

The State of the Internet and Digital Rights in Latvia (2019–2025)

In Latvia, where approximately 90% of the population uses the Internet, the telecommunications market is defined by the dominance of the company Tet in the fixed broadband sector and the leadership of LMT in the mobile segment. The country has a well-developed fiber-optic infrastructure that provides high access speeds, but it faces the problem of a digital divide between urban and rural areas. To address this problem, the government is implementing projects to expand network coverage.

Internet governance in the country is carried out according to a multi-stakeholder model involving both state regulators, such as the Public Utilities Commission (SPRK) and CERT.LV, and the private sector and non-profit organizations. The legislative framework, harmonized with European Union norms, including the GDPR, forms the basis for data protection and regulation of the online space. Despite this, the authorities face challenges related to the spread of disinformation and the need to promptly block illegal content.

A key aspect in the field of digital rights in Latvia is the search for a balance between freedom of speech and countering threats to national security. This was particularly evident in the active blocking of Russian propaganda resources after 2022. At the same time, content filtering mechanisms are in place in the country aimed at combating unlicensed gambling and protecting children from harmful information. These measures, together with efforts to improve cybersecurity, define the current agenda in the field of digital rights and freedoms in the country.

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1. General Information

1.1. Geographical Location

The Republic of Latvia is a state in Northern Europe, located on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea. The country borders Estonia to the north, the Russian Federation to the east, the Republic of Belarus to the southeast, and Lithuania to the south.¹ Geographically, Latvia occupies a central position among the three Baltic countries and has historically been an important crossroads of trade and cultural routes.¹

The terrain of the country is predominantly flat, with moderate hills; most of the territory is located at an altitude of about 100 meters above sea level.¹ Latvia is rich in forests, which cover a significant part of its territory, and also has an extensive river network and thousands of lakes.¹ This geographical position, especially the presence of a long sea border and non-freezing ports, determines the strategic importance of Latvia in the Baltic Sea region, affecting both economic aspects (transit, logistics) and issues of national security and information space.¹

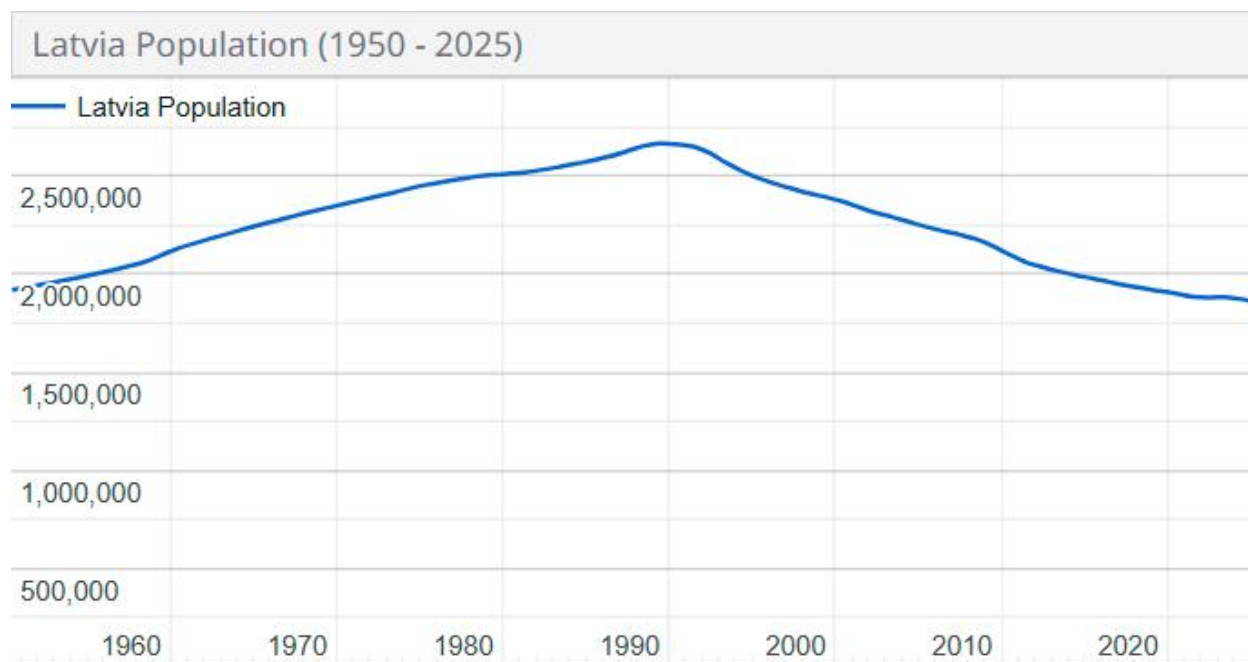
1.2. Population

The population of Latvia is characterized by a multinational composition and a steady trend toward a decrease in total numbers, despite individual periods of slight growth caused by external migration factors. According to data from the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (OCMA) of the Ministry of the Interior of Latvia as of January 1, 2021, the ethnic composition of the population was as follows: Latvians – 62%, Russians – 25.7%, Belarusians – 3.2%, Ukrainians – 2.3%, Poles – 2%, Lithuanians – 1.2%, Jews – 0.2%.⁴ As of the same date, 1.893 million people lived in Latvia.⁴ The

Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSP) also confirms similar figures: at the beginning of 2021 – 1,893,223 people.⁵

The problem of depopulation remains one of the most acute for the country. Since the restoration of independence in 1991, Latvia has faced both natural population decline and significant emigration.⁷ This trend persisted for most of the period under review. For example, according to Worldometers data based on UN statistics, Latvia's population decreased from 1,914,263 people in 2019 to 1,881,063 people in 2022.⁸ Although in 2023 there was some growth to 1,882,396 people, which, according to the Russian Wikipedia, is associated with the registration of Ukrainian refugees,⁷ forecasts for 2024 and 2025 again indicate a decline.⁸ The reduction and aging of the population (in 2023 the average age was 43.1 years,¹⁰ and the proportion of the population over 64 years old was 22.8%¹⁰) create serious challenges for economic development, the labor market, and Latvia's social system. This, in turn, affects the development of the Internet market, including a potential reduction in the number of active users and changes in the age structure of the audience, as well as the availability of qualified personnel in the ICT sector.

Graph 1: Dynamics of the population of Latvia (1950–2025)



Source: *worldometers.info*

A decrease and aging of the population may lead to a decrease in innovative potential in the digital sphere and an increase in the intergenerational digital divide. If active measures are not taken to

improve the digital literacy of the older generation and to attract or retain young specialists, the country may face a slowdown in the introduction of new digital technologies. The reduction in the share of young, technologically advanced population and the general outflow of residents may limit both the supply of qualified personnel for the IT sector and the demand for advanced digital services. At the same time, a significant proportion of the elderly population (22% over 64 years old⁶) with potentially lower levels of digital skills exacerbates the problem of digital inequality and requires targeted educational programs for their full participation in the digital economy and the exercise of digital rights.

1.3. Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

The economy of Latvia, integrated into the European Union and the Eurozone, demonstrated mixed gross domestic product (GDP) dynamics from 2019 to 2025. Economic indicators were influenced by both global economic cycles and specific regional factors, including the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions in the region after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

According to Trading Economics, Latvia's GDP in 2023 amounted to 42.25 billion US dollars.¹¹ The Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (CSP) reports that GDP at current prices in 2023 reached 40.3 billion euros¹² (or 40,208.4 million euros¹³). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) classifies Latvia's economy as developed, and the World Bank classifies it as a high-income country.¹⁴

During the period under review, there were both phases of growth and slowdowns in economic activity. After significant GDP growth in 2021,¹⁴ the pace of economic growth slowed in 2022.¹⁹ In 2023, according to preliminary data, GDP growth was 1.7%¹⁵ or even decreased by 0.3%¹² (different sources provide slightly different estimates). Forecasts for 2024 were also ambiguous: from weak growth of 0.1%–0.6%¹⁷ to a decrease of 0.4%.¹¹ Inflation, which reached double digits in 2022, had a significant impact on economic indicators.²⁰

Graph 2: Dynamics of nominal GDP of Latvia (2003–2023)**Latvia GDP (Nominal, \$USD) 2003-2023**

Source: *worldometers.info*

GDP dynamics directly affect the country's investment opportunities in the development of information and communication infrastructure, the availability and cost of Internet services, as well as the purchasing power of the population in relation to digital goods and services. Economic growth or its slowdown also affect state budgets, from which programs for digitalization and protection of digital rights can be financed. The slowdown in GDP growth and high inflation observed in certain periods can potentially lead to a decrease in the accessibility of digital technologies for the population and business, especially for vulnerable social groups. This, in turn, can exacerbate digital inequality and limit the state's resources for investment in critical digital infrastructure and educational programs in the field of digital literacy.

1.4. Main Economic Characteristics

The economy of Latvia is open and export-oriented, where key roles are played by sectors such as logistics (thanks to its strategic geographical position and non-freezing ports), wood processing industry, and various manufacturing sectors.²⁰ The service sector traditionally makes the largest contribution to the country's GDP, amounting to about 73.7% in 2017,¹⁴ while the information technology sector is showing significant growth, which allows us to speak of Latvia as an emerging center of digital services in the region.²⁰ Agriculture also remains an important sector, although its share in GDP is relatively small (less than 6% in 2021).²⁷

From 2019 to 2025, Latvia's economy faced a number of serious challenges. These include the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, a sharp increase in inflation (reaching double-digit

levels in 2022²⁰), which led to a decrease in the purchasing power of the population and a slowdown in consumer demand.²⁰ Geopolitical tensions caused by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine led to the disruption of traditional supply chains, the loss of the Russian market (which previously accounted for about 7% of Latvia's GDP²⁷), and the need to reorient trade flows to EU and Northern European countries.²⁰ Structural problems of the economy include the continuing decline in population and a shortage of qualified labor,²⁰ which creates pressure on the labor market and limits growth potential. Problems of income inequality and a relatively high level of public debt to GDP compared to other Baltic countries (about 44.6% in 2023²⁰) are also noted. To maintain long-term competitiveness and sustainable growth, Latvia's economy needs further structural reforms aimed at increasing productivity, stimulating innovation, and attracting investment, especially in infrastructure and human capital.²⁸

The combination of demographic decline and a shortage of qualified personnel can become a serious obstacle to the further development of the digital economy and the country's innovative potential, despite successes in the IT sector. This creates the risk of slowing down the introduction of advanced digital solutions or increasing dependence on external specialists, which may affect the competitiveness of Latvian enterprises. At the same time, the forced reorientation of trade ties from Russia to the markets of the EU and Nordic countries, taking place against the background of increased geopolitical tension, can stimulate demand for more secure and reliable digital communication channels and cybersecurity services. This, in turn, opens up new opportunities for the development of the IT sector, but at the same time increases requirements for data protection and critical infrastructure, which will require additional investment and competencies.

