

Protocol

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In diplomacy, protocol is a set of traditions, standards and rules governing diplomatic relations between, for example, top government officials. It also facilitates successful accomplishment of various diplomatic objectives. Protocol can broadly be described as etiquette of diplomacy and affairs of state.

Protocol traditions and approved General Protocol Guidelines provide rules and procedures for state events and participation of high-ranking officials in ceremonies and other events. Foreign visits of top government officials and visits of foreign dignitaries to Latvia are subject to international diplomatic protocol.

Presidential Protocol is responsible for the protocol activities of the President of Latvia.

Forms of address



We often wonder what the proper form of address is when we encounter a high-ranking government official.

Your Excellency is the most common form of address on formal occasions when referring directly to president of Latvia, speaker of the Saeima or a prime minister. It is appropriate for addressing an official directly (verbally) or written correspondence. You may also use *Your Excellency* when referring to minister for foreign affairs during a foreign visit or other important diplomatic events and ceremonial occasions.

Ministers and other public officials are addressed by *Honourable* (Mister) and *Esteemed* (Madam).

In less formal settings and everyday circumstance, presidents are addressed as *Mister President* or *Madam president* or surname and *mister/missis*.

When addressing a president in attendance and letters addressed to president of Latvia must use either *Honourable Mr President* or *Esteemed Madam President*.

Former presidents of Latvia are directly and in official correspondence are most commonly addressed as *Honourable Mr (surname)* or *Esteemed Madam (surname)*. *Mr President* or *Mrs President* are also acceptable if no incumbent president is in attendance to avoid confusion.

When referring to a president in a written text where official capacity is of importance, *President of Latvia* would be the most appropriate form, adding years served as president in the brackets.

Use of *ex-president* or *former president of Latvia* is not advised. Such forms are considered colloquial and suitable for unofficial communication only.

Presidential standard has regular state flag-coloured cross against the white background with the same colour pattern as the state flag. The large-size state coat-of-arms is placed at the centre of the cross at the cut-off.



Height of the coat of arms is one third of the height of the standard, the sun, located in the centre of the coat of arms, should match the central point of the presidential flag. The ratio of lines in the cross against the height of the standard should be 1:5. The ratio between the width and height of the standard should be 3:2.

Presidential standard is:

displayed above or at the permanent residence of the president of Latvia

President's working office

cars or other vehicles carrying president of Latvia

other presidential occasions

President's working quarters are usually adorned with state flag of Latvia and presidential standard.

Making foreign visits is one of the primary responsibilities of highest government officials. There are various types of such visits: state, official, working, transit and private visit. Each type of visit and intended activities may differ based on protocol traditions, culture and bilateral relations with particular country to be visited.

State visit is the main form for developing bilateral relations at the official level. State visit is the highest form of visit as that is the only type exclusively reserved for the head of state. In Latvia, President is the head of the Latvian State. State visit is arranged after a formal invitation from another head of state. State visits carry a special significance, protocol during state visits is more ceremonious, heads of state usually exchange state honours and are accompanied by extended delegation of other high-ranking government officials.

Officials go on official visit to another country upon its official invitation. Such visits are generally less ceremonious, more practical. Nevertheless, official visits still contain some compulsory elements, such as meetings with top officials of receiving side.

Working visits are very practical. Usually, these meetings are arranged directly by officials from both sides. These may include working meetings between counterparts from both sides or participation in various events, such as conferences, summits, forums, commemorative events. Working visit agenda has no protocol events and military ceremonies. Regional visits of the president of Latvia inside the country fall into the category of working visits.

A transit is when an official stays in country only temporarily (at an airport or when crossing a country by car). While in transit, government officials are supported by the protocol staff of the transit country.

Private visit is when top officials choose to spend vacation or holidays in another country or travel abroad for other private reasons. Such visits usually do not envisage any official meetings and require no protocol support. That, however, is subject to traditions, culture and understanding of hospitality of receiving state. Top government officials continue to act in their official capacity even on private visits.

