

Conference program

The European Union: Imprint of the Latvian Presidency

Venue: Saeima (the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia), 11 Jēkaba Street, Plenary Hall

15 February 2016

8.00-9.00: Coffee and registration (passport check)

9.00-9.30: Opening remarks

- Andris Sprūds, Director of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs
- Ināra Mūrniece, Speaker of the Parliament of Latvia
- Inna Šteinbuka, Head of the European Commission Representation in Latvia

Keynote speech:

- Laimdota Straujuma, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia

9.30-11.00: Prospects and Challenges of the European Project (Plenary hall)

2015 has been a difficult year for the European Union. The refugee crisis poisoned relations among various EU member state governments, stirring up doubts about the Schengen area and free movement of people within the EU. Anti-EU populism is on the rise across the continent; political forces that feed on it are becoming mainstream. In addition to that, the prospect of the Brexit in 2016 will also increase strains at the political foundation of the Union. Optimists, however, urge European leaders to recognize that every crisis also presents an opportunity to rejuvenate the European project. Be as it may, there are more legitimate reasons than ever to ask the big questions about Europe's future prospects.

Moderator: Edijs Bošs, senior faculty member, Riga Stradiņš University

- Urmas Paet, member of the European Parliament
- Lolita Čigāne, Chair of the Committee of European Affairs of the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia
- Ludolf Van Hasselt, Head of Unit, DG Communication, European Commission
- Anand Menon, Professor of European Politics and Foreign Affairs at the King's College London

11.00-11.30: Coffee break

11.30-13.00: Rebooting the EU's Economy: Solutions and Constraints (Plenary hall)

Avoiding the "Grexit" and current positive growth indicators after the economic and financial crisis raise hopes that the European economy is back on track. The adoption of the Investment Plan during the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union is strengthening expectations for stable and growing European economy. At the same time, the fiscal responsibility, improving

competitiveness, increasing productivity, need for higher investor activity, struggle with unemployment and the overall stability of the Eurozone are still high on agenda. We must continuously seek a better understanding on what lies ahead for the restarted European economy.

Moderator: Mārtiņš Kazāks, Chief Economist at Swedbank Latvia

- Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice-President of the European Commission for the Euro and Social Dialogue
- Jan Vapaavuori, Vice-President of the European Investment Bank
- Iain Begg, professorial research fellow at the European Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK
- Roberts Zīle, Member of the European Parliament

13.00-14.00: Lunch break (in Saeima)

14.00-15.30: Breakout sessions:

1. The EU Neighbourhood: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly? (Plenary hall)

The European Union and its citizens have a natural interest to ensure a safe and stable neighbourhood. At the time when external borders of the EU have become a heated topic in the European debate, more than before positive relations with neighbours and peaceful and stable political and economic environment at the EU's borders are essential. Although EU's Eastern neighbours have diverging perceptions of Europe and different interests and aspirations towards the EU, the domestic questions remain - does the EU understand its neighbours? Are there effective mechanisms apart from the membership to the EU to establish mutually beneficial relationship that would lead to a long-lasting stability?

Moderator: Māris Andžāns, Researcher, Latvian Institute of International Affairs

- Mārgers Krams, Ambassador - Director General of the Bilateral Relations Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia
- Arkady Moshes, Programme Director, Finnish Institute of International Affairs
- Nicu Popescu, Senior analyst, European Union Institute for Security Studies
- Kai-Olaf Lang, Senior Fellow Research Division: EU/Europe, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik

2. Digital Single Market: High Expectations for the EU's Economy? (see signs for room)

Digital solutions and technologies are transforming the world we know, bringing us closer to the Digital Single Market. Nevertheless, as in every market, existing barriers online mean citizens miss out on goods and services, internet businesses suffer from limitations and governments are losing potential for more effective state services. It is said, that this is the time to make the EU's single market fit for the digital age – which means blending together 28 digital markets into one. But, as the European Single Market is challenged by different member state and private business interests, also DSM faces its own challenges. High expectations for the EU's economy directly depends on management of those challenges.

Moderator: Mārtiņš Daugulis, researcher, Latvian Institute of International Affairs

- Krišjānis Kariņš, Member of the European Parliament
- Signe Bāliņa, President of Latvian Information and Communication Technology Association (LIKTA)
- Scott Marcus, independent consultant, visiting fellow, Bruegel
- Pēteris Zilgalvis, Head of Unit, eHealth and Well Being, DG Connect, European Commission
- Justinas Pagirys, Director of Business Development Department at Invest Lithuania

3. Energy Union: A Highway to a Single and Secure Market? (see signs for room)

European Energy Union (EEU) is an ambitious attempt by the European Commission to tame what stems from Article 194 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Although energy security ranks high on the agenda, a number of challenges still persist. With their sovereign rights to decide own energy portfolio will EU member states be willing to move towards an ever closer Energy Union? Is energy solidarity a myth that is doomed to exist only in the minds of wishful thinkers? After all, does EEU represent a new ideology in energy policy?

Moderator: Reinis Āboltiņš, independent energy consultant

- Andris Piebalgs, former member of the European Commission
- Jaroslav Neverovič, former Minister of Energy of the Republic of Lithuania
- Samuele Furfari, Adviser to the Director General, DG Energy, European Commission
- Jean-Arnold Vinois, Adviser on European Energy Policy at Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute

15.30-16.00: Coffee break

16.00-17.00: The EU's Global Role (Plenary hall)

The European Union is redefining its global role at the same time as the world around it is in a state of complex transformation. Indeed, the contemporary global environment is turbulent, complex and challenging as geopolitical competition returns to the international agenda. Ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Syria as well international terrorism have had a direct impact on European society as well as the foreign policy of the EU and European states. Will these external challenges reinvigorate or diminish the EU's solidarity and global strategy?

Moderator: Daunis Auers, Professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Latvia

- Sandra Kalniete, Member of the European Parliament, rapporteur on the Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy
- Pēteris Ustubs, expert at Federica Mogherini's team, European External Action Service
- Ian Anthony, Director of SIPRI's European Security Programme
- Andres Kasekamp, Deputy Director of the Estonian Foreign Policy Institute

17.00: Concluding remarks

Coffee, snacks and wine