



# LATVIAN STATE SECURITY SERVICE (VDD)



ANNUAL  
REPORT

**2025**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
ON THE ACTIVITIES  
OF LATVIAN  
STATE SECURITY  
SERVICE (VDD)  
IN 2025**



FEBRUARY 2026

**LATVIAN STATE SECURITY SERVICE (VDD).  
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2025**

# CONTENTS

FOREWORD .....	5
----------------	---

## 01 COUNTERINTELLIGENCE .....

1.1. Malign activities organised by Russia's intelligence and security services .....	7
1.2. Psychological operations organised by Russia's intelligence and security services .....	9
1.3. Intelligence activities of Russia's intelligence and security services .....	10
1.4. Security of critical infrastructure .....	14
1.5. Trends in activity of Belarusian intelligence and security services .....	15
1.6. Trends in activity of China's intelligence and security services .....	16

## 02 PROTECTION OF OFFICIAL SECRETS .....

2.1. Vetting of personal security clearance applicants and holders .....	23
2.2. Vetting of local government chairpersons and their deputies .....	24
2.3. Grounds for refusing the Personal Security Clearance issuance .....	25
2.4. Vetting of infrastructure and economic operators .....	27

## 03 PROTECTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER ..

3.1. Public mood and internal security .....	29
3.2. Main organisers of Russia's non-military influence activities .....	30
3.3. Attracting youth to Russia's non-military influence activities .....	31
3.4. Organisations and activists favourable to Russia in Latvia .....	32
3.5. Extremism and Radicalism .....	36

## 04 INFORMATION SPACE SECURITY .....

4.1. Trends of Russia's information influence activities .....	41
4.2. Information influence activities of Belarus .....	43

4.3. Use of activists who have fled to Russia and Belarus .....	44
4.4. Consequences of war propaganda .....	47
4.5. China's information influence activities ..	49

## 05 ECONOMIC SECURITY .....

5.1. Situation regarding application of sanctions .....	53
5.2. Investigating sanctions violations .....	54
5.3. Reports received of possible breaches of sanctions .....	58
5.4. Investor vetting .....	59
5.5. Energy security .....	61
5.6. Developments within transport sector ..	62

## 06 COUNTERTERRORISM .....

6.1. Terrorism threat situation in Europe .....	65
6.2. Terrorism threat trends in Latvia .....	66
6.3. Preventive measures to decrease terrorism risks .....	68
6.4. Improving responding capacity .....	71
6.5. Processing of aircraft passenger data ..	72

## 07 PRE-TRIAL INVESTIGATION .....

7.1. Initiated criminal cases .....	75
7.2. In-depth verifications .....	76
7.3. Criminal cases referred for criminal prosecution .....	77
7.4. Criminal cases transferred to other institutions or terminated .....	78

## 08 DIGNITARY PROTECTION .....



# FOREWORD

Latvian State Security Service (VDD) has prepared the Annual Report about its activities in 2025. The Report provides VDD's assessment regarding the security situation and the main threats to our country.

A year of complex international geopolitics has passed, saturated with a variety of developments. Despite the civilised world's attempts to restore peace in Europe, in 2025 no success was yet attained. Unable of a breakthrough in the frontline, Russia continued targeted attacks inside Ukraine directed against civil objects, critical infrastructure, killing thousands of innocent people.

Under the conditions of Russia's brutal war and revisionist policy, a number of challenges remained in the European security space. Russia's activities in international politics were aimed at significantly shattering the transatlantic community and the relations among its member countries. Russia's intelligence and security services continued to organise and implement malign activities in European countries. These activities were directed against military and civil critical infrastructure, including airports, railways, transport system, energy and telecommunications infrastructure, as well as businesses and organisations that provide support to Ukraine. By organising malign activities against objects in Europe, Russia exposed the civilian population to direct life and health threats.

