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1. Introduction: Latvian political system and pre election situation

1.1. Introduction

On October 2, 2010, the citizens of the Republic of Latvia divided in five electoral districts are electing their representatives to the 10th Saeima, the Latvian Parliament. In free and secret elections 100 members of Parliament will be elected. Voters have the choice between thirteen parties which were registered at the Central Election Commission by August 3. As the party system in Latvia in general is characterized by a high fluctuation of political parties, (in the last three years since the so called “umbrella revolution” of November 2007 in particular) the KAS Election Guide 2010 aims to give a broad overview of the Latvian political system as well as of the most important political parties/blocs competing in the 2010 Parliamentary elections.

The election guide will not analyze in details the programs of the parties running for the elections, nor political agenda. It rather presents the general ideological platform or strategic differences of each party and their declared and unofficial leaders.

Table 1: abbreviation of political parties and blocs presented in the election guide and web addresses:

Tautas Partija (People’s Party)	TP	www.tautaspartija.lv
Latvijas Pirmā Partija/Latvijas Ceļš (Latvia’s First Party/ Latvian Way)	LPP/LC	www.lpplc.lv
Par labu Latviju (For a Good Latvia)	PLL	www.parlabulatviju.lv
Zaļo un Zemnieku Savienība (Union of Greens and Farmers)	ZZS	www.zzs.lv
Jaunais Laiks (New Era)	JL	www.jaunaislaiks.lv
Pilsoniskā Savienība (Civic Union)	PS	www.pilsoniska-savieniba.lv
Sabiedrība citai politikai (Society for the alternative policy)	SCP	www.scp.lv
Vienotība (Unity)	Vienotība	www.vienotiba.lv
Politisko partiju apvienība „Saskaņas centrs“ (Harmony Center)	SC	www.saskanascentsrs.lv
Nacionālā apvienība „Tēvzemei Brīvībai/LNNK – Visu Latvijai“ (National Union „For Fatherland and Freedom – All for Latvia“)	TB/LNNK-VL	www.tb.lv

Besides the above listed parties the following parties have submitted candidates’ list for the 2010 Latvian Parliamentary elections at the Central Election Commission:

- Par cilvēka tiesībām vienotā Latvijā (PCTVL) – For Human Rights in United Latvia
- Ražots Latvijā – Made in Latvia
- Tautas kontrole – People’s control
- Par prezidentālu republiku – For Presidential Republic

- Atbildība-sociāldemokrātiska politisko partiju apvienība – Responsibility-Social Democratic Association of Political Parties
- Pēdējā partija – The Last Party
- Kristīgi demokrātiskā savienība – Christian Democratic Union

1.2. The electoral system of the Republic of Latvia

The elections for the national Parliament of Latvia (Saeima) are held every four years on the first Saturday in October. The Latvia Saeima's election is a proportional representation election system by secret ballot for the 100 seats in the Parliament. All citizens of Latvia who have reached the age of 18 by Election Day have the right to vote unless any of the restrictions described in the Saeima Election Law, Article 2.

The Saeima elections are held in the five constituencies: Riga, Vidzeme, Latgale, Zemgale and Kurzeme. In contrast to local government elections, Saeima elections are also held in those foreign countries where a substantial number of Latvian citizens reside. Thus, the Riga constituency also includes the electorate residing outside of Latvia.



The Saeima elections are held on one day. The polling stations are open for voters from 7.00 to 20.00, local time. A voter has the right to vote in any polling station in Latvia irrespective of his/her place of residence or registered address. Saeima's elections do not allow voting in advance of the Election Day, but voters who reside abroad are able to vote by mail upon early request (procedures apply).

Any legally registered political party or association of political parties may submit a list of candidates for Saeima. Any citizen of Latvia who has reached the age of 21 by Election Day may be nominated as a candidate, unless any of the restrictions apply (see Saeima Election Law, Article 5). Four months before Election Day the Central Election Commission determines the number of Saeima seats for each of the five constituencies, based on the Population Register statistics.

Only those lists of candidates which have received at least 5 percent of the total number of votes cast in all five election constituencies will be elected to the Saeima.

Electors vote for lists of candidates but can also indicate support (+) or rejection (-) to a particular candidate in the list. Distribution of seats among them is based on the Saint-Laguë method. Within each list, the order of candidates is rearranged to reflect the preferences expressed by the voters. The vote for each candidate (with "+") is equal to the number of votes cast for the list, plus or minus specific votes. Those candidates with the highest totals are declared elected, up to the number of seats allotted to each list. There are no reserved seats or quotas for women, ethnic minorities or other categories. Vacancies which occur between general elections are filled by the "next-in-line" candidates of the same party list. Voting is not compulsory.

The population of Latvia is 2,217,969 (July 2010). In the country there are registered 1,514,936 voters.

1.3. Short political history of Latvia since 1991

Since Latvia regained its independence in 1991 terminating the period of fifty-one years of annexation by the Soviet Union, it has developed a highly fragmented and volatile party system, with at least one new major party emerging in the four elections to the Saeima held between 1995 and 2006. No single party has ever won an absolute parliamentary majority, or even as much as one quarter of the popular vote in the last four parliamentary elections. Latvia has experienced considerable political instability, with coalition governments lasting on average less than two years in office.

During 2002 Saeima election, Einars Repše's center-right New Era (JL) came out of nowhere to emerge as the largest party in very short period of time, followed shortly by For Human Rights in a United Latvia (PCTVL) - a coalition of left-wing parties strongly supported by voters from Latvia's sizable Russian-speaking minority. The right-of-center People's Party (TP) - which had won a plurality of votes and seats in the 1998 Saeima election arrived in a strong third place, followed by two new center-right groups, the Union of Greens and Farmers (ZZS) and the First Party of Latvia (LPP). The election was also notable for the collapse of the right-of-center Latvia's Way (LC), even though it had been previously one of the country's major parties (and a coalition partner in every government since 1993), it fell short of the five percent threshold and lost all its seats in the Saeima.

Repše subsequently formed a four-party coalition government (2002), but failed to hold the office for the whole of the four year term. In March 2004, Indulis Emsis (ZZS) replaced Repše as head of government, but the following December was in turn replaced by Aigars Kalvitis (TP). Prime Minister Kalvitis' center-right minority administration ruled Latvia until the 2006 Saeima election, in which the People's Party topped the poll, ahead of the Union of Greens and Farmers, while New Era fell to third place. Meanwhile, the newly emerged Harmony Center (SC) gained the fourth biggest number of seats in Parliament overrunning its predecessor For Human Rights in a United Latvia, from which it had broken away.

After the election, Kalvītis formed a four-party coalition cabinet composed of TP, ZZS, LPP and LC, plus the right-wing For Fatherland and Freedom (TB/LNNK). Although Kalvītis was forced to step down in December 2007, following mass protests – the so called „umbrella revolution”- over his attempt to dismiss the head of the country’s Anti-Corruption Bureau (KNAB), the four-party coalition government continued to hold the office, headed by new Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis (LPP/LC). However, the global financial crisis - which caused a collapse of Latvia’s economy - lead to the new turmoils in the Cabinet of ministers in February 2009 despite having survived a parliamentary vote of confidence earlier that month. Valdis Dombrovskis, a former Minister of Finances and a Member of the European Parliament elected from New Era since 2004, formed a five-party coalition government - composed of JL, TP, ZZS, TB/LNNK and the new, center-right Civic Union (PS) - which was approved in the Saeima in March 2009.

