



LUXEMBOURG LETTONIE

100 ANS RELATIONS DIPLOMATIQUES
30 ANS DE RÉTABLISSEMENT DES
RELATIONS DIPLOMATIQUES
100 GADU KOPŠ DIPLOMĀTISKO
ATTIECĪBU NODIBINĀŠANAS
30 GADU KOPŠ DIPLOMĀTISKO
ATTIECĪBU ATJAUNOŠANAS

L FOR LUXEMBOURG AND LATVIA

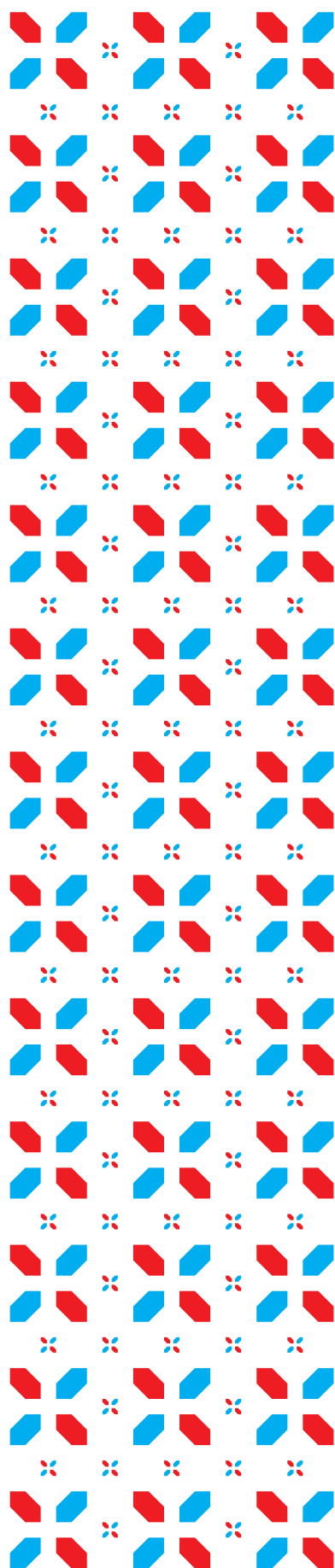
CELEBRATING THE CENTENARY OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS AND THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS
BETWEEN **LUXEMBOURG** AND **LATVIA**



Gëlle Fra
monument in Luxembourg City



Brīvības Piemineklis
monument in Riga





LADIES: The most symbolic statues in each country's capital are monuments to the martyrdom and fight for freedom of Luxembourg and Latvia; in both cases, this is represented by a LADY: *Gëlle Fra* (Golden Lady) for Luxembourg and *Brīvības Pieminēklis* (Freedom Monument) for Riga.

The “Golden Lady” in Luxembourg City is a shining gold statue, created as a memorial to honour the victims of the First World War. It is also known as “The Monument of Remembrance” and was designed by a Luxembourgish sculptor, Nicolas Joseph ‘Claus’ Cito. In 1923, the *Gëlle Fra* was inaugurated in Constitution Square on a 21-metre-tall granite obelisk where she has a view over the entire capital. The monument was torn down during the Nazi occupation. Lost and forgotten for decades, it was retrieved in the 1980s and reinstalled as a memorial to honour the victims of both World Wars. In 2010, the “Golden Lady” travelled all the way to the World Expo in Shanghai, where she was part of the Luxembourg Pavilion as a true “Ambassador of Luxembourg”.



The *Gëlle Fra* (Golden Lady) in Luxembourg City

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The “Freedom Monument” in Riga commemorates soldiers killed during the Latvian War of Independence (1918–1920). It is an important symbol of the freedom, independence, and sovereignty of Latvia. Standing 42.7 metres tall, it was designed by a Latvian sculptor Kārlis Zāle. It was inaugurated in 1935 in the centre of Riga on *Brīvības bulvāris* (Freedom Boulevard) – the same spot where there used to be an equestrian statue of Russian Tsar Peter I. The monument survived both the German and Soviet occupations, despite its intense symbolism for the Latvians. In order to protect it, Latvians claimed it represented “Mother Russia” welcoming the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), depicted by the three stars in her hands.



