Report of the *Saeima*

**On Approval of the National Security Concept**

I inform that the *Saeima* has approved the National Security Concept at the meeting of 26 September of this year.

Chairperson of the *Saeima* I. Mūrniece

Riga, 26 September 2019

**National Security Concept**

**1. Introduction**

The National Security Concept (hereinafter – the Concept) is a document prepared on the basis of the analysis of threat to the State specifying the basic strategic principles and priorities for the prevention of threat to the State to be taken into account upon development of new policy planning documents, legal acts, and action plans in the field of national security.

Threats which have a direct and indirect impact on national security of Latvia are discussed in the analysis of threat to the State and this Concept. Threats to national security are related to the development of the situation in the international security environment, to the military activities of Russia in the vicinity of the borders of Latvia, to malicious cyber activities and tendencies of international terrorism. Threats are also caused by attempts of individual foreign countries to influence the State of Latvia, its society and values, the current course of the State foreign policy oriented towards the West, as well as the internal political stability, using political, humanitarian, information, and economic means.

General priorities for the prevention of such threats are specified in the Concept according to each field of threat. The policy developed by State administration institutions, the measures planned and performed thereby, as well as the mutual cooperation in the field of national security must be based on the priorities laid down in the Concept. The Cabinet, on the basis of the priorities laid down in the Concept, shall draw up the National Security Plan which shall include specific measures and means for the neutralisation and prevention of threat to the State.

**2. National Security and National Security Policy**

The precondition for the existence of Latvia as the State is a responsible attitude of all inhabitants of Latvia towards the State and its security. National security and defence of Latvia is characterised by the readiness of the whole society and State authorities to overcome threat, the resilience towards external influence, as well as the ability to resist and continuously renew after challenges and crises. It is based on a comprehensive State defence system which promotes the readiness of inhabitants to defend the State, creates preconditions for overcoming threat, and ensures execution of the functions of importance to the State during crises and other shocks.

National security is an aggregate of circumstances achieved as a result of measures purposefully implemented by the State which ensure that internal and external vulnerability of Latvia is mitigated, as well as the joint abilities and general readiness of the State is improved in surveying, prevention, and overcoming of threat to national security.

National security of Latvia has military dimension, foreign policy dimension, and internal security dimension which are mutually linked. The military dimension is characterised by the military activities of Russia in the Baltic Region and also other security risks and threats that are hybrid in nature and are directed towards Latvia. The foreign policy dimension is characterised by the current international security environment, changes therein, and external threats. The internal security dimension is characterised by ensuring of the fundamental values laid down in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia by the State. Internal security is based on a cohesive civil society with a common understanding of the fundamental values and a wish to see Latvia as an independent, democratic, legal State that belongs to the Western world. At the same time it is a society with active citizens which is ready to defend the State in moments that are critical to the State. The capacity of the institutions that are part of the Civil Protection System and the development of their abilities are also of importance to the internal security dimension. Internal security of Latvia is closely linked to the international security situation. The stronger Latvia is in terms of internal policy, the more efficient its reaction and ability to mitigate vulnerability to external factors of threat will be.

The State border security, the capacity and abilities of State intelligence and security services, law enforcement authorities, the Foreign Service, as well as the National Armed Forces (hereinafter – the NAF) and the State Border Guard to respond in case of threat are extremely important aspects applying to the three abovementioned dimensions of national security.

The participation of Latvia in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (hereinafter – NATO) and the European Union (hereinafter – the EU) is an important basic element of national security of Latvia which adds to the national attempts of solving issues related to national security and defence. According to the NATO principle of collective defence, military threat to Latvia is considered joint threat to the alliance.

Attempts of the EU in the field of security and defence also have an additional role to the NATO collective defence. As hybrid threats keep increasing, an increasing significance must be added to the strengthening of such fields which are outside the competence of the Common Security and Defence Policy, for example, to border security, information and cyberspace security, energy security, etc. Latvia needs to promote efficient involvement of other international organisations as well, for example, the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the European Council in regulation of the international security situation.

The national security policy is a set of measures directed towards surveying, prevention, and overcoming of threat to national security. The range of the potential threats to national security of Latvia exceeds the competence of defence authorities and authorities of the system of the interior. This means that the whole State administration should get involved in surveying, prevention, and overcoming of threats to national security. Taking into account the large number of authorities involved, centralised management of the national security policy and mutual coordination of such authorities are important. A uniform understanding among State administration institutions regarding the current threats to national security of Latvia and the most efficient possibilities of counteraction is equally important. Interinstitutional cooperation should operate efficiently in everyday life, however, each authority should undertake initiative in its field of responsibility in solving the existing issues of national security. The support of the society is important to State administration institutions in implementation of the national security policy. Such support may be provided by inhabitants with adequate understanding and abilities to look critically at, for example, the content and meaning of information messages. Education of the society in the field of national security is one of the priorities when implementing the national security policy.

**3. Changes in the International Security Environment Influencing the National Security of Latvia**

Since 2015 when the previous Concept was approved at the *Saeima*, the international security environment has not improved. In addition to the existing conflicts and disagreements new risks and threats have emerged. The range of threats to national security has significantly increased due to the increasing hybrid threats, including cybersecurity risks. The international security dimension of climate change is becoming increasingly significant. Climate change has caused socioeconomic losses to the EU states, including Latvia, and also new security challenges will supplement them in the future.

The manifestations of hybrid threats are diverse, and they may include both the military means and threats of using them and the application of the non-military means of wide range, starting from the operations of intelligence and security services, cyberattacks, extensive information campaigns, and distribution of disinformation, the use of the potential of contradictions and conflict in the society, and ending with economic pressure and terrorism. The manifestations of hybrid threats are implemented simultaneously and each manifestation supplements the other, moreover, their essence is to hide any connection to the planners of the relevant activities as much as possible, similarly it is possible to suspect their implementers in many cases, however, it is very difficult to accurately determine and prove their involvement. Hybrid threats, including cybersecurity risks, will continue to have an increasing tendency, particularly taking into account the development of information technologies (hereinafter – the IT).

The countries which maintain a confrontational policy against the allies and partners of Latvia in the Euro-Atlantic space use a wide range of activities for the achievement of objectives, and these activities include both non-military and military aspects of hybrid threats. In this context Russia continues the implementation of its foreign policy without taking into consideration the international law. The action of Russia is determined by its unchanging strategic objective which is directed towards renewal and strengthening of its status of the global superpower. Russia has demonstrated that it is satisfied with the de facto prolonged conflict in Eastern Ukraine, moreover, its activities in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov region show that it is ready for the escalation of the situation to continue putting pressure on Ukraine. The international sanctions which were imposed on Russia after annexation of the Crimea were, for all these years, and will be a significant instrument henceforth for urging Russia to change its action.

Russia still actively continues strengthening its military potential. The intensity of military activities in Russia in the vicinity of the borders of Latvia at large has been high. This is attested by the modernisation and strengthening of the abilities of the armed forces, combat readiness checks and expansion of units, playing out of aggressive scenarios in military training. Russia has continued to expand the informative policy, the compatriot policy, and the educational policy, as well as activities in the field of culture and humanitarian fields with many countries, including Latvia, trying to influence their internal political processes and public opinion. All these activities must be viewed as the component of the foreign policy implemented by Russia.

As security of Latvia is rooted in close Euro-Atlantic link between the allies of Europe and the USA and Canada, the events inside the Euro-Atlantic space are also essential. The practical military support of the USA to the Baltic Region and the security of Europe still persists and increases, concurrently the dynamics of the relationship between Europe and the USA is influenced by the discussions regarding different issues of the foreign policy, trade, as well as climate. Also attempts to achieve more equivalent distribution of military expenses among NATO allies are still being made.

The withdrawal process of the United Kingdom is also topical on the EU agenda, and within the scope thereof it is essential to agree on sustainable model of future relationship and cooperation of both parties. Also the internal political tendencies observed in the EU Member States may influence the processes of external policy and security policy. Populists, politicians who are against the EU and the political parties led thereby have obtained influence in several European countries and their governments, as well as in the European Parliament elected on May 2019. This may increase the risks of disputes among the EU states in essential issues, as well as may hinder further work of the European Parliament and the European Commission.

It should be noted that currently the migratory flow from the Middle East and Northern Africa to the EU has decreased, however, this problem is still topical, moreover, new waves of migration are possible in the future. Not only warfare, but also climate change will be the factor promoting migration in the future.

International terrorism still is one of the main threats to the security of Europe and other countries of the world. The terrorist group Daesh the base of which is in Syria and Iraq has lost control over the territory it previously controlled, however, it keeps disseminating its ideology, trying to inspire its supporters who live in Europe to get involved in terrorist activities. Similarly increased radicalisation risks which may have a negative influence on security of the EU and NATO states are observed in politically unstable and socioeconomically weakened countries.

Due to exposure to the abovementioned changes and processes in the international security environment the level of threat to Latvia has reached such level of complexity that national defence using only military means is not sufficient anymore because it does not encompass all aspects of hybrid threats. When responding to the international and national challenges of the security environment, the response of Latvia must be comprehensive and based on mutual trust and partnership of the inhabitants and State authorities.

