

The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia

Chapter II The Saeima

1. The *Saeima* shall be composed of one hundred representatives of the people.
2. The *Saeima* shall be elected in general, equal and direct elections, and by secret ballot based on proportional representation.
3. In the division of Latvia into separate electoral districts, provision for the number of members of the *Saeima* to be elected from each district shall be proportional to the number of electors in each district.
4. All citizens of Latvia who enjoy full rights of citizenship and, who on election day have attained eighteen years of age shall be entitled to vote.
5. Any citizen of Latvia, who enjoys full rights of citizenship and, who is more than twenty-one years of age on the first day of elections may be elected to the *Saeima*.
6. The *Saeima* shall be elected for a term of four years.
7. Elections for the *Saeima* shall be held on the first Saturday in October.
8. The newly elected *Saeima* shall hold its first sitting on the first Tuesday in November, when the mandate of the previous *Saeima* shall expire.
9. Should elections for the *Saeima*, by reason of the dissolution of the previous *Saeima*, be held at another time of the year, the *Saeima* so elected shall convene not later than one month after its election, and its mandate shall expire upon the convening of the new *Saeima* on the first Tuesday in November following the elapse of three years after such election.
10. Not less than one tenth of electors has the right to initiate a national referendum regarding recalling of the *Saeima*. If the majority of voters and at least two thirds of the number of the voters who participated in the last elections of the *Saeima* vote in the national referendum regarding recalling of the *Saeima*, then the *Saeima* shall be deemed recalled. The right to initiate a national referendum regarding recalling of the *Saeima* may not be exercised one year after the convening of the *Saeima* and one year before the end of the term of office of the *Saeima*, during the last six months of the term of office of the President, as well as earlier than six months after the previous national referendum regarding recalling of the *Saeima*.
The electors may not recall any individual member of the *Saeima*.
11. The *Saeima* shall hold its sittings in Rīga, and only in extraordinary circumstances may it convene elsewhere.
12. The *Saeima* shall elect a Presidium that shall be composed of a Chairperson, two Deputies and Secretaries. The Presidium shall function continuously during the mandate of the *Saeima*.
13. The first sitting of the newly elected *Saeima* shall be opened by the Chairperson of the preceding *Saeima* or by another member of the Presidium at the direction of the Presidium.
14. The *Saeima* itself shall review the qualifications of its members.
A person elected to the *Saeima* shall acquire the mandate of a Member of the *Saeima* if such person gives the following solemn promise:
"I, upon assuming the duties of a Member of the *Saeima*, before the people of Latvia, do swear (solemnly promise) to be loyal to Latvia, to strengthen its sovereignty and the Latvian language as the only official language, to defend Latvia as an independent and democratic State, and to fulfil my duties honestly and conscientiously. I undertake to observe the Constitution and laws of Latvia."
15. The Presidium shall convene sessions of the *Saeima* and schedule regular and extraordinary sittings.
16. The Presidium shall convene sittings of the *Saeima* if requested by the President, the Prime Minister, or not less than one third of the members of the *Saeima*.

- 17.** The *Saeima* shall establish rules of order to provide for its internal operations and order. The working language of the *Saeima* is the Latvian language.
- 18.** Sittings of the *Saeima* shall be public. The *Saeima* may decide by a majority vote of not less than two-thirds of the members present to sit in closed session, if so requested by ten members of the *Saeima*, or by the President, the Prime Minister, or a Minister.
- 19.** Sittings of the *Saeima* may take place if at least half of the members of the *Saeima* participate therein.
- 20.** The *Saeima* shall make decisions by an absolute majority of votes of the members present at the sitting, except in cases specifically set out in the Constitution.
- 21.** The *Saeima* shall establish committees and determine the number of members and their duties. Committees have the right to require of individual Ministers or local government authorities information and explanations necessary for the work of the committees, and the right to invite to their sittings responsible representatives from the relevant ministries or local government authorities to furnish explanations. Committees may also carry on their work between sessions of the *Saeima*.
- 22.** The *Saeima* shall appoint parliamentary investigatory committees for specified matters if not less than one-third of its members request it.
- 23.** The *Saeima* shall have the right to submit to the Prime Minister or to an individual Minister requests and questions which either they, or a responsible government official duly authorised by them, must answer. The Prime Minister or any Minister shall furnish the relevant documents and enactments requested by the *Saeima* or by any of its committees.
- 24.** Members of the *Saeima* may not be called to account by any judicial, administrative or disciplinary process in connection with their voting or their views as expressed during the execution of their duties. Court proceedings may be brought against members of the *Saeima* if they, albeit in the course of performing parliamentary duties, disseminate:
- 1) defamatory statements which they know to be false, or
 - 2) defamatory statements about private or family life.
- 25.** Members of the *Saeima* shall not be arrested, nor shall their premises be searched, nor shall their personal liberty be restricted in any way without the consent of the *Saeima*. Members of the *Saeima* may be arrested if apprehended in the act of committing a crime. The Presidium shall be notified within twenty-four hours of the arrest of any member of the *Saeima*; the Presidium shall raise the matter at the next sitting of the *Saeima* for decision as to whether the member shall continue to be held in detention or be released. When the *Saeima* is not in session, pending the opening of a session, the Presidium shall decide whether the member of the *Saeima* shall remain in detention.
- 26.** Without the consent of the *Saeima*, criminal prosecution may not be commenced against its members.
- [14 June 2016]
- 27.** Members of the *Saeima* have the right to refuse to give evidence:
- 1) concerning persons who have entrusted to them, as representatives of the people, certain facts or information;
 - 2) concerning persons to whom they, as representatives of the people, have entrusted certain facts or information; or
 - 3) concerning such facts or information itself.
- 28.** Members of the *Saeima* may not, either personally or in the name of another person, receive government contracts or concessions. The provisions of this Article shall apply to Ministers even if they are not members of the *Saeima*.
- 29.** The remuneration of members of the *Saeima* shall be from state funds.
- 30.** No person may be called to account for reporting the sittings of the *Saeima* or its committees if such reports correspond to fact. Information about closed sessions of

either the *Saeima* or its committees may only be disclosed with the permission of the Presidium of the *Saeima* or the committee.

