

THE LATVIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

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Mission

The Latvian Academy of Sciences (LAS) is Latvia's national academy of sciences dedicated to the promotion of scientific and scholarly endeavour, 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 is an autonomous legal entity, composed of members, who are elected in recognition of their distinction as scientists / scholars. 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.

History

The Latvian Academy of Sciences marks February 14 as „The Day of the Academy”, since exactly this day in 1946, members of the Academy gathered for their first General Meeting, and on 14 February 1992, the LAS adopted its Charter and new Statute. The present-day LAS is the inheritor of research traditions of the scientific associations, which existed in Latvia in the 19th century, and the former Academy of Sciences (1946-1991). The oldest predecessors to the LAS were the Courland (Kurzeme) Society for Literature and Art, founded in 1815 in Jelgava, and the Commission of Knowledge, founded within the Riga Latvian Society in 1869. Thus, the Latvian Academy of Sciences can take pride in the fact that in 2015 it will be the 200th anniversary since the dawn of academic science in Latvia.

In the years 1946-1991 the Academy of Sciences was both an aggregate of prominent scientists and large research institutes (15) and it functioned also as the highest administrative structure of research.

Membership and structure

The Latvian Academy of Sciences is a community of members in which all Latvian universities, many institutions of higher education and the biggest research institutes are represented. Thus, the LAS expertise can be made available across the borders between various scientific and educational institutions. The LAS membership consists of full members, honorary members, foreign members and corresponding members. As of 15 March 2014, the LAS consisted of 244 full and corresponding members, 57 honorary members and 92 foreign members, each of whom is affiliated with one of four divisions according to his or her scientific discipline: Division of Physical and Technical Sciences, Division of Chemical, Biological and Medical Sciences, Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Division of Agriculture and Forestry Sciences. 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. Besides, several of them are elected foreign members in other national academies of sciences.

The LAS establishes special commissions and other organisational units. Of these, mention should be made of

- Terminology Commission, which operates under the authority of the LAS since foundation of the Academy. During its entire existence the Commission has developed and approved thousands of terms that are included in the official Latvian terminology database AkadTerm (873 657 terms in 6 languages) available at www.termini.lv
- Editorial Bureau of the journal *Proceedings of the Latvian Academy of Sciences*, which is issued since 1947;
- Centre for Science and Technology Studies, set up in 1991; the main research areas are: research and innovation policy studies both in a national and an EU context with an additional focus in the recent years on science-society relations.

Activities

The major activities of the LAS within its own society include the following: taking part in the development and implementation of Latvia's research and technology strategy; 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 monitoring and evaluation of the Latvian research programs and projects.

The Academy commends outstanding scientific achievements. The Grand Medal is regarded to be the most prestigious among the LAS awards. Apart from the major award for scientific lifetime achievement, the LAS also grants biannually or once in every three years, nominal prizes (25), which are named after prominent Latvian scientists. Several prizes and awards have been instituted jointly with other institutions and large Latvian companies. Every year the LAS awards prizes and awards to young scientists in various disciplines. The LAS in cooperation with the Latvian UNESCO Commission and L'Oreal Baltic awards annually since 2005 three fellowships to young female scientists. The LAS cooperates with the Lithuanian and Estonian academies of sciences in giving an international award - the Medal of the Baltic academies of sciences.

Every year, since 2003, the LAS nominates the Top ten achievements of the Year in Latvia's science.

Besides, according to the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers the LAS provides administrative operation of:

- The State Commission of Scientific Qualification, a collegiate institution supervising the conferral of Doctoral degrees in science,
- The Council of State Emeritus Scientists, a collegiate institution, which confers the emeritus status upon deserving scientists. As of 1 March 2014, the Academy awards life grants to 218 State Emeritus scientists.

Publications

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

The *Proceedings of the Latvian Academy of Sciences* appears in two sections:

Section A: Human and social sciences. The languages of publication are Latvian, English, German and Russian. Most articles are provided with Summaries in another of these languages. The thematic scope covers cultural history and theory, philosophy, economics, history, archaeology, ethnic studies, demography, sociology, political science, linguistics, literary criticism, folklore studies, history and theory of art, bibliography, and science of science. Each issue publishes also accounts of the activities of the LAS, or of other events pertaining to science life.

Section B: Natural, Exact and Applied Sciences. This is a peer-reviewed journal in English publishing papers that describe the results of original theoretical or experimental research of importance and interest to diverse groups of researchers, as well as reviews and short communications. The journal also publishes information on events pertaining to science life.

Coverage includes: biological sciences, medical sciences, environmental sciences, geography, geology, forestry, agriculture, mathematics.

Proceedings of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, Section B: Natural, Exact and Applied Sciences is available as an Open Access journal on the Internet.

International activities

Enhancing research cooperation, both nationally and internationally, is one of the key responsibilities of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. The LAS continually cooperates with the academies of sciences of other, mainly European, countries within the frames of bilateral agreements (28). A special mention should be given to the regional cooperation of the academies of sciences of the three Baltic countries – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which started in the beginning of 1990's. Besides scientific cooperation, Baltic academies of sciences hold regular joint meetings also with participation of Nordic academies of sciences, which are combined with the Baltic Conferences on Intellectual Cooperation (BCIC). The LAS has the privilege to organize the 14th BCIC in Riga in April 2015.

International activities of the LAS include representation of Latvia in the main European and global networks of academies of sciences: ALLEA, EASAC, ICSU, UAI and global networks: IAP and IAMP.

Starting from January 2008, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia has delegated to the LAS the duties of coordination and implementation of some European science programs and projects.

Associated institutions

Baltic Centre for Strategic Studies of the LAS, a foundation of Latvia;
Certification Centre of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, *LLC*;
Institute of Economics of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, *Ltd.*

The LAS co-operates with the majority of Latvia's research institutes and higher education establishments, as well as with the Association of Latvian Young Scientists (<http://eng.ljza.lv/about-ljza/>).