

## The Latvian Academy of Sciences

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### History and Structure

The Latvian Academy of Sciences marks 14<sup>th</sup> February as „The Day of the Academy”, since on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1946, members of the Academy gathered for their first General Meeting, and on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1992, the LAS adopted its Charter and new Statute. The present-day LAS in its work continues the research traditions of the scientific associations, which existed in Latvia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the former Academy of Sciences (1946-1991). The oldest predecessors to the LAS were the Kurzeme Society for Literature and Art, which was founded in 1815 in Jelgava and the Commission of Knowledge, founded within the Riga Latvian Society in 1869. In the years 1946-1991 the Academy of Sciences of was both an aggregate of prominent scientists and large research institutes (15) and it functioned also as the highest administrative structure of research.

In 1992, the LAS was reorganized into a classical academy which unites elected members – prominent scientists and scholars. For Latvia’s scientists, the LAS is the venue of discussions on significant science issues. Recently the LAS has been focusing not only on specific science issues, but also on the problems of science, technology and innovation in whole, thus paying greater attention to the problems of applied science. The LAS has found a stable place in the organizational system of Latvia’s science and has assembled under its umbrella the best qualified science experts in Latvia. Starting from January 2008, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia has delegated to LAS the functions of the national funding agency for several European science programs and projects.

The Latvian Academy of Sciences (LAS) is Latvia’s national academy of sciences dedicated to the promotion of science and high-quality research, the study and development of the history, culture and language of Latvian people and the state, Latvia’s natural resources and environment, and to advise the government and the public about socially relevant scientific issues. The LAS, by definition, is a derivative public person with autonomous competence in the state administrative system. The LAS functions by virtue of the Charter, which has been endorsed by the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, and the Statute. The General Meeting of the LAS, the highest decision-making body of the academy, organisationally keeps itself independent in adopting and/or amending the Statute.

### Membership

The most prominent Latvian and foreign scientists and intellectuals of other areas are elected the members of the LAS. The LAS includes full members, honorary members, foreign members and corresponding members. As of 1 February 2009, the LAS consists of 221 full and corresponding members, 54 honorary members and 93 foreign members. Latvia has a good representation in *Academia Europaea*, *European Academy of Sciences in Support of Excellence in Science and Technology* and *Academia Scientiarum et Artium Europaea* through individual membership of outstanding Latvian scientists, members of the LAS, and several of them are elected foreign members in other national academies of sciences.

The members of the LAS unite in divisions of sciences. The LAS is composed of four scientific divisions: Division of Physical and Technical Sciences, Division of Chemical, Biological and Medical Sciences, Division of Social Sciences and the Humanities, Division of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences.

## Activities

The major activities of the LAS within its own society include the following: taking part in the development and implementation of Latvia's science policy; discussing and analyzing national, regional and international issues relevant to Latvia; contributing to the development of regional science; continuous review and assessment of research and scholarly activity results in Latvia through collective expertise; coordination and assessment of national programs.

Each year the LAS rewards scientific excellence. The Grand Medal is regarded to be the most prestigious among these awards. The LAS gives nominal prizes (25), which are named after prominent Latvian scientists, and these are announced biannually or once in three years. Several prizes and awards of the LAS have been instituted jointly with other institutions and large Latvian companies. In 2005, the LAS, the UNESCO Latvian National Commission and L'Oreal Baltic jointly launched the fellowships *For Women in Science*, which are granted annually. The LAS in collaboration with the Lithuanian and Estonian academies of sciences give an international award - the Medal of the Baltic academies of sciences. Every year the LAS awards prizes and awards to young scientists. Since 2003 the LAS nominates the Top ten achievements of the Year in Latvia's science.

The LAS co-operates with the majority of Latvia's research institutes and higher education establishments. Several small, but active research units are working under the umbrella of the LAS, for instance, the Centre for Science and Technology Studies, the Baltic Center for Strategic Studies, the Certification Centre, the State Commission of Scientific Qualification and traditionally the Terminology Commission has been attached to the LAS.

## International activities

The LAS continually represents Latvia's science in worldwide and European non-governmental international organizations: ICSU, UAI and ALLEA, and participates in the global networks: IAP and IAMP. The LAS continually cooperates with the academies of sciences of other, mainly European, countries within the frames of bilateral agreements (29). The regional cooperation of the three Baltic academies of sciences, started in the beginning of 1990's, has been expanded to regular joint meetings of Nordic and Baltic academies of sciences, which are combined with the Baltic Conferences on Intellectual Cooperation.

The LAS is also contributing to research cooperation. Carrying out a commission of the government, the LAS is representing Latvia in the EU committee CREST and the JRC Board of Governors. Since 2004, the LAS is involved in the activities of EASAC, providing independent advice about the scientific aspects of public policy issues to those who make or influence policy for the EU. Starting from 2008, the LAS has undertaken the functions of coordinating and implementing the activities of COST , EUREKA /EUROSTARS, the Joint Baltic Sea research program BONUS and several EU research initiatives, as well as the functions of national funding agency for ERA-NET+ projects.

## Publications

The LAS publishes a bimonthly journal *Proceedings of the Latvian Academy of Sciences*, and produces several joint publications through cooperation with its partner institutions: the bi-weekly newspaper *The Science Bulletin*, the popular scientific seasonal issue *The Starry Sky* and *Technical Review Journal*.