Delegations and their composition depending on the type and purpose of visit

Top state officials are usually accompanied by delegation on foreign visits, except private visits. Composition of the delegation depends on the rank of official, type and purpose of visit, and sometimes traditions of receiving state. Heads of delegation may choose to include other public officials, advisers, line ministry personnel, heads of state and local institutions, various experts and business owners or media employees. Size and composition of the delegation may also vary depending on the type of visit, national interests and sometimes also traditions of receiving side.

Exchange of gifts is an ancient and essential human tradition. Gift-giving has evolved over time. Gifts initially symbolised good intentions and offer of friendship by one side to another. Nowadays, however, exchange of gifts is more of a gesture of respect and dignity, especially in international diplomatic settings. It is rooted in specific traditions and culture of each nation. For example, in East, gift-giving is very important. Luscious gifts are presented, and also expected. Europe, and Nordic countries in particular, are gradually abandoning the tradition of exchanging formal gifts. They have chosen to present more meaningful and sentimentally valuable gifts.

Culture of gift-giving is an important part of Latvian hospitality. It is deeply rooted in tradition of bringing a treat or a

present, such as flowers, when visiting. Or bringing the best to the table when a dear and near visitor comes by. This is the kind of hospitality still found and distinct in Latvian regions.

President of Latvia and other high-ranking officials receive gifts when on foreign visits, working visits to Latvian regions or participating in various events where gifts are usually of lesser, more sentimental value. Gifts mostly come from Latvian and foreign dignitaries and individuals.

State gifts

As a rule, official state gifts represent the country, culture, history and traditions of a state. Such gifts may also depict an important event for both countries. Gifts presented during foreign and official visits often contain a symbolic message. Gifts may also reflect personal or national values, or the close relationship between the presenting and receiving side (less official, closer, friendly ties). Over time, however, gift-giving traditions have transformed and acquired additional dimensions. These traditions have been modernised and often simplified. It is not rare that no gifts are exchanged between states during working and other lower-level visits, with gifts being exchanged only on highly formal occasions.

Gift exchange protocol is usually coordinated between two states in the run up to the actual state or official visit. Gifts are exchanged directly during state and official visits, i.e., official from another country publicly presents gift to the other side, photographs are taken and the whole event and gifts acquire additional meaning and significance. Less official occasions are usually more *protocolary*, i.e., a formal exchange of gifts is arranged where one official hands the gift over to his/her counterpart without additional media coverage.

Gift register and collection

All gifts presented to the president of Latvia, except souvenirs and information materials (catalogues, brochures, etc.), food items with shorter expiration date (cakes, fruit, snack gift baskets, beverages) and flowers are recorded in a register. Data contains time and place when gift was received and from whom and on what occasion it has been given. After recording, gifts are placed into Presidential Chancery's gift collection and rotated through display at Diplomatic Gift Room of the Riga Castle as much as possible. To showcase gifts outside the museum and special display, items are used in the working setting as well. For example, artwork is exhibited at presidential working quarters to let the art be appreciated.

Some of the gifts presented to president of Latvia are stored at the National History Museum of Latvia, in a special presidential collection.

Purchase of gifts

Art experts conduct post-tenure valuation of all diplomatic gifts received by a president of Latvia. Each item is given purchase price that a head of state may pay to acquire an item, which bears special personal value.

Recording and registration of diplomatic gifts is regulated by Cabinet of Ministers Regulation 255 'Procedures for registration, valuation, use and purchase of diplomatic and official gifts, which are considered national or local property', issued pursuant to Article 13.1 and 13.5 of Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Activities of Public Officials.

Dress code

Visitors attending events with participation of the president of Latvia must follow approved dress code. Event or theme-specific dress code for the event is usually indicated in the invitation. Please note that dress code on the invitation will always refer to gentleman's wardrobe. International business etiquette requires women to adjust their dress to

gentleman's clothes. Invitation may contain additional instructions or guidelines regarding the clothes of choice.

