which we would like to strengthen with the help of the EU?"

G e n e r a l / b a c k g r o u n d r e a d i n g

Baltic Assembly, (2005) Official website,

E-Doc Link: www.baltasam.org

The Baltic Assembly (BA) is an international organisation, which was established on November 8 1991, in Tallinn with the aim of promoting cooperation between the parliaments of the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia and the Republic of Lithuania.

Council of the Baltic Sea States, (2005) Official website,

E-Doc Link: www.cbss.st

The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) is an overall political forum for regional intergovernmental cooperation. The members of the Council are the eleven states of the Baltic Sea region as well as the European Commission.

Council of Europe, (1996) Cultural policy in Latvia: national report. Report of a European panel of examiners, Strasbourg, Council of Europe

□http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Cooperation/Culture/Policies/Reviews/Latvia.asp □ No abstract available.

EFAH, Interarts (2003) Study on cultural cooperation in Europe: Annex 1 - National reports – Latvia,

E-Doc Link: http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/sources_info/pdf-word/annex1_national_reports2.pdf

Background to structures, competencies and institutes in the field of cultural cooperation.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (2005) Official website,

E-Doc Link: www.am.gov.lv/en

Background information, documents and news on principal Latvian foreign policy issues and domestic developments

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (2004) Yearbook of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia,

E-Doc Link: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/data/file/l/gada%20parskats%202004%20kopa.pdf>

Includes sections on Latvian foreign policy strategy after becoming member of the EU and NATO; on New Foreign Policy Challenges; and on Latvia as a member of the EU.

Nordic Council, (2005) Official website,

E-Doc Link: www.norden.org Latvia

The Nordic Council was founded in 1952. Since then cultural cooperation has been the core component of intra-Nordic cooperation.

Republic of Latvia, (2000) [Latvian] Strategy for the integration into the European Union,
E-Doc Link: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/data/file/e/EU-strategy-15.02.2000.pdf>
Deals with the Latvian accession process to the European Union.

Sedleniece, Una, (2005) Chapter 2.4, International Cultural Cooperation, Latvia :
Compendium of Cultural Policies,
E-Doc Link: www.culturalpolicies.net
Introduction to the main actors and principle institutions working in the field of international
cultural cooperation in Latvia.