**4. Prevention of Military Threat**

The security environment of Latvia is characterised by mutual interaction of several military and non-military factors. The significance of external security risks and threats in the context of national security of Latvia has remained high. As Russia continues maintaining confrontation with the Western countries, the aggressive security policy implemented thereby in the Baltic Region is considered the main source of threat to national security of Latvia.

Modernisation of the armed forces of Russia, the development of military abilities, particularly in the strategical direction of Europe, the mobility of the forces, the accumulation of operational experience, the organisation of military training of different types and scale, including in the border area of Latvia, as well as regular demonstration of force in combination with different activities of non-military nature increase the topicality of military threat. This is reinforced by the readiness previously attested by Russia to use military force for achievement of its objectives of the foreign policy.

Taking into account the strategic views of Russia on NATO and the threat caused by its activities to its national interests, Russia is regularly trying to destroy the unity of the Alliance by trying to influence its joint decision-making processes and individual decision-making processes of Member States, as well as to reduce the role of NATO as the safety guarantee of Europe. In this context attempts are being concurrently made to test the boundaries of the conformity with the principle of collective defence, using conventional and unconventional methods and avoiding direct military confrontation with NATO.

Upon responding to the existing risks of and threats to military and non-military security, the priorities of national defence of Latvia are further development and strengthening of the national defence abilities, introduction of a comprehensive national security system, increasing of the combat readiness of the NAF units, improvement of the political and military efficiency of NATO, presence and contribution of the allied forces in ensuring international security.

**Priorities for the Prevention of Military Threat:**

**Introduction of a Comprehensive National Defence System**

In order to improve the national deterrence abilities of Latvia, as well as to shape the resilience of the society against potential crises and shocks caused by armed conflicts, the State authorities should, upon mutual cooperation, introduce a comprehensive national defence system. Specific tasks and role in national defence should be determined for each State authority, as well as a closer link between inhabitants, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations of Latvia and institutions of State administration, local governments should be created.

**Development of the National Defence Abilities and Increasing of Combat Readiness**

In order to guarantee rapid response to any type of challenges in early stages of threat and to strengthen the first line of defence in the east of the Alliance, the NAF should continue the development of combat abilities of the core of the operational capability of the NAF – land (Mechanised Infantry Brigade, National Guard, Special Tasks units) – and increase combat readiness of units which includes not only the abilities, but also recruitment of units with the staff, provision with material and technical resources, staff training, etc. Concurrently the abilities of combat support and combat provision should be improved. At the same time the compatibility of the abilities and equipment among State authorities which get involved in overcoming threat to the State should be analysed at interdepartmental level. An efficient and flexible mobilisation system of reserves should be created. Allocation of adequate financing for defence expenses in the amount of not less than 2 % from gross domestic product is a precondition for the development of the NAF units and abilities.

**Improvement of the Political and Military Efficiency of NATO**

The security and defence guarantee of Latvia is the NATO principle of collective defence. Upon expansion of the range of the potential threat, it is in the interests of Latvia to have a uniform understanding of threat among NATO Member States, as well as the readiness and political will to respond in crises or conflict situations with little warning time. Latvia should promote that the adjustment of NATO to the changing security environment is continued by implementing specific measures which conform to the security challenges of the alliance. It is in the interests of Latvia to promote the improvement of efficiency of the command structure of NATO, as well as the readiness of rapid response units which will at large improve the ability of the alliance to respond to any threat within a few days throughout the range of the military forces.

**Implementation of the Presence of the Allied Forces**

The presence of the allied forces is one of the security and defence priorities of Latvia. Permanent presence of the allied forces strengthens deterrence, closer integration with NATO defence structures and armed forces, facilitates reception of the allied forces and their response if necessary, as well as strengthens NATO defence positions in the Baltic Region at large. Therefore, it is in the interests of Latvia to continue searching for and implementation of the possibilities of increasing permanent presence of the allies. Latvia as the receiving state must keep providing all the necessary support to the allied forces deployed in Latvia. In order to facilitate the movement of the allied forces and the supply of the necessary equipment both in case of training and military conflict, the execution of the military mobility requirements of both the EU and NATO should be continued, including within the scope of implementation of Rail Baltica project.

**Contribution to Ensuring of International Security**

Participation of Latvia in international operations and in structures of the forces strengthens international security and concurrently is also a contribution to national security. Upon responding to security challenges where it is necessary the most, Latvia will continue to contribute to international operations and structures of the forces, thus strengthening the joint security and the capacity to act of organisations, as well as maintaining and increasing combat readiness of the NAF units.

**5. Prevention of Threat Caused by Foreign Intelligence and Security Services**

Work against Latvia is being implemented by intelligence and security services of several states (hereinafter – the intelligence and security services). The most essential threat to the collective security of NATO and the EU Member States, as well as to national security and interests of the State of Latvia is caused by the intelligence and security services of Russia. The Armed Forces and military infrastructure of Russia which is deployed in the strategic direction of Europe also provides for the development of intelligence and special tasks abilities adjusted to the military objectives which are directed towards Latvia. The activity of the intelligence and security services of Russia against Latvia is part of the aggregate of activities directed towards the Western countries.

The intelligence and security services of Russia are implementing a targeted and systematic work in order to obtain intelligence regarding the most essential aspects of the internal policy, foreign policy, security policy, economics, and energy policy of Latvia, as well as is following the social processes and the mood of society. The defence abilities of Latvia, the action strategy of NATO in the region, the extensive presence of the Alliance, as well as the security of the external border and the situation in the border area is attracting amplified interest of the intelligence and security services of Russia. The intelligence and security services of other foreign countries are also showing interest in these issues.

Concurrently with gathering the intelligence and strengthening the positions of the agency, the intelligence and security services of Russia are launching short-term and long-term measures with the objective of influencing: they are creating a network of agents of influence, conducting research and strengthening of the levers of influence, as well as are implementing targeted operations of influence in order to advance decisions, sociopolitical processes, and the public opinion in a manner favourable for the Kremlin. The abilities of Russia to apply complex operations of influence by combining different methods is increasing. The information space and the cyberspace play a significant role in such operations. Most often topical measures of influence are related to attempts of weakening the position of Latvia in NATO and the EU, to divide these organisations, as well as to promote tension in the society of Latvia, showing Latvia as a State that has a weak internal policy and is ethnically divided. The emphasis is also placed on distrust of inhabitants towards the State authority and politics. The abilities of influence are being developed in long term with the objective of activating them as necessary within the scope of specific projects or upon arising of a specific situation.

The intelligence and security services of Russia are using diverse work methods for the achievement of objectives and tasks, they organise their work by working from the territory of their country, temporarily entering Latvia, using the positions of diplomatic representations, actively working in the information space, inter alia, in social networks. The opportunities of technical intelligence – cyber intelligence, interception of signals and data – are increasing. The information obtained in such a way may be used in implementation of active measures and operations of influence.

The strategic objective of State intelligence and security services (the Military Intelligence and Security Service, the Constitution Protection Bureau, and the State Security Service) is to ensure an aggregate of pre-emptive and preventive measures to neutralize the threat caused by foreign intelligence and security services to national security and interests of Latvia, as well as to collective security and interests of NATO and the EU. The priority tasks must be based on the strengthening and improvement of the existing activity of State intelligence and security services according to the existing types of threat.

**Priorities for Elimination of Threat Caused by Foreign Intelligence and Security Services:**

**Development of Abilities of State Intelligence and Security Services and Coordinated Cooperation Thereof**

Taking into account the essence of the currently topical hybrid threats, the State intelligence and security services must strengthen their abilities to identify activities of foreign intelligence and security services in a wide range of manifestations. The implementation of expansion and improvement of the fields of activity should be targeted, thorough, and coordinated, retaining high work efficiency and useful utilisation of resources. Strengthening of the abilities of the State intelligence and security services should be continued both in the field of the staff and technical means and innovative work methods. The State intelligence and security services should improve and strengthen the mutual cooperation schemes and communication mechanisms in training in order to rapidly identify changes in the joint State security situation and to implement measures for the elimination of threat.

**Strengthening of Counterintelligence and Preventive Measures**

The task of State intelligence and security services is to perform continuous counterintelligence measures, identifying the activities implemented by foreign intelligence and security services which are being implemented against Latvia and nationals of Latvia, using a wide range of methods. The counterintelligence activity should be directed not only towards the discovering and neutralisation of employees of foreign intelligence and security services and their agency and also the protection of information of significance to national security and of critical infrastructure, but also towards the identification of the agents of influence and operations of influence, inter alia, the discovering of active measures implemented in media and social networks.

