

Address by the President of Latvia, Egils Levits, at the Latvian–German Port Days

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I

It is with great pleasure to welcome you all at the Latvian–German Port Days, after years of pandemic returning back to the wonderful Hanseatic cities of Hamburg and Lübeck.

I am pleased to see, that the enthusiasm to build new partnerships between our nations and peoples is stronger as ever.

Latvia and Germany have been bound by century-long ties, having left marks on all aspects of our daily lives.

II

German companies entering Latvian market or establishing a subsidiary there, soon come to conclusion, that doing business in Latvia is easy – particularly because of the similar work ethics and culture.

The Hanseatic League, in which numerous Latvian cities once actively took part, have had a significant role in building bridges between the peoples and strengthening the foundations of mutual understanding.

The Hanseatic League, shaping the economy and politics in Northern Europe, was among the first to underline the importance of deep economic integration as a backbone of lasting peace in Europe.

The notion of economic integration, which creates a web of mutually beneficial interdependencies, had been rediscovered after the painful experience of the World War II.

Nowadays Latvia and Germany as members of the European Union and NATO, are actively contributing to the peace and stability in Europe.

III

Yet, with the aggression Russia against Ukraine, the world has witnessed, that deep economic ties alone are insufficient when faced by revisionist totalitarian regimes. 'Wandel durch Handel' has failed to bring the desired outcomes, clearly indicating, that purely economic reasoning cannot avert wars.

Unity and decisiveness of the European Union member states came as a surprise to the aggressive dictatorship in Moscow.

And yet, while we have to continue supporting Ukraine with all possible means in its fight for freedom, we must take a lesson from the past.

We must make necessary adjustments in our perception of the world, to be able to safeguard our fundamental values and democracy.

We must come back to reality, and act respectively.

That is just the turning point of *Zeitenwende*, declared by Chancellor Scholz.

IV

We see NATO as the cornerstone of our physical security, European Union as the backbone of our economic cooperation.

Latvia as a small and open economy is an advocate for free global trade.

The Russian war in Ukraine has not changed the basic principles of global economy, but it has vividly underscored the necessity for a much more vigilant approach, when choosing our trading partners.

While the war in Ukraine has preoccupied our minds, we should not forget the disturbances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

By seeking ways to minimize costs and maximize profits, Europe found itself being very vulnerable.

In particular, the long supply chains for strategic goods, which included autocratic regimes, proved to be a trap.

It must not happen again.

V

In order to avert the repetition of such situations in the future, there is a clear need for smarter investment and trade policy, which is based on much closer cooperation between countries that share similar values.

Such an approach does not necessarily require global changes. But it cannot be realized without an adaption of thinking at an individual level.

This is where we all have a role to play.

VI

Ladies and gentlemen,

Relations between Latvia and Germany are closer than ever before.

The growing trade relations is just one of the many indicators proving it.

Since the time of the Hanseatic League, trade by the sea has played a vital role.

I am happy to see that the willingness to strengthen these vital ties between our cities have been reaffirmed in these days.

VII

I would like to take this opportunity to stress the importance of transforming our economies from dependency of fossil fuels into an era of sustainable and green energy.

It is our shared responsibility to stop the climate change, and green transition will play a vital role.

Latvia already now is among the European frontrunners, producing nearly half of its energy from renewables.

Our aspiration is in the upcoming years to become a reliable exporter of green energy to our partners.

VIII

In terms of Latvian–German relations, we see immense and mutually beneficial potential in closer cooperation in production of sustainable and green energy.

Allow me to stress the importance of Latvian ports in order to facilitate green transition.

Taking into consideration their convenient geographical location, well-established infrastructure and visionary outlook, Latvian ports are vital actors to ensure success.

They meet the necessary preconditions to ensure production and assembly of wind park equipment, as well have logistical advantages to carry out maintenance work at the offshore wind parks not only near the Latvian coastline, but in the whole Baltic Sea.

IX

Ladies and gentlemen,

Latvia wants to share its experience and knowledge to increase the competitiveness and well-being of our partners.

Particularly noteworthy is digitalization of public services, where Latvia has been acknowledged globally ones of most advanced.

Various public actors in Europe have experienced the benefits of applying cutting-edge technologies developed by Latvian company *Tilde* in machine translation to promote tourism and to expand the global outreach by overcoming language barrier.

Companies such as *Advangrid* or *Idea Lights* have come up with innovative solutions to significantly decrease energy costs, which was much appreciated, anticipating the past winter full of unknowns.

Going digital has allowed us to make our public services not only faster and more convenient to users, but also to plan smarter our human resources.

X

Latvia has also developed top-level security solutions to our digital services.

Latvia has established world's first 5G military test site in the Ādaži Military Base, serving as a testbed for allied forces.

Latvia, with highly skilled workforce, outstanding IT, logistical infrastructure and profound understanding of the adversary has

proven to be an excellent location to develop dual need technologies.

Military drones and off-road e-vehicles produced in Latvia have already proven successful in combat in Ukraine and since last year Latvia together with Finland is producing the 'Patria' armoured vehicles.

XI

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am grateful to the organizers of the Latvian-German Port Days for creating the necessary preconditions to revive this wonderful tradition of having an open forum for people interested in expanding cooperation between Latvia and Germany.

I wish you to have stimulating and inspiring discussions this evening!

Thank you!



President of Latvia opens Latvian–German Port Days in Lübeck

On 27 April, President of Latvia Egils Levits opened the Latvian–German Ports Days in Lübeck, Germany. Latvia is represented by the Ministry of Transport, representatives of Latvian ports, the...

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