1.5. General Political Situation

Latvia is a parliamentary republic whose political system is based on the Constitution (Satversme), adopted in 1922 and restored in 1990–1993.⁴ Legislative power in the country belongs to the unicameral parliament – the Saeima, which consists of 100 deputies. Deputies are elected by universal direct secret ballot according to a proportional system for a term of four years.⁴ The Saeima passes laws, approves the state budget, elects the president, and expresses confidence in the government.³¹

The head of state is the president, elected by the Saeima. The president mainly performs representative functions, represents the country on the international arena, is the supreme commander-in-chief of the armed forces, promulgates laws, has the right of legislative initiative,

and the right to dissolve the Saeima (in cases provided for by law).⁴ Since July 8, 2023, the President of Latvia has been Edgars Rinkēvičs.³²

Executive power belongs to the Cabinet of Ministers, headed by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is nominated by the president, and the government is formed and approved by the Saeima, before which it bears political responsibility.²⁹ Since September 15, 2023, the government of Latvia has been headed by Evika Siliņa.³² Latvia's political scene is characterized by multi-party politics and the formation of coalition governments.³² According to the results of the parliamentary elections on October 1, 2022, seven political forces entered the 14th Saeima: "New Unity" (Jaunā Vienotība, JV) – 26 seats, "Union of Greens and Farmers" (Zaļo un Zemnieku savienība, ZZS) – 16 seats, "United List" (Apvienotais saraksts, AS) – 15 seats, "National Alliance" (Nacionālā apvienība, NA) – 13 seats, "For Stability!" (Stabilitātei!, S!) – 11 seats, "Progressives" (Progresīvie, PRO) – 10 seats, and "Latvia First" (Latvija pirmajā vietā, LPV) – 9 seats.³¹ The current government of Evika Siliņa is formed by a coalition of the parties "New Unity", "Union of Greens and Farmers", and "Progressives".³²

A complex multi-party coalition system can lead to the need to seek compromises when making legislative decisions, including in the sensitive area of Internet and digital rights regulation. Different ideological positions of the parties included in the ruling coalitions can affect the speed and direction of reforms concerning, for example, combating disinformation, protecting personal data, or regulating online platforms. This can be expressed both in delays in decision-making and in their softening or, conversely, toughening, depending on the balance of power in the Saeima. Against the background of the current geopolitical situation and active information campaigns, the emphasis on national security issues and countering disinformation is likely to remain dominant in the political agenda. This may lead to the strengthening of the powers of regulatory bodies, such as the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP), and the potential introduction of new restrictions on freedom of speech and access to information under the pretext of protecting the country's information space, which has already been observed in the form of blocking Russian media.³⁹

2. Internet

2.1. National Domain

The national top-level domain (ccTLD) for Latvia is .lv.⁴ It was delegated to Latvia and officially put into operation on April 29, 1993, two years after the restoration of the country's independence.⁴⁹

Since its creation, the management and administration of the .lv domain zone has been carried out by the Network Solutions Department (DNS) of the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics of the University of Latvia, known as NIC.LV.⁴⁹ NIC.LV ensures the stable and secure operation of the .lv domain in accordance with international standards and best practices.⁵³

Registration of domain names in the .lv zone is open to a wide range of persons: both legal entities and individuals who have reached the age of 18 can carry it out.⁵⁰ An important condition is the absence of the need for local presence of the registrant or local placement of DNS servers on the territory of Latvia for domain registration.⁵⁴ Technical requirements for .lv domain names include a length of 2 (in some sources from 3⁵²) to 63 characters. Names may consist of Latin letters (case-insensitive), numbers, and hyphens. A hyphen cannot be used at the beginning or end of a domain name, nor simultaneously in the third and fourth positions.⁵⁰ Since March 2004, NIC.LV has also provided the opportunity to register internationalized domain names (IDN) that can contain specific Latvian letters with diacritical marks (for example, ā, ē, ī, ū, ō, ķ, ļ, ņ, ŗ, ģ, š, č, ž).⁵⁰ This feature is aimed at supporting and developing the Latvian language in the digital space. By the end of 2022, 2,518 such IDNs were registered, which, however, is 18% less than in 2021.⁵⁰ In addition to registration of second-level domains (for example, example.lv), registration at the third level is also possible under a number of generic subdomains, such as .com.lv, .org.lv, .edu.lv, .gov.lv (for government institutions), and .mil.lv (for defense structures).⁴⁹

NIC.LV pays considerable attention to the security of the domain zone. The DNSSEC (Domain Name System Security Extensions) technology, designed to protect users from DNS data spoofing and ensure the integrity of DNS responses, was implemented for the .lv zone back in 2012.⁵⁰ In addition, NIC.LV cooperates with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) on the implementation of alternative procedures for resolving domain disputes,⁵⁰ which contributes to the civilized settlement of conflicts related to rights to domain names. Statistics for 2022 showed that about 26% of all domain names in the .lv zone were registered by foreign individuals or legal entities, while there was some reduction in the number of domains registered by residents of Latvia.⁵⁰ This may indicate both the attractiveness of the .lv domain for international use and certain trends in the domestic market. The decrease in the number of registered Latvian IDNs against the background of the overall growth in the number of domains registered by foreigners may indicate insufficient popularization or practical usefulness of IDNs for local business and users, or economic factors affecting the activity of local registrants. This may potentially have long-term consequences for the representation of the Latvian language in the global digital space. At the same time, the active implementation and support of DNSSEC, as well as cooperation with WIPO, emphasize NIC.LV's

desire to meet high international standards of security and legal regulation in the domain zone, which increases overall trust in the .lv domain.

2.2. Number of Users

The level of Internet penetration in Latvia is one of the highest in the European Union, indicating wide accessibility and active use of Internet technologies by the population. According to DataReportal (Kepios analysis), at the beginning of 2025, Latvia had 1.75 million Internet users, which accounted for 93.9% of the total population of the country.⁵⁸ A year earlier, at the beginning of 2024, these figures were 1.69 million users and 92.9% penetration, respectively.⁵⁹

Data from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for 2023 show that 89.2% of Latvia's population used the Internet.⁶⁰ The World Bank, summarizing data from various sources, indicated a penetration level of 87.1% back in 2019.⁶¹ Eurostat also provides extensive data on Internet use. For example, in 2023 (according to table tin00092, the data may reflect surveys from the previous year), 87.62% of Latvian residents aged 16–74 used the Internet daily or almost daily.⁶² In 2024, according to Eurostat, 94% of households in the EU had Internet access; specifically for Latvia in 2023, this indicator (for persons who used the Internet in the last 3 months) was 91.51%.⁶³

Despite the high percentage of penetration, the absolute number of Internet users in Latvia may show a trend toward stagnation or even a slight decrease. Thus, Kepios analysis indicates a decrease in the number of users by 17 thousand (–1.0%) in the period from January 2023 to January 2024⁵⁹ and by another 15 thousand (–0.8%) between January 2024 and January 2025.⁵⁸ This phenomenon is directly related to the overall demographic situation in the country – a decrease in population. Thus, even with the preservation or slight increase in the share of connected citizens, the overall size of the domestic digital market may not increase or even decrease, which sets specific tasks for providers and developers of digital services to retain the audience and search for new growth models.

- **Sources for verification (at least 3):**

1. DataReportal (Kepios analysis)⁵⁸
2. ITU (International Telecommunication Union)⁶⁰
3. Eurostat (data from tables tin00092 and isoc_ci_ifp_iu)⁶²
4. World Bank⁶¹

2.2.1. Fixed Internet

Fixed broadband Internet access remains a key element of Latvia's telecommunications infrastructure, providing stable and high-speed connections for households and enterprises. A significant part of these connections is implemented using fiber-optic technologies (FTTP/FTTH), which contributes to the provision of high-quality services. At the end of 2019, the total number of active fixed Internet service connections in the country was 508,894, with more than 350,000 (or 69%) of them provided via fiber-optic communication lines.⁶⁶ This indicates the early and active development of fiber-optic networks in the country. According to the World Bank, in 2023 the number of fixed broadband subscribers per 100 inhabitants of Latvia was 25.99.⁶⁷

In 2023, according to Eurostat data, 93.9% of enterprises in the European Union used fixed broadband connections. However, for Latvia in the same year, a slight decrease (–0.5 percentage points compared to 2022) was noted in the share of enterprises using Internet connections with speeds of at least 1 Gbit/s.⁶⁸ This may indicate that, despite the widespread deployment of fiber-optic networks,⁶⁹ ultra-high speeds have not yet become a mass standard for business.

The fixed Internet market in Latvia is characterized by the presence of several key players. Historically, the largest provider is the company Tet (formerly Lattelecom), which was formed on the basis of the state telecommunications company. In 2019, its market share was estimated at 55%,⁶⁶ and according to more recent data (around 2022–2023) – at 49%⁷⁰ or “more than 50%”.⁶⁹ Other notable market participants are **Baltcom** (share about 20%,⁷⁰ subsequently acquired by Bite Group⁷¹) and **BALTICOM** (Balticom SIA or AS, with a share of about 17%⁷⁰). The total number of merchants providing fixed Internet access services in 2019 was 154.⁶⁶ By 2022, the number of operators required to submit declarations on the quality of Internet services (including fixed Internet) to the regulator SPRK was 117.⁷³

The dominant position of Tet, inherited from the former state monopolist Lattelecom,⁷⁴ continues to be an important characteristic of the market. Despite the activities of other operators and regulatory efforts by the Public Utilities Commission (SPRK),⁶⁹ such concentration may affect price dynamics and the pace of innovation in the sector.

The presence of a developed fiber-optic infrastructure is a positive factor for Latvia. However, the decrease in the share of enterprises using ultra-high speeds (1 Gbit/s and higher)⁶⁸ against the background of the wide availability of such networks⁶⁹ may indicate several aspects: either the current lower speeds generally satisfy the needs of most commercial users, or there is a price barrier to switching to more expensive gigabit tariffs, or business is insufficiently aware of the

advantages of such speeds for the introduction of innovative and bandwidth-demanding digital technologies. This may become a deterrent to the deeper digitalization of some sectors of the economy.

Largest home (fixed) Internet providers and their market share (estimated, based on available data for the period):

- **Tet (SIA Tet):** <https://www.tet.lv/>.⁷⁵ Market share: ~49–55%.⁶⁶
- **Baltcom (SIA Baltcom):** <https://www.baltcom.lv/> (legally merged with Bite Latvija from July 1, 2024⁷²). Market share: ~20% (before the merger).⁷⁰
- **BALTICOM (SIA BALTICOM):** Most likely refers to SIA “BALTICOM” indicated in⁷⁰ with a share of 17%. Website: <https://www.balticom.lv/> (coincides with Baltcom).