Dark suit

Dark suit is the most common dress code for business. You can wear dark suit to official events during the day or at night. A 'dark suit' is a monochrome black, navy or dark grey men's suit, combined with white or another monochrome shirt and a mandatory tie. All jacket buttons, except for the bottom one, have to be done if there are at least two buttons.

Costume suit, women's suit or a dress is the equivalent of male dark suit for women. This formal wear must be monochrome (no patterns or flowers), but women are allowed to wear brighter colours than men. The preferred skirt or dress length is knee or below knee.

Dress etiquette encourages women to wear more subdued attire at events attended by the first lady to avoid overshadowing.

Semi-formal

This dress code applies to events that are commonly less formal but still require a more sophisticated attire rather than casual. Such events would include meetings between the president and school children or youth, Christmas events for families and other similar occasions. Since dark suit requirements cannot be applied to children or youth, semi-formal dress code would imply clothing that is above casual and matches the occasion and significance of the event. Accompanying adults should follow the dark suit guidelines.

Black tie

Tuxedo is an elegant evening attire for a reception, ball, opera or theatre play opening night after 6 p.m.

Men's tuxedo jacket is similar to that of a classic fit suit, usually black, with peak lapels or shawl collar, collar will always be silk, trousers (black) without turn up, silk stripe sewn over the outside seam of the leg, white shirt, classic or upright wing collar shirt, black bowtie, black silk cummerbund worn with pleats (pockets) facing up, accompanied by sophisticated, laced black leather shoes or black patent leather tuxedo dress shoes and silk socks, white breast pocket square is optional. All tuxedo jacket buttons, except for the bottom one, have to be done if there are at least two buttons.

When invitation requires men to wear a tuxedo women can choose between short and long gown, unless it is expressly specified otherwise. A ball with dances requires long gown, while a short gown is suitable for receptions. A more sophisticated women's suit or elegant knee or below knee-length skirt suit is also appropriate. Dress or skirt may have slit. Dress can have subtle décolletage, while shoulders must be covered. Evening attire must be monochrome. There are no other colour restrictions. Ladies should wear high heel court shoes with this evening attire. A small, elegant clutch will be the best accessory.

NB! Be extra careful when choosing the attire for the events attended by the first lady.

White tie

White tie is an evening dress for very special occasions. There are very few remaining white tie events these days. However, if you get invited to one, getting the white tie right might take serious preparation to match the profile of the event.

You may be invited by a president to a white tie event if it is a special dinner in honour of a foreign dignitary (for example, a state dinner) or a significant national holiday, such as proclamation of the republic on 18 November.

White tie requires a black jacket (coat tail) with extended tails and a slit on the back. Front ends at waist. Jacket must have silk lapels. Trousers must be black, no turn-ups. Black side strips. White waistcoat with three buttons, all done. White pique shirt with upright wing collars or shirt with hidden buttons or sophisticated buttons. White bowtie, elegant cufflinks. Matching black patent leather dress shoes and black silk socks. White breast pocket square is optional (not compatible with state awards). Gentlemen may also wear delicate white leather gloves inside. Coat tail is not compatible with wristwatch (gentlemen may wear pocket watch with their waistcoat or keep it in other pockets).

Ladies should wear a monochrome long gown (floor length mandatory). One or both shoulders and back may be partially open. The rear part of the skirt may be extended (with train). Shoes need to be sophisticated, made from delicate leather, with high heels. Delicate stockings. Elegant small clutch made of leather or other fabric, may be embroidered. Women can wear gloves, but it is not a must-have. You can hold a glass when wearing gloves, but they must subtly come off once seated at the dinner table. Jewellery must match the gown (bijou jewellery not allowed). Wristwatch or hat is not used.

A complete and authentic national costume is a perfect substitute for a white tie attire both for men and women.

<https://www.president.lv/en/protocol>