Taking into account the intense interest of foreign intelligence and security services in the defence abilities and security of the external border of Latvia, complex counterintelligence measures should be strengthened at sites and in objects where the military forces and infrastructure of the NAF and the allies, the units of the State Border Guard are concentrated, as well as in the territories of the border area. Increased counterintelligence work should be implemented in relation to the objects of critical infrastructure. Such cases are being recorded with an increasing frequency when different subjects, inter alia, private individuals, are using unmanned systems (aerial vehicles, ground vehicles, and underwater vehicles), therefore, the intelligence and security risks related to their use are also increasing. In order to reduce the amount of the potential threats of unmanned systems, Latvia must develop mechanisms for the control, determination, discovery of such devices and for eliminating the threats caused thereby, as well as promote the public awareness of the risks caused by the use of unmanned aerial vehicles to national security and privacy protection.

The State intelligence and security services must, according to their competence, strengthen cooperation with other State and local government authorities, as well as the non-governmental and private sector which might contribute to identification of activities of foreign intelligence and security services and to establishment of general resilience. Educational work of the society at large should be continued, strengthening understanding and ability to recognise activities which point towards intelligence activities or operations of influence implemented in a covert manner.

**Strengthening of Cooperation with Partner Services of Foreign Countries**

Cooperation of the State intelligence and security services of Latvia with the partners of the European Union and NATO Member States is an essential tool for surveying, prevention of threat caused by foreign intelligence and security services and for strengthening of collective security. The development of cooperation with the partner services of foreign countries should be continued within the scope of NATO, the EU, and regional formats, ensuring regular exchange of information and experience, shaping a common understanding of the threat caused by the third countries. Particularly close cooperation should be maintained with the partner services whose military contingent of the countries represented thereby participates in ensuring the enhanced forward presence of NATO in the Baltic States. Work on planning communication schemes and coordinated counteraction in cases when foreign intelligence and security services are directing particularly hostile activities against one or several partner states should be continued within the scope of international cooperation.

**Improvement of Measures for the Protection of the Official Secret**

The State intelligence and security services must ensure regular improvement of the existing laws and regulations governing the protection of official secret, taking into account the everchanging threats and risks, as well as the practical needs of everyday life. Security of the classified information of NATO and the EU is still affected by the human factor, therefore, it is important to implement security vetting of good quality for persons who are applying for the receipt of security clearances for work involving official secret or for certificates for the work involving classified information of NATO and the EU, as well as to implement systematic supervision of everyday work processes involving official secret objects, classified information of NATO and the EU. The State intelligence and security services must continue regular training of State senior officials and responsible officials of the subjects of official secret regarding the security requirements laid down in laws and regulations and the conformity with the secrecy regime.

According to the development of threats and new intelligence skills, consistently intense attention should be paid to appropriate classification and processing of information in appropriately accredited information systems. Physical objects (premises) of State institutions should also be appropriately managed. The State intelligence and security services should control the development, storage, handling, and use of official secret objects, classified information of NATO and the EU in a reinforced manner. Subjects of official secret should evaluate and reduce, as much as possible, the amount of the accumulated classified information if such information is no longer necessary for work.

Maintenance of consistently high security requirements for merchants which wish to work in circumstances of reduced competition, i.e., procurements which are related to the official secret object or processing of classified information of NATO and the EU both in Latvia and internationally, should be continued in the field of facility security.

**6. Prevention of Cyber Threats**

Cyber threats to Latvia are considered essential threat to national security which will increase systematically because the significance and role of IT have an increasing tendency on a global scale, as well as in the functioning of the State administration, society, and economy. The survivability of the State and the society is increasingly dependent on IT. In order to implement the basic functions of the State, such solutions are necessary which ensure the State control over the important IT infrastructure.

Cyber threats cannot be separated from the political, economic, military, and social events and the geopolitical situation at large, and they should be evaluated together with the general threat caused to Latvia by other countries, as well as being threat to Latvia as the participant of international organisations (the EU and NATO) and international missions. However, it is important to separate cyberattacks according to the objective – political motives or gaining of a financial benefit.

Similarly as in the previous years, the number of those countries keeps increasing which have a significant capability of performing cyber intelligence, information operations for influencing the opinion of the society and decision-makers, and destructive activities in the cyberspace (blocking of services, damaging of IT equipment, damaging of the physical infrastructure). Also the development of the cyber abilities, including the abilities of cyberattacks, of individual countries is continuing. Individual countries have particularly high cyber abilities which are used thereby for achievement of a wide range of strategic and tactical objectives on a global scale, including for obtaining of intelligence and particularly for economic intelligence. In turn, Russia is extensively using cyberspace not only for spying, but also for carrying out of information operations and destructive activities.

Threat in cyberspace may be caused by foreign intelligence and security services, cyber units deployed under the armed forces, as well as individual groups of hacktivists which are operating according to the assignments of State authorities or upon their own initiative, cyber hooligans, and cyber criminals. Cyberspace is also used by terrorist groups which are mostly distributing propaganda and recruiting militants in cyberspace for implementation of their interests. The evaluation of the level of cyber abilities of terrorist groups is comparatively low, however, their activities may cause threat to security which arises from the objectives of activity of terrorist organisations. Threat of the abovementioned subjects of cyberspace may be directed both against State or public organisations and also individual persons and undertakings.

The IT infrastructure mutually connects authorities and undertakings both in Latvia and in foreign countries. Accordingly, the potential threats to one institution may cause risks to others, also threats in one country may affect safety of cyberspace of other countries. Data storage in Latvia, as well as the creation of national solution which would ensure continuous data exchange in case of threat should be evaluated as the potential means for mitigating risks.

Upon commencement of the creation of the fifth generation (hereinafter – 5G) mobile data transmission networks the provision of security of 5G networks is of strategic importance. In order to promote readiness to face risks, technical, technological, and political factors should be taken into account.

Although the general situation in the State is improving, the insufficient understanding of the State, local governments, and private sector regarding the necessity of strengthening IT security or investments in this field, as well as the insufficient number of highly qualified IT specialists in Latvia and the most skilled specialists moving to foreign countries and their choosing to work in the private sector should be considered an essential security risk of cyberspace of Latvia.

Concurrently it should be noted that the ability of State intelligence and security services of Latvia and the Information Technology Security Incident Response Institution (hereinafter – CERT.LV) to identify cyberattacks performed by foreign intelligence and security services, as well as other subjects of cyberspace has improved significantly, measures for the strengthening of the information infrastructure are being implemented, the common understanding of the society regarding cybersecurity issues has increased. It is essential to continue this development and to raise the ability related to identification of threats. Upon increase in risk of personal and financial data theft, it is important to increase the awareness of the society, including merchants, regarding conformity with good cyber hygiene.

**Priorities for the Prevention of Cyber Threats:**

**Efficient Implementation of the Cybersecurity Policy**

Control and mitigation of cyber threats is possible only together with an efficiently implemented national cybersecurity policy which would, in long term and systematically, ensure the capacity to act in crisis situations, develop the legal framework of the field of information and technology, educate the society, as well as carry out targeted work on the development of abilities of the responsible authorities and provision of human resources for the sector.

In order to carry out improvements in the field, several documents which have a direct effect on the issues of the cyber environment have been developed and adopted, for example, the Cybersecurity Strategy of Latvia 2019–2022 which also includes specific tasks and measures to be carried out. The aggregate of the critical infrastructure is being reviewed, and several new information systems or their aggregate have been included therein.

The responsible authorities should ensure regular ant timely reviewing of the normative framework of cybersecurity, including of internal security instructions of authorities, taking into account the current changes and rapid dynamics of cyber threats. It is necessary to improve mutual exchange of information and mutual coordination of issues among the authorities involved in the development and introduction of policy in the cyber field.

**Strengthening of the Ability to Identify and Respond to Threats**

The abilities of the authorities involved in the prevention of cyber threats to identify in a timely manner, as well as to efficiently and rapidly prevent threats in cyberspace should be strengthened. The authorities involved in the prevention of threats should systematically work on the development of work methods and tools, adjusting them to the current situation of threat to cyberspace, as well as should work on the reduction of response time. In accordance with the Law on the Security of Information Technologies in case of an IT security incident the authority, the legal person governed by private law is responsible for the prevention thereof, in turn, CERT.LV provides support or coordinates its prevention.

The State intelligence and security services should develop the ability to monitor the content created on the Internet by users with the purpose of identifying the targeted activities directed against national security of Latvia and preventing them, as well as actively work on reduction of response time and improvement of proactive ability to prevent threats.

**Strengthening of Security of the Critical Infrastructure of Information Technologies**

The State intelligence and security services in cooperation with CERT.LV should continue work on the improvement of the security procedures of the IT critical infrastructure, timely identification of risks, training of holders and security personnel of the critical infrastructure, as well as should implement systematic control of conformity with the security regimes at the objects of owners or legal possessors of the critical infrastructure. The possibilities of multiplying benefits for the holders of private objects of the critical infrastructure whose infrastructure is included in the aggregate of the critical infrastructure and upon whom additional obligations and responsibility are placed should be evaluated.

It is essential to form cooperation of CERT.LV with such providers of Internet services which are not holders of the critical infrastructure. Mutual trust and common understanding of the necessity to increase security of the infrastructure of all providers of Internet communications should be promoted.

