



UK Science & Innovation Network Summary

Latvia

1. Science and innovation landscape

The [Global Innovation Index 2024](#) ranked Latvia in the 42nd place. Out of different innovation input and output indices, Latvia performed best in infrastructure, creative outputs, business sophistication and institutions. [European Innovation Scoreboard 2024](#) ranks Latvia 30th among EU countries. Under the latter classification system, Latvia is considered an emerging innovator whose relative advantages are tertiary education, trademark applications, and public-private co-publications. In 2021 total funds invested in research and development (R&D) amounted to 0.71% of GDP. The government has undertaken to increase this funding to 1.50% of GDP by 2027. Almost half of the public spending on research came from European structural funds.

Government priorities and funding

The national science and technology policy framework is set out in the Guidelines for Science and Technology Development, and Innovation for 2014 to 2020 (approved by the Government). The guidelines specify R&D smart specialisation areas for transforming Latvian economy towards higher added value products and increased productivity. It aims at concentrating public R&D investment and providing balanced and complementary support measures to strengthen innovation capacity of Latvia's economy. The following 5 smart specialisation areas were identified:

- 1) Knowledge based bioeconomics
- 2) Biomedicine, medical technologies, bio pharmacy and biotechnologies
- 3) Advanced materials, technologies and engineering system
- 4) Smart energy
- 5) Information and communication technologies

Total EU funding for support to increase R&D and innovation capacity in the defined priority areas was more than £400 million for 2014 to 2020.

The State funding for research is awarded to competitive scientific institutions with specific minimum criteria for research staff. Moreover, since 2018 all state research funding instruments (for example, State Research Programmes, fundamental and applied research grants) use external evaluation by international experts for all R&D project applications.



Higher education and research landscape

Currently there are 6 state universities, 11 state higher education institutions and 17 state colleges in Latvia. The country also has 11 private higher education institutions and 8 colleges. 79408 students were enrolled in Latvian higher education institutions in 2019/2020, and the international students (including Erasmus+ students) shared 11% of the total number. In Latvia there are 69 research institutions, 21 of which are state funded.

The most important role in international projects during 2019 was played by:

- Riga Technical University (RTU)
- Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis (IOS)
- University of Latvia (UL)
- Riga Stradiņš University (RSU)
- Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LULST, formerly known as the Latvian University of Agriculture)

These 5 science bodies have secured 77% of total international funding. Many industry-commissioned contractual studies were implemented by the Latvian State Forest Research Institute Silava, RTU and UL, which secured over €3.2 million under this metric in 2019.

Research and development priorities

Latvia's research institutions have strengths within health sciences, engineering, technology and natural sciences. The national priorities in fundamental and applied research for 2018 to 2021 set by the Ministry of Education and Science are in line with Latvia's smart specialisation areas and are oriented to Latvia's economic, social and cultural growth:

- technologies, materials and systems engineering for increased added value products and processes, and cybersecurity
- strengthening security of energy supply, development of the energy sector, energy efficiency and sustainable transport
- climate change, nature protection, environment; sustainable use of local natural resources for the development of a knowledge-based bioeconomy
- Latvia's statehood, language and values, culture and art
- public health
- knowledge culture and innovations for economic sustainability
- demographics, sports, open and inclusive society, welfare and social resilience
- state and public safety and defence

An important step towards bringing order to the Latvian science sector was taken in 2020 when, in accordance with a Cabinet decree, the Latvian Council of Science assumed control of the State Education Development Agency (SEDA) Science and Research Policy Support Department, which is comprised of 4 structural units:



- the International Research Programme Department
- the Research and Innovation Policy Support Department (whose Latvian Council of Science department name is – the Post-Doctoral Programme Department)
- the European Economic Area and Norwegian Programme Department
- the Horizon Europe Programme National Contact Point.

Latvia participation in EU programmes

In 2022, Latvian organisations participated in 474 project applications in the Horizon Europe programme, submitting 466 corresponding projects. 636 Latvian organisations engaged in these project submissions, as a single project could involve several Latvian partners. Out of 474 submitted project submissions, 286 were approved. The European Community provided EUR 32.70 million in funding to 115 projects, and thus to 24.27% of projects submitted by Latvian bodies. Of these, 6 projects are co-ordinated by Latvian organisations.

2. UK partnership with Latvia on science, technology and innovation

In December 2021, the Joint Declaration of co-operation between the UK and Latvia was signed. Its goal is to identify opportunities to build closer economic links between the UK and Latvia in key sectors including cyber and the digital economy, life sciences, research and development, technology, defence, energy, and infrastructure.

There are efforts to further explore the possibilities for collaboration on green tech, carbon capture, smart cities, and green hydrogen. The goal for this is to foster co-operation to promote the sustainable and safe application of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), 5G/6G, blockchain and quantum computing. Thereby identifying opportunities for collaboration aimed at strengthening the resilience of critical supply chains.

3. Science and Innovation Network contacts

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