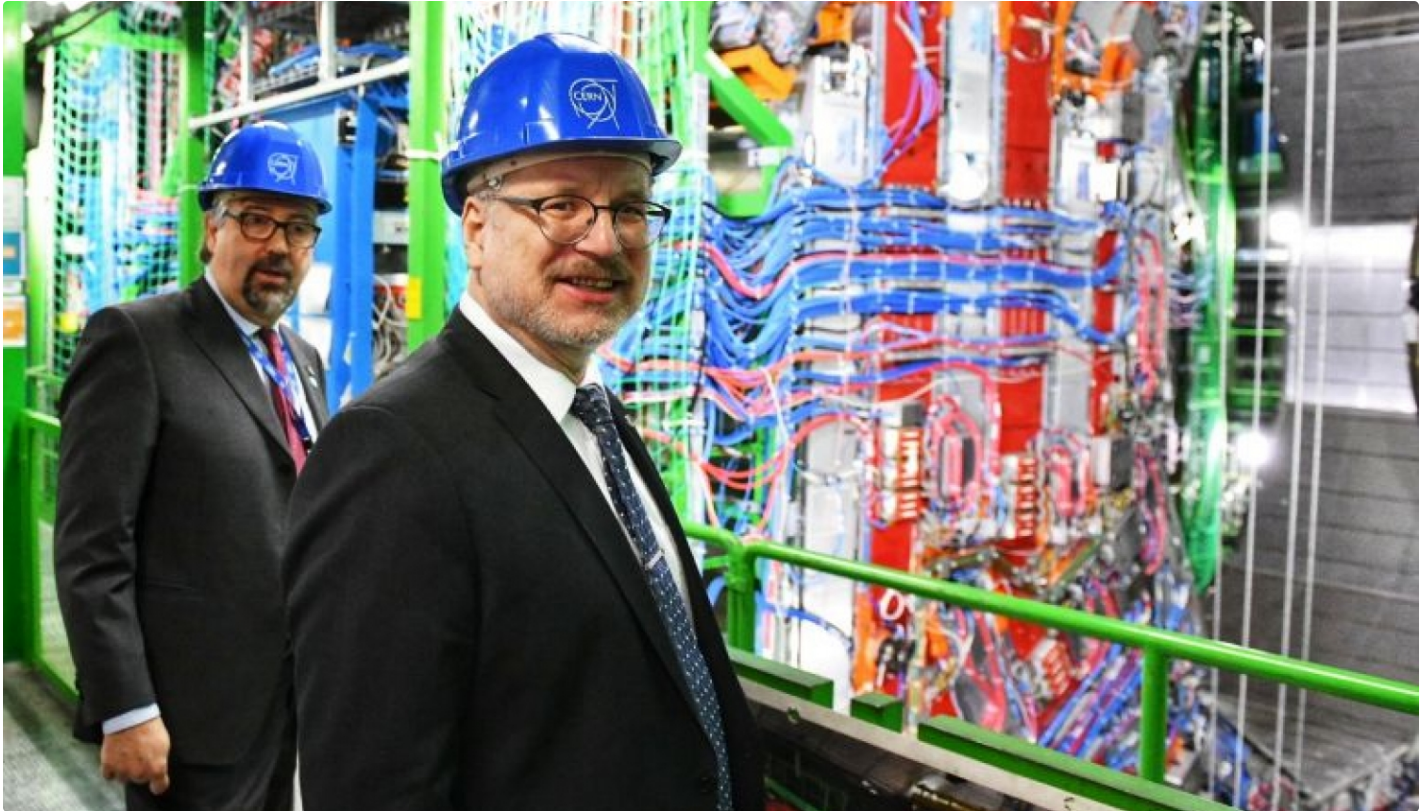


## President of Latvia: Latvia's accession to CERN will contribute to our country's emerging community of excellent physicists

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On 20 January, the President of Latvia Egils Levits and the First Lady Andra Levite visited the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva. President met with the leadership of CERN and reiterated Latvia's commitment to become the associate member state of CERN.

'CERN is one of the leading global laboratories and scientific centres. It is crucial for Latvia to become the associate member state of CERN. We have worked hard and have been committed to this goal for a number of years now. Our science and technologies have benefitted from that, and this process has paved the way for a new community of scientists specialising in research in high energy particle physics,' stressed the President of Latvia.

Visit of the President of Latvia to CERN underlines the importance of research opportunities provided by CERN for Latvia and contribution of Latvian scientists to CERN's research efforts. Egils Levits also talked about supporting science. 'Undeniably, we must spend some of the public funding for science to support fundamental research,' President said. Fundamental research gives us scientific evidence, knowledge and clues about general laws of nature and society. Applicability of this knowledge is not paramount. Fundamental research aims to deepen our theoretical understanding of particular field and discover new laws. 'This is good for society. Although the benefits of fundamental science are not always obvious to the society or politicians, we need to invest public funds into development of applied and fundamental science. CERN, for example, is researching the origins of the Universe. And it is not just about scientific curiosity. These findings have practical implications. Knowledge that can then be used in health care and other areas.'

While at CERN, President Levits also addressed the pupils of the Riga Technical University Engineering College, Aizkraukle Regional Gymnasium, Valmiera State Gymnasium, Talsi State Gymnasium and Cēsis New Primary School during a live telecast.

Egils Levits told the pupil 'Science is your future and the future of Latvia. You can either work here at CERN or in other fields elsewhere. Latvia currently experiences a shortage of IT and engineering experts, and you have plenty of opportunity to become one. Latvia, the European Union and other countries of the world are actively supporting the development of science to build knowledgeable societies that are capable of handling diverse challenges, for example, climate change, cyber threats, health and other major issues.'

Latvia joined CERN on 31 October 2016 when the government of Latvia and CERN signed the Technical and Scientific Cooperation Agreement concerning research in high energy particle physics.

President of Latvia Egils Levits is attending the World Economic Forum in Davos on 20-24 January. During the forum, Egils Levits will meet with leading global economic actors and discuss key factors contributing to sustainability of the European Union and the world, deliver speech at the panel 'Threats to contemporary Western democracy' and join two other keynote speakers for the discussion focused on economic trends in Central and Eastern Europe. President is also scheduled to hold several bilateral meetings during his working visit to Davos.



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