The authorities responsible for cybersecurity should systematically and regularly organise penetration testing, training, and exchange of information among all parties involved in order to increase the security level not only at individual objects, but in the sector at large. The infrastructure risk analysis and security documentation should be regularly reviewed, based on the current situation in cybersecurity.

**Risk Assessment of the Infrastructure Equipment and Services Received**

Anyone, particularly the owner, holder, or legal possessor of the State and local government, as well as IT critical infrastructure, should organise and support approach based on risk analysis in assessment of cybersecurity. Supplies and procurements of IT products, equipment, and services are not an exception because they may directly affect the security and continuity of operation of the infrastructure.

It is equally important to assess the practice of data storage and storage of its copies outside the territory of Latvia. Upon assessing procurements of IT products and services of importance to the functioning of the infrastructure, it is important to give preference to such products and services which have been certified by NATO, the EU, or in any Member State thereof and conform to the international standards of the IT security field.

**Improvement of Interinstitutional and International Cooperation**

The nature of cyber threats is transboundary, they may concurrently be directed not only against the national security interests of Latvia, but also against NATO and the EU at large, as well as the international partners of Latvia. The authorities of Latvia responsible for the prevention of cyber threats should form close mutual and international cooperation, increasing the national abilities of cyber defence and developing collective security. International cooperation is a precondition for the discovery of serious cyber incidents, and it should be particularly improved together with the Baltic and Nordic partners.

The authorities responsible for cybersecurity should strengthen cooperation with the private sector, ensuring mutual understanding and help in strengthening of the joint national cybersecurity and prevention of threats.

Participation of Latvia in international training strengthening the cyber defence ability and in simulations of cyberattacks should be continued, inter alia, strengthening the cooperation procedures of NATO.

**7. Prevention of Threat Caused to Internal Security and Constitutional System**

Internal security is related to the sense of security of the inhabitants of Latvia in everyday life, the socioeconomic situation in the State, the conformity with the rule of law, as well as the safety of the State border. Internal security also depends on external factors, for example, the international security environment and the foreign policy implemented by individual countries. The constitutional system of the State is part of the internal security concept which is closely linked to the fundamental values specified in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia: national independence, democracy, and territorial integrity.

One of the main elements of internal security is a cohesive and strong civil society with a common understanding of the fundamental values and the geopolitical orientation of the State. The society of Latvia is ethnically diverse, its unity is affected by the different historic experiences and value orientations of inhabitants. Concurrently social inequality is increased in the society of Latvia, and part of inhabitants is not feeling safe about their material condition and financial possibilities in the future.

The environment of internal security is negatively affected by the low trust of the society in State administration and political parties which are small in terms of the number of members, depend on private donations, and are having difficulties in ensuring stable operation in long term. These are some of the aspects which reduce the interest of inhabitants in political processes and participation in elections, as well as their wish to take active involvement in civic and political initiatives. Upon increase in alienation of inhabitants from the State, the public participation in public political activities in everyday life, as well as the ability of the society to mobilise in situations that are critical to national defence reduce. The high level of corruption, the abuse of insolvency proceedings, and the cases where involvement of the State and local government officials or officials of their undertakings in criminal offences related to corruption is suspected leaves a negative impression on the society as to the provision of the rule of law in the State. The functioning of the judicial system is still negatively characterised by the long period of hearing cases in courts.

Internal security is also related to the regional dimension which is characterised by uneven development of the capital and regions and by ever increasing socioeconomic contrasts. Depopulation of extensive territories is hindering the ability of the State to control them. These risks in the border area are increased even more by other aspects, for example, the indiscriminate attitude of individual local governments of the border area towards cross-border cooperation with Russia and Belarus, as well as the influence of the information and cultural space of Russia on inhabitants of the border area.

The cultural space, the social and historical memory of the society have an important role in shaping of a cohesive society, therefore, the activities started in the centenary programme of Latvia in relation to events of national and transnational significance the purpose of which is to strengthen the sense of belonging of inhabitants to the State, to shape a common understanding of historical events, and to increase unity among inhabitants, should be continued.

The basis of the civil society are patriotic families which have a sense of belonging to their State. Work on a clearer definition of the fundamental values of the State of Latvia and their strengthening in the everyday life of inhabitants should be continued, thus strengthening the belonging of citizens to Latvia and promoting psychological resilience against the negative influence caused by different external ideological and information activities. The principles of the civil society and fundamental values which shape a new generation with a sense of belonging and loyalty to the State and a united value orientation from the preschool age should be incorporated in the study content of the education system.

The socioeconomic problems and insecurity about one’s future may be one of the causes for self-radicalisation of individuals which are difficult to identify in comparison to other manifestations of radicalisation and extremism. Nowadays the virtual environment is serving both as the place for releasing the accumulated aggression and hate speech for a specific part of the society and the platform for targeted distribution of radical ideas with the intention of attracting new supporters for radical and extremist ideologies and the organisations representing them. The potential risks for the constitutional system in the field of internal security are also caused by persons who have been actively involved in paramilitary activities, are organising military simulation games (for example, airsoft, laser tag), and are participating in practical shooting practices. Such persons may also cause increasing counterintelligence risks, particularly in cases if they are travelling actively and maintain contacts with partners in Russia.

One of the basic elements of internal security, including public security, is the operation of the civil defence system the implementation of which is performed by State and local government authorities. In order to ensure the operation of the civil defence system, a comprehensive framework that can be implemented, a clear coordinating mechanism should be developed, as well as constant planning and training measures should be implemented.

The main external factors which have a negative impact on internal security and protection of the constitutional system are the information policy, as well as the compatriot policy implemented by Russia. The information policy of Russia has long-term objectives, and it is oriented towards changing the public opinion of Latvia according to the foreign policy priorities of Russia. Russia is trying to diminish the unity of the society of Latvia and to promote alienation of inhabitants from the State. Similarly it is important for Russia to maintain unilateral interpretation of the history in part of the society of Latvia, as well as to diminish support to the current Euro-Atlantic geopolitical orientation and participation of Latvia in the EU and NATO.

Russia is using the compatriot policy as an instrument for the involvement of compatriots in the influence activities of Russia which are directed against national security of Latvia. During the last years strengthening of the historical memory and military memorial work have become one of the main priorities within the scope of the compatriot policy. Within the scope thereof memorials and monuments are being restored and maintained in order to emphasise the historical presence of Russia in the territory of Latvia. In such a way Russia is trying to bring to life such interpretation of historical events which is preferable thereto, concurrently denying the fact of occupation of Latvia and doubting the foundation of the statehood which is in contradiction with the national security interests of Latvia.

The work of Russia with the new generation of compatriots also causes long-term risks to protection of the constitutional system. Granting of paid scholarships for studies in institutions of higher education of this state and attempts to involve the young compatriots in youth events taking place in Russia are only some of the ways in which Russia is trying to achieve formation of the new generation of compatriots loyal thereto and to be used in the future for the implementation of its interests. These activities of Russia are in contradiction with the attempts of Latvia to shape a cohesive civil society and may also cause risks to the Euro-Atlantic geopolitical orientation of Latvia.

**Priorities for the Prevention of Threat Caused to Internal Security and Constitutional System:**

**Shaping of a Cohesive Society**

Shaping of a cohesive society is the responsibility of several State authorities which comprises the policy of society integration, official language, education and youth, culture, as well as information space. Activities of the responsible authorities should be coordinated, developing and implementing a single policy of a cohesive society. Useless overlapping of functions should be prevented in their operation.

The changes initiated in the field of education which concern not only transition to studies in the official language should be continued. The principles of the civil society and fundamental values which shape a new generation with a sense of belonging and loyalty to the State and a united value orientation from the preschool age should be incorporated in the education system. The projects implemented at schools and within the scope of the youth policy should also be oriented towards the promotion of the public activity of young persons, the research of historical events of rural territory (or *pagasts*), municipality, and national scale, the involvement in decision-making, thus developing both local patriotism and attachment to the State.

In the field of the official language policy attention should be paid to the environment of languages in the public space and media environment, strengthening the positions and use of the official language in everyday situations. The State should ensure the opportunities for learning the official language for those interested persons who want to learn it, as well as should ensure systemic access to the studies of the Latvian language to those young members of the society who have entered Latvia from the third countries. Such condition should be achieved where all inhabitants are able to communicate and comprehend information in the official language. It is important both in everyday life that inhabitants are able to comprehend the messages created by the State authorities of Latvia and in crisis situations so that the government would be able to communicate efficiently with the society.

A cohesive society is also formed by the minorities living in Latvia, therefore, the State should implement inclusive minority policy, involving them in publicly political processes and decision-making processes. It is important to promote active involvement of the minority representatives in the work of local governments and State administration.

**Promotion of Public Participation in Publicly Political Processes**

Different opportunities should be used for the promotion of public participation in decision-making. Local governments are in the best position in terms of providing support to initiatives of inhabitants at the local level. Concurrently the State should systematically provide support to non-governmental organisations, involving them in implementation of different projects and in decision-making, thus increasing the participation and responsibility of inhabitants regarding occurrences in the State. It is also necessary to promote the participation of minority organisations and their representatives in networks and events of the leading non-governmental organisations of Latvia.

