

# History of the Presidency

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The establishment of the Institution of the President of Latvia was envisaged by the Satversme (Constitution) of the Republic of Latvia adopted by the Constitutional Assembly on 15 February 1922. Before the Satversme took effect, there was no separate office of the President of Latvia.

A Chairperson of the Parliament undertook the duties of the Head of State. According to the first provisional constitution, the political platform of the National Council of the Republic of Latvia dated 17 November 1918, Chairperson of the National Council of Latvia Jānis Čakste undertook the functions of the Head of State from the day when the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed to the day when the Latvian Constitutional Assembly convened. On the other hand, the second provisional constitution, the Provisional Regulations on the Political System of the Republic of Latvia dated 1 June 1920, set forth that the President of the Latvian Constitutional Assembly Jānis Čakste fulfilled the functions of the Head of State before the Satversme took legal effect and the Saeima (Parliament) convened. It is interesting that the Law on the Satversme of the Republic of Latvia Entering into Force of 20 June 1922 stipulated that until the election of the President of Latvia, the President of the Latvian Constitutional Assembly would continue fulfilling his duties.

On 14 January 1922, the first convocation of the Saeima elected Jānis Čakste as President of the Republic of Latvia, who gave the solemn oath of the President of Latvia on 18 November 1922. Jānis Čakste was re-elected as President of Latvia by the second convocation of the Saeima on 6 November 1925, and he gave the oath on 8 November 1925. After Jānis Čakste died on 14 March 1927, the second convocation of the Saeima elected Gustavs Zemgals as President of Latvia on 8 April 1927, who gave the oath of the President of Latvia on the same day. The third convocation of the Saeima elected Alberts Kviesis as President of the Republic of Latvia on 9 April 1930, who gave the solemn oath on 11 April 1930. Alberts Kviesis was re-elected as President of Latvia by the fourth convocation of the Saeima on 4 April 1933, and he gave his oath on 11 April 1933.

Alberts Kviesis continued holding the office of the President of Latvia after anti-constitutional coup d'état of 15 May 1934, and he accepted the replacement of a democratic and parliamentary republic with an authoritarian political system. When the second term of Alberts Kviesis as the President of Latvia was approaching the end, the Cabinet of Ministers passed the Law on the Execution of the President's Office on 12 March 1936. The Law stipulated that after the second term of presidency of Alberts Kviesis ceased on 11 April 1936, Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis would undertake the position until the completion of the Constitutional Reform. By this law, the posts of the President of Latvia and the Prime Minister were merged. On 11 April 1936, Kārlis Ulmanis became the President of Latvia and the Prime Minister, remaining in these positions until the occupation of the Republic of Latvia on 17 June 1940.

The Soviet Union's aggression against the Republic of Latvia, as well as the occupation and unlawful incorporation of the Republic of Latvia into the USSR in 1940, did not lead to any legal consequences, as the USSR violated the norms of international law and the fundamental laws of the Republic of Latvia. The Republic of Latvia continued to exist as an accepted subject of international law throughout the years of occupation. During that period, the Foreign Service of the Republic of Latvia continued to represent the Republic of Latvia in exile, which continued to operate until the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Latvia. During the occupation, there have been attempts to restore the freedom of the Republic of Latvia and establish a government. At the meeting of the Latvian Central Council on 8 September 1944, it adopted a Declaration on the Restoration of the State of Latvia, by which Speaker of the last legally elected Saeima Pauls Kalniņš became acting President of Latvia. After the death of Pauls Kalniņš on 26 August 1945, the Latvian Central Council announced on 26 April 1947 that according to the Satversme, the powers of the Speaker of the Saeima and the acting President of Latvia were taken over by Vice-Speaker of the Saeima Jāzeps Rancāns. The establishment of government in exile under the occupation regime was unsuccessful due to various reasons.

After the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Latvia, a separate post of the President of Latvia was not created. During the transition period, Chairperson of the Supreme Council Anatolijs Gorbunovs undertook the duties of the Head of State until the full restoration of the Satversme and the convening of the fifth convocation of the Saeima.

The rights of the Chairperson of the Supreme Council to perform the functions of the Head of State were determined at that time based on the Law on the Organization of the Work of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia until the convene of the Saeima of 25 August 1992 and the Law on the Head of State of the Republic of Latvia before the gather of the Saeima of 15 September 1992.

Restoration of the Saeima in full, when the fifth convocation of the Saeima convened to the first session at noon on 6 July 1993, also meant the renovation of the Institution of the President of Latvia. On 7 July 1993, the fifth convocation of the Saeima elected Guntis Ulmanis as President of Latvia, who gave the solemn oath of the President of Latvia on 8 July 1993. The sixth convocation of the Saeima re-elected Guntis Ulmanis as President of Latvia on 18 June 1996, and he gave the solemn oath on 8 July 1996.

The seventh convocation of the Saeima elected Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga as President of the Republic of Latvia on 17 June 1999, with her giving the solemn oath of the President of Latvia on 8 July 1999. The Saeima re-elected Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga as President of Latvia on 20 June 2003, and she gave her solemn oath on 8 July 2003.

The ninth convocation of the Saeima elected Valdis Zatlers as President of Latvia on 31 May 2007, who gave the solemn oath of the President of Latvia on 8 July 2007.

On 2 June 2011, the tenth convocation of the Saeima elected Andris Bērziņš as President of the Republic of Latvia, and he gave his solemn oath of the President of Latvia on 8 July 2011.

In its turn, the twelfth convocation of the Saeima elected Raimonds Vējonis as President of Latvia on 3 June 2015, who gave the solemn oath of the President of Latvia on 8 July 2015.

In its turn, the convocation of the Saeima elected Egils Levits as President of Latvia, who gave the solemn oath of the President of Latvia on 8 July 2019.

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