The *Brīvības Pieminēklis* (Freedom Monument) in Riga

© Investment and Tourism Agency of Riga



As you can see, despite the significant geographical distance between them, LUXEMBOURG and LATVIA have much more in common than just the first letter in their name. Yet, as we are about to show, many of these shared characteristics start with the letter “L” too:



LINK: Luxembourg and Latvia are strongly LINKED through a century of diplomatic relations. The intensification of their bilateral relations dates back 30 years, with the de jure recognition of the Republic of Latvia by the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, after the restoration of Latvian independence in 1991. The most fruitful cooperation takes place within the European Union, NATO, the UN and other multilateral organisations.

Just as importantly, they are linked simply by...



LIKING: Both countries and their populations appreciate, like and understand each other. One of the reasons for this may be a somewhat similar history. Both nations were heavily influenced by powerful foreign sovereigns. Both were occupied during the Second World War. Nevertheless they proved to be extraordinarily resilient in the face of these strong and long-lasting challenges. Luxembourg is one of the few European states that never recognised the occupation and the annexation of Latvia by the USSR and there has always been a great fascination in Luxembourg for the “Singing Revolution” (1988-1991) in the Baltic countries. What is also very characteristic for both Luxembourg and Latvia is that, despite the bumpy road to independence, they remain truly open countries.

A perfect example of this is their attitude towards...



LANGUAGES: Luxembourg has three official languages: Luxembourgish (which derives from Moselle Franconian dialects), French and German. Despite the difficult past with its powerful neighbour, literacy is first taught in German. Latvian, rooted in Sanskrit and an Indo-European past, is one of Europe’s most ancient languages and the cornerstone of Latvian identity. Current language policy protects and develops the languages of Latvia’s minorities. The Latvian Government covers bilingual education in the eight largest minority languages: Belarusian, Estonian, Jewish, Lithuanian, Polish, Romani, Russian and Ukrainian. Luxembourg has the best score in the European Union when it comes to the average number of foreign languages learned per pupil in upper-secondary education, while Latvia scores 6th place! This openness towards languages shows that both countries are pragmatic, tolerant and oriented towards the future. It is also reflected in their attitude towards foreigners – in both countries, minorities constitute an important part of the society. In Luxembourg, 47.4% of the population have a foreign nationality, while in Latvia this number stands at 37.8%.

Both countries implement projects supporting the integration of immigrants despite the fact that both countries are relatively...



LITTLE: Luxembourg is the second-smallest country in the European Union, with an area of 2,586 km². It also has the second-smallest population, with 634 thousand residents. Latvia is significantly bigger but is among the ten smallest countries in the EU in terms of geographical size. Its population ranks 23rd in the European Union, with 1,893 thousand residents. Small often stands for beautiful. Small countries often had to face serious geopolitical challenges throughout their history. Being little shapes the mentality of people and influences the choice of strategies. Small countries have the flexibility not only to adapt themselves to a changing environment but also to reinvent themselves.

That is why Luxembourg and Latvia are...



LEADERS: in new technologies, which will shape the future economy. In the Eco-Innovation Index, which illustrates eco-innovation performance across the EU Member States, Luxembourg holds first position. Latvia comes second in the Central and Eastern Europe region.

Both Luxembourg and Latvia are in the process of developing a circular economy strategy and both are keen on opportunities in the space industry, which is a key high-tech sector for the benefit of future generations. In the mid-1980s, Luxembourg began developing its satellite communication technology, and today the Société Européenne des Satellites (SES) is the world's leading commercial satellite operator. Luxembourg also aims to contribute to the peaceful exploration and sustainable use of space resources for the benefit of humankind. Meanwhile, at the campus of Riga Technical University, a team of researchers is developing technology that will one day help prevent asteroids from hitting Earth. Drawing on a long history of innovation, Luxembourg is committed to fostering new ideas and companies. Luxembourg is also shaping the future of finance. It serves as a gateway to the European Union for international fintech businesses and as home of major global e-payment and e-commerce companies. By providing a rich, supportive environment for today's fintech pioneers, it is leading the way for tomorrow's financial services industry.

Similarly, Latvia has been the country with the largest growth of interest in fintech since 2020. Boasting 118 fintech startups, Latvia has leveraged its established position as a former centre of finance for Central and Eastern Europe to become a burgeoning fintech hub comprising worldwide recognised players. This growth has been accelerated through institutional support – in 2017, Latvia passed a unique and innovative startup law, which increased Latvian competitiveness in this sector even further. The political as well as economic and cultural, dimension of cooperation between Luxembourg and Latvia is extremely important. However, most relevant are the human connections made from links between citizens.