Steps should be taken for the creation of the diaspora policy, trying to earn the interest of compatriots living outside Latvia in Latvia and the participation in the publicly political processes occurring in Latvia, thus promoting their link with the homeland and return of the part of compatriots to Latvia. Concurrently active involvement of the diaspora of Latvia in disproving the false information and disinformation distributed in the media of their countries of residence and directed against Latvia should be promoted.

Improvement of the understanding of the society of the issues of internal security and national defence should be continued. In order to achieve it, both introduction and popularisation of national defence training in schools and education of inhabitants regarding action in different crisis situations should be continued. The State Police should develop cooperation and communication with the society regarding issues of internal security in everyday life, as well as should ensure that officials of the State Police are available to inhabitants throughout the territory of the State in crisis situations and in case of threat. Upon preparing for the different situations when threat to national security must be prevented and overcome, the NAF in cooperation with other authorities should regularly organise training in which civil-military cooperation is checked, also involving inhabitants in the training process.

**Strengthening of the Rule of Law and Shaping of Efficient State Administration**

The society should be certain and the partners of Latvia in the Euro-Atlantic space should have a view of Latvia as a judicial state where State authorities are conforming to the laws, courts are issuing fair rulings, and the decisions taken in State administration serve the interests of the society and not the personal interests of separate individuals. At the same time the society cannot just demand rule of law from the State because every citizen must also be law-abiding. Alignment of the judicial system should be continued in strengthening of internal security and rule of law, increasing efficiency of its operation and paying particular attention to the quality of pretrial investigation, as well as the long period of hearing cases in courts. Strengthening of the capacity of the law enforcement authorities in the field of investigation itself should be continued, implementing an adequate policy of human resources, also investing financing both in the remuneration of the relevant personnel and in education and raising of the professional qualification thereof.

In order to increase the trust of the society in the State and State administration institutions, they should become more efficient by providing more comfortable public services to inhabitants. This would be possible by carrying out the structural reforms of State administration, eliminating the overlapping of the functions, and expanding the use of modern technologies, for example, e-services, in State administration processes. The services provided by State administration should also be available to inhabitants in more distant populated areas, particularly at the Eastern border area, in order to reduce the exclusion of such inhabitants from the regional centres and Riga.

**Strengthening of the Capacity of the Law Enforcement Authorities**

State intelligence and security services, law enforcement authorities, as well as the State Border Guard are responsible for elimination of threats to internal security and constitutional system. The financing, the capacity of human resources, the material and technical equipment, and the response abilities of such authorities should conform to the topical challenges which endanger internal security and the constitutional system of the State, as well as arise from the rapidly changing international security environment.

In order to eliminate threat to internal security, strengthening of the abilities of the law enforcement authorities, particularly the State Police and the State Border Guard, should be continued by planning and training the required human resources, implementing projects for the construction of infrastructure, as well as modernising the existing material and technical equipment or purchasing a new one. The monthly salary of officials of the State Police and the State Border Guard should be competitive in order to prevent leaving of the personnel for better remunerated workplaces. Upon increase in the average work remuneration in the State, also the monthly wage of officials should increase. In addition to the remuneration, an appropriate working environment should be ensured to the persons employed in the State Police. Upon implementing changes in the State Police, it should be ensured that the response time of the police does not increase and low populated areas are not left without the supervision and control of the police.

**Strengthening of the Security and Defence of the State Border**

The arrangement of the green border should be completed on the Eastern border of Latvia which concurrently is the external border of the EU and NATO, creating the necessary infrastructure and deploying a corresponding technical equipment.

The capacity of human resources of the border guards and customs officials working on the Eastern border should be strengthened, concurrently reinforcing control over both the trips of border guards and customs officials to the third countries and their potential involvement in unlawful and corrupt activities by supporting illegal immigration and smuggling of excise goods. Innovative methods and modern technical means are being used in committing criminal offences endangering the inviolability of the State border. In order to prevent and successfully combat such criminal offences, it is necessary to strengthen the material and technical resources of the investigating institutions which are responsible for the investigation thereof with modern technical means, also by actively using and developing the aviation, maritime, and special operations component of the State Border Guard.

The development of the cooperation of the NAF and the State Border Guard should be continued, paying particular attention to the compatibility of the response procedures and material and technical resources of both authorities, as well as planning and organising regular joint training.

**Strengthening of the Capacity of the Civil Defence and Disaster Management Authorities**

In order to implement the operation of the civil defence system in case of threat to the State, it is necessary to efficiently mobilise human resources and material and technical resources. The authorities involved should be provided with sufficient financing, human resources, response abilities, and the necessary material and technical resources. Concurrently regional and international support mechanisms should be improved for the provision and receipt of humanitarian aid. The remuneration of the officials of the State and local government authorities involved in the operation of the civil defence system should be such as to prevent leaving of the personnel for better paid workplaces.

**8. Prevention of Threat Caused to the Information Space of Latvia**

One of the cornerstones of the national security system is safeguarding of democracy. Democracy is operational if citizens take decisions on the basis of information which is provided by the pluralism and diversity of media. This applies equally to electronic mass media and printed press. Therefore, the information space of Latvia is characterised by such principles of democracy as the freedom of press and the prohibition of censorship. The conditions of free market and competition which provide the inhabitants with freedom of action to choose a preferred source of information exist in the media market of Latvia. At the same time the availability of Latvian and European printed and electronic media at the national and regional level is a significant security element of the information space.

Essential vulnerabilities of the information space of Latvia are related to the structural challenges of the national media market. The media space of Latvia has been continuously and systematically suffering because of low financing. The comparatively small market and insufficient income from advertising are limiting the abilities of media to create high-quality content. The lack of financing has a particularly negative effect on public media the financing of which is one of the lowest in the EU.

Reduction or disappearance of media diversity, particularly in regions, may endanger and cause serious national security risks. Printed press must compete with the informative publications of local governments the content of which also includes topics that are not related to informing of the society regarding the work of the local government, moreover, they are publishing ads and advertisements, thus having a negative effect on sustainability of private regional media.

The State is not able to directly influence the choice of inhabitants in favour of a specific medium in a democratic society and free market conditions. Quite often it is more financially advantageous to buy audiovisual content that has been created in the third countries, particularly Russia, than the audiovisual products created in Latvia or Europe. This facilitates the entry of such media content in the information space of Latvia which is in contradiction with the letter and spirit of the Constitution, contains false information or distorted interpretations of the history.

The distribution of Russian television programmes, using illegal methods, has reached substantial scale in Latvia. Unlawful streaming and card sharing of satellite television operators is among such methods.In such a way the decisions of the National Electronic Mass Media Council (NEMMC) to discontinue the distribution of programmes on platforms registered in Latvia due to serious violations of the Electronic Mass Media Law are evaded.

In relation to Latvia the level of hybrid threats remains high, and its main element is hostile information influence activities, including disinformation.

The main external threat to the information space of Latvia is the information policy implemented by Russia with the purpose of destroying the political, economic, and social viability and stability of Latvia, as well as shaping the public opinion of Latvia in the direction preferable thereto. Russia is using different means for influencing the public opinion of Latvia, and also a wide range of disinformation and propaganda methods.

Enduring presence of the information space of Russia is being maintained and developed in Latvia, causing essential and, on many occasions, unequal competition for the information space of Latvia. The influence of Russia in the information space is promoted by the availability of the Russian media in Latvia and the choice of a large part of the society to use them as the main source of information and entertainment. It is related to several internal factors. The ethnic and linguistic diversity of the society of Latvia, as well as the media use habits which have developed in the middle and older generation over the years and are also partially transferred to the younger generation should be mentioned among them. The information space of Latvia is still relatively divided into two large audiences – those who comprehend information in Latvian and those who comprehend information in Russian. Part of the audience, also inhabitants whose native language is Latvian, is still using the opportunity to watch Russian television channels which form an essential part of the channel packages offered to the customers of the television service providers.

Russia has been continuously using State funded television channels, as well as radio stations several of which are retransmitting in Latvia content created in Russia. In addition Russia is implementing several specific projects of information influencing in the field of television and radio, as well as in the Internet environment which comprise not only Latvia, but also other European countries. The latest tendencies in media content consumption are showing that Russia has been increasingly using the Internet and social platforms for the purposes of information influencing.

The public opinion of Latvia is being influenced, systematically distributing different messages which are being adjusted and changed depending on the target audience. The creation of a positive view of Russia is among the messages. This message is used in juxtaposition to negative messages regarding the Western world, showing that it is experiencing economic decline and degradation of values. A negative image of NATO which will not be able to defend Latvia in case of external threats and of the EU which had not been able to ensure the economic development and welfare of Latvia and for which splitting and disintegration is expected in its nearest future is being purposefully created in the society of Latvia. Distrust in the State of Latvia, distrust in its officials, State authorities, and politicians is being created in long term with the intermediation of different messages, thus deepening the gap between the State and the society, as well as increasing the psychological insecurity about the future in the society.