Also in Latvia last year Russia's intelligence and security services continued to organise malign activities and psychological operations, and conducted aggressive intelligence activities. Russia also continued to extend targeted non-military influence activities, including in the information space. Russia unsuccessfully sought the "weak" spots – topics that it could use to provoke disagreements, divisions, and attempt to destabilise the internal situation. Organisations and individuals associated with Russia or favourable to it tried to saturate Latvia's public space with narratives that provoked society, increased interethnic hatred and socio-economic tension, thereby demolishing the trust in our statehood.

The intelligence and security services of Belarus and China continued to pose risks to Latvia's national security. Likewise, terrorism risks related to individual cases of radicalisation in Latvian society and the possible entry of foreigners supporting terrorism into Latvia remained relevant.

To reduce the threats posed by Russia and other unfriendly states to the security of the Latvian state and its people, last year VDD in cooperation with national and foreign partner services implemented a wide range of countermeasures. Insofar as the secrecy requirements of the Service's work allow, this report provides a more detailed insight into VDD's activity.

The Service highly values the engagement of Latvia's society in identifying risk persons and potential threats to state security by regularly providing VDD with useful information. The participation of every member of society in strengthening the national security remains crucial.

Sincerely yours,  
**Normunds Mežviets**  
Director General of Latvian State Security Service



# 01

## COUNTERINTELLIGENCE

**Russia's intelligence and security services continued to pose the highest threat to Latvia last year. Despite the full-scale warfare in Ukraine, Russia continued to invest significant resources to expand activities destabilising Latvia's internal security: malign activities, psychological operations and aggressive intelligence.**

Malign activities and psychological operations organised by Russia's intelligence and security services became a significant and constant challenge to Latvia's internal security in 2025. In the assessment of VDD, the amount of malign activities and psychological operations observed in 2025 also in other European countries indicates a high activity of Russia's intelligence and security services in the region as a whole.

At the same time, the recruitment of residents for long-term covert intelligence gathering remained as the main direction of activity of Russia's intelligence and security services. The aggressor state was primarily interested in information regarding domains that are crucial to Latvia's security, defence, performance of functions important to the state and democratic order.

Belarusian intelligence and security services also posed challenges to Latvia's security. Similar to Russia, Belarusian intelligence and security services were interested in acquiring information regarding Latvia's critical and military infrastructure, the construction of infrastructure on the eastern border, as well as the Belarusian political opposition in Latvia. Likewise, Belarusian intelligence and security services implemented measures to facilitate illegal migration to Latvia and other European countries.

Similar to previous years, last year China's intelligence and security services did not implement aggressive intelligence activities against Latvia. The priority of this country's intelligence and security services was to establish and strengthen positions of influence in different domains with the long-term goal of influencing the public opinion and fostering decision making in our country favourable to the interests of China. Likewise, China attempted to develop cooperation in academic and business sectors, creating risks of scientific and economic espionage.

VDD deployed systematic measures against the threats posed by foreign intelligence and security services to preventively reduce or eliminate them.

### Russia's intelligence and security services

Three Russia's intelligence and security services continued to implement activities aimed against the security of the Republic of Latvia in 2025: Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia (GRU), Federal Security Service (FSB) and Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR).



GRU



FSB



SVR

## 1.1.

### MALIGN ACTIVITIES ORGANISED BY RUSSIA'S INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES

The most significant threat to Latvia's security last year was posed by malign activities organised by Russia's intelligence and security services, which within the territory of Latvia were the cases of arson. In 2025, several such incidents were identified in the territory of Latvia, where the Service suspects the involvement of Russia's intelligence and security services. Critical infrastructure as well as facilities related to support for Ukraine were among the targets of the malign activities.

In VDD's assessment, by implementing malign activities in the territory of Latvia or other Western countries, Russia's intention in 2025 remained unchanged – to undermine public confidence in state authority, cast doubt on the society's collective safety, as well as to negatively influence public opinion regarding the provision of support to Ukraine.

Despite the fact that the chosen targets and modus operandi clearly indicated involvement of Russia's intelligence and security services, the persons involved in the planning and execution of malign activities tried to hide their connection to the Russian intelligence and security service. VDD observed that, for this purpose, the involved persons created a multi-layered agent network which consists of the Russian intelligence and security service as the starting point, one or more intermediaries in between, and, finally, perpetrators as the end of the chain.