2.2.2. Mobile Internet

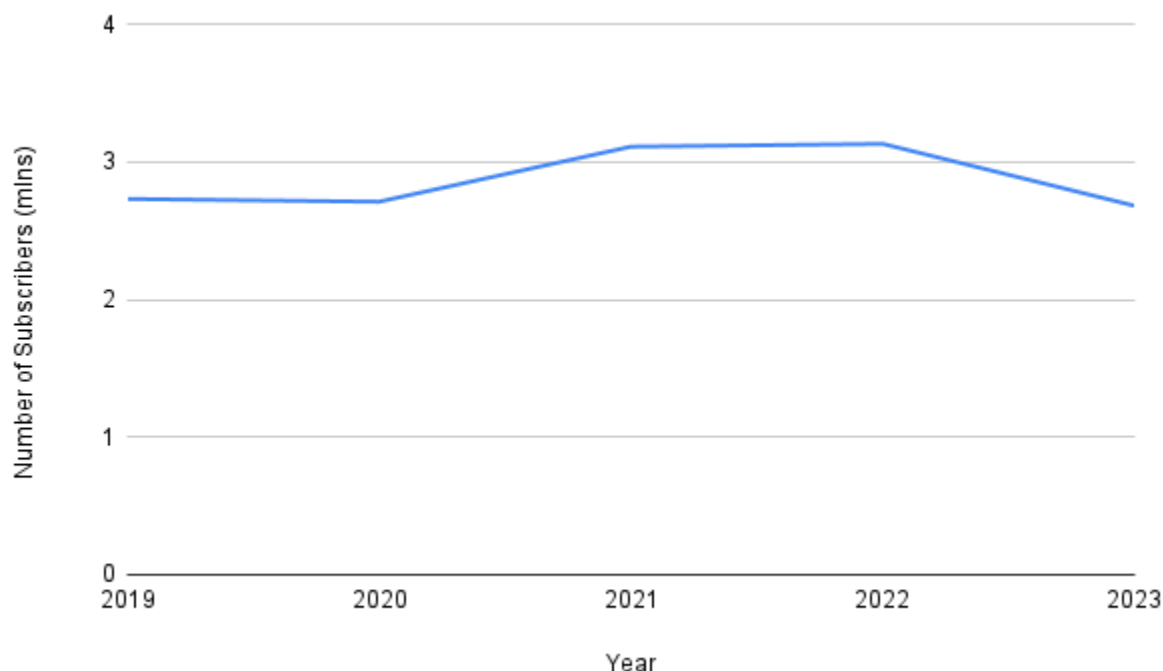
Mobile Internet plays a key role in providing access to information and digital services in Latvia, demonstrating high indicators both in the number of connections and in the volume of consumed traffic. The country is among the European leaders in mobile data consumption per capita.⁷⁷

According to the Traficom report “Telecommunications Markets in the Nordic and Baltic Countries 2023”, the number of active mobile subscriptions (including voice and data, excluding M2M) per capita in Latvia in 2023 was 1.43.⁷⁸ This indicator decreased slightly compared to 2022 (1.66) but remains high, indicating the widespread use of mobile devices and services. The absolute number of mobile connections (including M2M), according to DataReportal, at the beginning of 2025 was 2.72 million, which is equivalent to 146% of the total population.⁵⁸ A year earlier, at the beginning of 2024, this indicator was 2.65 million (145.8% of the population).⁵⁹ Such a high level of penetration, exceeding 100%, indicates the widespread practice of using several SIM cards by one user, as well as a significant number of M2M connections (machine-to-machine) used for the Internet of Things (IoT). In 2022, Latvia had 2.2 million connections specifically to mobile Internet.⁷⁹

The main mobile communication and mobile Internet operators in Latvia are **LMT (Latvijas Mobilais Telefons), Tele2, and Bite Latvija**.⁷¹ These three companies form an oligopolistic market. Their market shares are distributed competitively. For example, according to indirect data on the distribution of calls across networks (source gudriem.lv, which may not reflect the exact market shares of Internet traffic), LMT and Tele2 occupied leading positions, followed by Bite.⁸⁰ More accurate data on mobile Internet market shares require analysis of regulator (SPRK) reports or specialized analytical agencies. In the SPRK report for 2022, it was indicated that LMT, Tele2, Bite

Latvija, and Tet (which also provides mobile services) collectively formed 81% of the electronic communications market as a whole.⁷⁹ According to S&P Global, in 2023 Bite Group occupied about 24% of the mobile communications market in Latvia by the number of subscribers.⁷¹

Graph 3: Dynamics of the number of mobile broadband subscribers in Latvia (2019–2023)



A high level of mobile connection penetration, significantly exceeding 100% of the population,⁵⁸ is an important indicator of market saturation and active use of M2M technologies. This creates favorable conditions for the further development of the Internet of Things (IoT) and related services, such as smart cities, smart agriculture, and industrial automation. However, such a density of mobile network use also increases requirements for efficient management of the radio frequency spectrum, ensuring sufficient network bandwidth, and strengthening cybersecurity measures to protect both individual users and critical infrastructure dependent on M2M communications.

Largest mobile Internet providers and their market share (estimated):

- **LMT (Latvijas Mobilais Telefons SIA):** <https://www.lmt.lv/>.⁸³ One of the market leaders.⁷⁹
- **Tele2 (SIA Tele2):** <https://www.tele2.lv/>.⁸⁵ One of the market leaders.⁷⁹
- **Bite Latvija (SIA Bite Latvija):** <https://www.bite.lv/>.⁸⁷ Significant player, about 24% of the market in 2023,⁷¹ also active in the M2M segment.⁷⁹

2.3. Internet Access Speed and Quality of Services Provided

Latvia traditionally demonstrates high Internet access speed indicators, especially in the fixed broadband segment, thanks to the developed fiber-optic infrastructure. According to Ookla (Speedtest.net) as of January 2025, the average download speed for fixed broadband access in Latvia was 94.86 Mbit/s.⁸⁹ At the same time, the median mobile Internet connection speed via cellular networks, according to Ookla as of February 2025, reached 132.72 Mbit/s,⁸⁹ and according to DataReportal as of January 2025 – 101.31 Mbit/s.⁵⁸ These figures indicate the high quality of mobile networks in the country. At the beginning of 2024, the median mobile Internet speed was 73.64 Mbit/s, and fixed – 88.77 Mbit/s, which indicates a significant increase in mobile Internet speeds over the year.⁵⁹

The Public Utilities Commission (SPRK) regularly monitors the quality of electronic communications services. In the SPRK report for the period from May 1, 2021 to April 30, 2022, it was noted that in 2021 the share of fixed Internet connections with speeds above 100 Mbit/s reached 68% of the total, and the share of mobile Internet connections with speeds above 30 Mbit/s – 76%.⁷³ In 2023, SPRK conducted more than 160,000 measurements of the quality of voice communication in mobile and fixed networks.⁹⁰ The European Commission, within the framework of the “Digital Decade” initiative, also monitors connectivity indicators, noting that Latvia supports the goals of the Gigabit Society and seeks to provide speeds of 100 Mbit/s (with the possibility of upgrading to a gigabit) for urban and rural areas, as well as 5G coverage for all major urban agglomerations.⁹¹ In 2022, FTTP (fiber to the premises) coverage in Latvia was 91%, which is significantly higher than the EU average (56%).⁹²

Despite generally high indicators, there are certain problems with the quality of communication in border and rural areas. In March 2025, concerns were reported about the deterioration of mobile communication and Internet quality in areas bordering Russia and Belarus, in particular in the Augšdaugava region.⁹³ Local authorities and residents expressed suspicions that operators may be reducing signal power due to fewer customers or restrictions related to international agreements on the use of frequencies in border areas.⁹³ Operators, in turn, denied intentional deterioration of networks, pointing to the specifics of border territories and the need to comply with international agreements on frequencies, which may require limiting the power of transmitters to avoid interference on the territory of neighboring countries.⁹³ To improve the situation in Latgale, investments in infrastructure are planned, including the construction of new fiber-optic lines and access points.⁹³

- **Sources of research (at least three):**

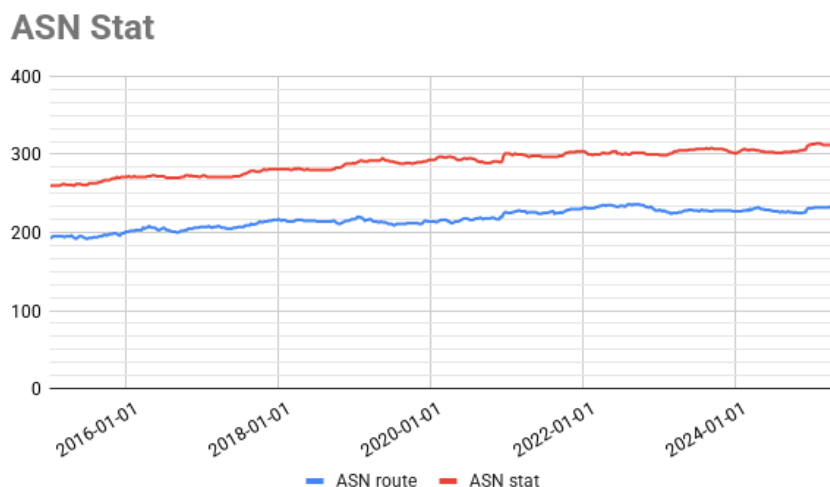
1. Ookla (Speedtest.net) (data as of January–February 2025)⁸⁹
2. Reports of the Public Utilities Commission (SPRK) (for example, report for 2021–2022)⁷³
3. European Commission (Digital Decade Country Report, DESI)⁹¹
4. DataReportal (with reference to Ookla)⁵⁸
5. LSM.lv report on communication quality in border areas (March 2025)⁹³

High mobile Internet speeds, sometimes exceeding fixed access speeds in some reports, may indicate the active development of 4G and 5G networks and their ability to meet the growing needs of users for data transmission. This may also reflect competition between mobile and fixed providers, where mobile operators seek to offer comparable or even better speed services. However, problems with communication quality in rural and border areas⁹³ emphasize the existence of a “digital divide” not only in access but also in the quality of services, which may limit the opportunities of residents of these territories and require targeted state and private investments in “last mile” infrastructure.⁹¹

2.4. Development of Providers and Autonomous Systems

The development of Internet infrastructure in Latvia is characterized by the presence of a significant number of Internet providers and autonomous systems (AS) that ensure traffic routing. RIPE NCC is the regional Internet registry (RIR) responsible for the allocation of Internet resources, including AS numbers, in Europe, the Middle East, and parts of Central Asia, including Latvia.⁹⁴ RIPEstat provides tools and data for analyzing these resources.⁹⁵

Graph 4: Dynamics of Autonomous Systems in Latvia (2015–2025)



Over the decade (from 2015 to 2025), Latvia has seen a consistent, though not explosive, growth in both the total number of registered autonomous systems (ASN stat) and the number of systems announcing routes on the Internet (ASN route). This indicates the maturity and systematic development of the country's Internet infrastructure, without sharp jumps or stagnation.

High network density. With a population of Latvia of approximately 1.85 million people (as of 2025), the presence of 312 autonomous systems indicates a very high density of Internet operators. This means that there are about 17 autonomous systems per 100,000 inhabitants. Such an indicator points to a highly competitive and diversified Internet services market, which, as a rule, has a positive effect on the quality and cost of access for end users.

Market maturity. The smooth nature of growth and the relatively small delta between registered and routable AS indicate that the telecommunications market in Latvia is mature. New players appear, but their number does not lead to radical changes in the overall network structure.

Presence of “dormant” systems. The difference between the total number of AS (312) and those in routing (233) is 79 systems. This is a significant number of “dormant” or reserved networks. Possible reasons for this phenomenon:

- Companies register AS for future projects.
- Systems are used for internal routing or as backup and are not announced globally.
- Some networks may belong to companies that have ceased operations but have not yet been removed from the registry.

The graph clearly demonstrates two parallel trends:

ASN stat (red line): Shows the total number of AS registered in Latvia. The line steadily goes up, rising from approximately 260 at the beginning of 2016 to 312 by 2025.

ASN route (blue line): Reflects the number of AS that actively participate in global routing. This line also shows growth, but with slightly less dynamics — from approximately 200 to 233 over the same period.

The gap between the two lines remains almost constant, which confirms the conclusion about the stable number of inactive or reserved networks.

Table 1: Top 10 largest Autonomous Systems of Latvia

#	Number of AS	Name	Web Site	Foreign neighbour count	Local neighbour count	Total neighbour count	Foreign neighbours share
1	12578	Lattelecom	https://www.tet.lv/	102	78	180	57%
2	2588	Bite Latvija	https://www.bite.lv	2	53	55	4%
3	12993	Digitalas Ekonomikas Attīstības Centrs	https://www.deac.eu/	47	6	53	89%
4	24589	Telenet SIA	https://telenet.lv/en	21	19	40	53%
5	5518	Telia Latvija SIA	http://telia.lv	4	29	33	12%
6	8194	LVRTC Network	http://www.lvrtc.lv	7	20	27	26%
7	42532	Veesp SIA	https://veesp.com	20	2	22	91%
8	58061	SCALAXY-AS	https://scalaxy.com	20	0	20	100%
9	5538	SigmaNet-NIC		11	9	20	55%
10	24651	Balticom	http://www.balticom.lv	5	14	19	26%

Clear leader and oligopoly: Lattelecom (AS12578) is the undisputed leader in the total number of peering connections (180), significantly ahead of all others. This indicates its central role in Latvia's Internet ecosystem. Together with Bite Latvija (AS2588) and Digitalas Ekonomikas Attīstības Centrs (AS12993), they form the top three largest players in terms of connectivity, although with completely different profiles.