Security of Latvia is endangered by the hostile information influence activities which are directed against the EU, NATO, and the allied states of Latvia. Particularly active disinformation campaigns of Russia are directed against the EU. Their purpose is to destroy the unity of the Union, to diminish the support of inhabitants to cooperation with the EU and the trust in its authorities. There are proven and well known attempts of the third countries, particularly Russia, to interfere and manipulate with the election processes in democratic states.

**Priorities for the Prevention of Threat Caused to the Information Space**

For the prevention of threat caused to the information space, on the one hand, its vulnerability should be mitigated and, on the other hand, actions against the particular external information influence activities should be taken. Prevention of threat caused to the information space of Latvia is not the task only for the State administration – this task also requires involvement of the civil society and media.

**Provision of Media Pluralism and Diversity**

An important action direction is the creation and offering of competitive content, investing in the development of both public and commercial media. The media use habits of inhabitants and the successful fierce competition of the Internet media with the traditional media is an essential challenge. A long-term alternative should be offered for reduction of the influence of the informative space of Russia in terms of the content itself, concurrently with the development of public media, ensuring a more diverse offer of commercial television and cable television from which consumers would also be able to choose audiovisual products created in Europe.

It is essential to continue and expand the operation of the Media Support Fund, providing an opportunity for the commercial media to participate in open procedures for the receipt of the funds from the State budget for the creation of content of public significance. It promotes the viability of the national media and, upon creating credible and original content of good quality, also the ability to compete with a content of media created abroad.

For the interests of national security it is important to ensure not only the pluralism of electronic media, but also of printed press, particularly in regions and border areas, as well as at the national level at large. Press publications are distinctly more used by people in regions, and they reach specific groups of the society which do not consume other sources of information as much.

Media environment support measures should be directed towards strengthening of the trust of inhabitants in independent media as an important democratic authority and defender of the interests of the society.

**Development of Public Media**

The public media of Latvia are part of the national security system because they have an essential role in shaping of a cohesive society. The development of the public media is restricted and their leaving of the advertising market is hindered by the limited State financing which should be increased. Upon investing resources into the public media, their Internet platforms should be developed and their quality should be improved, thus competing with the commercial media.

The public media should address different target audiences, and they should be available throughout the territory of Latvia. One of the specific target audiences of the public media of Latvia is the minorities of Latvia. Comprehensible alternative of good quality should be created and offered to this target audience as an alternative to the sources of information representing the information space of Russia, providing the possibilities to choose from. The public media should also reflect information regarding the processes in the regions of Latvia. In such a way the awareness of the inhabitants of Riga and other cities of regional topicalities would be promoted, increasing the attraction of the regions and promoting their development. Concurrently it would demonstrate that Riga also has interest in problems of the inhabitants of regions, reducing the sense of exclusion of the inhabitants of regions.

**Combating of the Illegal Distribution of Programmes**

The active cooperation with the non-governmental sector should be continued in combat against distribution of television programmes and films without the permission of the producer or supplier, as well as lawful transmission of television programmes in the telecommunications market should be promoted. A separate legal framework should be developed to reduce the possibilities for illegal distribution of the content of the Russian satellite television.

**Development of the Strategic Communication Skills of the State**

The strategic communication abilities of the State should be strengthened. A targeted strategic communication policy should ensure that true, timely, and comprehensible information regarding both the objectives of action, decisions, and operation of the government and the rights and obligations of inhabitants is available to inhabitants. The strategic communication channels and mechanisms should also be usable in crisis and threat situations in order to ensure informing of the society in emergency situations.

The promotion of the sense of belonging of inhabitants to the State and of the understanding of democracy and historic values should be continued. The strategic messages of the State of Latvia which are based on the values laid down in the Constitution and bringing together the society should be developed and consistently used in communication. In addition to joint messages which highlight the positives of Latvia and its allies, also specific messages which change depending on the situation and which reduce the risks of the influence of disinformation and increase the unity of the society, also its common social and historical memory, should be developed for each audience.

Implementation of both the strategic communication regarding unifying events of the social and historic memory and a targeted cultural policy should be continued. The dimension of the cultural space should be included in measures of regional development, ensuring that the regions of Latvia become an increasingly attractive environment for life and work.

The communication of the government should efficiently reach different target audiences, inter alia, the inhabitants residing in the regions of Latvia, entrepreneurs, representatives of the non-governmental sector, young persons, minorities, as well as the diaspora abroad.

**Establishment of the Monitoring and Analysis System of the Information Space**

A precondition for the resilience of the national information space is the ability of the society and the State administration to be aware of the risks and threats to the public space and to respond to them. Therefore, efficient monitoring and analysis of the information space should be ensured in Latvia in order to be able to identify, analyse, and tackle threats to the information space, inter alia, to hostile information influence activities, in a timely manner. A centralised mechanism for the coordination of the strategic communication and the security of the information space of the State is necessary, allowing to respond to specific threats in a timely and efficient manner, inter alia, coordinated skills of crisis communication. The action policy of the security of the information space should be developed and implemented in cooperation with all the authorities involved and the civil society.

The resilience of elections against external information influencing should be strengthened. The resilience of the State administration and the society at large against attempts to disturb the elections, trust of inhabitants in the process, as well as the democratic legitimacy of the election results should be strengthened. The readiness and ability of not only the State administration, but also of media and the civil society to prevent disinformation campaigns in the election context should be promoted.

**Improvement of the Laws and Regulations Governing the Media Environment**

If viewed from the perspective of national security, the current legal framework of the media operation does not solve the topical challenges related to the security of the information space of Latvia which arise not only from the abuse of television, radio, and press publications, but also of Internet sites and social networks for manipulative influencing of the public opinion and consequently the political process.

The restrictions provided for in the laws and regulations governing media operation currently in force are not sufficient to turn against the attempts of information influencing implemented by Russia on Internet sites and social networks. Therefore, the necessity for a comprehensive discussion between the State authorities and the civil society as to how to defend the democratic system of the State and to guarantee the public security on the Internet environment, concurrently fulfilling the State obligation enshrined in the Constitution to recognise and defend the right to freedom of expression, inter alia, the freedom of the press, will inevitably increase in the nearest years. Upon shaping the national normative framework, the development in the EU approach to personal data protection and self-regulation and potentially regulation of online platforms should be taken into account.

The revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive allows the Member States to suspend, upon request, retransmission and services in urgent cases which are under jurisdiction of other Member States if they endanger security of the society, including also national security, distribute hate speech or incitement to violence or terrorism after one violation. The new procedures will allow the NEMMC to combat the hate speech and incitement to violence expressed in Russian television programmes in a more active manner. Therefore, the requirements of the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive should be incorporated in the legal acts of Latvia.

**Promotion of Media Literacy and the Professional Growth of the Media Sector**

The State should promote the strengthening of media literacy of persons in formal and informal education, as well as should support the attempts of the public media and commercial media to promote media literacy in all age groups. The understanding of the society of the disinformation methods and its resilience against the influence of such methods should be promoted, paying particular attention to education of the society as to how to distinguish objective information from disinformation and propaganda, thus promoting the critical thinking of the inhabitants and their ability to analyse, assess, and recognise the activities of information influencing implemented against them which is purposefully destroying trust in the State and the policy implemented thereby. Education of the young persons from schools in media literacy should be promoted, thus strengthening the psychological resilience of the youngest part of the society against threats and malicious acts which reach the information space.

Concurrently provision of the financing for the promotion of media literacy within the scope of the Media Support Fund should be continued, thus promoting education of the society in media literacy, inter alia, for recognition of disinformation, propaganda, and manipulative information.

The operation of the media sector which is directed towards the promotion of the sustainability of independent media and the professional growth of journalists should be promoted.

**Strengthening of the European Union Policy for Combating Disinformation**

The resilience of the EU against information influencing and disinformation is important for Latvia. The priority interest of Latvia in the EU is to achieve that the private sector also takes efficient measures against disinformation. Higher responsibility and transparency from IT companies and online platforms should be achieved. If it has been concluded in a comprehensive assessment regarding efficiency of the Code of Practice on Disinformation of the European Commission1 that the Code is not efficient, Latvia should promote a discussion regarding the necessity of regulatory measures.

Concurrently it is important that the ability of the EU authorities to discover, analyse, and expose disinformation campaigns would be strengthened, coordinated and joint response of the EU authorities and Member States to disinformation would be developed. It is important to increase awareness of disinformation and to improve the resilience of the society against it throughout the EU.

Paying of international attention to disinformation activities of Russia and to the ways it is using information campaigns as the element of a hybrid war should be continued. It is in the interests of Latvia to have a closer cooperation with the EU and NATO, as well as closer Transatlantic cooperation in combating disinformation.

