

Address by the President of Latvia Egils Levits at the opening of the 7th Three Seas Initiative Summit

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[Foreign policy](#)

[Egils Levits](#)



Dear Colleagues,

Excellencies,

All guests and participants,

I

I warmly welcome you here in Riga today for the opening of the 7th Three Seas Initiative (3SI) Summit, which takes place along with the 4th Business Forum.

First, I thank President Radev for hosting an excellent Summit in Bulgaria last year.

This year, there could be no better time, place and format to meet than today – on the shores of the Baltic Sea and in the historic Hanseatic town of Riga which over centuries has a tradition to bring together people, goods and culture for prosperity to everyone.

This Summit is a continuation of a process that began only six years ago. Leaders from countries between the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Seas joined forces because of necessity.

A necessity that came out of our similar historical experience, our geographic situation, our common European path and commitment to European values.

II

We, the 12 participating states of the 3SI, are all members of the European Union. Most of us are also members of NATO.

In many ways we are fully integrated into the fabric of Europe.

Our region is a region of economic growth. The long-term economic growth in our region is significantly higher than in other parts of Europe.

The political weight of our region is also growing. Together with other Europeans we determine what are European interests, what are European values. This has also been clearly shown in the current Russian war against Ukraine.

III

Dear Colleagues,

The main underlying principle of the 3SI is 'politically inspired, commercially driven'. That is why the Business Forum is being held concurrently with the Summit.

Our task is to make the right policy decisions to promote investment in key areas and make our economies resilient and fit for the future.

The infrastructure needs on the North-South axis of the European Union are still enormous. Stronger digital, transport and energy links along this axis are crucial for the cohesion of the European Union.

IV

The task of our gathering today and tomorrow in the business forum is to boost our strength in the three directions of our cooperation – energy, transport and digital.

Our energy connectivity has to be brought into sharper focus. If the climate change threats have not pushed us to act quickly enough, the Russia's war against Ukraine did.

The transportation routes within and throughout the Three Seas region create multiple new opportunities to consolidate our region and accelerate the North and South Axis.

The high-speed *Rail Baltica* that will link us with Warsaw and beyond by 2026 is one of a few examples here.

The current difficulties with exporting grain following the Black Sea blockade also highlight the rail connectivity improvements still to be made in Europe.

The latest digital technologies are of equal importance. Trusted and secure digital connectivity is essential to further growth of our economies, but also critical to our security.

V

Large infrastructure projects need investors. The Investment Fund was set up only three years ago in Riga to pool resources from the participating states.

We look forward to further commitments from governments to the Fund, as well as rising investment by private entities.

VI

We appreciate the close strategic partnership with Germany, the US and the European Commission. The transatlantic relationship and the strong European identity are the two geopolitical pillars of the 3SI.

Increased involvement of the US in the region through the Investment Fund will be a significant boost.

Today we will also have an opportunity to discuss the possible wider cooperation of the Three Seas region with other like-minded states and organizations in Europe and across the globe.

VII

Dear colleagues!

Let me propose a new underlying principle of the Three Seas region in Europe – ‘democratically activated’.

The pipelines, turbines, railways and cables are the material expression of our connectivity.

Yet their purpose is to connect and serve the people of our region, by extension of all Europe.

That is why we must engage the civil society in our countries, help them connect and discover our common interests and common goals.

Last month for the very first time a 3SI Civil Society Forum took place in Riga, whose recommendations you will find in the report published today.

I will welcome your reflections on the various excellent ideas for improving connectivity, security and governance in our region.

VIII

I am also delighted that Riga is today hosting the 2nd 3SI Parliamentary Forum. Parliaments pass the laws that make our countries more attractive and efficient for investment.

The chambers of commerce of our countries, too, continue to support the 3SI mission and goals. This year’s meeting of chambers of commerce in Riga is very timely and will certainly boost the practical dimension of the Initiative.

IX

Dear Colleagues!

Our needs are still manageable compared with the rebuilding that Ukraine will require after this war has ended – in victory, I am sure.

In our Summit discussion today, we will look for the best ways to connect Ukraine with the rest of Europe.

I envisage a close partnership, given our neighbouring geographical position and our strong common values.

X

Here I want to call for a positive decision at this week’s European Council to grant EU candidate status to Ukraine.

The people of Ukraine have shown incredible bravery and determination to fight for their freedom, for European values. If a new Iron Curtain is descending, it must land at Russia’s border, not across its neighbours.

Today, Europe is incomplete without Ukraine.

The European Union has rebuilt Europe after World War II, and after the Cold War.

Now it must continue this work for peace and freedom.

XI

Excellencies, dear friends!

We have much to discuss and much to do.

Again, welcome to Latvia and I hereby declare the 7th Three Seas Initiative Summit open!

[20.06.2022. Trīs jūru samits Rīgā](#)

<https://www.president.lv/en/article/address-president-latvia-egils-levits-opening-7th-three-seas-initiative-summit>