The People’s Party left the coalition government in March 2010, thus leaving Prime Minister Dombrovskis as head of a minority government of a four party coalition: JL, ZZS, PS and TB/LNNK. Despite various attempts to destabilize the government through parliamentary votes of confidence Dombrovskis managed to lead the coalition until the end of the legislative period.

Table 2: Seats in Parliament and percents of votes 2006 (2010)

Party	Seats in Parliament 2006 (2010)	% of total votes (2006)
TP	23 (16)	19,6
ZZS	18 (18)	16,7
JL	18 (15)	16,4
SC	17 (18)	14,4
LPP/LC	10 (10)	8,6
TB/LNNK	8 (5)	6,9
PCTVL	6 (5)	6,0
PS	0 (7)	
Unaffiliated MPs	0 (6)	
Others	11,4	
Total	100 (100)	100

Source: CVK (<http://www.cvk.lv>); During the Parliament 2006-2010 there were newly established political parties: PS, SCP. Newly established parties consisted of deputies that redraw from the JL and TP forming new political forces in the Parliament. These political forces will be included in the analyses for the parliament 2006-2010.

2. Political parties

Despite its 20 year history Latvian party system is far from being stable. The number of politically influential (with representation in the parliament) parties changes notably with every new elections. The 2006 elections for the first time since the regaining of independence did not bring a new party into the Latvian Parliament. However, in the light of the political crisis in the end of 2007 the supposed consolidation of the political party system in Latvia failed. A number of politicians mainly of TP and JL left their organizations and established new parties as a protest to the “old politics and ethics” they earlier represented.

With some success they were running for the local and European elections in June 2009 – e.g. former Latvian Foreign Minister Sandra Kalniete’s newly founded Civic Union (PS) reached from the stand 24.3 percent (192,537 votes) and two out of 8 seats in the European Parliament.

Since the beginning of 2010, however, Latvia's political parties system is experiencing the reverse process. In order to increase the chances for the 2010 Parliamentary elections almost all of the parties present in the current Saeima have formed election alliances or political blocs – e.g. JL, PS and SCP formed the election alliance Vienotība (Unity), LC/LPP and TP have merged into the political bloc Par Labu Latviju (“For a Good Latvia” / PLL). Also TB/LNNK has joined their forces with Visu Latvija (“All for Latvia” / VL) to TB/LNNK-VL.

One of the “birth defects” of Latvia's political system is the lack of public finances for political parties, which is since the beginning an intensely debated topic. Latvia also lacks effective legislation and control mechanisms how to control the party spending. So far only some indirect public forms of support for political parties are in place such as free but limited broadcasting time on television and the distribution of short party programs. Otherwise political campaigning is to be fully covered by private sponsors. The donations to the political parties are limited within 100 minimum annual salaries per one person (minimum salary in Latvia is 180,- LVL).¹ Moreover, all party income and expenditure must be declared once a year. Together with immature political culture, lack of control mechanisms (though formally in place, yet incapable to impose the legal restrictions and means of control to the party expenses and money flows) this has led to the complete dependency of political parties on their private sponsors.

As a result, there is a risk that political parties and their representatives in the parliament and the Cabinet of Ministers make decisions according to narrow and not always legitimate interests of so called economic elite or oligarchs. Currently, the government had prepared a new bill on financing of political parties that should in practice provide stronger restrictions on private sponsorship balancing it with finances from the state budget. The subsidy from the state would be calculated based on the results of previous elections - the more votes the party earns, the larger subsidy it receives. However, the bill has been criticized for ineffective control mechanism that would not solve the over-dependency of political parties on private sponsors and has not passed the Parliamentary readings, yet.²

Meanwhile the great deal of financial flow in the parties' pockets is from private sources. The only limit for the parties which regulates their unrestrained spending during election time is set by the overall maximum expenditure allowed during the electoral campaign.³ As the result an unlimited amounts of money can be spent on behalf of party by “third person” which unlike party has no limits to what amounts of money can be spent per party (or candi-date). Though illegal in the concept, it is hard to be proved and, thus, to be persecuted.

Moreover, the political system in Latvia is to be divided not by classic ideological spectrum, but rather by historic thinking and ethnic division of social groups. For example right wing political movement is to be understood as political ideals and thus affiliation to political movement in support of Latvian national identity, values and ethnos. While left wing political movement is historically interpreted as political ideals in favor or supporting identity of Russian-speaking, values and ethnos.

¹ State Tax and Income Agency, www.vid.lv (25.09.2010)

² Valts Kalnins, Latvian Institute of International Affairs LIIA, October 2001, updated by Mikko Palonkorpi in August 2003: http://www.baltic-data.info/latvia/politics/latvia_politics_legislative_power_parliament_political_scene_party_system_basic_information.htm

³ Political party financing Law, www.likumi.lv (27.09.2010)

This specific division is a political heritage from the two rivals: “Latvijas Tautas Fronte” (Latvian Popular Front) and “Interfronte” (Counterfront) that each fought in favor or against the collapse of Soviet Union and regaining the independence of Latvia in late 80ies and early 90ies.

2.1. Tautas Partija (Peoples Party) – TP



Latvia's Peoples' Party is a right wing political party. It was established in 1998 and since then has developed a strong regional network that became a stable political support platform in later elections. TP's strongholds are mainly found in the rural areas and medium-sized cities of Kurzeme and Vidzeme while it lacks support in Latgale and the most major cities including the capital Riga. The party is a member of the

European Peoples' Party (EPP) which is “the largest and most influential European level political party of the centre-right”.⁴

Program: ideals, values

TP's ideals are based on European culture and Latvian traditions, and are embedded within four values: **freedom, justice, private property and nation state**:

- According to the liberal principles the term **freedom** is associated starting from the freedom of thoughts and evolves to the freedom of choice of personal happiness. The only restrain for the personal freedom is the freedom of other person. The development of the state has to be based on the educated nation that lives in the society who respects human rights and the rule of law.
- The term **justice** means the equality of the moral principles, respect and freedom. Justice means that everybody is equal under the law. Protection of the rights of the citizens has to be grounded within the equity disregarding ethnical, gender, religion, social welfare or any other criteria.
- The right for **private property** is the basis for the personal freedom, security and responsibility as the result of rational economic management. TP declares private property as the backbone for the Latvia's economy. The principles of free market economy are strongly supported. The interference of the government into the market can be tolerated only in the exceptional cases if the market becomes ineffective or if it works against the interests of the Latvian society.
- The **nation state** is defined as the right for the separate identity among the European nations. The church has to be separated from the state. National security and resistance to the external threats is the joint responsibility of the citizens of Latvia.

⁴ www.epp.eu

Personalities and coalitions

Entrepreneur and two times Prime Minister (December 1995 until August 1997 / July 1999 until May 2000) Andris Šķēle is the undisputed leader and unofficial “owner”/shareholder or ruler of the People’s Party. Though he resigned from official position within the party in 2003 he remained, as he himself characterized, “an ordinary member” of TP, yet, he was thought to have a considerable behind-the-scene influence in the party.