Multi-layer agent network recruitment took place both in the digital space, using online messaging applications, and through targeted search for perpetrators in the criminal environment. VDD detected that both former and current inmates were approached, which were useful as intermediaries and executors in Latvia.

VDD's analysis shows that in the cases of the multi-layer agent network, the task perpetrators were not in direct contact with a Russian intelligence and security service officer. In between the handler and the executor, there were often several intermediaries who coordinated the implementation of malign activities. Coordination took place starting from the search for the perpetrator until the performance evaluation of the malign activities. Although several involved persons were not in a direct contact with the officer of Russian intelligence and security service, VDD assesses that the specific goals and the nature of the tasks was clear enough to for these persons to understand that their actions provide support to the aggressor state.

When analysing the identified cases of malign activity in 2025, VDD primarily identified executors with connections in the criminal environment. Russia's intelligence and security services viewed such

persons as "single-use agents", whose fate was of no concern to them. Perpetrators' engagement in malign activities was mainly based on financial rather than ideological motivation.

### VDD DETAINS A GROUP OF PERPETRATORS OF MALIGN ACTIVITIES



Illustrative photo, VDD

On 17 October 2025, VDD asked the Prosecution Office to initiate criminal prosecution against four persons for malign activities against the critical infrastructure and other facilities in the territory of Latvia on behalf of a Russian intelligence and security service.

During the investigation, VDD established that, following the initiative of a Russian intelligence and security service, a group of persons had been formed, bringing together individuals with the goal to commit especially serious crimes against the Republic of Latvia. This group, carrying out tasks received from organisers in Russia, engaged in the planning, organisation, and execution of malign activities against the critical infrastructure and other facilities in the territory of Latvia.

VDD detained three individuals in spring 2025, whereas the fourth individual was already incarcerated for the commission of another crime.

During the investigation, VDD found that in autumn 2023 the suspects planned and conducted an arson attack on a property owned by a private company because it implemented a project related to the field of defence. In the beginning of 2024, the individuals also conducted preparatory work with the goal to set on fire a truck with Ukrainian number plates within the territory of a critical infrastructure object.

VDD obtained information that the suspects had also carried out reconnaissance of other potential targets for malign activities, including capturing videos and photos of these objects and their surroundings, which were then sent to the organisers of the malign activities in Russia.

Furthermore, "Google Maps" screenshots of the locations of different facilities were found on the smartphone of one of these individuals. Among those were military facilities, memorial sites significant to the Latvian people, companies that produce or sell highly flammable products, and critical infrastructure facilities related to electricity supply.

To prevent potential malign activities against these facilities, VDD implemented a wide range of preventive measures. Service officers instructed the personnel responsible for the security of these facilities on the identification of suspicious activities by the object, urging to immediately report such activities to VDD. Likewise, according to VDD's recommendations, the security regime of these facilities was strengthened.

All four of the suspects are related to the criminal environment and have been previously convicted for other crimes, for example, theft, robbery, as well as violation of regulations on handling of narcotic substances.

In this instance, similar to other cases of malign activities, organisers in Russia used the online messaging application "Telegram" to coordinate the criminal activities. In this application, members of the criminal group received tasks related to the reconnaissance and arson of specific facilities, and reported on the completed tasks to the organisers in Russia, including by sending video materials confirming the completion of the tasks.

The criminal case in which the activities of these persons were identified was initiated by VDD on 10 June 2024.

VDD incriminates two suspected Latvian nationals with assisting Russia in action directed against the security of Latvia committed by a group of persons, as well as intentional damage to property of another. The third suspect is incriminated with instigation and incitement to conduct malign activities that implied finding the perpetrators for the task. The fourth suspect is incriminated with supporting the commission of a crime by using the vehicle at their disposal to transport perpetrators to the location of the intended malign activities, and helping them leave the place of crime.



