

# The Centenary of the International Recognition of Latvia

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Ministry



On 26 January 2021, we are celebrating the centenary of the international *de jure* recognition of the Republic of Latvia. One hundred years ago on this date in Paris, following determined efforts of Latvian diplomats over a two year period, the states that emerged victorious from World War I, known as “the Entente” – Belgium, France, Great Britain, Italy, and Japan – decided to grant *de jure* recognition to Latvia. This was a pivotal moment for Latvia as it sought to assert itself as a fully independent state and establish diplomatic relations with other states.

Since the establishment of the Latvian state on 18 November 1918, our diplomats sought to gain *de jure* recognition from the great powers. In 1920, this became the main task for the Baltic States’ governments and diplomats in their foreign policy.

On 21 January 1921, Latvian diplomats submitted notes with an official request for the governments of France, Great Britain, Italy, Belgium and Japan to recognize Latvia *de jure*.

On 26 January 2021 at 5 p.m., the representative of Latvia in Paris, Oļģerts Grosvalds, received confirmation from the French Foreign Ministry that Latvia had been recognised *de jure*. In the following days, Latvia was recognized by a number of other countries. International recognition brought to an end a very challenging and complicated process of state-building.

Recognition *de jure* meant that a state had become a subject of international law. Such recognition is irrevocable and permanent. Following its *de jure* recognition, the 1815 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations became fully applicable to Latvia. Latvia was able to establish diplomatic relations, appoint envoys extraordinary and ministers plenipotentiary and accede to international conventions, enter into multilateral agreements, as well as taking part in international conferences, organising and participating in meetings between countries as a duly empowered member.

Remembering these historic moments in time, [in 2021, Latvia will be marking the centenary of diplomatic relations with a number of countries.](#)

Even though Latvia had lost its *de facto* independence in 1940, the Latvian state existed as a subject of international law until the full restoration of the independence of the Republic of Latvia in August 1991.

After the occupation had begun in 1940, the Latvian Foreign Service was the only public authority of the Republic of Latvia which continued performing its functions and representing the state internationally. Latvia's diplomatic and consular missions continued working in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Argentina and Switzerland – a case like this is without precedent in the world history of diplomacy. By keeping the idea of Latvia's independence alive and actively defending it in international politics, Latvian diplomats and Latvian organisations in exile made significant contributions leading eventually to the renewal of the country's independence.

Following the adoption of the Declaration “On the Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia” on 4 May 1990, the Supreme Council established a new Council of Ministers and appointed a Foreign Minister on 22 May. The work to restore the Foreign Service had begun.

In 1991, Latvia regained complete independence, and the state could begin integrating itself into international processes and participating in them fully.

At present, Latvia enjoys bilateral [diplomatic relations with 191 countries](#).

The day of international *de jure* recognition was a national holiday in Latvia in the period before the occupation, with a status equivalent to the day when the proclamation of independence is celebrated on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November, which in the historical consciousness of the Latvian people is Latvia's birthday.

Today, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established a tradition in which this occasion is referred to as “Diplomats Day”, paying tribute to the unstinting, selfless and determined commitment of diplomats to establishing Latvia's statehood and gaining *de jure* recognition.

[Infographic: Recognition of Latvia's Independence de iure](#)

<https://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/article/centenary-international-recognition-latvia>