Two peering strategies

The table clearly divides operators into two groups based on their peering policy:

- **Internationally transit-oriented:** Companies such as SCALAXY-AS (100%), Veesp SIA (91%) and Digitalas Ekonomikas Attīstības Centrs (89%) have an overwhelming share (around 90% and above) of foreign connections. This is typical for hosting providers, CDN or transit operators whose business is focused on providing services outside Latvia and ensuring fast connection to global networks.

- **Domestic market-oriented:** Providers such as Bite Latvija (4%), Telia Latvija SIA (12%), LVRTC Network (26%) and Balticom (26%) have a low share of foreign peers. Their main task is to provide access for end users inside Latvia, so they actively exchange traffic with other local networks to minimize delays for their customers.
- **Balanced connectivity:** Operators such as Lattelecom (57%), Telenet SIA (53%) and SigmaNet-NIC (55%) demonstrate a balanced peering policy. They have extensive both international and local channels, which allows them to simultaneously serve the domestic market and provide international transit services.

Role of state participation

The presence in the top of LVRTC (AS8194), the Latvian State Radio and Television Centre, and Digitalas Ekonomikas Attīstības Centrs (DEAC), a data centre operator, underlines their importance for the national network infrastructure. LVRTC, with its focus on local connections, probably plays an important role in ensuring connectivity within the country, while DEAC is a major centre for hosting and cloud services with global reach.

Overall summary

The analysis of the largest players confirms the conclusion about the maturity and high competition in the Latvian internet market. The connectivity structure is diverse: there are both large “last-mile” providers focused on local traffic and strong international players specializing in transit and hosting. Such a variety of strategies ensures the resilience and efficiency of the national internet infrastructure.

The growth in the number of autonomous systems usually correlates with an increase in the number of internet providers, large enterprises and organizations that independently manage their network infrastructure and routing policies. This contributes to increasing the fault tolerance of the internet in the country, diversifying traffic routes and developing competition in the internet services market. The increase in the number of routable AS also indicates active participation of Latvian networks in global internet exchange. A stable or growing number of AS is an indicator of the health and maturity of the national internet ecosystem.

2.5. IPv6 penetration

The transition to the IPv6 protocol is a global necessity due to the exhaustion of IPv4 address space. Latvia, like other countries, is gradually introducing IPv6, but the pace of this process may

vary. According to APNIC Labs data as of May 2025, the level of IPv6 penetration (IPv6 Capable) in Latvia was 28.07%, and the share of users preferring IPv6 (IPv6 Preferred) was 27.29% with a total number of measurements (Samples) of 584,462. These figures are lower than in many other European countries, such as France (76.28%), Germany (66.43%) or Belgium (69.50%). According to Google data as of April 2025, the global level of IPv6 adoption among Google users was about 47.55%, and according to Aelius (interpretation of Google data), the level of IPv6 adoption in Latvia was estimated at 25.64%.

Historical data on the dynamics of IPv6 penetration in Latvia for the period 2019–2025 require a detailed analysis of time series from sources such as APNIC Labs or Google. APNIC Labs graphs for individual AS in Latvia, for example AS201673 (PTSLV-AS), show the dynamics of IPv6 deployment since 2015, but aggregated country data for each year were not presented in an easily extractable form in the provided materials. The overall trend in the Asia-Pacific region and the world indicates a gradual but linear growth in IPv6 adoption.

Graph 5: Dynamics of IPv6 penetration in Latvia (2015–2025)

Use of IPv6 for Latvia (LV)



Source: stats.labs.apnic.net

The relatively low level of IPv6 penetration in Latvia compared to some leaders may indicate a number of factors. It is possible that large internet providers and enterprises do not yet see an acute shortage of IPv4 addresses due to the use of network address translation (NAT) technologies

or the availability of sufficient IPv4 address pools. Costs for upgrading network equipment and staff training for full IPv6 support may also play a role. Slow adoption of IPv6 may in the long term limit the growth of the Internet of Things (IoT), since IPv6 provides practically unlimited address space necessary for connecting a huge number of devices. In addition, it may create difficulties with direct connectivity for new services and applications originally developed with IPv6 in mind. Although the current level is likely not creating critical problems for most users, accelerating the transition to IPv6 is an important task to ensure the future development of the country's digital infrastructure and its integration into the global internet.

2.6. Connectivity index

Two key indicators based on the analysis of pairwise connections (peering) between Autonomous Systems (ASN) are used to assess the level of integration of the internet segment.

Global Connectivity Index: This index represents the total number of unique connections between each local ASN and each external (foreign) ASN. In essence, it measures how widely and diversely the internet segment is connected to the rest of the world. The higher this indicator, the more “windows” the country has to the global network.

Local Connectivity Index: This index is calculated as the total number of unique connections between different local Latvian ASNs. It reflects the intensity and complexity of the domestic internet market, in particular the activity at internet exchange points (IXP). A high indicator indicates a developed internal ecosystem that allows efficient traffic exchange within the country, minimizing delays and dependence on external channels for local data.

Analysis of the ratio of these two indices allows us to understand the strategic orientation of the national network: whether it is predominantly self-sufficient or deeply integrated into the global infrastructure.

Graph 6: Dynamics of global connectivity of Latvian Autonomous Systems (2019–2025)

Global connectivity statistics

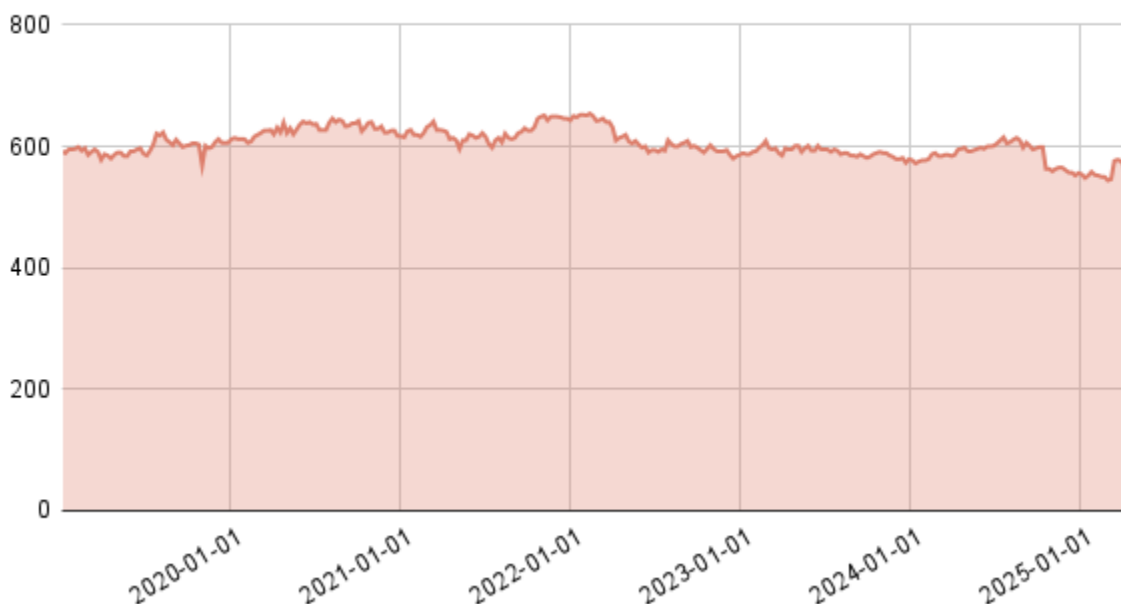


The analysis of the Global Connectivity Index shows growth in the international integration of the Latvian internet segment. From early 2020 to early 2022, the number of unique connections with foreign networks almost doubled — from ~250 to ~450. This growth indicates a targeted expansion of “windows” to the world, active connection to new international operators and an increase in the redundancy of external channels.

After 2022, the indicator stabilized in the 400–450 corridor, which indicates a transition from a phase of rapid growth to a state of maturity. Latvian operators have reached a high level of global integration and are now maintaining it, which ensures resilience to failures on individual external directions and low latency to global resources.

Graph 7: Dynamics of local connectivity of Latvian Autonomous Systems (2019–2025)

Local connectivity statistics

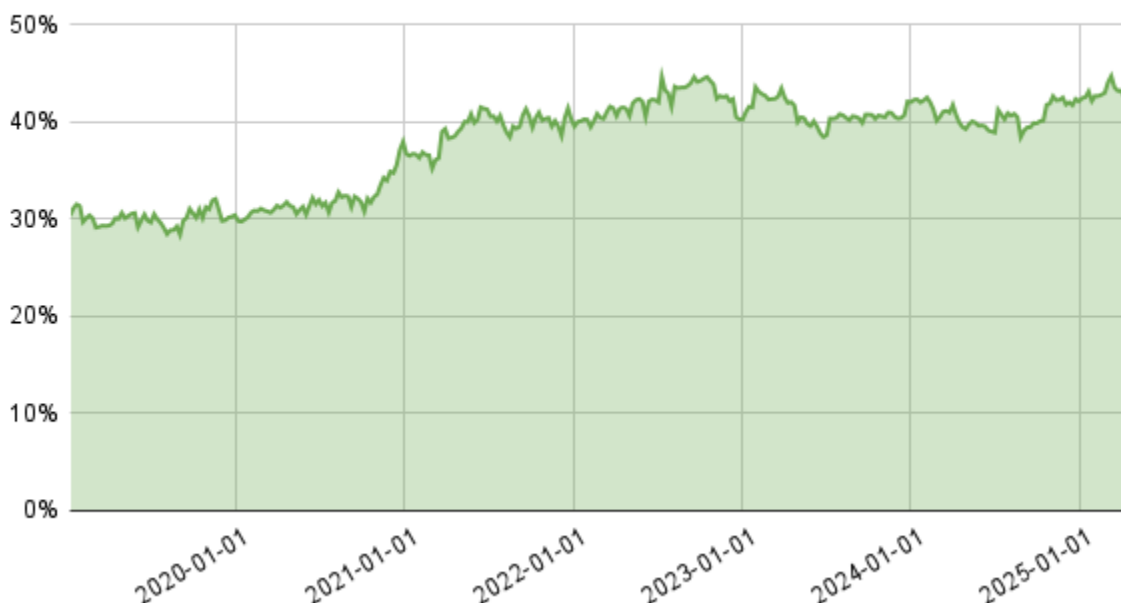


The Local Connectivity Index demonstrates a high degree of stability throughout the period from 2019 to 2025. The number of unique peering connections between Latvian autonomous systems fluctuates in a narrow range around 600, without a pronounced trend towards growth or decline. This indicates that the country's internal internet ecosystem has long been formed and is mature.

A consistently high indicator indicates developed internal peering, probably through internet exchange points (IXP). Operators actively exchange traffic within the country, which ensures fast delivery of local content to users and reduces dependence on expensive international channels for internal communications. The absence of growth indicates that the market has reached saturation in terms of internal connections.