### Profile of a perpetrator of malign activities INDIVIDUALS WITH TIES TO CRIMINAL ENVIRONMENT

In 2025, the executors of malign activities were mainly persons who have previously been convicted and who have contacts in the criminal environment.

Such persons were usually assigned tasks that require prior preparation: finding a vehicle, reconnaissance of the target object, its surroundings and security systems, as well as preparing the necessary materials for the execution of the task.

The persons' low moral standards and skills acquired in the criminal environment allow them to be used in the execution of more complex tasks.



Illustrative photo, VDD

## 1.2.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS ORGANISED BY RUSSIA'S INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES

Last year VDD also detected the so-called psychological operations in Latvia, which most often appeared as hooliganism: placement of posters in the street environment with messages aligning with Russia's interests, marking walls with slogans supporting the aggressor state using standardised stencils, etc.

One purpose of psychological operations identified by VDD was to create a false impression of a supposed vast movement in Latvia that supports Russia, including by allegedly advocating for the resumption of cooperation with the aggressor state. The operation, which was carried out in Rēzekne, also promoted resumption of cooperation with Belarus (see the screenshot). VDD also identified the intent to build a negative attitude in Latvia's society against Ukrainian nationals that have found refuge in Latvia by disseminating calls against Latvia's security interests in their name and deceiving society about the non-existent benefits given to Ukrainian refugees, thus attempting to garner dissatisfaction at providing support to Ukraine.

### Explanation: PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS

In contrast to malign activities, psychological operations are less destructive, that is, their primary intention is delivering a message instead of causing physical or material damage. At the same time, psychological operations are just as dangerous because they are aimed at influencing public opinion against the long-term national security interests of Latvia.



Screenshot from “1188.lv” website regarding flyers distributed in Rēzekne

In the assessment of VDD, Russia was unable to achieve its targets through psychological operations in Latvia, which can be seen by Latvian society's unwavering support of Ukraine and its people.

### Profile of perpetrators of psychological operations: YOUNG PEOPLE FROM UNFAVOURABLE ENVIRONMENT



Illustrative photo, Freepik

In 2025, executors of psychological operations were mainly young people from socially disadvantaged families, including minors.

These persons often practice vagrancy and have already come to the attention of law enforcement institutions for different offences: hooliganism, alcohol consumption, etc.

Such young people are a convenient recruitment target for Russian intelligence and security services, as they are interested in easy money and know how to use information technologies.

Malign activity organisers primarily select young people for activities of hooliganism nature, as no special preparation is necessary for the execution of the tasks, such as drawing pro-Kremlin slogans in urban environments.

Similar to malign activities, psychological operations were also organised by using the multi-layer agent network model. The approach of the executors and coordination of activities were done on online messaging applications, most commonly - on "Telegram". Seemingly ordinary job advertisements were often used to identify executors of tasks, addressing potential interested persons with an ambiguous but tempting offer - to make quick money. By publishing job advertisements on the chat groups of concrete Latvia's regions, the organisers took the opportunity to approach the population of a specific region that was of interest to them in that case.

VDD observed that further dissemination in the information space of messages posted or written in the street environment was a crucial component of the psychological operations. Russian propaganda resources were used for this purpose. VDD's analysis shows that, in

several cases, the function of distributing the messages was implemented by Russian propagandist Aleksejs Stefanovs, who, for example, shared information on his "Telegram" channel regarding the flyers identified in Rēzekne.

VDD established that young people from an unfavourable environment, including minors, were primarily approached for the implementation of psychological operations. In the view of the Service, it can be explained by the nature of the tasks and the simplicity of their implementation. Until now, for the psychological operations detected in Latvia no specific knowledge or preparations were needed for the perpetrators.

### 1.3.

## INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES OF RUSSIA'S INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES

Russia's intelligence and security services' interest in Latvia's affairs remained at a high level. Last year, similar to previous years, the aggressor state's intelligence and security services were primarily interested in information about areas essential for the functioning and defence of Latvia, as well as political and economic intelligence. It was in Russia's interests to obtain information that would allow it to expand its aggressive foreign policy against Latvia more effectively, renew military plans against Latvia and ensure a public opinion that aligns with Russia's interests.