Among them, the Honorary Consul of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in the Republic of Latvia, Mrs...



Honorary Consul Mrs Kristiāna Lībane-Šķēle
with Ambassador Paul Schmit.

LIBANE-SKELE: (Kristiāna) is a well-known lawyer and a graduate from the Latvian State University. She has served as the Honorary Consul of Luxembourg in Latvia since 2006. Mrs Lībane-Šķēle was elected to the 5th, 6th and 7th *Saeima* from the Latvian Way (*Latvijas Ceļš*) list. Between 1998 and 2002 she was a Chairwoman of the “Latvia’s Way” Parliamentary Club. After leaving the parliament, she was the director of the Foundation for Social Education (Young Academy). Since 2003, Mrs Lībane-Šķēle has been practicing as a sworn attorney.

LUXEMBOURG-LATVIA ASSOCIATION: brings together Latvians and friends of Latvia who live in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and neighboring regions. The association’s goals are to improve communication between Latvian expats and the Luxembourgish community, to strengthen ties between the Latvian diaspora in Luxembourg and their home country, and to develop and popularise Latvian cultural traditions and language. Since its establishment in 2008, the association has gathered enthusiastic and active people who have brought the quality of Latvian activities in Luxembourg to a new level.

LIKENESS: As you might have seen, there are quite a few similarities between both nations. The difficult history of small countries which, regardless of the attempts of stronger neighbours, succeed to preserve their languages, traditions, culture and identities, it is only one side of the story. Another side is their shared openness, which allows them to look beyond the past. Both Luxembourg and Latvia bravely look into the future, cooperating within the European Union in order to improve the quality of life of their citizens, as is the case with the current green and digital transformation.

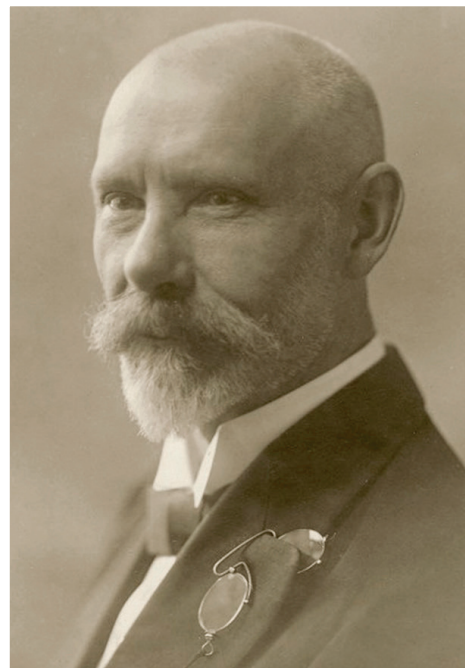
Let’s have a look at bilateral relations between Luxembourg and Latvia.





H.R.H. Grand Duchess Charlotte, the head of State of Luxembourg from 1919 until 1964.

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H.E. Mr Jānis Kristaps Čakste, the first head of an independent Latvian state.

© Wikipedia



Chronology of the Establishment of Bilateral Relations

In his letter dated 23 September 1922, Mr P. Seya, Legation Counsellor of Latvia in France, informs Mr Ernest Leclère, chargé d'affaires a.i. of Luxembourg, of his desire to enter into closer political and economic relations with the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: *"The Latvian Government has instructed me to seek your intermediary, with a view to requesting from Your Government the de jure recognition of Latvia by the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. For your information, I have the honour to inform you that Latvia has already been recognised as an independent and sovereign Republic by almost all the countries of the world and, most recently, by the United States of America"*. On 4 October 1922, the chargé d'affaires a.i. of Luxembourg in Paris, Mr Leclère, informs his Latvian counterpart that Luxembourg recognises Latvia as a sovereign and independent republic.