After dramatic losses in the 2009 European and local elections Andris Šķēle reemerged onto the political scene as the chairman of TP in November 2009. Since then, he is trying to rebuild the party’s network in its struggle to regain its former position and influence. Amongst other influential leaders of the party there are former Prime Minister Aigars Kalvītis (Prime Minister 2004-2008), former Minister of Foreign Affairs Māris Riekstiņš, former Minister of Finance Atis Slakteris, and former Minister of Regional Development and Local Government Edgars Zalāns.

During the 2006 Saeima elections TP got elected as the strongest political party with 19,6 percent of votes, thus becoming the biggest Parliamentary fraction with 23 seats in the Saeima. From November 2006 until January 2008 TP’s Aigars Kalvītis as Prime Minister was heading a four-party coalition (TP, LPP/LC, ZZS, TB/LNNK) until his resignation due to massive street protests after his attempt to dismiss the head of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (KNAB). Due to this and other controversial decisions TP lost its support of the electorate as well as a number of (prominent) Members of Parliament e.g. former Minister of Foreign Affairs Artis Pabriks and former Minister of Regional Development Aigars Stokenbergs leaving TP with 16 MP’s behind.

In the aftermath of Kalvītis` resignation, TP was part of the coalition governments led by LPP/LC’s Ivars Godmanis (Januar 2, 2008 – March 13, 2009) and JL’s Valdis Dombrovskis (March 13, 2009 – March 17, 2010). On March 17, TP left the government for good, since then strongly opposing the reform policy and budget cuts of Dombrovskis’ cabinet. TP is notoriously labeled as party that brought Latvia to the financial crisis.

2.2. Latvijas Pirmā Partija/Latvijas Ceļš (Latvia’s First Party/Latvian Way) – LPP/LC



LPP/LC is a right wing political party which focuses in its political agenda on protection of human rights and freedom, protection of family values, integration of the social groups, social security, responsible free market economy, private enterprises and competition. LPP/LC is considered conservative in its values and yet supports a liberal economic system as the

way to improve the welfare of the Latvian people. LPP/LC was established in 2007 as a merger of the centre-right liberal party Latvian Way (LC) and the right-wing, socially conservative Latvia’s First Party (LPP).

LC was founded in 1993 by a group of former activists of Latvia’s Popular Front (Tautas Fronte) and Latvian exiles who had returned to Latvia after it regained independence. In its first election in 1993, LC won 32.4 percent of popular vote and became the leading party in a coalition government. Despite its declining popularity in the 1995 (14.6 percent) and 1998 elections (18 percent) LC remained a powerful force in Latvian politics and was part of every coalition government in Latvia from July 1993 to November 2002 with four Prime Ministers during that period.

LPP was founded in May 2002. By Ēriks Jēkabsons and Ainārs Šlesers. As the party included also a number of priests from all the major branches of Christianity in Latvia, it was informally nicknamed as “the party of priests” or “pastors’ party”. The party proclaimed itself to be a strong supporter of the traditional family. It sponsored a constitutional amendment that defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman, unambiguously excluding homosexual unions. Several prominent members of the party have been labeled as homophobic. When it comes to the economic program, LPP is less concerned with budget deficits and believes that the government should do everything possible to stimulate economic growth, even at the costs of possibly running deficits. In its first parliamentary election in 2002, LPP also run on an anticorruption agenda. In the next election, it emphasized its competence and experience (in particular, the achievements of its leader Šlesers as the Minister of Transportation). On ethnic relations, LPP is viewed as more Russian-speakers friendly than most of the Latvian political parties. Most of the party’s supporters are Latvian-speaking but it does not attempt to appeal to Latvian nationalism and has a number of ethnic minorities among its voters.

Program: ideals, values

The outline of the LPP/LC ideals lies within six main principles: **freedom and responsibility, family and children, consolidated society, social security, welfare, and values.**

- **Freedom and responsibility** are inseparable terms. LPP/LC recognizes the freedoms every person enjoys from the day of birth (freedom of speech, thought, interest, self-expression, development, etc.) while respecting freedoms of others. The freedom is a personal duty to bear the responsibility for the actions and decisions made.
- **Family and children** is the most important part of the society that carries moral and spiritual values through generations. Family that raises children as the most important part of the society has to enjoy the support of the state through different financial mechanisms. Everything that is considered as a threat to the traditional values of the family must be eradicated.
- **Consolidated society:** integration of Latvian-speakers and national minorities in independent, sovereign and national state. The objective of LPP/LC is to ensure the emergence of the Latvian identity based on the citizenship that is a sacred right of every individual. LC/LPP supports the citizenship principle for all children born in independent Latvia despite the fact that their parents may not be the citizens of Latvia.
- The **welfare** in Latvia is built upon two basic principles: support for enterprises and innovation. Innovative economy will ensure balanced development of Latvia, including its regions. After the territorial-administrative reform is accomplished the regional centers have to become the main contact points for enterprises as the basis for sustainable longterm economic regional development. The key elements of the economy are private enterprises and private property. The state involvement can be tolerated only as far as state acting for the sake of the interests of the whole society and protecting the rule of law. Strong and stable economy will ensure the social welfare and security for the whole society.
- Christianity, freedom, responsibility, freedom of speech, respect for the fatherland, honor, human rights, respect and tolerance, compassion, truth, and peace are the main values supported by LPP/LC.

Personalities and coalitions

Former Deputy Prime Minister (2002 - 2004) and Minister for Transportation (2004 - 2006) Ainārs Šlesers is one of the founders of Latvia's First Party (LPP) in 2002 and yet unchallenged chairman of the party ever since. Besides Šlesers the board of the party includes several prominent businessmen, thus LPP and Šlesers in particular have been severely criticized as being a business project built to foster the business interests of Šlesers himself.

After the merge of LPP and LC into one party the coalition holds ten seats in the Saeima, allowing LC/LPP to join the coalition government under Prime Minister Aigars Kalvītis (TP). LC's party chairman Ivars Godmanis became interior minister in November 2006, and then Prime Minister in January 2008. After public protests against the government's budget cuts due to Latvia's economic downturn Godmanis resigned as Prime Minister along with the rest of his government in February 2009. LPP/LC was not invited to the coalition government of Valdis Dombrovskis, thus remaining in opposition since then.

2.3. Par Labu Latviju (For a good Latvia) – PLL



Par Labu Latviju has been established in June 2010 as the agreement of the two businessmen and political leaders Andris Šķēle (TP) and Ainārs Šlesers (LPP/LC) with the objective to promote the economic development of Latvia and to protect the interests of the business sector under the concept of national interests. The agreement and cooperation of Andris Šķēle and Ainārs Šlesers is known as the abbreviation – “AŠ2”.

Furthermore, PLL gets substantial support from the business community united under the NGO “Par labāku Latviju”, e.g. Aleksandrs Milovs (LNK), Gunārs Ķirsons (Lido), Ieva Plaude-Rēlingere (Kolonna), Andrejs Ēķis (LNT), Ēriks Stendzenieks (Zoom).