### Intelligence trends

VDD's analysis indicates that one of the primary tasks of Russia's intelligence activities was to identify vulnerabilities in Latvia's critical infrastructure objects, state and municipality institutions, military and civil protection facilities, as well as their employees. Such information allows Russia to evaluate Latvia's resilience and internal stability, as well as the potential of civil and military resistance in cases of a potential Russian invasion or organised destabilising incidents. To acquire the necessary intelligence, Russia's intelligence and security services continued their attempts to recruit Latvian nationals last year.

Considering the significant resources that it used to target Latvia last year, Russia remained the sole existential threat to Latvia's statehood. The nature of Russia's intelligence and security services' activities undoubtedly indicated their intent to implement malign activities against Latvia and its people. Russia's intelligence and security services were interested to not only acquire intelligence and grow Russia's influence in our country, but to also create and maintain support infrastructure for the execution of diversion and sabotage acts.

## CRIMINAL CASES ON SUSPICION OF ESPIONAGE ON BEHALF OF RUSSIA'S MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

In 2025, VDD detained two persons on suspicion of espionage on behalf of Russia's military intelligence service GRU. In one of these cases, the investigation and detention took place in close cooperation with the Defence Intelligence and Security Service (MIDD). These cases illustrate Russia's military intelligence interests in Latvia.

### Collection of intelligence about military objects and NATO forces



Illustrative photo, VDD

On 27 August 2025, VDD detained a Latvian national on suspicion of unlawful collection of information about the military facilities of Latvia on behalf of GRU.

During the investigation VDD discovered several episodes when the suspect collected intelligence on behalf of GRU. VDD established that the person provided the Russian intelligence service with information about the locations, layouts and security measures of various military facilities of Latvia. Among those were also armament depots. VDD's investigation also revealed that the person provided the Russian intelligence service with information about the construction of new military facilities, troop trainings and the presence of NATO allied troops at particular military facilities of Latvia.

According to information at VDD's disposal, the man had also transferred other information to the Russian intelligence service which could be used against the security interests of Latvia and other Baltic region countries.

As VDD found out during the investigation, the intelligence activities of the suspect were coordinated through the online messaging application "Telegram". This application was also used to transfer the intelligence to the Russian intelligence service.

VDD initiated the criminal case against this person on 21 August 2025 on suspicion of illegal collecting

of information and transferring thereof to a Russian intelligence service on its behalf. On 30 December 2025 VDD concluded its investigation, sending the criminal case materials to the Prosecution Office and asking to initiate criminal prosecution against the person for espionage on behalf of the GRU.

### Collection of intelligence about infrastructure used for aviation

#### IN COOPERATION WITH:



On the night of 18 October 2025, VDD in cooperation with MIDD detained an individual suspected of illegally collecting information about the Latvian defence sector on behalf of GRU.

The investigation revealed that the Latvian citizen obtained and passed on to GRU information about private infrastructure used for aviation in the territory of Latvia, for example, Spilve Airport, the presence of NATO allied forces in the country and various developments in the defence sector. The person also passed GRU information about the public mood in Latvia, aid provided to Ukraine and critical infrastructure objects in the territory of Latvia.

In addition, the suspect, on behalf of the Russian intelligence service, obtained practical information, such as the terms of purchasing prepaid mobile phone cards in Latvia, namely, whether it is possible to purchase them without revealing one's identity.

During the investigation VDD found that the person maintained conspiratorial contacts with a GRU officer and passed on the collected information whilst meeting in the territory of Russia. In this instance, the espionage on behalf of Russia had an ideological motivation.

Based on information provided by MIDD, the criminal case against this person was initiated on 14 October 2025. On 30 December 2025, VDD concluded its investigation, sending the criminal case materials to the Prosecution Office and asking to initiate criminal prosecution against the person for espionage on behalf of GRU.