Graph 8: Dynamics of the ratio of global and local connectivity of Latvian Autonomous Systems (2019–2025)

Total connectivity share



This graph clearly illustrates the strategic shift in the development of the Latvian internet segment. Until 2021, the share of global connections was about 30% of the total, indicating a balanced but still more locally oriented development. However, during 2021 there was a sharp jump, and the share of global connections grew to 40% and above, stabilizing at this level.

Such dynamics, combined with data from the previous graphs, allow us to draw an unambiguous conclusion: in 2021 Latvia made a qualitative leap towards deeper integration into the global network. While maintaining strong and stable internal connectivity, the national internet segment has become significantly more open and oriented towards international traffic. This change reflects the strategy of turning the country not just into a consumer, but into an active participant in the global digital infrastructure, possibly as a transit hub or hosting centre.

3. Internet legislation

3.1. Principles of internet governance

Internet governance in Latvia, like in other European Union member states, is based on principles that promote openness, competition, protection of user rights and ensuring the free flow of information, while complying with national security and public order requirements. Latvia, as a member of the OECD, also adheres to the recommendations of this organization regarding the development of the internet economy, which include promoting the open, distributed and interconnected nature of the internet, encouraging investment and competition in high-speed networks and services, as well as ensuring cross-border provision of services. An important aspect is multi-stakeholder cooperation in policy development involving all stakeholders, including the state, the private sector and civil society.

Latvian legislation in the field of the internet and electronic communications is largely harmonized with EU norms. The principles of public administration in general, which may indirectly affect the internet sphere, include respect for the rights of private individuals, equality, legality, reasonable application of legal norms, prohibition of arbitrariness, legal certainty and procedural fairness. Particular attention is paid to the protection of fundamental human rights, such as freedom of expression and the right to information, which are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (Satversme). At the same time, it is emphasized that these rights are not absolute and may be restricted in cases provided for by law to protect the rights of others, the democratic state system, public safety, welfare and morality.

3.1.1. Regulation

Internet regulation in Latvia is carried out through a set of legislative acts covering various aspects: from the provision of electronic communications services to data protection and combating illegal content. The key document regulating the activities of internet service providers and their obligations is the Law on Electronic Communications (Elektronisko sakaru likums). This law defines the competences, rights and obligations of users, electronic communications operators, owners of private networks, as well as the powers of state regulators in the electronic communications sector. Issues related to information society services are regulated by a separate Law on Information Society Services.

Policy in the field of digital communications and broadband development is determined by national plans, such as the Electronic Communications Sector Development Plan for 2021–2027 and the Digital Transformation Guidelines for 2021–2027. These documents are aimed at achieving the goals of the Gigabit Society, including providing access to high-speed internet (at least 100 Mbit/s) for all households and developing 5G networks. Regulation also includes aspects of personal data protection, which are harmonized with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and implemented through the national Law on the Processing of Personal Data.

3.1.2. Regulatory authorities and responsible persons

Several state institutions are responsible for regulation and supervision in the field of the internet and electronic communications in Latvia:

1. **Public Utilities Commission (Sabiedrisko pakalpojumu regulēšanas komisija, SPRK):** The main regulator in the electronic communications sector. SPRK is responsible for regulating and supervising the market, ensuring competition, managing the radio frequency spectrum and numbering, as well as monitoring the quality of services.
 - Chair of the SPRK Board: Alda Ozola. Term of office until 01.07.2028. Official profile: <https://www.sprk.gov.lv/en/content/board>.
2. **Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (Vides aizsardzības un reģionālās attīstības ministrija, VARAM):** Responsible for initiatives in the field of e-governance, state information technology issues, as well as for developing national plans on frequencies and numbering.
 - Minister: Inga Bērziņa (since 15 September 2023). Official profile: <https://www.mk.gov.lv/en/employee/inga-berzina>.
3. **Ministry of Transport (Satiksmes ministrija):** Responsible for overall communications policy, including the development of the national 5G implementation plan and is the national broadband coordination office (BCO Latvia).
 - Minister of Transport: Kaspars Briškens (since 15 September 2023). Official profile: <https://www.mk.gov.lv/lv/darbinieks/kaspars-briskens>. Note: as of 27 February 2025, the duties of the Minister of Transport were temporarily performed by the Minister of Culture Agnese Lāce. As of May 2025, one of the sources lists Atis Švinka as minister. Clarification of the current minister is required at the time of preparation of the final report.
4. **State Data Inspectorate (Datu valsts inspekcija, DVI):** The national supervisory authority for personal data protection and ensures compliance with GDPR and national legislation in this area.

- Director of DVI: Jekaterina Macuka. Reappointed for a second term in April 2025, first term started in 2020. Official information: <https://www.dvi.gov.lv/en/management>] ([https://gdprhub.eu/DVI_\(Latvia\)](https://gdprhub.eu/DVI_(Latvia))).
- 5. **National Electronic Mass Media Council (Nacionālā elektronisko plašsaziņas līdzekļu padome, NEPLP)**: Regulates the activities of electronic media, including television and radio broadcasting, as well as certain aspects of online content. NEPLP has the authority to block websites disseminating disinformation, content threatening national security, or violating copyright.
 - Chairman of NEPLP: Ivars Āboliņš. Official information: <https://www.neplp.lv/en/members-council-0>.
- 6. **Competition Council (Konkurences padome)**: Acts as the national centre of competence on competition issues, promotes competition in all sectors, including telecommunications, and monitors compliance with antitrust legislation.
- 7. **CERT.LV** (Information Technology Security Incident Prevention Institution): A subdivision of the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics of the University of Latvia, responsible for responding to cybersecurity incidents, providing recommendations and raising awareness of cyber threats. Under the new Law on National Cybersecurity, CERT.LV cooperates with the National Cybersecurity Centre.

3.2. Market monopolization

Latvian legislation, in accordance with European Union norms, is aimed at ensuring competition and preventing monopolization in the electronic communications market. The Law on Electronic Communications sets one of its goals as promoting the development of competition in the provision of electronic communications networks and services. Supervision of compliance with competition legislation is carried out by the Competition Council. The electronic communications market regulator, SPRK, also plays an important role in market analysis and identifying operators with significant market power (Significant Market Power – SMP), to which specific regulatory obligations may be applied to prevent abuse of a dominant position.

Historically, after regaining independence, natural monopolies existed in Latvia's telecommunications sector, as in many other transition economies, especially in the fixed communications segment, where the national operator Lattelecom (now Tet) dominated. The market liberalization process began in accordance with EU requirements, and Lattelecom's monopoly on fixed communications services formally ended in January 2003. However, as noted in European Commission reports in the early 2000s, there were obstacles on the way to effective

market liberalization, and efforts were required to ensure reasonable conditions for interconnection and access to the local loop.

Despite formal liberalization, Tet continues to hold a dominant position in the fixed broadband access market with a market share of about 49–55% in recent years. The mobile communications market is operated by three main operators (LMT, Tele2, Bite), creating an oligopolistic structure. The Competition Council and SPRK conduct market analyses and take decisions to prevent anti-competitive practices. For example, SPRK may impose obligations on SMP operators to provide access to their networks to other operators, price control or transparency. In 2023, the Competition Council conducted a study of digital markets, including online platforms, identifying potential competition risks associated with hybrid platform functions and exclusive terms in contracts. This indicates the attention of regulators to new forms of potential monopolization in the digital environment.

3.3. Internet shutdowns by government order

Latvian legislation provides for the possibility of restricting or suspending the provision of electronic communications services, including internet access, in certain strictly defined cases, usually related to emergency situations, national security or the need to implement decisions of law enforcement agencies. The Law on Electronic Communications and related regulations define the general framework for such actions.

In particular, the Law on Emergency Situation and State of Exception (*Ārkārtējās situācijas un izņēmuma stāvokļa likums*) grants the Cabinet of Ministers the right to declare an emergency situation for a period of up to three months (with the possibility of a one-time extension for another three months) in the event of natural disasters, epidemics, catastrophes or if there is a threat to the state system or public safety. During an emergency situation, the Cabinet of Ministers has the right to restrict the rights and freedoms of natural and legal persons, as well as impose additional obligations on them. Although direct reference to internet shutdown as a specific measure is not always detailed in the general descriptions of this law, such powers may be implied within the framework of general measures to ensure public order and safety. For example, during the emergency situation declared in connection with COVID-19, various restrictions were introduced regarding gatherings and movement, but no full internet shutdowns were reported.

The Law on National Security (*Nacionālās drošības likums*) also forms the basis for state actions in the event of threats to national security. This law defines the national security system, the competences of various bodies and measures to overcome threats to the state. In the context of

information security and cybersecurity, the new Law on National Cybersecurity, which entered into force on 1 September 2024, provides for the creation of a National Cybersecurity Centre and grants supervisory authorities (including CERT.LV and the Constitution Protection Bureau) the powers to conduct inspections and, if necessary, suspend the provision of services until the identified deficiencies in the field of cybersecurity are eliminated. This may include restricting access to certain internet resources or services if they pose a threat. The terms of service contracts of the operator Tet (formerly Lattelecom) may also provide for the possibility of disconnecting services without the subscriber's consent in cases of the need to ensure the operation of operational services or in the event of natural disasters and emergency circumstances. Procedures for blocking specific websites are more often associated with decisions of NEPLP (on media content, disinformation, copyright) or IAUI (unlicensed gambling), rather than with a complete internet shutdown.

3.4. Legislation on “words on the internet”

Latvian legislation contains provisions that can be applied to prosecute statements on the internet, including the dissemination of information recognized as “fakes” or disinformation, especially if such actions lead to certain socially dangerous consequences or affect the honour, dignity and security of a person or the state. The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (Satversme) guarantees freedom of speech (Article 100), which includes the right to freely receive, store and disseminate information, express one's views, but also indicates that this right may be restricted in cases established by law to protect the rights of others, the democratic state system, public safety, welfare and morality.

The Criminal Law of Latvia (Krimināllikums) contains several articles relevant to this topic. **Article 78** provides for liability for actions aimed at inciting national, ethnic, racial or religious hatred, including statements on the internet. Punishment may range from a fine and community service to imprisonment for up to five years (if committed using the internet) or up to ten years (if associated with violence or threats). **Article 150** concerns inciting social hatred and enmity on grounds of gender, age, disability or other characteristics, if it caused significant harm, with similar qualifying features (use of the internet, by a group of persons, with violence) and corresponding punishments.

Particular attention is drawn to **Article 231 of the Criminal Law “Hooliganism”**. According to clarifications from the Ministry of Justice of Latvia and media reports, this article (in particular its part 2, concerning gross violation of public order, expressed in obvious disrespect for society or audacity, if it resulted in a violation of people's peace or the work of institutions) is used to bring to justice for the dissemination of knowingly false information, if it led to the indicated consequences.

In 2022, amendments were discussed that would separate the dissemination of knowingly false information causing gross violation of public order into a separate composition of Article 231.2. The Ministry of Justice emphasized that this is not about restricting freedom of opinion, but about stopping the dissemination of verifiably false information or fabrications presented as facts, which are deliberately disseminated and lead to serious violations of public order. The terms “fake news” or “disinformation” may not be used directly in the text of the Criminal Law; instead, “knowingly false information” (apzināti nepatiesas ziņas) or “fabrications” (izdomājumi) are used.

The practice of applying these norms, especially Article 231, has caused discussions. In 2021, Latvia became the first Baltic state where cases were initiated for the intentional dissemination of dangerous false information under the Criminal Law, but the number of convictions was small due to legal uncertainty in defining “fake news” in the context of Article 231. There are attempts to reformulate parts of the law to more clearly indicate false content or disinformation. It is important to note that for criminal liability under **Article 231.2** (or similar provisions of Article 231), it is necessary to prove not only the fact of public dissemination of false information, but also the person’s awareness of the falsity of this information, as well as the onset of specific consequences in the form of gross violation of public order, violation of citizens’ peace or the work of institutions.