Program: ideals, values

From the declaration of the people's movement “Par labāku Latviju” PLL integrates the main objectives in their program: the main value for Latvia is the human being; the number of Latvian citizens is crucial for Latvia; free education till the high school; jobs for everyone; predictable, stable and safe tax system; self-sufficient small economy; health care for children and elderly people; till the retirement age the individual supports the state through taxes – after that the state supports the person through social welfare; the interests of Latvia as the top priority in foreign policy.

- **Foreign policy:** the main task is to protect national interests through promotion and unconditional support to the Latvian entrepreneurs and their goods in foreign markets. EU and NATO should be used as effective means of endorsing further economic growth. Strategic partners are essential for overcoming the crisis.

- **Economic development** is defined through the budget consolidation, improving the employment rate and long term development. Although it is recognized that there is a need for budgetary consolidation, there are no steps offered to reach that through the spending cuts or tax policy. Battling negative unemployment rates is seen through specific steps like financial support of 1200,-LVL in tax reductions for creating every new work placement, additional training (education while on duty). Long term development is depending in overall demographic situation. The stimulation of economic development is seen through tax reductions for the families with more children. To ensure the necessary capital and stimulus for the economy it is planned to devote social budget.
- **Governance** – it is planned to reduce the red tape by decreasing the number of ministries to eight;
- **Energy** – to improve energy efficiency, increase the share of renewable energy resources in Latvian energy sector, to ensure the sufficiency of necessary energy powers, to ensure energy security, improvement of energy markets;
- **Human rights** – equal rights to all the inhabitants disregarding their national, political, economic or religious belonging or social status.
- **Corruption** – improving the mechanisms to decrease the corruption and increase the tax income from the “gray” economy sectors;
- **Integration** – preservation of Latvian culture and traditions within the European cultures. Integration of minorities in Latvian society, especially through education (children);
- **Education** – increasing the competitiveness of primary, secondary education and vocational education. Internationalization of higher education system.

Personalities

Currently the Vice-Mayor of Riga and chairman of LPP/LC Ainārs Šlesers is the party alliance’s candidate for the Prime Minister’s post and runs as the alliance’s leader for the Riga constituency. The runner-up leader for PLL is former Prime Minister and chairman of TP, Andris Šķēle, who is running as PLL’s leader for the Zemgale constituency. In the Latgale constituency Rita Strode, Deputy Chairwoman of Daugavpils Municipality and Chairwoman of Latgale Planning Region, is leading the alliance’s list for the upcoming elections. The Baptist priest Ainārs Baštiks – former Minister for Children and Family Affairs and vice chairman of PLL – is heading PLL’s candidates list in the Kurzeme constituency.

By electing Guntis Ulmanis as their party chairman PLL has landed a surprise coup. Guntis Ulmanis is the nephew of Kārlis Ulmanis, the last freely elected head of state before the Soviet Occupation. He was elected president of the Latvian Republic after the restoration of independence in 1993 until 2001. After his retirement in 2001, Ulmanis mostly kept himself away from the political stage and the public. On a symbolic level, the reactivation of Ulmanis could be seen as a continuity of the presidency of his uncle Kārlis and his own legacy in the 1990s, in a time where the national interests of Latvia were to be defended towards outer and inner dangers.

With Guntis Ulmanis as party leader, PLL presents itself as a treasurer of national interests in another difficult time for Latvia.

2.4. Zaļo un Zemnieku Savienība (Union of Greens and Farmers) – ZZS



ZZS is the union of the Green Party of Latvia (Latvijas Zaļā partija) and the centric party Latvian Farmers' Union (Centriskā partija Latvijas Zemnieku savienība) established before the 2002 Parliamentary elections. In contrast to the mostly left-wing green political movements in Western and Central Europe, ZZS is a centre-right and conservative alliance. ZZS has strong regional impact, - especially in the Kurzeme and Zemgale region - taking into account the specifics of their electorate.

Program: ideals, values

ZZS' political agenda is mainly dedicated to education, healthcare and social welfare while the objective of the movement is to ensure environmentally friendly economy with the emphasis on renewable energy resources:

- **Education** has been described as the main objective to produce expertise and knowledge according to market demand. For that reason it is proposed to subsidize universities. Financing for the education is described as a necessary precondition for technical basis for secondary schools and universities. To improve the language knowledge of Latvian youngsters it is necessary to reform the educational system from the kindergarten/nursery level.
- To ensure effective and efficient **health care system** crucial aspects are infrastructure, availability of family doctors and stationary healthcare establishments. To ensure long-term social health improvements special emphasis should be made to the eradication of smoking, alcoholism and drug abuse. For the pensioners it is planned to ensure additional financial resources to ensure sufficient and affordable health care.
- To ensure the development of **economy** this political union defines its priorities as follows: promotion of efficient use of EU funds; fighting red tape; improving the financial management of the state, development of transport infrastructure (roads and railway), water and waste management systems, as well as management of polluted territories. To ensure the production of high value added products and the creation of jobs in regions it is planned to promote the progressive taxation.
- To ensure the environmentally friendly **farming** it is planned to support financially all the households no matter of their size. The production of the biological products is seen as one of the potential niches and priorities of Latvian farming as an option to diversify the Latvian economy. Latvian environment (water, forests, farming lands) can serve as the necessary energy sources so the promotion of the research and development for the sector is seen as the way to decrease the dependency on the imported energy resources.

- **Regional integration** is seen as the promotion of the regional cooperation between the regional and governmental institutions. The objective is to ensure the bigger role of the municipalities in the decision-making related to the regional development.
- **Civil society** is seen as an important precondition for the democratic development of the country and national identity.
- **Corruption** and the abuse of state institutions to reach the private business objectives is unacceptable part of Latvian political culture (especially in the institutions that protect the rights of citizens, fight crime and corruption).
- **EU and NATO** are seen as the guarantee of sovereignty and democracy of Latvia while ZZS sees to withdraw Latvian troops from Afghanistan. To ensure politically, economically and military safer state, regional integration with the Baltic and Nordic regions are strongly supported.

Personalities and coalitions

The alliance has strong links to the oligarch Aivars Lembergs, who is elected lord mayor of Ventspils since 1988, at the last municipal elections 2009 with a majority of 59.96 percent. Lembergs was ZZS' candidate for the position of Prime Minister in 2006, before being charged with corruption, fraud, bribery, money laundering and abuse of elected office on July 20, 2006. As of March 14, 2007, Lembergs was detained by the Latvian authorities in relation to a criminal investigation. After almost two years of investigating most of the accusations remained pending, but no further charges were carried on. Aivars Lembergs is the unofficial sponsor of the political party despite he is not a member of ZZS. In public he has always been one of the key aspects for the successful turnover for the election results for ZZS as Lembergs enjoys strong regional support in Latvia, especially in Kurzeme region. As mayor of Ventspils he showed remarkable success in turning the former run-down Soviet military harbor into a family friendly, prosperous sea bath and university town.

Other prominent leaders of the party are Augusts Brigmanis (Chairman of ZZS, heading ZZS' list for the Zemgale constituency), the current speaker of the 9th Saema Gundars Daudze (No. 1 on ZZS' list for the Kurzeme constituency), Raimonds Vējonis (Minister of Environment, Chairman of ZZS board, No.1 on ZZS's list for Riga constituency), Jānis Dūklavs (Minister of Agriculture, No. 1 on ZZS' list for Vidzeme constituency, Staņislavs Šķesters (MP, heading ZZS' list for the Latgale constituency), and Indulis Emsis (former Prime Minister of Latvia in 2004 and former Speaker of the Saeima).

