

## Address of the President of Latvia Egils Levits at the XIII International Congress of Balticists

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Warm welcome to the XIII International Congress of Balticists, dear participants,

Each cooperation initiative brings our nations closer together and strengthens the Baltic region.

Balticists mostly focus their scientific endeavours on Latvian and Lithuanian languages. These are the only remaining Baltic languages that shape the modern identity and character of the state of Latvia and state of Lithuania.

Baltistics deal with core elements of Latvian and Lithuanian identity. It is a purely local perspective in the globalised scientific world. Looking from the perspective of Latvia and Lithuania, however, it is completely the opposite. Baltistics are absolutely vital for continuity of our nations.

That is why current generation of Latvians and Lithuanians have the sacred duty to nurture and preserve the unique Baltic culture and languages today.

Dear participants,

This scientific forum must bring you plenty of joy in seeing your colleagues from far and near at least on your screen. It will also give you lots of inspiration and new ideas. Pandemic has clearly shown that live discussion, conversations with others, which we used to take for granted, have become an absolute necessity these days.

First Congress of the Baltistics was held in Vilnius back in 1965. This tradition acquired a special meaning during the Soviet occupation when Baltistics struggled to preserve the Latvian and Lithuanian identities.

How has mission of Balticists in Latvia and Lithuania changed compared to then? Has it lost its significance in the new era and should it be treated as merely a 'scientific discipline'? I believe the answer is resounding no!

I wish you all the best in your future scientific endeavours and urge Latvian and Lithuanian Balticists to also take active civic stance on protection of Latvian and Lithuanian languages. We must encourage everyday use of Baltic languages. Promote their use in science and education. Support their quality and continuity through our children and young people. That is how Baltic heritage, which is being enriched also by your life's work, will remain forever vital and relevant.

I wish you an interesting and fruitful congress!

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