



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

15 OUT OF 100. THE 15 YEARS OF LATVIA'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Place: Riga Castle

Time: 7 May 2019

Organizers: Latvian Association of Political Scientists, Latvian Institute of European Studies, Chancellery of the President of Latvia, European Commission, European Council on Foreign Relations, Elcano Institute

Objective of the conference: In May 2019 it will be fifteen years since Latvia became a Member State of the European Union. During this time Latvia has enjoyed many achievements but also encountered challenges. The aim of the conference is to discuss how the membership in the EU has shaped the overall development of Latvia. The anniversary of Latvia's membership in the European Union is celebrated at a time when the Member States discuss the future of Europe. The conference will give its contribution to this general debate.

PROGRAM OF THE CONFERENCE

9:00–9:30 Registration

9:30–10:00 Opening of the conference

Moderator: prof. Žaneta OZOLIŅA, Political Science Section, University of Latvia

Speakers:

H.E. Mr Raimonds VĒJONIS, President of Latvia

Mr Valdis DOMBROVSKIS, Vice-President of the European Commission

H.E. Mr Arturs Krišjānis KARIŅŠ, Prime Minister of Latvia

H.E. Mr Edgars RINKĒVIČS, Foreign Minister of Latvia

10:00–10:25 Presentation of the Study “The 15 out of 100: Latvia’s membership in the European Union”

Presented by:

Prof. Žaneta OZOLIŅA, Political Science Section, University of Latvia

Prof. Inna ŠTEINBUKA, University of Latvia, Member of the Fiscal Discipline Board of Latvia

Mr Arnis KAKTIŅŠ, Marketing and Public Opinion Research Centre SKDS, Executive director

10:25–12:00 Economic and social issues. “On the Path to Welfare”

Moderator: prof. Inna ŠTEINBUKA, University of Latvia, Member of the Fiscal Discipline Board of Latvia

Panelists:

Mr Valdis DOMBROVSKIS, Vice-President of the European Commission

Mr Mihails KOZLOVS, Member of the European Court of Auditors

Mr Mārtiņš KAZĀKS, Member of the Council of the Bank of Latvia

Mr Kārlis BUKOVSKIS, Deputy Director, Latvian Institute of International Affairs (LIIA)

Mr Morten HANSEN, Head of Economics Department, Stockholm School of Economics in Riga

Every economy in the European Union is now growing quite healthily. Employment is at an all-time high and unemployment at a nine-year low. Also, in Latvia wages have been rising and overall the economy in macroeconomic terms is doing well.

There are many other reasons why Europe is on track and on the right track to welfare. But it is not just about being back on track if European citizens are not convinced and sometimes frustrated. The major problems are income inequality, slow convergence of income levels, regions’ disparity and poverty. We still need to speed-up the work on numerous good initiatives to address these problems. We must also continue to work hard to fight populism, to which no EU member state is immune.

These days European leaders will meet at a special summit on Europe Day 2019 in Sibiu, Romania, to agree on how the new Union of 27 will work for its citizens, for each of us. Therefore, discussions about the future of Europe are important and it is important that all of us engage in them actively today.

12:00–12:30 Coffee break

12:30–12:40 Speaker: Mr Phil Hogan, Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, the European Commission

12:40–14:10 The European Union - Is There a Need for a New Governance Model?

Moderator: prof. Žaneta OZOLIŅA, Political Science Section, University of Latvia

Panelists:

Ms Zanda KALNIŅA-LUKAŠEVICA, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia

Mr José Ignacio TORREBLANCA, European Council of Foreign Relations, Head of Madrid office and Senior Policy Fellow

Mr Charles POWELL, Director of the Elcano Royal Institute

Prof. Daunis AUERS, University of Latvia, CERTUS, Chairman of the Board

In recent years, the EU has faced a number of serious challenges such as BREXIT, the rise of euroscepticism and populism, and the mistrust in political institutions. The EU and its Member States have brought new political solutions to the table, adopting new policies, and defining various initiatives. Are the steps taken sufficient? Will they reduce public concern about the sustainability of the EU project? Are the EU policies efficient enough and meeting citizens' hopes and expectations? Does the EU lose its normative power in the eyes of its citizens and the international community? Does the situation of growing challenges require a new model of EU governance?