In the 2006 elections ZZS won 18 seats and became the second biggest Parliamentary fraction. Since 2006 ZZS is part of any governing coalition, thus becoming the only constant in the Latvian government.

2.5. Jaunais Laiks (New Era) – JL

jaunais laiks

▶ **N**ew Era was founded in 2001 by Einars Repše, who became very popular in the 1990s due to his rigid and successful monetary policy as the President of Latvia's central bank. Originally, most of the party candidates were political unknowns led by Repše. JL has strong populist leanings and derives most of its appeal from positioning itself as the main anti-corruption force in Latvian politics. The party supporters characterize most of the other political parties as corrupt and controlled by oligarchs. As a result, JL has very

strained relations with most of the other political parties, which make a considerable effort to leave JL in opposition whenever possible.

In its first election campaign, JL promised to combat corruption and tax evasion. According to JL's promises, eliminating tax evasion would increase Latvia's state budget by 400 million lats, allowing for increased funding for a variety of programs and also for tax cuts. Running on this platform, the party won 23.9 percent of the popular vote and 26 out of 100 seats in the 2002 legislative election and became the largest party in the Saeima. JL formed a coalition government with three other parties, and Einars Repše as the Prime Minister. In January 2004, the coalition fell apart and Repše resigned.

JL was in the opposition until October 2004, when it rejoined a coalition government led by Aigars Kalvītis (TP). The party left the government again after a vote-buying scandal in the Jūrmala municipal elections which involved its coalition partner LPP. In the 2006 parliamentary elections, JL won 18 seats, thus becoming the second biggest Parliamentary group in Latvia's Saeima behind TP. After the elections it did not rejoin the coalition government, but decided to stay in opposition.

In 2008, prominent MPs and members of the board – e.g. former Minister of Education Ina Druviete, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Sandra Kalniete and MP Ilma Cepane - left the New Era to create the political party Civic Union (PS). JL's leadership resigned, and Solvita Aboltina and Artis Kampars became new leaders. After the resignation of Ivars Godmanis in March 2009 former Minister of Finance and Member of European Parliament Valdis Dombrovskis became Prime Minister, bringing JL back to power in a four-party, center-right coalition government. However, in the 2009 European and municipal elections JL did not benefit from the crisis of the governing party TP, and failed to gain major support in the bigger municipalities including Riga due to a badly managed political campaign. However, JL gained its strongest support in the 2006 Parliamentary election in Riga and Vidzeme region.

On the European level JL is – like TP and PS - member of the European People's Party (EPP).

Program: ideals, values

JL is a right wing political party which addresses everybody (no matter to which national or social group he or she belongs) who is ready to work to promote the development of a democratic liberal society. **Human, Nation, Latvia as state, Latvia in Europe and in the world** are seen as the core values of JL:

- Welfare and the spiritual richness of the **human being** is a crucial aspect for JL. To ensure that education, freedom, human rights, social policy, welfare system and harmony with the nature are the areas through which JL sees the development of human capital.
- The historical heritage and national identity is the backbone of the Latvian **nation**. National values and characteristics must be developed and delivered to the next generations. The basis for the nation is the strong family who is associated with the traditions and culture.
- **Latvia as a state** has to serve the interests of its citizens promoting the welfare of the nation and the developing human capital. Efficient distribution of taxpayers' money, decrease of the red tape, and guaranteed human rights are amongst the essential role of the state. Liberal economy has to serve the private interests and capital. Interaction of the state within free markets and society can be tolerated only if it serves the interests of the society. Tax system that promotes the private initiative is seen as a key aspect for the Latvian economy.
- **Latvia is linked with Europe and the world** through common values: the rule of law, cultural and spiritual values, political and economic freedom. NATO and EU are seen as the crucial guarantees of sovereignty, democracy and economic development of the state. A historic aspect (occupation) has to be taken into account while rethinking relationships with the neighboring countries, mainly Russia. Deeper integration within the Baltic Sea Region serves Latvian economic interests.

Personalities and coalitions

The former president of the Bank of Latvia, Einārs Repše, founded JL as a populist anti-corruption party in 2001. After the 2002 elections, Repše became Prime Minister of Latvia leading a four-party coalition of his own New Era Party, LPP, ZZS and TB/LNNK. Repše's government became known for an outspoken fight against corruption and tax evasion. Due to a conflict on vested interests resisting JL's anticorruption strategy as well as Repše's authoritarian management style the coalition partner LPP left the government in January 2004. After four weeks in rule as a minority government JL went into opposition but joined Aigars Kalvītis (TP) coalition government in December 2004 again, with Repše becoming Minister of Defense. In 1999 and 2000, Repše was one of the most trusted politicians in Latvia, with 75-80 percent of Latvians having a positive opinion of him. By the time of his resignation in 2005, he was the least popular minister in the Latvian government due to a questionable real estate deal during his Premiership, his confrontational management style and flamboyant lifestyle. After JL joining the government in March 2009 Repše became the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Latvia.

The current leader of JL is Solvita Āboltiņa, a former Minister of Justice, Member of the Saeima (2000 – 2002) and since 2006, a Deputy Speaker of the 9th Saeima. Āboltiņa followed Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš as leader of the party alongside some prominent personalities that left JL in winter 2008. In a "Triumvirate" with Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis and Minister of Economy Artis Kampars Āboltiņa is deciding over the party's strategic direction and thus can be considered as one of the most influential women in Latvian national politics.

⁵ See JL's party history above.

What Einārs Repše experienced at the beginning of the 2000 certainly applies to Valdis Dombrovskis in 2010. Shortly before the 2010 Saeima elections he is the most trusted politician in Latvian politics. Born in 1971 he served already as Minister of Finance (2002-2004) and as Member of the European Parliament (2004-2009). After the resignation of Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis (LPP/LC) in February 2009 President Valdis Zatlers, nominated the 37-years old graduate of physics to run the state affairs at the peak of Latvia's economic and political crisis. In the last one and a half years Dombrovskis managed to implement the EU's and IMF's recommendations balancing the state budget and cutting the state's expenditure. With greatest possible rationality and little emotion he guided Latvia through the crisis at the edge of bankruptcy and gained the highest level of respect and support by most of the political decision makers in Europe. Despite for most of the Latvian population harmful reform steps implemented by Dombrovskis' government he remains the most trusted and popular politician in the country with rankings far ahead of his own party.

2.6. Pilsoniskā Savienība (Civic Union) – PS



PILSONISKĀ SAVIENĪBA

PS was established by former members of JL and TB/LNNK in April 2008. Like the most of the Latvian parties PS understands itself as a national-conservative party. Despite its short history PS achieved a remarkable success in the 2009 European elections with 24 percent of the vote in Latvia and two (out of eight) seats in the European Parliament as well as in the 2009 municipal elections with 18.9 percent of the vote and 14 (out of 60) seats in the Rīga city council.