On 15 June 1925, Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess grants the exequatur to Mr Jan Lasdin, Consul General of Latvia in Brussels, enabling him to exercise the function of Consul General of Latvia in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

On 12 May 1926, the Grand Duchess grants the exequatur to Mr Jean-Pierre Zanen (1878-1953) in order to exercise the position of Consul of the Republic of Latvia in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. He was a Luxembourgish agronomist, author and professor at the agricultural school in Ettelbruck before becoming an attaché at the Ministry of Agriculture in 1912. From 1949 to 1953, he was a member of the Luxembourg Dictionary Commission (*Luxemburger Wörterbuch*). He was the author of textbooks and publications on agricultural issues. In Luxembourgish literature, he is best known as the author of a short story "Berels Berta", which he published in 1915 under the pseudonym "J. von der Hardt".

On 3 January 1928, Mr Zanen is informed by the chargé d'affaires of Latvia in Belgium that a Latvian Legation is being set up in Brussels. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, Mr Joseph Bech, had been informed about the change a few weeks earlier, on the occasion of the transmittal of the Letters of Credence on 15 December 1927.



Bilateral Relations Between the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Republic of Latvia

The year 2022 is very special for bilateral relations between the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Republic of Latvia for two important reasons. First, it marks the centenary of diplomatic relations between our two countries. Second, it is the 30th anniversary of the recognition *de jure* of the Republic of Latvia, after the restoration of its independence in 1991. These commemorations offer an opportunity to reflect on the history of our bilateral relations while also looking to the future.

The People's Council of Latvia proclaimed the independence of Latvia on 18 November 1918. The Luxembourg government announced the recognition of the Latvian state through a letter dated 4 October 1922, addressed to the Latvian Minister, Mr P. Seya. However, the contact was rather limited due to the geographical distance and because both countries were focused on their closest neighbours and reconstruction after the First World War. Historically friendly relations between both countries were brutally interrupted for decades with the outbreak of the Second World War when the young Latvian state found itself under German, and later Soviet, occupation.

Luxembourg was among the few European states, which never recognised the occupation and annexation of Latvia – neither *de facto* nor *de jure*. As a result, our relations were at their lowest during the Soviet occupation. Diplomatic relations were re-established on 21 April 1992, after the declaration of the restoration of independence in Latvia on 21 August 1991. Further rapprochement between our two countries took place in 2004 with Latvian accession to the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

In 2006, the State Visit of the President of Latvia, Her Excellency Mrs Vaira Vike-Freiberga, took place upon invitation of Their Royal Highnesses the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg.



TT.RR.HH. the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess and H.E. Mrs Vaira Vike-Freiberga with her husband, Mr Imants Freibergs, at the Grand-Ducal Palace in Luxembourg.

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Furthermore, on 6 May 2008 Luxembourg accredited its first non-resident Ambassador to Latvia, Mr Ronald Dofing. Since then, the diplomatic representatives in Riga were the following: Mr Conrad Bruch (2011-2013), Mr Georges Faber (2013-2016), Mr Conrad Bruch (second mandate: 2016-2020). Ambassador Paul Schmit has been accredited to the Republic of Latvia since 13 April 2021.

The Ambassador of Latvia in Brussels, Mr Andris Razāns, has been accredited as non-resident Ambassador to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg since 12 June 2020.

Our cooperation has always been excellent. We are both small but vibrant countries, looking forward rather than backwards, focused on the future. Both societies are determined to build a modern, safe, ecological world and eager to develop new technologies. These similarities are reflected in our political dialogue and close cooperation within the European Union and NATO, as well as in other European and international organisations. Luxembourg and Latvia share the same values and the same outlook on the future.



This approach was also prevailing during the rotating Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the European Union when both countries joined to form the Troika with Italy between 1 July 2014 and 31 December 2015. The Latvian Presidency was focused on economic governance and quality issues in the area of statistics, as well as the legal framework for the new institutional context, such as: the European Fund for Strategic Investments, Energy Union, Digital Single Market. Latvia, holding the Presidency for the first time, created a solid basis for Luxembourg, which took over from 1 July to 31 December 2015. Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Mr Xavier Bettel, explicitly thanked Latvia for its important efforts and successes during the first half of 2015.



Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister of Luxembourg, and Laimdota Straujuma, Prime Minister of Latvia, during the European Council, in Brussels in June 2015.

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Five years ago, the 25th anniversary of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations provided yet another occasion to confirm our synergies. During the commemorations, Mr Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg, visited Latvia on 17 January 2017 upon the invitation of Mr Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia. During his visit, Minister Asselborn met with the Latvian Prime Minister and the Speaker of *Saeima*.