In addition, **Article 157** of the Criminal Law provides for liability for defamation, that is, the intentional dissemination of knowingly false, defamatory fabrications about another person, including in the media, which may include internet publications. New Articles **90.1** and **90.2** (which entered into force, probably replacing the repealed Article 275.1) criminalize the production or dissemination of knowingly false discrediting information about political organizations or candidates using “deepfake” technology during the pre-election period or on election day, as well as in the process of election or approval of officials by the Saeima.

3.5. Legislation on internet blocking

Latvian legislation provides mechanisms for blocking internet resources in certain cases related to the dissemination of illegal content, copyright infringement, organization of unlicensed gambling, as well as threats to national security and public order. There is no single comprehensive law “on blocking”; the relevant powers and procedures are distributed across several regulatory acts and are under the jurisdiction of various state bodies.

The main laws on the basis of which blocking can be carried out are the Electronic Media Law (Elektronisko plašsaziņas līdzekļu likums), the Electronic Communications Law (Elektronisko sakaru likums), the Copyright Law (Autortiesību likums), the Law on Gambling and Lotteries (Azartspēļu un

izložu likums) and the National Security Law (Nacionālās drošības likums) with the supplementing Law on National Cybersecurity.

3.5.1. Legislation

The Electronic Media Law grants the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP) the authority to make decisions on restricting access to websites. Grounds for blocking include the dissemination of television programmes without permission for retransmission, dissemination of content threatening national security or public order, content related to persons under EU sanctions, promotion of equipment for illegal access to programmes, as well as illegal placement of copyright objects. Amendments to the Electronic Media Law adopted in 2022 expanded NEPLP's powers, allowing the suspension of access to sites disseminating disinformation or threats to national security, especially in the context of countering propaganda related to Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

The Copyright Law, with recent amendments, also provides for the possibility of blocking sites illegally hosting copyrighted content, and NEPLP is authorized to take measures against such violations. The Law on Gambling and Lotteries is the basis for blocking sites organizing unlicensed gambling. This function is performed by the Lottery and Gambling Supervisory Inspection (IAUI).

The National Security Law and the new Law on National Cybersecurity (entered into force on 1 September 2024) grant state bodies, including the National Cybersecurity Centre (in cooperation with CERT.LV) and the Constitution Protection Bureau, powers to ensure cybersecurity, which may include suspending the operation of services or restricting access to resources posing a threat. CERT.LV also uses a DNS firewall to prevent user access to malicious sites.

3.5.2. Blocking procedures

Blocking procedures for internet resources depend on the grounds and the responsible authority.

- **NEPLP blockings:** In cases related to electronic media content, disinformation or copyright infringement, NEPLP makes a decision to restrict access. This decision is an administrative act and is sent to all internet providers for execution. For example, in case of copyright infringement, the copyright holder can apply to NEPLP with a statement. NEPLP requests documents from the content provider or hosting provider confirming the right to publication. If the rights are not confirmed or the site clearly violates copyright, NEPLP may decide to block. NEPLP decisions can be appealed in court.

- **IAUI blockings:** The Lottery and Gambling Supervisory Inspection makes decisions to block access to sites of unlicensed organizers of interactive gambling on the basis of the Law on Gambling and Lotteries and the Electronic Communications Law. These decisions are also mandatory for execution by internet providers.
- **Cybersecurity blockings:** CERT.LV uses a DNS firewall system to automatically block user access to known malicious sites (phishing, malware). Within the framework of the Law on National Cybersecurity, supervisory authorities may issue orders to suspend services if threats are identified.
- **Court-ordered blockings:** In certain cases, for example, to protect intellectual property rights (before recent amendments expanding NEPLP's powers) or in criminal cases, blocking may be carried out on the basis of a court decision.

Internet service providers (ISPs) are obliged to execute decisions of authorized state bodies on blocking access to certain resources. As a rule, this is implemented by blocking domain names (DNS blocking) or IP addresses.

3.5.3. Registries of blocked internet resources

In Latvia, there are official and publicly available lists (registries) of blocked internet resources, maintained by various authorities depending on the reason for the blocking.

- **NEPLP** (National Electronic Mass Media Council) maintains a list of domain names to which access is restricted on the territory of Latvia. This list is published on the official NEPLP website. The grounds for inclusion are varied: from illegal retransmission of TV programmes and copyright infringement to the dissemination of disinformation and content threatening national security. The list is regularly updated as the council adopts new decisions.
- **IAUI** (Lotteries and Gambling Supervisory Inspection) also maintains and publishes a list of blocked domain names of unlicensed organisers of interactive gambling. This list is available on their official website and is updated as new illegal gambling sites are identified and decisions to block them are made. Users attempting to access such sites are usually redirected to an informational page at nelegalssaturs.lv.

Thus, the main registries of blocked resources in Latvia are open and maintained by the responsible regulators. This ensures a certain level of transparency regarding which resources are blocked and on what grounds.

Official lists of blocked internet resources in Latvia are maintained and published by the relevant regulatory authorities.

NEPLP (National Electronic Mass Media Council):

- Link: <https://www.neplp.lv/lv/piekluves-ierobezosana-timekla-vietnem>
- Description: On this page, NEPLP publishes a list of domain names to which access is restricted on the territory of Latvia. The list includes websites blocked for various reasons, such as illegal retransmission of TV programmes, dissemination of disinformation, threats to national security, copyright infringement or connection with persons under EU sanctions. The list is regularly updated. For example, in March 2024, 9 sites were reported blocked for disseminating Russian propaganda. Earlier, in 2022, after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, NEPLP blocked a significant number of Russian and pro-Russian sites and TV channels. Users attempting to access blocked resources from this list are often redirected to the information page nelegalssaturs.lv.

IAUI (Lottery and Gambling Supervisory Inspection):

- Link: <https://www.iaui.gov.lv/lv/bloketas-saites>
- Description: IAUI publishes and regularly updates a list of domain names of unlicensed interactive gambling operators to which access is blocked on the territory of Latvia. Blocking is carried out on the basis of the Law on Gambling and Lotteries and the Electronic Communications Law. This list is also public. As of October 2024, since August 2014, 3576 blocking decisions have been made, affecting 3571 legal entities and 579 domain names (some domains may have been blocked by several decisions or belong to one legal entity).

CERT.LV:

- Description: CERT.LV uses a DNS firewall system that blocks user access to known malicious sites such as phishing pages or sites distributing malware. In Q4 2024, the CERT.LV DNS firewall prevented 459,213 visits to malicious sites, processing an average of 1 million requests per month and blocking about 8,000 attempts to follow fraudulent links per day. Although CERT.LV does not publish a full list of all domains blocked in real time in the same format as NEPLP or IAUI, information on the types of threats and general statistics on DNS firewall activity is regularly covered in their reports.

These official registries ensure transparency of the blocking process and inform the public and internet providers about resources to which access is restricted by decision of state bodies. Unofficial lists or aggregators of such data may exist, but the main sources are the regulatory bodies themselves.

3.5.5. Development of blockings

The practice of blocking internet resources in Latvia has noticeably intensified in recent years, especially after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The main body responsible for blocking websites that disseminate disinformation, propaganda and content threatening national security has become the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP).

In 2022, NEPLP made a series of high-profile decisions on blocking. Already in February 2022, immediately after the start of the invasion, the broadcasts of Russian TV channels "Rossiya RTR" (for 5 years), "Rossiya 24" (for 4 years) and "TV Centr International" (for 3 years) were suspended on grounds of threat to national security. By March 17, 2022, NEPLP had blocked access to 71 websites, including the official website of the Kremlin, for disseminating pro-Kremlin propaganda and justifying the war. In June 2022, NEPLP blocked all remaining Russian TV channels on the basis of amendments to the Electronic Media Law prohibiting the operation in Latvia of media from countries threatening the territorial integrity of other states. By that time, the total number of blocked Russian and pro-Russian resources had increased significantly. For example, in May 2022, NEPLP also blocked access to the social networks "VKontakte", "Odnoklassniki" and "My World".

The trend toward blocking continued in subsequent years. In March 2024, it was reported that over the previous year NEPLP restricted access to more than 200 websites related to Russian propaganda (this information requires verification from the primary source). In the same month, NEPLP blocked another 9 sites, including life.ru, russkie.org and Belarusian ont.by and sb.by, for disseminating disinformation and supporting Russian aggression. In January 2025, NEPLP blocked access to another seven sites disseminating Russian propaganda, including sfr.gov.ru (website of the Social Fund of Russia) and mgimo.ru (MGIMO website).

In addition to blocking related to propaganda and national security, the blocking of sites with unlicensed gambling continues by the Lottery and Gambling Supervisory Inspection (IAUI). By October 2024, the total number of blocking decisions made since 2014 reached 3576, affecting 579 domains. In 2023, 317 such sites were blocked. NEPLP also received powers to block sites for copyright infringement.

OONI (Open Observatory of Network Interference) reports:

According to OONI data as of May 2025, 1,347,251 measurements were collected in Latvia from 79 local networks from 2015 to 2025. However, at the time of the request, specific data on "Confirmed blocked categories" of websites in Latvia did not load ("No data" or "Network Error"). This makes it difficult to analyze specific categories of sites subject to censorship based on OONI data. OONI notes that without providing a stub page, some anomalous measurements may be false positives, and calls for careful study of such measurements.

Conclusion:

The development of blocking in Latvia demonstrates a clear trend toward strengthening control over the information space, especially in the context of countering Russian propaganda and disinformation after 2022. NEPLP has become a key body actively using its expanded powers to block websites and TV channels. In parallel, routine blocking of illegal gambling sites and sites violating copyright continues. Although OONI data do not currently allow a detailed assessment of the entire spectrum of blocking, official messages from NEPLP and IAUI indicate a significant number of blocked resources. This raises questions about the balance between ensuring national security, combating illegal content and protecting freedom of speech and access to information.

4. Human rights violations on the internet

In Latvia, as in many other countries, there are concerns about the observance of human rights on the internet, despite the generally high level of internet freedom noted in some international reports. The main problem areas concern freedom of expression, especially in the context of combating disinformation and incitement to hatred, as well as potential pressure on media and activists.

Latvian legislation provides for liability for incitement to hatred and dissemination of false information, which may also affect the online space. The practice of applying these norms, especially in relation to "fake news" and statements regarded as a threat to national security, causes discussions about the boundaries of freedom of speech. The strengthening of internet resource blocking, especially after 2022, is also a factor requiring attention from the point of view of access to information.

4.1. Internet shutdowns by government order

Based on available research materials, **no cases** of full or large-scale regional internet shutdowns by direct order of the authorities, similar to those observed in some other countries during periods of political instability or protests, have been recorded in Latvia for the period from 2019 to 2025. Reports from international organizations monitoring internet shutdowns, such as Access Now (campaign #KeepItOn) or Cloudflare data, do not indicate Latvia as a country practicing such measures in the specified period.

Latvian legislation, in particular the Law "On Emergency Situation and State of Exception", theoretically grants the government broad powers to restrict rights and freedoms in an emergency situation, which could include restrictions on communications services. However, even during emergency situations related to the COVID-19 pandemic, when various restrictions on movement and gatherings were introduced, no full internet shutdowns were reported. Instead, efforts were focused on ensuring continuity of communications for remote work and education. The new Law on National Cybersecurity also provides for the possibility of suspending services in the event of cyber threats, but this rather concerns targeted measures to ensure security rather than mass shutdowns.