Program: ideals, values

PS is a political party with the main priorities to ensure the Western style democracy, promote national state, sustainable and balanced development of Latvia. According to their program it can be characterized as a right-wing political party. Main priorities of PS are **self-governance, taxes, regions, education, social system, good governance, green energy, national self consciousness, Western choice, solidarity in Europe:**

- **Self-governance of Latvian society** is linked with the institution of the President. The party declares that the President has to be elected by the citizens in direct and open elections. Citizens have to be involved also in the forming of the election candidate lists which is possible only with the strong civil society.
- **Taxes** have to be balanced from the salaries to the consumption. With this principle the objective is to find the balance between rich and poor people. PS declares that more taxes have to be paid for the luxury goods. For the big families, education, health care, research, development, infrastructure for the enterprises, family houses and flats there have to be tax reductions.
- It is necessary to give more autonomy in their decisions to the **regions** which will ensure better representation of the regional interests of the society. The decision makers, deputies at the regional level have to be directly elected by the community representatives. It is necessary to ensure the transportation and the infrastructure to ensure the access to the closest available services and goods for inhabitants of the regional municipalities.

- It is necessary to implement an **educational** system where the money follows the pupil/scholar/student. For the teachers, lecturers with the best results it is essential to develop a more stimulating teaching/learning system.
- To promote the **social system** for the elderly people it is important to ensure the sustainable and predictable payments with the stabilization funds in case of economic downturns. The additional payments to the pensions have to be made for elderly people with complicated health problems.
- **Good governance** has to start with the elimination of the bureaucracy and decrease of the costs of state institutions by 10 percent once in every five year period. It is essential to ensure the public services that are based on market principles. State institutions have to serve the interests of citizens instead of political goals.
- **Green energy** is a key aspect to decrease dependency on Russian gas and to ensure self-sufficient energy resources. Together with the decrease of greenhouse effects it is necessary to develop more effective energy supply and consumption system.
- **National self-consciousness** has to be based on the principle that for every citizen all the services in Latvia are available in Latvian language. Cultivation of the national identity in the European family of cultures is the key aspect for national Latvian consciousness.
- **Western choice** is characterized with the values and economic policy where long-term objectives prevail under short-term convenience.
- **Solidarity in Europe** for PS means more integrated EU with the emphasis on common judicial, domestic affairs and energy policy aspects.

Personalities and coalitions

The establishment of PS is based on an agreement between former Minister of Defense (1998-2004) and former member of European Parliament (2004-2009) Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis (TB/LNNK) and former Minister of Foreign Affairs (2002-2004) Sandra Kalniete MEP (JL). Being influential politicians in Latvia already since the late eighties/early nineties Kristovskis and Kalniete managed to gain significant public support in a relatively short time. In the 9th Saeima PS is currently represented by seven Members of Parliament who were originally elected on other parties' list (TB/LNNK, JL and TP) in the 2006 Parliamentary elections.

Since March 13, 2009 PS has been in coalition with JL, TP (till 17.03.2010), ZZS, TB/LNNK, SCP to form a coalition government under the leadership of Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis. In March 2010 at PS' congress the party's members voted for joining the election alliance Vienotība together with JL and SCP in order to consolidate national conservative political forces and increase the chances for a better election output.

2.7. Sabiedrība citai politikai (Society for alternative politics) – SCP

SABIEDRĪBA CITAI POLITIKAI

SCP was founded in September 2008 by former Minister of Economy and Regional Development Aigars Štokenbergs and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Artis Pabriks. As a reaction of the “Loskutovs affair” and the following political crisis of 2007 (“umbrella revolution”) Štokenbergs and Pabriks first resigned from their posts as Ministers in the Kalvītis government and then quit their membership in the Tautas Partija. Since then both politicians are unaffiliated members of Latvia’s Saeima since SCP does not count enough members of Parliament qualifying for the group status.

First established as a NGO promoting civil society and critical participation SCP soon was transformed into a political party. Thereby, Štokenbergs and Pabriks succeeded in bringing new faces from business and societal organizations into politics. However, despite the degree of popularity of the two leaders Štokenbergs and Pabriks SCP did not gain extensive support among the voters in the 2009 European (3.85 percent) and municipal elections.

Program: ideals, values

SCP is a political party with an objective to offer alternative policy (political culture/behavior) to the existing political trends in Latvia. Among their priorities are **economy, predictable and sustainable tax policy, small and effective governance, support for the regions, stimulation of the business leaving tax rates at the existing level, social responsibility:**

- SCP has stated that stimulation of the **economy** is one of their biggest priorities to reach the main objectives - to ensure stable growth of the GDP, fighting inequalities in the society, promotion of small and medium enterprises, fight against corruption, and improving the quality of education.
- **Predictable and sustainable tax policy** means no harsh decreases and increases for the tax rates as a key aspect for stable long term economic development. Tax policy must be adjusted to ensure the sustainable and predictable development of the economy. Through the banking sector it is necessary to control the payment balance of Latvian economy to avoid uncontrolled inflation which can lead to economic downturn.
- **Small and effective governance** is the option to ensure more flexible and effective governance. Huge bureaucracy makes the governance slow and non transparent.
- **Support for the regions** means more functions for the regions with more power to reflect the opinions and needs of local municipalities. The tax system has to be changed to ensure bigger financing for the regions which will give more space for the regional development.

- **Stimulation of the business leaving tax rates at the existing level** will lead to stable economic development and social security. Income from taxes has to serve as the basis for the know how economy in the future. It will create the feedback for the stronger economy that will in return become a stable ground for the families, free education, competitiveness of the education system at the international level, stimulation of R&D at the state level, social allowances for mothers raising children, more kindergartens, tax reductions for employers, improvements in health care, better support for the handicapped.
- **Social responsibility** at the time when Europe is rapidly aging with the risk of decreasing social budgets it is essential to ensure that pensions do not go below the daily minimum. To ensure the motivation for the tax payers to legalize their income the pension has to be equalized with the overall salary and working years for each person. It is necessary to ensure pensions for widows.

Personalities and coalitions

The leaders of SCP are the two ex-ministers Aigars Štokenbergs and Artis Pabriks. Štokenbergs and Pabriks were elected as MP to the 9th Saeima from TP's party list. Both left TP's Parliamentary group in November 2007 as a result of the illegitimate removal of the director of the state anti-corruption office (KNAB) Aleksejs Loskutovs by Prime Minister Aigars Kalvītis. Meanwhile, Loskutovs was (unsuccessfully) running as SCP's candidate for the chair of the mayor of Riga in the 2009 municipal elections and is the party's top candidate at the joint Vienotība party list in the Latgale election district.

Currently, Štokenbergs and Pabriks are SCP's only members of Saeima. As according to Saeima's regulation a party requires a minimum of three MPs to form a Parliamentary group the two of them pursue their Parliamentary work as unaffiliated members of Parliament, but they support the current government in the voting procedure.

Gatis Kokins is the Chairman of SCP board and has worked with diverse economic institutions. He is one of the key leaders and opinion makers inside SCP.