**9. Prevention of Threat Caused to the Economy of Latvia**

Latvia with its small internal market and consumption, as well as open and export-oriented economy is subject to changes in the external environment. Therefore, economic security of Latvia at large is affected by the unstable geopolitical situation. This applies to both the slower rates of economic growth in the euro currency zone, inter alia, uncertainty regarding further action of the United Kingdom in relation to withdrawal from the EU, and the international sanctions, as well as fluctuations of oil prices. There are sectors of economy in Latvia which are more subjected to the influence of the external environment and depend on the geopolitical situation, however, concurrently are essential within the context of national security. The energy sector, the transit sector, as well as the financial sector are among them.

Stable economic growth of Latvia in long term is an important precondition for the State to be able to ensure financing for the achievement of the objectives which are important for national security, for example, by dedicating at least 2 % of the gross domestic product for the needs of financing national defence, increasing the financing for strengthening of internal security, for public media and other fields which are indirectly linked to national security.

The main challenges of economy of Latvia in subsequent years will be related to the availability of a qualified labour force, the increase in costs of the labour force in contrast to the productivity that is still low, a foreseeable tax policy, a systematic financial sector and investment environment, as well as competitive and export-oriented manufacturing which is based on innovations and modern technologies. Currently insufficiency of the labour force is evident in individual sectors as a result of which employees from other states are being attracted illegally, the risk of illegal employment and the proportion of underground economy in specific sectors keep being increased. One of the challenges for the economy of Latvia will also be the reduction of the amount of the available EU structural funds in the future, therefore, it is important to plan how to compensate it partly, for example, by implementing State aid programmes in the form of financial instruments.

There is still a significant proportion of underground economy in Latvia which has a negative impact on the State budget revenue, sustainable growth of national economy, fair and competitive entrepreneurial environment, therefore, one of the issues to be solved as a priority is to continue work on introduction of the measures for reduction of underground economy. Corruption, deficiencies in public procurement procedures, in the judicial and insolvency system are factors that hinder the development of the entrepreneurial environment, and measures for ensuring transparency of the efficiency and operation of the State administration should be continued in order to reduce these factors, concurrently strengthening the openness of the State administration and the integrity of public officials.

**Priorities for the Prevention of Threat Caused to Economy:**

**Provision of Stable Economic Environment**

The responsible State authorities should continue implementation of balanced development of economy, thought-out fiscal and tax policy. Reforms in the public sector, management of State and local government undertakings should be performed in order to improve the transparency of their activities and the decisions taken, to eliminate the risks of corruption and the situations of a conflict of interests.

The responsible State authorities should continue implementation of measures to restrict the negative impact caused by underground economy on the national economy and State budget revenues. In order to achieve it, particular focus should be put on sectors with a higher proportion of underground economy, strengthening the control and tax collection measures in these sectors. Concurrently adequate abilities of the law enforcement authorities and authorities responsible for corruption in discovering and investigation of economic and financial crimes should be ensured, as well as efficiency of the operation of the judicial system in trying such crimes should be improved.

It is necessary to define and lay down the requirements for the continuity of operation of the services that are critical to the functioning of national economy, determining the minimum amount in which such critical services should be ensured in case of threat to the State.

Concurrently with the promotion of economic growth it is important to prevent increase in inequality of income. By implementing an adequate tax policy and other support measures, by performing measures for the reduction of tolerance of the society for non-payment of taxes, growth of tax payment culture of inhabitants will be promoted, the amount of voluntary fulfilment of tax liabilities will increase and tax collection will improve, promoting the development of national economy and reducing the number of those inhabitants who are subject to the risk of poverty and social exclusion.

**Implementation of Control of External Economic Policy and Foreign Investments**

The main priorities of external economic policy of Latvia are attraction of foreign investments and promotion of export.

The responsible authorities in cooperation with the diplomatic representations of Latvia abroad should continue proactive work by addressing the potential investors for attraction of investments in specific projects that have been developed in good quality. Attraction of investors should be focused on the neighbouring countries and countries with developed economy where Latvia is already recognisable. Concurrently diligent work with the existing investors should be carried out, finding out about those problems which they have encountered upon entering the market of Latvia, planning specific measures for elimination of the detected problems.

The responsible State authorities should continue the provision of support to entrepreneurs for the promotion of export of their products, for example, by ensuring an opportunity to participate in international exhibitions or providing guarantees of export transactions in order to secure themselves against the potential dishonest action of transaction partners.

In attraction of foreign investments it is concurrently important to ensure a control mechanism in order to prevent the possibilities of taking control over undertakings or sectors of strategic significance with the intermediation of investments, thus causing threat to national security. Upon planning and implementing measures of hybrid threats in order to destroy national economy of the State, to carry out intelligence or preparation works for the provision of military operations, the potential adversary may use the economic and financial resources at its disposal, inter alia, undertakings operating in the territory of Latvia, as well as their assets. In such cases the operation of undertakings may be legal, however, the aggregate, progress, and context of their activities may cause risks to national security.

It is necessary to continue improvement of the laws and regulations in order to find a legitimate justification for action of the government in the interests of national security, providing for the rights to restrict the investments and commercial activity of the third countries in the territory of Latvia.

**Strengthening of Energy Security**

The most important aspects of energy security are safety of the supply of energy resources and an adequate infrastructure, competitive electricity prices, and reduction of dependence on import of energy resources, promoting the use of local energy resources and implementing the energy efficiency improvement measures in a more extensive manner.

Although the natural gas supply system of Latvia is not connected to the joint natural gas supply system of the EU, Latvia has the possibility of supplying natural gas from Lithuania due to the commencement of the operation of Klaipeda liquefied natural gas terminal at the beginning of 2015. Since the end of 2017, the proportion of different sources of supply in the supply of natural gas has experienced significant short-term fluctuations and, although in total supply from Russia still forms the largest part of the supply of natural gas within a year, in separate periods the consumption of Latvia has also been ensured by supplies from the natural gas transmission system of Lithuania.

Further diversification of the supply of natural gas, the development of the infrastructure, as well as the establishment of a highly liquid and integrated regional natural gas market in the Baltic States with Finland is considered the most essential future priority in the natural gas market of Latvia.

Latvia should promote the use of the potential of Inčukalns underground gas storage facility, achieving that after creation of the necessary interconnections it would be used for the storage of natural gas by the nearest neighbouring countries for their needs and it would become a component of the natural gas supply system of the Baltic Sea Region and also the EU. For this purpose it is necessary to continue modernisation of technological equipment of Inčukalns underground gas storage facility.

Although the natural gas market in Latvia is open, the State should define more clearly its further role and control possibilities over the processes that are occurring in the natural gas market, continuing the implementation of plans in relation to the purchase of stocks of the natural gas transmission operator JSC Connexus Baltic Grid.

The hitherto successfully implemented development of the infrastructure of electricity transmission interconnections should be continued in the field of electricity. This will promote further integration of Latvia in the electricity market of the Baltic States, Poland, and the Nordic States, as well as prevent the potential overloads of the existing transmission networks. The next step would be the connection of the electricity supply systems of Latvia and other Baltic States for operation in synchronised mode with the joint electricity system of Europe.

Upon carefully evaluating the technologies which are based on the use of renewable energy resources, including their competitiveness, Latvia should promote the use of renewable energy resources in agriculture and transport sector. Latvia should continue the implementation of energy efficiency measures in the sector of final energy consumption and energy transformation, thus saving expenses for the purchase of energy resources.

**Improvement of the Supervision of the Financial Sector**

Since 2015, the financial sector of Latvia and the operation of the authorities supervising it have been affected by several events which have left a negative impact on the reputation of this sector and concurrently on the international reputation of the State. However, lately positive tendencies have been observed which is attested by the fact that the proportion of capital originating from the residents of Latvia and the states of the Euro currency zone has increased and the proportion of the capital originating from the third countries has reduced in credit institutions of Latvia. Similarly credit institutions of Latvia have improved the internal control mechanisms, revising the portfolios of their customers, and have reduced the proportion of the risky customers, as well as they are trying to implement cautious credit policy. The cautious attitude of credit institutions of Latvia in relation to the issuing of credits have both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, if receipt of credits is hindered for entrepreneurs, it may reduce the economic growth and competitiveness of Latvia. In turn, on the other hand, the caution of credit institutions in this field should be viewed positively from the point of view of national security because it reduces the potential flow of resources of unclear origin through the financial sector of Latvia.

Latvia should continue improvement of supervisory mechanisms of the financial sector in order to reduce the proportion of the amount of high-risk investments of non-residents in credit institutions of Latvia, as well as to meet the requirements included in MONEYVAL report and to ensure further progress in the field of the prevention of money laundering and terrorism and proliferation financing (hereinafter – MLTPF). Also mutual cooperation of the involved authorities and their understanding of the high priority of the field of MLTPF prevention in the context of national security of Latvia and international reputation of the State should be promoted. Concurrently work should be carried out in order to identify, in a timely manner, the potential interest of foreign investors in subjects of the financial market of Latvia, thus reducing the risks related to an overly large influence of non-resident investors on the financial sector of Latvia. It is important to define investigation of money laundering as one of the priorities of the responsible law enforcement authorities, increasing their capacity in the field of investigation and analysis accordingly, as well as developing unified guidelines for investigation of such cases. The awareness and understanding of the society and particularly the sector of non-governmental organisations of money laundering and the risks related thereto should be increased. In order to achieve it, the responsible law enforcement authorities should carry out education of the society, inter alia, explaining that criminal liability is provided for involvement in money laundering.