Thus, the practice of large-scale internet shutdowns in Latvia for the period under review is absent. Restrictions on access to individual internet resources (website blocking) are carried out on other grounds and procedures described in section 3.5.

4.2. Criminalization of online speech

In Latvia, there are legislative norms that can lead to administrative or criminal prosecution of citizens for statements on the internet, especially if they concern incitement to hatred, dissemination of knowingly false information threatening public order, or justification of crimes against humanity and the state.

Legislative basis:

As already mentioned in section 3.4, the Criminal Law of Latvia contains articles applicable to online statements:

- **Article 78:** Incitement to national, ethnic, racial or religious hatred.
- **Article 150:** Incitement to social discord.

- **Article 231 (and the discussed 231.2):** Hooliganism, which can be interpreted as dissemination of false information that caused gross violation of public order.
- **Article 157:** Defamation.
- The laws also prohibit justification of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany against Latvia, as well as statements threatening national security.

Cases of prosecution:

1. **Cases related to dissemination of false information (Article 231 of the Criminal Code):**
 - In 2021, Latvia became the first Baltic country to initiate prosecutions of persons for intentional dissemination of "dangerous false information" in accordance with Article 231 of the Criminal Law. However, as noted, the number of convictions was small due to legal uncertainty in defining "fake news" within this article.
 - The publication Re:Baltica in May 2021 reported cases where the State Police detained people for disseminating disinformation about COVID-19, applying the article on hooliganism. It was indicated that Latvia is the only one of the Baltic countries using the Criminal Code to combat disinformation in this way.
2. **Cases related to incitement to hatred (Articles 78, 150 of the Criminal Code):**
 - According to the U.S. State Department data for 2023 (covering events up to June 2023), the State Security Service (VDD) initiated five criminal cases against persons for inciting national, ethnic, religious or racial hatred. In the report for 2022 (data up to September 2022), 22 such cases initiated by VDD were mentioned, and one case for antisemitic comments. These cases could potentially include statements on the internet, although the reports do not always specify this.
 - In May 2021, VDD referred a case to the prosecutor's office to initiate criminal prosecution of a person for inciting national hatred and disseminating fake news.
3. **Alexander Gaponenko case:**
 - Alexander Gaponenko, an activist advocating for the rights of the Russian-speaking minority, has repeatedly attracted the attention of law enforcement agencies with his publications on Facebook. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) considered his complaint (case No. 59402/14) regarding his statements and the reaction to them by Latvian authorities, although the details of this case in the provided materials concern an earlier period and other aspects (for example, citizenship issues in the context of his statements or later events). Nevertheless, his activity on social networks often became the subject of public discussions and attention from special services.

4. Other cases:

- In March 2025, the State Security Service (VDD) appealed to the prosecutor's office with a request to initiate criminal prosecution against four persons for purchasing and supplying portable satellite internet kits to the Russian army for use in the war against Ukraine, which is a violation of EU sanctions. Although this case is not directly related to "statements on the internet", it demonstrates the authorities' attention to citizens' actions related to the use of internet technologies in the context of the conflict.

The complexity in assessing the full picture of prosecutions for statements on the internet is that not all cases receive wide publicity, and official statistics do not always detail what proportion of cases under articles on incitement to hatred or hooliganism is related specifically to online activity. Nevertheless, the available data indicate that Latvian authorities actively use existing legislation to respond to statements on the internet that they consider illegal, especially in the context of national security and combating disinformation.

4.3. Persecution of media and NGOs

In Latvia, despite the generally favorable environment for media freedom, in the period from 2019 to 2025, certain cases and trends were observed that can be regarded as pressure or persecution of media and, to a lesser extent, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for their activities, including publications on the internet.

Pressure on media and journalists:

- **Blocking of media and revocation of licenses:** The most notable actions were taken by the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP) after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Dozens of Russian and pro-Russian TV channels and websites were blocked under the pretext of disseminating disinformation and threatening national security. Although these measures were mainly directed against foreign media, they created a precedent and provoked discussions about the boundaries of freedom of speech and the powers of the regulator.
 - **TV Rain (Dozhd) case:** In December 2022, NEPLP revoked the broadcasting license of the independent Russian TV channel "Dozhd", which moved to Latvia after the start of the war. The decision was motivated by a number of violations, including showing a map with Crimea as part of Russia and statements by the presenter that were regarded as

support for Russian military personnel. This decision caused widespread international criticism from human rights and journalistic organizations, who saw in it a threat to media freedom.

- **Financial pressure and concentration of ownership:** High concentration of ownership in the media is noted, which makes editorial offices vulnerable to the influence of business interests and political interference. Public media are largely dependent on state funding, which can also create risks for their independence. In 2023, the Public Electronic Media Council (SEPLP) called for an increase in funding for public media to reduce the risks of political influence.
- **Defamation as a criminal offense:** The retention of criminal liability for defamation (Article 157 of the Criminal Code) creates a potential tool for pressure on journalists.
- **Online attacks and harassment of journalists:** Latvian journalists, like their colleagues in other countries, face online attacks, discredit campaigns and threats, especially when covering sensitive topics. In 2023, CPJ documented cases of Pegasus spyware being used against exiled Russian journalists working in Latvia, as well as against one Latvian journalist. A study by the Latvian Association of Journalists showed that a third of surveyed journalists were subjected to hostile statements, and a significant part faced surveillance or legal pressure due to their work.
- **Restriction of access to information:** During the state of emergency on the border with Belarus (August 2021 – August 2023), media access to border areas was restricted.

Pressure on NGOs:

- **"I Want to Help Refugees" (Gribu palīdzēt bēgļiem) case:** In January 2023, the authorities initiated a criminal case on smuggling charges against two members of this NGO for their work in providing assistance to refugees and migrants on the border. This case caused concern among human rights organizations regarding possible persecution for humanitarian activities.
- **General challenges for NGOs:** Although no direct systematic persecution of NGOs for online content is recorded in the provided materials, NGOs working in sensitive areas (human rights, anti-corruption, minority assistance) may face pressure or discredit campaigns, including in the online space. NGO funding also remains a relevant issue.

Overall, although Latvia has a relatively high press freedom rating, individual cases and legislative initiatives, especially related to national security and combating disinformation, cause concern among human rights defenders and the journalistic community regarding potential risks for freedom of expression and the activities of media and NGOs in the online space.

5. Civil society in the field of internet governance

Civil society in Latvia plays an active role in issues related to digital rights, internet freedom and countering disinformation, although its capabilities may be limited by resources and the overall political situation. Various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic circles and volunteer groups are involved in monitoring, analysis and advocacy on issues related to the internet.

Civil society shows particular activity in the field of media literacy, fact-checking and countering disinformation, especially originating from Russia. There are initiatives such as the "Baltic Elves", who on a volunteer basis expose online fakes and track hostile campaigns. Organizations similar to the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence conduct trainings for journalists and contribute to raising journalism standards. These efforts complement state policy in the field of information security and media literacy.

5.1. Organizations

A number of civil society organizations operate in Latvia that deal with protecting citizens' rights on the internet, freedom of speech, media literacy and countering disinformation.

1. Latvian Centre for Human Rights (Latvijas Cilvēktiesību centrs, LCHR):
 - Description: One of the oldest human rights organizations in Latvia, founded in 1993. The centre works on a wide range of fundamental rights issues, including prevention of discrimination, hate crimes and hate speech, rights of refugees and migrants, as well as minority integration. In the context of digital rights, their work on combating hate speech (including online) and protection from discrimination is directly related to freedom of expression and security on the internet. LCHR publishes reports and studies, including on topics of hate speech and Euroscepticism, where online discourses are analyzed. The organization also provides legal assistance.
 - Website: <https://cilvektiesibas.org.lv/en/>
2. Society for Openness – Delna (Sabiedrība par atklātību – Delna):
 - Description: Latvian branch of Transparency International. The main direction of activity is combating corruption and promoting principles of good governance and transparency. Although their focus is not exclusively on digital rights, their work on ensuring transparency of state processes and access to information indirectly contributes to protecting citizens' rights in the digital environment. Delna publishes

transparency indices of municipalities, which may affect the accessibility of information online.

- Website: <https://delna.lv/lv/> (main site in Latvian, information about Delna mentioned in)
3. Latvian Association of Journalists (Latvijas Žurnālistu asociācija, LŽA):
- Description: Professional organization uniting journalists of Latvia. LŽA deals with issues of media freedom, professional ethics, journalist safety and working conditions. The association actively responds to cases of pressure on journalists and restrictions on freedom of speech, including in the online context. LŽA participates in developing proposals to improve the media environment and cooperates with international organizations on media freedom issues. For example, LŽA signed a memorandum of cooperation with the State Police to ensure effective protection of journalists. They also conduct research and surveys among journalists about their working conditions and threats.
 - Website: <https://www.latvijaszurnalisti.lv/> (mentioned in)
4. Baltic Centre for Media Excellence (BCME):
- Description: Regional organization based in Riga that supports quality journalism and media literacy in the Baltic countries. BCME conducts trainings for journalists, promotes experience exchange and implementation of high professional standards. Their activities are important for strengthening independent media and their ability to counter disinformation, including in the online space.
 - Website: <https://baltic.media/> (indirectly mentioned in the context of journalism support)
5. CERT.LV (Information Technology Security Incident Prevention Institution):
- Description: Although CERT.LV is a structural subdivision of the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics of the University of Latvia and closely cooperates with state bodies in the field of cybersecurity, it also plays an important role in informing and educating society and organizations on cyber threats and safe behavior on the internet. CERT.LV provides a DNS firewall to protect against malicious sites and actively works to improve cyber hygiene. Their activities contribute to protecting users' rights to a safe internet.
 - Website: <https://cert.lv/>
6. Drossinternets.lv (Safer Internet Centre in Latvia):
- Description: This centre is probably part of the wider European network of Safer Internet Centres (SIC). Its main task is educating children, parents and teachers on safe internet use, as well as operating a hotline for reporting illegal content, in particular child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Such centres play a key role in protecting children's rights in the digital environment.

- Website: <https://www.drossinternets.lv/> (mentioned in)

These and other organizations contribute to forming a safer and more rights-based digital environment in Latvia, although their influence and resources may vary.

5.2. VPN and circumvention tools

The use of VPNs (virtual private networks) and other circumvention tools is a common practice among internet users worldwide to ensure privacy, security and access to content that may be restricted by geography or other reasons. In Latvia, as in other EU countries, the use of VPNs is generally legal for lawful purposes, such as protecting privacy or secure remote access to corporate networks.

However, against the background of strengthening measures to block internet resources, especially related to the dissemination of disinformation, unlicensed gambling or copyright infringement, interest in VPNs and other circumvention tools may increase among users wishing to access such resources. No direct legislative bans on using VPNs to bypass blocking in Latvia have been identified in the provided materials, but it is important to note that bypassing blocking to access illegal content does not legalize the consumption of such content itself.

5.2.1. Status of VPN services

In Latvia, as an EU member state, legislation generally does not prohibit the use of VPN services for lawful purposes, such as ensuring privacy on the internet, protecting transmitted data or secure remote access to corporate networks. EU norms regarding data protection (GDPR) and electronic communications privacy (ePrivacy Directive) form the general framework in which both users and VPN service providers operate.

No direct laws specifically regulating the use, advertising or sale of VPN services in Latvia have been identified in the provided materials. The activities of VPN providers, like other providers of electronic communications services, fall under the general Law on Electronic Communications and the Law on Information Society Services. These laws establish general requirements for service providers but do not contain specific restrictions specifically for VPNs.