2.8. Vienotība (Unity)



The founding congress of the Unity party alliance (Vienotība) was held in Riga on March 6, 2010. The alliance is composed of the liberal JL, the national-conservative PS, and the social-liberal SCP. Additionally, Vienotība integrated a group of independent and in the public widely respected personalities, who have gathered around the long-time editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper DIENA, Sarmīte Elerte - the so-called Meierovica group.⁶

⁶“Meierovics Society for Progressive Change” – named after Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics, the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of the independent Republic of Latvia in 1918 - understands itself as the driving force to “generate a constructive public debate on key issues, and prepare professional recommendations that have a direct relevance to the upcoming October 2 parliamentary elections” in Latvia.

The Meierovics Society and the three parties, despite differences in their programs and the personal ambitions of their leaders, formed the Vienotība alliance against common political opponents – the Harmony Centre backed by the Russian minority and parties linked with Latvian oligarchs.

Program: ideals, values

Vienotība's value declaration emphasizes three values: the human being, Development and State, under which the alliance subsumes its policy approaches:

- **Education:** to increase state budget share up to 7 percent of GDP until 2014; to ensure that 97 percent of the school aged children get basic education (9 years); to ensure that 50 percent of the pupil get professional education; to promote the quality of the educational programs; money follows the pupil principle; pupils with the special needs must be integrated into the overall educational institutions; sufficient career planning steps; to promote the prestige of teacher.
- **Higher education, R&D:** to increase the budget share to 3 percent of the GDP until 2014; to increase the number of students financed from the state budget; to promote national and international R&D programs; to promote the national identity (language, culture, society and history etc.); to promote the quality of education through national and international accreditation; to ensure 5 percent of the overall students and lecturers from abroad.
- **Social security:** rational and well grounded allocation of the social budget; to ensure the balance between the deficit and surplus of the social budget even in the conditions when the inflation increases Maastricht criteria; to promote the accumulation of the capital in three pension funds: overall, state owed and private funds; to promote the quality of the social system with the improved interaction of the state and regional institutions; with the improved economic conditions family with children as the main subject of support; pension system linked with the social payments and employment years.
- **Health care:** to increase the budget share up to 5 percent of GDP until 2014; structural improvements of the health care system; client oriented health care system; to promote the quality of the primary health care (family doctors) as the first contact point to the health care; to promote healthy life style through educational system; clearly defined state and privately financed health services.
- **Economy, budget and taxes:** stabilization of the economy; inflation according to Maastricht criteria; balanced budget in 2014 with the surplus in upcoming years; member of the euro zone in 2014; to increase the economy growth by 20 percent until 2014; to decrease unemployment by 7 percent by 2014; free markets and competition; the emphasis of the taxes to the consumption instead of employment; investments in human capital and production efficiency; promotion of SME; substitution of imported products with made in Latvia products; to promote the private initiative; sustainable tax and fiscal policy; support for the enterprises in international markets that produce high value added products; increased competitiveness within the Baltic Sea Region; responsible policy towards forestry with the emphasis on "green energy" and biomass.

- **Business environment:** new enterprises and investments as the backbone of Latvian economy; emphasis on the regional development; exporting industries with high added value products must be supported by the state; integration of education and production industries to promote R&D with high value added products;
- **Regional development:** administrative and structural regional reforms to promote regional development; regions with more functions previously done by the government; Riga as the trading center in the Baltic Sea Region; state financed programs for the development of the infrastructure in the regions; improvements in financing system for the municipalities.
- **Energy:** reorientation from traditional to renewable green energy sources; Latvia as energy exporting country; nuclear energy as the priority for the Baltic states common energy projects; alternative energy sources as the way to ensure the energy security and independency; decrease of the share of fossil fuels in Latvian energy.
- **Transport and transit:** Latvia as East – West and South – North transit hub; Latvian ports, geo-graphic qualities have to be the main criteria while planning the development of roads, rail-ways and air traffic; increase of the quality of Latvian roads.
- **Environmental protection:** biological diversity; clean environment; improvement of the legal planning as the way to ensure environmental protection; long-term sustainable planning of consumption of environmental sources.
- **Democratization process and initiative:** transparent, honest, public accessible governance in Parliament; development of civic society; changes in political culture (money has to be excluded as power source); the Parliament and President have to be directly elected by the society; fight against corruption and political culture which is linked with the business interests.
- **Governance:** small, mobile, effective, accessible and client oriented bureaucracy; the interests of political parties must not be the subject of the action of the bureaucrats; client oriented action.
- **Legal affairs and fight against corruption:** the independence of legal power as the key aspect for rule of law and democratic values in Latvia; contemporary fine policy; declaration of the income and property; independency and efficiency for the institutions that fight against corruption.
- **Foreign policy:** Latvia's interests as the priority (independence and sovereignty). Strategic partnership within NATO and the US; promotion of the development within the EU; promotion of relationships within the Baltic Sea Region, Germany, Poland and CIS countries and Russia; foreign economic relationship have to become as one of the most important priorities.
- **Defense:** fulfillment of duties within NATO; promotion of non-military NATO benefits (transit within NATO missions); defense system has been restructured till the level that it fulfils all the international obligations.

Personalities

The Vienotība alliance is gathering a great number of experienced and respected politicians and prominent public figures. The leadership of the three allying parties JL, PS and SCP has agreed on a rotating Vienotība chairmanship beginning with Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis (PS), who is also leading the party's list in the Riga constituency. Vienotība's electoral campaign is focused on Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis' popularity and last months' achievements. He is heading the alliance's list in the Vidzeme constituency. For SCP Aleksejs Loskutovs is nominated as the party's number 1 in the Latgale constituency. JL's chairwoman Solvita Āboltiņa is heading Vienotība's party list in the Kurzeme constituency and Sarmīte Ēlerte as an icon of the Tautas fronte movement of the early 1990s is Vienotība's No. 1 on the Zemgale electoral list

2.9. Politisko partiju apvienība „Saskaņas centrs“ (Harmony Center) – SC



**Saskaņas
Centrs**

The political party union SC was established in 2005 as centre-left party by the National Harmony Party, the Socialist Party of Latvia and the New Centre Party. Former journalist Nils Ušakovs leads the party alliance as its chairman since autumn 2005 (the first chairman was Riga city councilor and head of the New Centre Party Sergejs Dolgopolovs). In 2006 Parliamentary elections, the party won 17 of 100 seats. It became the fourth largest party in Parliament and the second largest opposition party. SC has strong impact in the regions where the Russian speaking minority in Latvia mostly resides (Riga and Latgale districts).

Although SC claims to be the only political party in Latvia in which ethnic Latvians and Russian-speakers work together, almost all of SC's members of Parliament originate from the Russian-speaking community. Despite its popularity and increasing electoral support SC has never been invited to join any Latvian government, yet. However, after the municipal elections in 2009 for the first time since the restoration of independence in 1991 the alleged political body of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia with the majority in the Riga city council holds a major position in Latvian politics.

Program: ideals, values

The Harmony Center is a left wing political party. The main values of SC are **health care, family, employment, and ethnic harmony, political and economic independence of Latvia**. Disregarding the foreign policy and economy aspects the main objective remains to ensure the welfare of the inhabitants of Latvia. To ensure the welfare of the citizens the SC has outlined the following political tasks:

- **Social Security:** to ensure sufficient medical services in Latvia; to decrease the level of poverty in Latvia and foreign debt for the government; instead of liberal capitalism it is planned to introduce socially responsible policy; health, family, employment, harmony amongst different ethnicities residing in Latvia, sovereignty of the state and economic development are the main aspects of social security; it is unacceptable to decrease the pensions for elderly people; to fight emigration by promoting employment; to promote positive demographic growth.