It is important for Latvia to continue the putting into order of the financial sector in long term in order to mitigate the risks related to the reputation of the financial system. It is also important to perform increased supervision of the operation of non-banking credit institutions, concurrently carrying out general education of the society in the issues of financial literacy, promoting the understanding of the society of responsible borrowing of financial resources, paying particular attention to avoiding that the number of such persons increases who have found themselves in the yoke of the so called quick loans. Uncritical attitude of inhabitants promotes irresponsible use of non-banking credit services which causes further negative consequences, deteriorating the financial situation of such persons and their families, as well as promoting emigration and the development of underground economy.

**Provision of Competitiveness of the Transit Sector**

The development of the transit sector is influenced by the common tendencies and changes in the geopolitical environment, inter alia, demand for energy resources, for example, coal. In subsequent years the amount of freights may diminish due to the strategy implemented by Russia by redirecting the unloading of coal, petroleum products, and other freights to its ports. Similarly competition between the countries and individual transit corridors for attraction of freights and their servicing keep increasing in the Baltic Sea Region.

The large ports of Latvia, the international airport Riga, the operators of freight transport by rail, and the companies involved in the logistics sector may achieve better results in the competition fight for attraction of freights by operating in a coordinated manner and forming a unified transit corridor and clear tariff policy for the owners of freights. Latvia should continue work in order to ensure a coordinated progress of export services of the transport and logistics sector in the international market, the inclusion of Latvia in modern global supply chains with a united sectoral brand VIA LATVIA.

The responsible authorities, the large ports, and the rail freight carriers should look for new types of freights and sources of supply, taking into account gradual reduction of Russian energy resources and orienting towards the container freights of higher added value.

The Ministry of Transport in cooperation with entrepreneurs of the transit and logistics sector should work on the development of multimodal carriage in Latvia, providing for the establishment of a corresponding infrastructure and the promotion of the competitiveness of services in the nearest future. A positive contribution might be provided by the development of the logistics centre near Salaspils which would service carriage by road and rail in the East-West, as well as the North-South directions and would be linked to the largest ports of Latvia, the airport Riga, and the railway infrastructure project Rail Baltica to be newly constructed, as well as other logistics projects in ports and airports.

**10. Prevention of Threat Caused by International Terrorism**

International terrorism still is one of the main threats to the security of Europe and also other countries of the world. Currently two most significant terrorist groups are Daesh and Al Qaeda, as well as the militant groups related thereto in different countries of the world. Daesh and Al Qaeda militants are controlling territories in several countries of the world where armed conflicts are taking place (in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, and Mali). Islam terrorists are planning attacks, preparing militants, hiding leaders, and performing illegal activities for the acquisition of financing in these territories.

Hitherto one of the most significant armed conflicts occurred in Syria and Iraq in which Islam terrorist groups and the foreign militants recruited by such groups got involved. Four to six thousand foreign militants from Europe got involved in Syria and Iraq during the armed conflict occurring therein. When in the territories of the armed conflicts, the foreign militants underwent training in training camps of terrorists. Currently mass return of foreign militants from the conflict zones is not forecasted. Taking into account the time spent in the conflict zone, there is a risk that after return such foreign militants may use the knowledge and combat experience acquired for planning attacks in Europe. Although currently the terrorist group Daesh based in Syria and Iraq has lost control over the territory, the ideology and propaganda of the group, as well as activities of other Islam terrorist groups continues to inspire the supporters living in Europe to become involved in terrorist activities.

The analysis of terrorist attacks that had occurred in European countries in the time period from 2015 to 2018 attests that the terrorists are primarily targeting civil inhabitants at mass gathering objects and officials of the law enforcement authorities. Although the targets of attacks of Islam terrorist groups are mainly directed towards the Western countries and their inhabitants, the long-term terrorism development tendencies attest that the persons and objects which are assessed by the radical Islamists as blasphemers of Islam religion are still targets of an attack by Islam terrorists.

Currently such persons, their groups or organisations which would plan to use terrorist methods for achievement of their ideological objectives have not been detected in Latvia, however, at the same time several individuals who have manifested initial signs of radicalisation have been identified in Latvia. Currently turning to radical interpretation of Islam by individual members of the Muslim community residing in Latvia is one of the main risk factors of terrorism. Converts are the most significant risk group of radicalisation. Several converts with mental health problems have been detected in Latvia. Experience of other European countries shows that recruiters of terrorist organisations are intentionally looking for persons from vulnerable groups of the society, as well as for persons with mental health problems in order to incite them to become involved in terrorist activities. Radicalisation may also be promoted by communication with terrorist groups, studies in the terrorism risk countries, places of imprisonment, and terrorist propaganda.

The socioeconomic strain in the State may also promote activity of different other strata of the society. Although both left-wing and right-wing extremists in Latvia have not gotten involved in violent activities lately, the different experience of other European countries does not allow for significant reduction of the probability of such threats.

Latvia is not disconnected from the processes occurring in Europe, therefore, henceforth it is in the interests of national security of Latvia to contribute substantially to combat against international terrorism in order to prevent increase in terrorism threats in NATO and the EU Member States. In turn, it is necessary to continue improvement of the existing counterterrorism system at national level in order to ensure the prevention of the threats caused by terrorism in a timely manner.

**Priorities for the Prevention of Threat Caused by International Terrorism:**

**Participation in International Operations for Combating Terrorism and Implementation of International Cooperation**

It is in the interests of national security of Latvia to promote combating of terrorism in regions where the international terrorist organisations are based and training of terrorists and planning of terror acts against the EU and NATO Member States is taking place. Therefore, Latvia together with the forces of other EU and NATO Member States should participate in international peace keeping missions in order to support the ability of other countries to control the security situation in their territory, concurrently preventing the dissemination of extremist ideas and terrorism tendencies outside the terrorism risk regions.

International cooperation which is one of the main elements of the preventive measures of counterterrorism has a significant role in the prevention of threat caused by terrorism. In the field of planning the counterterrorism policy Latvia should take active part in and contribute to the activities implemented by the EU and NATO in order to reduce and prevent, in a timely manner, the threats of terrorism which are directed against the EU states and their inhabitants. Concurrently the State intelligence and security services should continue the development and improvement of exchange of information with the intelligence and security services of the partner states.

**Strengthening of Cooperation of the State, Local Government and Legal Institutions in the Field of Counterterrorism**

Within the scope of the national counterterrorism system State intelligence and security services as well as other authorities involved in the counterterrorism measures must ensure more efficient cooperation in order to ensure timely exchange of information regarding threat caused by terrorism subjects. Within the scope of the preventive counterterrorism measures it is necessary to develop regional cooperation, promoting a common understanding of counterterrorism measures and action in case of terrorism threats. In addition in cooperation with other authorities the State Security Service as the main authority coordinating counterterrorism measures should ensure reviewing of the existing plans and procedures, as well as updating thereof according to the security situation in the region.

**Prevention of Radicalisation**

The potential radicalisation of inhabitants of Latvia under the influence of different ideologies justifying violence is currently the most significant risk related to terrorism. Representatives of different social groups regardless of their sex, age, ethnic origin, or professional occupation may be subject to the risk of radicalisation. Therefore, the identification of the persons subject to the risk of radicalisation and prevention of the threats caused thereby is a significant measure for the mitigation of terrorism threats. The State and local government authorities involved in the prevention of terrorism should, within the scope of their competence, perform measures to identify the early signs of radicalisation and to prevent the further development thereof. Promotion of the understanding of the society of the risks caused by radicalisation has a significant role in the prevention of radicalisation.

**Increase of Security of Terrorism Risk Objects**

The State intelligence and security services should continue the activities implemented for increasing the level of physical security of terrorism risk objects (critical infrastructure objects and mass gathering objects of people), as well as, if necessary, should ensure reviewing of the aggregate of the critical infrastructure. It is necessary to ensure coordination of the development of good quality of the documents governing security measures of the objects of the critical infrastructure and efficiency control of the implementation thereof.

**Prevention of Terrorism Financing**

The institutions supervising, controlling, and investigating the financial sector should do everything in their power to prevent a possibility of using the financial and non-financial sector for money laundering and terrorism financing, ensuring risk-based approach which providers for the introduction of prevention, supervisory, and control measures according to the level of risk. The abovementioned institutions should strengthen the ability to combat money laundering, terrorism financing, and proliferation, and to mitigate the general MLTPF risks, ensuring conformity with the international liabilities and standards in the field of prevention of MLTPF and promoting public security, competitiveness and credibility of the economic environment.

1 In 2018 the Code of Practice of the European Commission on Disinformation was introduced, and it contains a wide range of liabilities to combat disinformation online. Until the end of 2019 the European Commission will carry out a comprehensive assessment regarding the first year of operation of the abovementioned Code. If the results are unsatisfactory, the European Commission may propose further activities, inter alia, regulatory measures.