[27 January 1994; 4 December 1997; 15 October 1998; 30 April 2002; 8 April 2009]

Chapter V

Legislation

31. The *Saeima*, and also the people, have the right to legislate, in accordance with the procedures, and to the extent, provided for by this Constitution.

32. Draft laws may be submitted to the *Saeima* by the President, the Cabinet or committees of the *Saeima*, by not less than five members of the *Saeima*, or, in accordance with the procedures and in the cases provided for in this Constitution, by one-tenth of the electorate.

33. Annually, before the commencement of each financial year, the *Saeima* shall determine the State Revenues and Expenditures Budget, the draft of which shall be submitted to the *Saeima* by the Cabinet.

If the *Saeima* makes a decision that involves expenditures not included in the Budget, then this decision must also allocate funds to cover such expenditures.

After the end of the budgetary year, the Cabinet shall submit an accounting of budgetary expenditures for the approval of the *Saeima*.

34. The *Saeima* shall determine the size of the armed forces of the State during peacetime.

35. All international agreements, which settle matters that may be decided by the legislative process, shall require ratification by the *Saeima*.

Upon entering into international agreements, Latvia, with the purpose of strengthening democracy, may delegate a part of its State institution competencies to international institutions. The *Saeima* may ratify international agreements in which a part of State institution competencies are delegated to international institutions in sittings in which at least two-thirds of the members of the *Saeima* participate, and a two-thirds majority vote of the members present is necessary for ratification.

Membership of Latvia in the European Union shall be decided by a national referendum, which is proposed by the *Saeima*.

Substantial changes in the terms regarding the membership of Latvia in the European Union shall be decided by a national referendum if such referendum is requested by at least one-half of the members of the *Saeima*.

36. The President shall proclaim laws passed by the *Saeima* not earlier than the tenth day and not later than the twenty-first day after the law has been adopted. A law shall come into force fourteen days after its proclamation unless a different term has been specified in the law.

37. The President shall proclaim adopted laws in the following manner:

“The *Saeima* (that is, the People) has adopted and the President has proclaimed the following law: (text of the law).”

38. Within ten days of the adoption of a law by the *Saeima*, the President, by means of a written and reasoned request to the Chairperson of the *Saeima*, may require that a law be reconsidered. If the *Saeima* does not amend the law, the President then may not raise objections a second time.

39. The President has the right to suspend the proclamation of a law for a period of two months. The President shall suspend the proclamation of a law if so requested by not less than one-third of the members of the *Saeima*. This right may be exercised by the President, or by one-third of the members of the *Saeima*, within ten days of the adoption of the law by the *Saeima*. The law thus suspended shall be put to a national referendum if so requested by not less than one-tenth of the electorate. If no such request is received during the aforementioned two-month period, the law shall then be proclaimed after the expiration of such period. A national referendum shall not take place, however, if the *Saeima* again votes on the law and not less than three-quarters of all members of the *Saeima* vote for the adoption of the law.

40. The Budget and laws concerning loans, taxes, customs duties, railroad tariffs, military conscription, declaration and commencement of war, peace treaties, declaration of a state of emergency and its termination, mobilisation and demobilisation, as well as agreements with other nations may not be submitted to national referendum.

41. A law adopted by the *Saeima* and suspended pursuant to the procedures specified in Article seventy-two shall be repealed by national referendum if the number of voters is at least half of the number of electors as participated in the previous *Saeima* election and if the majority has voted for repeal of the law.

42. Should the *Saeima*, by not less than a two thirds majority vote, determine a law to be urgent, the President may not request reconsideration of such law, it may not be submitted to national referendum, and the adopted law shall be proclaimed no later than the third day after the President has received it.

43. The *Saeima* may amend the Constitution in sittings at which at least two-thirds of the members of the *Saeima* participate. The amendments shall be passed in three readings by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members present.

44. If the *Saeima* has amended the first, second, third, fourth, sixth or seventy-seventh Article of the Constitution, such amendments, in order to come into force as law, shall be submitted to a national referendum.

45. Electors, in number comprising not less than one tenth of the electorate, have the right to submit a fully elaborated draft of an amendment to the Constitution or of a law to the President, who shall present it to the *Saeima*. If the *Saeima* does not adopt it without change as to its content, it shall then be submitted to national referendum.

46. An amendment to the Constitution submitted for national referendum shall be deemed adopted if at least half of the electorate has voted in favour. A draft law, decision regarding membership of Latvia in the European Union or substantial changes in the terms regarding such membership submitted for national referendum shall be deemed adopted if the number of voters is at least half of the number of electors as participated in the previous *Saeima* election and if the majority has voted in favour of the draft law, membership of Latvia in the European Union or substantial changes in the terms regarding such membership.

47. All citizens of Latvia who have the right to vote in elections of the *Saeima* may participate in national referendums.

81. [3 May 2007]

[21 March 1933; 4 December 1997; 15 October 1998; 8 May 2003; 23 September 2004; 3 May 2007]