

Latvia and in the UN system bodies

Published: 03.07.2021.

The UN system encompasses the UN principal organs, subsidiary bodies, specialized agencies, programmes and funds, as well as related organizations.

Broader representation in the bodies of international organizations is a prerequisite for the implementation of interests of Latvia's foreign policy. Active participation in the work of international organizations also contributes to the visibility of Latvia at the global level.

Currently Latvia has been elected as a member to the [UN Economic and Social Council](#), to the [UN Commission on the Status of Women](#) and to the [UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development](#)

Latvia has also been elected to two UNESCO bodies – the [Intergovernmental Council of the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication \(IPDC\)](#), and the UNESCO [Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#). Latvia's representative Mr.Valts Ernštreits, Director of the Livonian Institute of the University of Latvia, participates in the UN Global Task Force for Making a Decade of Action for Indigenous Languages.

Latvian expert Ms. Ilze Brands-Kehris assumed her functions as [Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights](#) in January 2020. This is the highest-ranking post in the UN structure ever held by any Latvian expert. Ms. I. Brands-Kehris heads the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in New York and assists the Secretary General in advancing the human rights agenda.

In May 2021, Ms. Elīna Šteinerte from Latvia was elected as the Chair-Rapporteur of the [UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#). E.Šteinerte is the first Latvian representative to hold a leading post of a Special Procedure of the UN Human Rights Council. She has been elected to the Working Group since 2016.

Latvian expert Ms. Ilvija Pūce has been elected to the [UN Committee against Torture](#) for the term from 2020 to 2023.

Since April 2021, Latvia is a member of the UN Committee on Information. The Committee deals with a variety of issues in the field of information and communications, including evaluates the efforts by the United Nations system in this area.

[UN Economic and Social Council](#)

On 14 June 2019 in New York, at the plenary session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, Latvia was elected as member of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the term of 2020–2022. Latvia received 179 votes in favour. In total, 18 new ECOSOC members out of 54 were elected. Those elected beside Latvia were Montenegro, Russia, Finland, Australia, Norway, Switzerland, Colombia, Nicaragua, Panama, Thailand, Bangladesh, China, the Republic of Korea, Benin, Botswana, Congo, and the Republic of Gabon.

In its capacity of an ECOSOC member, Latvia will take part in decision-making on international issues of high importance – implementation of the sustainable development goals, development cooperation and climate change, focusing in particular on strengthening the forestry sector. Latvia aims at working actively to take forward the ECOSOC digital agenda in order to promote digital inclusion and the use of new technologies towards the achievement of the goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Latvia has experience of working on ECOSOC: the country has already been ECOSOC member twice, from 1997 to 1999 and from 2011 to 2013. In addition to working on the Council, Latvia is also a long-standing member of ECOSOC functional commissions – the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Statistical Commission.

ECOSOC is one of the principal UN structures, responsible for the issues of international co-operation in economy, social matters, culture, education, health, environment, and other areas relevant to the promotion of sustainable development.

[UN Commission on the Status of Women](#)

On 14 September 2020 in New York, Latvia was elected to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW) for the 2021–2025 period. In total, 10 of 45 UN CSW member states were re-elected during the elections. Alongside Latvia, the other countries to be elected were Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, the Dominican Republic, India, Israel, Nigeria, Turkey, and Zambia.

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was established on 21 June 1946 and it is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The UN CSW is the principal global intergovernmental body dedicated to the identification and understanding of various aspects of women's lives across the globe and creating global standards for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The UN CSW gathers in New York for annual two-week meetings with participation of UN member states, civil society organisations and representatives from UN bodies. At the commission's sessions, the participants discuss progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which is the principal political document for women's equality at the international level. The Commission discusses current developments concerning gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as producing thematic resolutions and general conclusions.

[UN Committee against Torture](#)

On 3 October 2019 in Geneva, the Latvian expert Ilvija Pūce was elected to the United Nations Committee against Torture (CAT) for the term from 2020 to 2023. This is the first time that a Latvian representative has been elected to the CAT. Nominees from 12 countries stood as candidates to five seats of independent experts. From among all candidates, Ilvija Pūce received the second largest number of votes in her favour – she was supported by 84 countries.

Ilvija Pūce is a human rights expert with more than 20 years of professional experience during which she developed special competence with respect to the prevention of torture and cruel, inhuman treatment or punishment. Ilvija Pūce has been member of the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture since 2007.

