

KEY EVENTS

After World War I, a Latvian group of people, that formed from eastern Baltic tribes, established a Latvian Republic. However, it was annexed by the USSR in 1940. After the breakup of the Soviet Union Latvia reestablished its independence in 1991. In the spring of 2004 Latvia became a part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). In 2014, Latvia joined the eurozone and adopted the euro as its common currency.

ECONOMICS

Latvia is a small and open economy. An open economy gives Latvia access to international trade, but since the economy is small, their trade policies do not affect other countries. Therefore, their income is unsteady and corruption is likely. The economy in Latvia benefits mostly from transit services, timber and wood-processing, food and agriculture, and electronic manufacturing.



LATVIA

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POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Latvia is a parliamentary republic; the republic of Latvia. Latvia declared its independence on May 4th, 1990 but was not recognized by the Soviet Union until September 6th, 1991. It contains a civil law system with some traditions of socialism. The government has three branches: executive, legislative, and the judicial. The national symbol of Latvia is the white wagtail bird because it has the national colors of maroon and white.

CULTURAL & SOCIAL ASPECTS

Latvia is made up of many ethnic groups. 61.1% is Latvian, 26.2% is Russian, 3.5% is Belarussian, 2.3% Ukrainian, 2.2% Polish, and 1.3% is Lithuanian. Most people 15 years old and over can read and write. Only 1,965,686 people live in Latvia today. The largest concentration of people is found around the port and capital city of Riga while small agglomerations are scattered throughout the country.

PHYSICAL STRUCTURE

Latvia is located in Eastern Europe between Estonia and Lithuania. To compare it to one of America's states, it is slightly larger than West Virginia. The climate is maritime but wet in the winter. It has a low plain with natural resources such as peat, limestone, dolomite, amber, hydropower, and timber. Most of the country is composed of fertile low-lying plains with some hills in the east.