On 18 October of the same year, the Latvian Foreign Minister, Mr Edgars Rinkēvičs, visited Luxembourg. He was received by His Royal Highness the Grand Duke at the Grand Ducal Palace. He also met the President of the Chamber of Deputies and the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs. During these visits, both Ministers emphasized the excellent bilateral relations between our countries and our shared views on major issues on the European agenda, such as migration, enlargement and further integration within the European Union.



H.R.H. the Grand Duke and Mr Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, in Luxembourg in 2017.

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Jean Asselborn, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg, and Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, in Luxembourg in 2017.

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We also enjoy close military and security links, notably through cooperation in NATO. Since Latvia's accession to the alliance in 2004, Luxembourg has participated in the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission aimed at guarding airspace in the region. In 2017, Luxembourg contributed 3 million EUR in order to strengthen the host nation's support capability. The funding was used for the construction of 450 man barrack blocks at Camp Ādaži, the base of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence. The two NATO allies decided to tighten their collaboration further and, on 13 February 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding was thus signed between the Minister Delegate of Defence of Luxembourg, Mr Henri Kox, and his Latvian counterpart, Mr Artis Pabriks. Its main objective was the remediation of polluted soil on Latvian military sites. Luxembourg committed to contribute 1.2 million EUR over the years 2020 to 2023 in order to reduce the environmental impact. On 28 October 2021, a second memorandum, valid until 2024, foreseeing a contribution of 6.9 million EUR was signed in Brussels.



Henri Kox, Minister Delegate of Defence of Luxembourg, and Artis Pabriks, Minister of Defence of Latvia, in Brussels in 2020.

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Since 2007, the Benelux Foreign Ministers have met with their Baltic counterparts almost every year. During their meeting in Tallinn in 2015, the ministers agreed to further intensify exchanges between the Benelux countries and the Baltic countries. Lately, Benelux-Baltic-Nordic meetings have been initiated too in order to deepen negotiations on various subjects on the European agenda.

In the economic field, there is a potential for stronger cooperation between Luxembourg and Latvia; e.g. in the wood industry, financial services, the food industry and the pharmaceutical sector. Renewable energies, cyber-defence and fintech are other sectors where there could be economic synergies. Latvia and Luxembourg, have both invested heavily over the years in developing new technologies through start-ups.

Regarding the cooperation in higher education, in November 2019, under the Luxembourg Presidency of the Benelux, the Ministers of Higher Education of the Benelux countries and their counterparts from the Baltic states signed a declaration of intent on the automatic recognition of higher education degrees. The according treaty was launched on 27 September 2021.

In the cultural field, some important exchanges have taken place in recent years. From December 2010 to March 2011, the National Museum of History and Art (MNHA) in Luxembourg hosted the exhibition “The Age of Symbolism in Latvia”, a selection of works by Latvian artists at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries from the Latvian National Museum of Arts in Riga.



“The Age of Symbolism in Latvia” at the National Museum of History and Art (MNHA) in Luxembourg.

Janis Rozentāls (1866-1916). Princess and monkey. 1913.
Oil on canvas. 147,5 × 71 cm.

Collection of the Latvian National Museum of Art, Inv. No. VMM GL-5668.

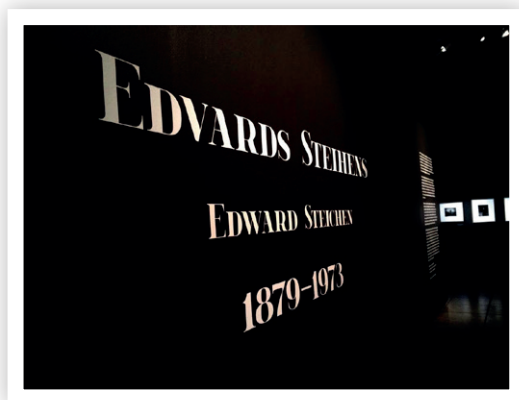


The beginning of the 20th century was a particularly interesting and rich period for Latvia, corresponding to a remarkable development of the industry and trade at the origins of its prosperity. This evolution is also reflected in the arts.