- **Governance:** professional ministers without the political affiliation to the party; Parliamentary coalition which will be stable and not willing to destabilize the government for the sake of the short-term political ambitions.
- **Economy:** it is planned to create vacancies by creating stable and attractive environment for foreign direct investment and support to local initiatives; value added tax and human capital taxes must be decreased; progressive taxes must be introduced in Latvia; the tax system must be adjusted to ensure efficient usage of land, avoid speculations with mortgages, introduce minimum or no taxes for the only shelter for the families; the ground for the economic growth lies in the production of goods with high added value; it is necessary to avoid financial speculations.
- **Culture:** domestic policy has to ensure the harmony among all of the ethnic groups; all the inhabitants of Latvia have to be responsible for preservation of Latvian language, the sacrifices previous generations have made in their fight to violent regimes (namely Hitler's Germany) is sufficient ground to recognized all people living in Latvia as equal members of the state and its most important value.

Personalities and coalitions

Nils Ušakovs is SC's political leader. He is a journalist and left-wing politician of Russian descent. Ušakovs was a member of the 9th Saeima since 2006. Following the June 2009 municipal elections in Latvia, the majority coalition of SC and LPP/LC in the Riga city council nominated Ušakovs for the chairman of the city council, effectively the Mayor of Riga (on July 1, 2009). He became the first Russian mayor of Riga since Latvia regained its independence in 1991.

Jānis Urbanovičs is SC's nominee for the position of Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia. He is the chairman of National Harmony Party since 2007 which is one of five political parties forming SC and is heading the party's list for the Riga constituency. Furthermore, SC's list of prominent leaders includes the infamous former communist leader Alfrēds Rubiks, chairman of the Socialist Party of Latvia since 1999 – who sought to overthrow the new-born independent Latvian government 20 years ago (now a member of the European Parliament).

2.10. Nacionālā apvienība “Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK – Visu Latvijai” (National Union “For Fatherland and Freedom – All for Latvia”) – TB/LNNK-VL



TB/LNNK-VL is a national conservative political party union. The union is formed of the two nationalist right wing political parties – TB/LNNK and VL.

TB/LNNK was founded from smaller groups in 1993 as „For Fatherland and Freedom“ (TB), focusing on protection of the Latvian language and putting strict criteria on naturalization process. In the 1995 Parliamentary election TB won 14 seats and was invited to join the centre-right coalition government

led by Māris Gailis (LC) and Andris Šķēle (TP).

TB merged with the moderate Latvian National Independence Movement (LNNK) in 1997, and shifted its emphasis to economic liberalization. TB/LNNK's then-leader Guntas Krasts became Prime Minister in August 1997 to lead the government for 14 months until November 1998. TB/LNNK remained in the changing government coalitions until 2004, and again since 2006.

VL (All for Latvia!) started as a political youth organization in 2000 and became a political party in January 2006, running in the 2006 Parliamentary elections for the first time. It won 1.48 percent of vote and no seats in the parliament. VL is a strong nationalist party that supports the implementation of more restrictive citizenship laws in Latvia, by introducing strict limits on the number of people who can be naturalized into Latvian citizenship in one year. All for Latvia! would like to increase the percentage of ethnic Latvians from the current 59 percent of the Latvian population to at least 75 percent, by providing financial support to ethnic non-Latvians who would like to leave the country and ethnic Latvians from abroad who would like to return to Latvia. All For Latvia! strives to strengthen the role for the Latvian language and proposes to make it the only language of instruction in publicly funded primary and secondary schools, starting from 2015.

Program: ideals, values

TB/LNNK-VL is a right-wing political party with the main objective to promote Latvian traditions, language and identity. Promotion of national identity and interests is seen also through economy, monetary and fiscal policy, market economy, well organized social sector as the basis for strong educational system, health care and other important social services. Their priorities are **Latvian national values as top priority, education as the way of socialization process, civil society as the way of consolidating society and fighting consequences of the occupation, promotion of demographics, social security and integration, economy, regional integration, governance:**

- **Latvian national values as top priority:** to ensure Latvian language as the only official language in Latvia to be used also in the practical terms in everyday communication, Latvian language as the only way of communication through the educational system, support for the research of Latvian language, literature, scientists, actors, journalists, teachers that promote the role of Latvian language, to support Song and Dance Festival in Latvia and cultural events, export of the culture as important part of foreign policy.
- **Education as the way of socialization process:** to promote the access to the highest education by increasing state financing, support for scholars and experts to strengthen the academic capabilities in Latvia, to support the research of history.
- **Civil society as the way of consolidating society and fighting consequences of the occupation:** to ensure the recognition of occupation worldwide using the tools offered by the membership in the EU and NATO, no election rights for non-citizens, support for the citizenship only to the persons who proved their respect to the Latvian state, language, culture and traditions, any kind of support regarding the accession of the treaties on minority rights must be restricted while Russia does not confess the occupation of Latvia, to promote the repatriation of Latvians and ethnic minorities to their native countries.

- **Promotion of demographics:** to ensure the support for the families, to set the income taxes according to the number of children in the family, to ensure state leasing for the real estate for families that will be reduced according to the number of children in the families.
- **Social security and integration:** to ensure improvements of the qualification for the social sector, additions financing for social teachers in the schools, support for the NGO's that implement projects for the integration of society, jobs for youngsters in the summer.
- **Economy:** to promote the implementation of the EU funded programs, to ensure stable monetary and fiscal policy, to ensure the competition in the energy sector among electricity, gas, telecommunication and other sectors while avoiding historically made monopolies, to ensure projects with no negative effect on the environment, support for R&D.
- **Regional integration:** to promote regional integration with a strong link with the educational system, to facilitate the development of crucial infrastructure (roads, communication, electricity interconnections in rural regions), ecotourism as an important aspect of rural territory as the part of Latvian identity.
- **Governance:** to promote effective governance through e-governance and better motivation system for the higher posts in the state sector, to promote the qualification standards for the state sector employees, to avoid integration of political party interests with state institutions.

Personalities and coalitions

The leaders of TB/LNNK–VL are Roberts Zīle (TB/LNNK) and Raivis Dzintars (VL).

Roberts Zīle is an economist and politician, currently being Member of the European Parliament (since 2009). During the 1990s, Zīle was a member of the Riga City Council. He was elected a Deputy of the Saeima in 1995. In the government of Guntars Krasts, Zīle served as the Minister of Finance from 1997 to 1998. Furthermore, he served as the State Secretary for International Trade and Financial Institutions under Prime Ministers Vilis Krištopans, Andris Šķele and Andris Bērziņš. In the government of Einars Repše, he served as the Minister of Communications from 2002 to 2004. Zīle was the Prime Ministerial candidate of TB/LNNK for the Latvian Parliamentary election in 2006.

Raivis Dzintars is a founder of nationalist union VL which has become a political party. In 2006 he was elected as the chairman of VL and now for the 10th Saeima elections co-chairs the political party together with Imants Parādnieks. He has worked as a journalist for Latvijas Avīze.