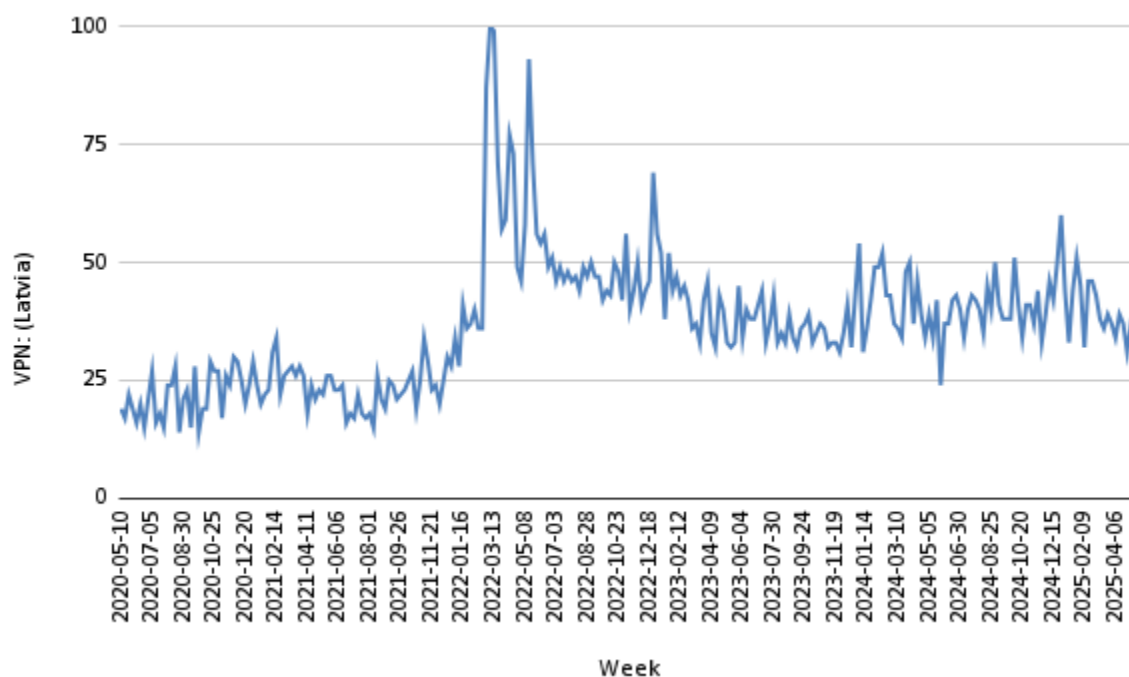
It is important to note that although the use of VPNs is not prohibited, their use to bypass legally established blocking (for example, sites with unlicensed gambling or resources disseminating prohibited content by decision of NEPLP) may be regarded as an action aimed at gaining access to illegal information, although liability for the mere fact of using VPNs for such purposes is not clearly

prescribed as a separate offense in the available sources. The main responsibility for blocking lies with internet providers, who are obliged to execute decisions of authorized bodies.

5.2.2. Number of VPN users

Exact data on the number of VPN users in Latvia and the dynamics of this indicator for the period from 2019 to 2025 are difficult to access and often based on global or regional surveys and estimates from commercial VPN providers or research companies. No specialized official statistics on VPN use in Latvia have been found in the provided materials.

Graph 9: Dynamics of VPN search queries in Latvia (2020–2025)



Source: *trends.google.com*

Based on the graph of the dynamics of "VPN" search queries in Latvia and taking into account the specified context, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- **Sharp increase in interest due to geopolitical shock:** The most notable element on the graph is the explosive growth in search queries about VPN, which begins at the end of February 2022 and reaches an absolute peak in March–April. This directly coincides with the

start of the full-scale war in Ukraine and the subsequent blocking of Russian media and resources on the territory of Latvia and the EU. Residents of Latvia likely massively searched for tools to bypass these restrictions, access blocked information or protect their data in conditions of increased geopolitical tension.

- **Formation of a "new normal":** After the peaks in spring 2022, interest in VPN declined but did not return to the previous, "pre-February" values. The average level of search queries from mid-2022 to 2025 established at a mark that is approximately twice as high as in 2020–2021. This indicates that geopolitical events led to a long-term increase in awareness of VPN services. Part of the users who first installed VPN in 2022 continued to use them, and the overall digital literacy of the population in cybersecurity and access to information issues increased.

Information on blocking VPN services:

The provided materials do not contain direct information about targeted blocking of VPN services themselves or their protocols on the territory of Latvia from 2019 to 2025. The main efforts of the authorities on blocking are directed at specific websites disseminating illegal content (propaganda, unlicensed gambling, copyright infringement), rather than at VPN infrastructure as such.

Theoretically, if any VPN service is systematically used to organize access to a large volume of prohibited content or to carry out other illegal activities, the authorities may attempt to restrict access to the servers of this particular VPN provider using the same mechanisms as for blocking ordinary websites (for example, through a NEPLP decision or court decision obliging ISPs to block IP addresses or domains). However, no mass or systematic practice of blocking popular VPN services in Latvia has been reported.

5.2.3. Cases of prosecution for using VPN

The provided research materials **lack information about cases of prosecution of citizens or organizations in Latvia directly for the mere fact of using VPN services** from 2019 to 2025. As noted earlier, the use of VPN for lawful purposes, such as protecting privacy or bypassing geographical restrictions on access to legal content, is not illegal in Latvia.

Prosecution may arise if VPN is used to commit other offenses, for example, to access child pornography, carry out fraudulent actions, copyright infringement on a commercial scale or for activities threatening national security. In such cases, liability arises not for using VPN as such, but for the main illegal act, where VPN could serve only as a tool.

There is also **no information about prosecution of organizations providing VPN services** on the territory of Latvia only for the mere fact of providing such services. The activities of such companies are regulated by general legislation in the field of electronic communications and information society services.

5.2.4. Monitoring of blockings

There are several resources and organizations in Latvia and at the international level that monitor or provide information regarding internet resource blocking.

1. National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP):

- **Description:** NEPLP publishes on its official website a list of domain names to which access is restricted on the territory of Latvia by its decisions. These decisions mainly concern the dissemination of unauthorized TV programmes, disinformation, content threatening national security, and copyright infringement. Over the past years, especially after 2022, NEPLP has actively blocked Russian and pro-Russian resources. In March 2024, 9 sites were reported blocked for Russian propaganda, and in January 2025 – another 7 sites.
- **Website:** <https://www.neplp.lv/lv/piekluves-ierobezosana-timekla-vietnem>.

2. Lottery and Gambling Supervisory Inspection (IAUI):

- **Description:** IAUI maintains and publishes a list of blocked domain names of unlicensed interactive gambling operators. As of October 2024, 579 domains have been blocked on the basis of 3576 decisions made since 2014. In 2023, 317 such sites were blocked.
- **Website:** <https://www.iaui.gov.lv/lv/bloketas-saites>.

3. Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI):

- **Description:** OONI is a global project that collects data on internet censorship, website and application blocking, as well as the presence of surveillance systems using volunteers running OONI Probe tests. OONI data for Latvia show that more than 1.3 million measurements were collected from 2015 to 2025. However, at the time of the last access to the data, information on specific confirmed blocked categories of sites in Latvia did not load ("No data" or "Network Error"). OONI provides tools for analyzing anomalies that may indicate blocking.
- **Website:** <https://explorer.ooni.org/country/LV>.

4. CERT.LV (Information Technology Security Incident Prevention Institution):

- **Description:** CERT.LV uses a DNS firewall to block access to malicious sites (phishing, malware). In its reports, CERT.LV provides statistics on the number of blocked requests. For example, in Q4 2024, the DNS firewall prevented more than 459 thousand visits to

malicious sites. Although this is not monitoring of censorship blocking, it is an important aspect of restricting access to certain resources for security reasons.

- **Website:** <https://cert.lv/> (publishes activity reports).

Digest of reports over the last 5 years (2019–2024):

The main volume of reports on blocking in Latvia for this period is related to NEPLP decisions to restrict access to Russian and pro-Russian media and sites, especially after February 2022. The list of blocked unlicensed gambling sites from IAUI is also regularly updated. OONI continues data collection, but detailed country reports on Latvia with analysis of specific blocking in the provided materials are absent, and online data by category were unavailable. CERT.LV regularly reports on the activity of its DNS filter blocking malicious resources.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of the state of the internet and digital rights in Latvia for the period from 2019 to 2025 reveals a complex picture characterized by a high level of internet penetration and developed infrastructure, but also by the state's growing attention to control over the information space, especially in the context of national security and combating disinformation.

On the one hand, Latvia demonstrates positive indicators in the development of internet infrastructure: a high percentage of internet users, a significant share of fiber-optic connections, a competitive mobile communications market with good access speeds. The country follows European principles of internet governance aimed at openness and competition. Legislation in the field of data protection is harmonized with GDPR. There are active civil society organizations dealing with digital rights and media literacy.

On the other hand, there is a tightening of online content regulation. Especially after 2022, in response to geopolitical challenges, the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEPLP) actively uses its powers to block websites and TV channels, mainly Russian and pro-Russian, for reasons of national security and combating propaganda. The blocking of unlicensed gambling sites and resources violating copyright continues. The Criminal Law contains articles that can be applied to prosecute online statements, including the dissemination of “fakes” or incitement to hatred, although the practice of their application and the legal clarity of definitions cause discussions. Cases of pressure on media and journalists, including online attacks and license revocations, have also been recorded.

Forecast of developments:

1. **Neutral scenario:** Latvia will continue to balance between ensuring freedom of access to information and the need to protect the national information space. The level of blocking will remain approximately at the current level, with a focus on resources that clearly disseminate disinformation, hostile propaganda or violate legislation (gambling, copyright). Legislation on “words on the internet” will be applied selectively, without mass repression, but legal uncertainty will remain. Infrastructure development will continue, possibly with an emphasis on cybersecurity. Pressure on independent media and NGOs will remain hidden or indirect, without obvious tightening. The use of VPN will remain legal, but users bypassing blocking may attract the attention of law enforcement agencies in the event of access to prohibited content.
2. **Positive scenario (weakening of regulation, liberalization):** In the event of a decrease in geopolitical tension and strengthening of internal stability, some weakening of control over the information space is possible. NEPLP may review some blocking decisions, especially if they concern resources that do not pose a direct and obvious threat. Legislation on “fakes” may be clarified with greater emphasis on protecting freedom of speech and narrowing the grounds for criminal prosecution. Support for independent media and media literacy programs will increase as the main tool for combating disinformation rather than blocking. Dialogue between the state, civil society and the internet industry on regulation issues will intensify. The number of cases of pressure on journalists and activists will decrease.
3. **Negative scenario (strengthening of censorship):** If geopolitical tension persists or intensifies, as well as in the event of internal crises, further tightening of internet control is possible. The list of blocked resources may expand to include not only propaganda but also opposition or critically minded resources under the pretext of combating threats to national security. Legislation on “words on the internet” may be toughened and applied more widely, which will lead to increased self-censorship. Attempts may be made to restrict the use of VPN or other anonymization tools. Pressure on independent media and NGOs involved in monitoring digital rights will increase. More active attempts to monitor citizens’ online activity are possible.

The most likely scenario appears to be the development of events according to the neutral scenario with elements of the negative one, especially if the geopolitical situation in the region remains tense. Latvia, as an EU member, will seek to comply with European human rights standards, but the priority of national security will most likely continue to determine a tough line regarding content perceived as a threat.

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