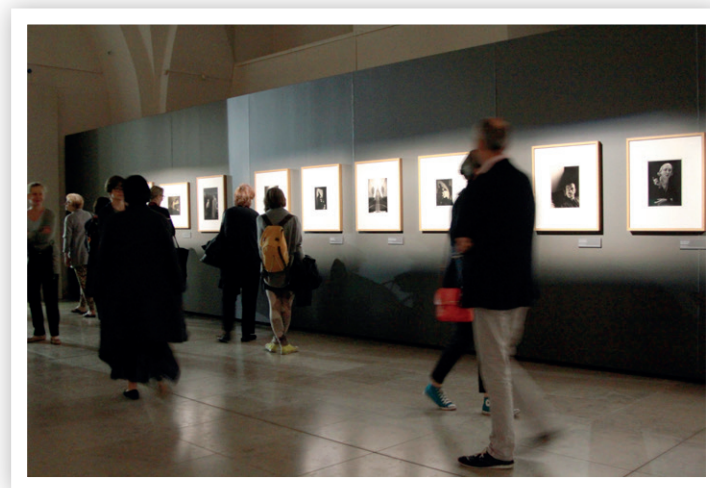
Thus, the rise of Symbolism and Art Nouveau at the turn of the 19th century coincided with one of the most productive periods in Latvia's cultural and artistic history. Music, literature, architecture and the plastic arts converged, leading to the creation of a specific national heritage.

The masterpieces of major representatives of Latvian Symbolism, such as Janis Rozentals (1866-1916), Vilhelms Purvītis (1872-1945) or Johann Walter (1869-1932) are the perfect illustration of this. The volume of Dace Lambergā documents masterpieces from Latvia and was exhibited in Brussels City Museum and Luxembourg National Museum of History and Art (MNHA).

In 2015, to celebrate the transition from the Latvian to Luxembourgish presidency of the EU Council, the MNHA presented a collection of photographic works by the Luxembourg-born American photographer Edward Steichen (1879-1973) at the Museum in Riga.



© Latvian National Museum of Art



© Latvian National Museum of Art



Another cultural exchange during the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council was a series of contemporary dance performances in Luxembourg and Riga supported by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg.

Both countries are also linked through the “European Route of Industrial Heritage” in the framework of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. The European Institute of Cultural Routes has been located in Luxembourg since 1998. In 2022, Esch-sur-Alzette, the second largest city of Luxembourg, is European Capital of Culture together with Kaunas in Lithuania and Novi Sad in Serbia.



Esch-Belval, Belval Blast Furnaces in Luxembourg

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Līgatne Paper Mill Village

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Honorary Consul of Luxembourg in Riga
Kristiāna Lībane-Šķēle

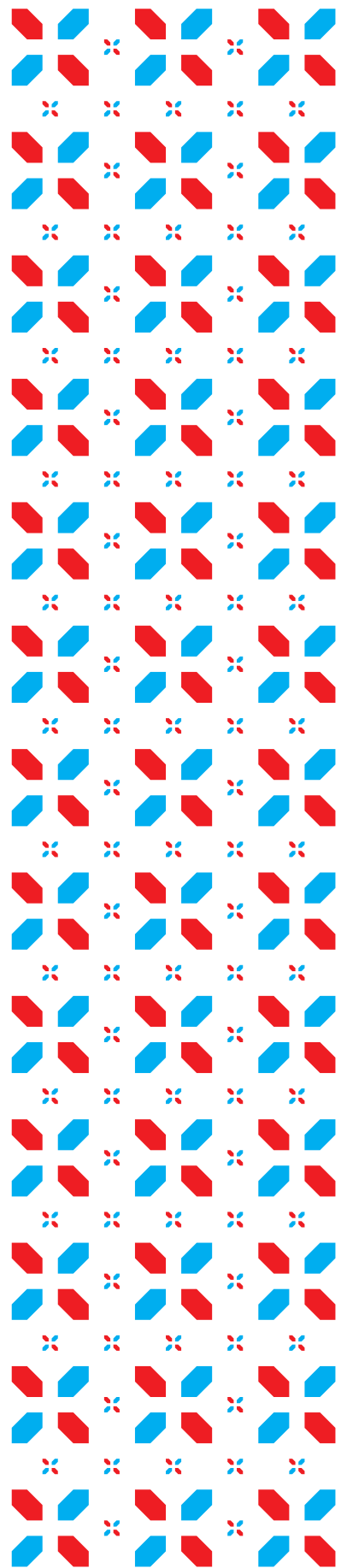
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