In accordance with its Rules of Procedure, two sessions of the Committee against Torture are held each year in Geneva. Ten independent human rights experts serve on the committee. In the election of 3 October 2019, out of nominees from 12 countries, the representatives of Turkey, France, Moldova, and Mexico were also elected for the term from 2020 to 2023. Experts from Morocco, Denmark, Colombia, Russia, and China will continue serving on the committee until 31 December 2021.

The task of the Committee's independent experts is to monitor the implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment by its States parties. All States parties are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee, usually every four years. The Convention entered into force in 1987 and it has been ratified by 168 States parties. Latvia acceded to the Convention on 14 April 1992.

Latvia's representation in elected bodies of international organisations has been increasing steadily and is one of the prerequisites for advancement of Latvia's foreign policy interests. Active participation in international organisations also helps raise the profile and visibility of a country.

Functional Commissions of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Functional Commissions are subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC mandated to address specific topics of ECOSOC agenda. The subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC play important role in ensuring that the development agenda coincides with the interests of the UN member states.

Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) consists of 43 Members. CSTD acts as forum for examining science and technology questions and their implications for development, it also mandated to review of progress in the implementation and follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) as well as addressing the substantive themes of development oriented policies for information society, science, technology and research. Latvia has been an elected member of the CSTD since 2007 and has been re-elected at the elections in April 2018 for the term 2019-2022. Membership in the CSTD gives the opportunity to participate in the decision making process on development of the latest and the most effective information technologies. Latvia attaches great importance to the information technologies and science in order to achieve development goals.

[International Programme for the Development of Communication](#)

On 21 November 2019, Latvia was re-elected to the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) of the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO) for the term 2019 - 2023. The elections took place during the 40th session of the UNESCO General Conference in Paris. Journalist Rita Ruduša has been appointed as a representative of Latvia to the Council until 2023.

On 12 November 2015, during the 38th session of the General Conference of UNESCO in Paris, Latvia was elected to IPDC for the term 2015 - 2019. Ms. Sanita Jemberga, the Head of the board of the Latvian Journalism Association, represented Latvia at the Council.

IPDC is the only multilateral forum – intergovernmental programme for media development.

The [IPDC's main priorities](#) are: supporting media pluralism and independence, promoting social media, capacity building for journalists and developing cross-cultural dialogue among journalists. IPDC carries out its mandate through the funding and implementation of media development projects which are approved annually. Particular attention is always given to proposals from least developed countries, as well as those in conflict or post-conflict situations. The funding of the programme is provided by the voluntary contributions from donor states. It's important that the financial support of IPDC is not linked to any specific donor state and therefore the independence of media is guaranteed.

An Intergovernmental Council composed of 39 member states is elected by UNESCO's General Conference.

The Council normally meets in a regular plenary session once every two years. Extraordinary sessions may be convened as specified in the Council's Rules of Procedure.

[UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#)

On 15 June, 2017 Latvia was elected for the first time to the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions for the period from 2017 to 2021.

The representative of Latvia on the committee will be Rūta Muktupāvela, Rector of the Academy of Culture.

The election took place during the sixth ordinary session of the Conference of Parties to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in Paris.

The UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions was established in 2005 and is composed of representatives of 24 States Parties to the Convention.

The Committee aims at raising awareness among international community of the value of diverse cultural goods and services, promoting cooperation with developing countries and ensuring the protection of the diversity of cultural expressions.

Latvia acceded to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2007. The

Convention has currently been ratified by 144 States Parties.

Implementation Committee of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

On 11 October 2018 in Astana, Kazakhstan, DPhil. Mārtiņš Pāparinskis, Reader (Associate Professor) of University College London, was elected to the Implementation Committee (a body of independent experts) of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

At the same time he is also a member of the Council of Independent Experts in International and European Law established by the Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs in 2016.

The purpose of the Convention is to enhance national and international efforts and measures for the protection and management of transboundary waters, and ensuring ecological balance.

The Implementation Committee consists of nine members with experience and recognized expertise in various fields related to the Convention, including environmental experts, biologists, chemists and lawyers, whose aim is to facilitate, promote and protect the implementation of the Convention and to ensure its application and compliance. An expert is elected to the Committee for a term of six years.

The election was held as part of the Meeting of the Parties to the UN Convention from 10 through 12 October.

Background information

The Convention was adopted in Helsinki in 1992 and entered into force in 1996. It has been ratified by 43 UN member states. Latvia ratified the Convention in 1996.

<https://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/latvia-and-un-system-bodies>