Russia's intelligence and security services were interested in the recruitment of Latvia's residents to acquire intelligence, as well as to expand Russia's influence and interests' representation in our country. In the view of Russia's intelligence and security services and decision-makers, such positions are necessary to enable the future possibility to establish a government loyal to Russia or to take Latvian territory under the control of the aggressor state by military force.

Similar to 2024, last year VDD continued to observe an increasing trend of the use of online messaging applications in the work of Russia's intelligence and security services. In 2025, VDD detected Russian intelligence and security services' attempts to recruit Latvian residents primarily on the "Telegram" platform. Likewise, the aggressor state's intelligence and security services often used the messaging applications as a platform for tasking and receiving intelligence.

Taking into account the deficit of Western technologies in Russia due to the EU sanctions, last year Russian intelligence and security services continued activities to ensure the circumvention of export prohibitions imposed against Russia and the delivery of necessary technology into Russia. The aggressor state had an urgent need of Western technologies to restore its military resources for continuing the warfare in Ukraine.

Last year FSB and GRU remained the most active against Latvia in terms of intelligence gathering. FSB kept its interest in acquiring intelligence about Latvia's defence sector, intelligence and security services, home affairs institutions and their officials, public administration, as well as sociopolitical processes in Latvia's society and public opinion. Likewise, information regarding the Latvian state border remained unchangingly important to FSB. FSB activities can be described as opportunistic, namely, FSB acquired information both systematically and by adapting to the situation, for example, by attempting to recruit Latvian nationals on the border regardless of their ability to access sensitive information.

GRU maintained an increased interest in developments pertaining to Latvia's military and civil defence domains. Russia's military intelligence service showed enhanced interest in NATO's presence in Latvia, military industry and the capacity of the National Armed Forces (hereinafter – NAF), as well as military support for Ukraine. Transport logistics hubs and other critical infrastructure objects were just as relevant to the Russian military intelligence service.

### Recruitment targets of Russia's intelligence and security services

In 2025, persons with access to non-disclosable and publicly unavailable information remained the most valuable recruitment targets for Russia's intelligence and

security services. At the same time, the aggressor state's intelligence and security services' officers looked to use any opportunity to gain useful information, including by questioning persons who do not have access to non-disclosable information.

It is important to point out that Russia's border guard is a body within FSB. By leaving Latvia to Russia and encountering FSB border guard service officers, travellers almost immediately come under the attention of Russia's intelligence and security services. Therefore, Latvian nationals who visited Russia remained the most convenient targets for acquiring information regarding developments in Latvia and potential recruitment.

According to information obtained by VDD, Latvian nationals who visited Russia last year consistently faced interest from Russian intelligence and security services. It often took place already during the border crossing procedure. Respectively, FSB officers continued random in-depth reviews of Latvian residents at Latvian-Russian border crossing points, thus identifying potential persons for recruitment.

VDD established that profiling information of Latvian nationals was collected to determine their potential usefulness, and in several cases – biometric data, as well as data of their communication devices and other data devices. Russia's intelligence and security services used the opportunity to try to aggressively recruit Latvian residents at the border crossing point, and elsewhere within the territory of Russia.

Cases identified by VDD indicate that, during the questioning of Latvian nationals, FSB officers showed increased interest in:

- work in state or municipal institutions, critical infrastructure facilities;
- border crosser's contacts in state or municipal institutions, especially in home affairs services and intelligence and security services;
- contacts in Ukraine, Ukrainian armed forces;
- border crosser's financial situation, workplace, duties;
- attitude towards the events in Ukraine, as well as Russia.

At the same time, personnel of state institutions, particularly home affairs services, public undertakings and municipal institutions, as well as persons with access to critical infrastructure objects were among priority objects for Russia's intelligence and security services.

Last year VDD continued to identify cases in state institutions, public undertakings and municipalities where the employees did not take the threat posed by Russia's and other countries' intelligence and security services

seriously enough, showing negligence of precautionary measures and questioning the possibility of them becoming recruitment targets of Russia's intelligence and security services. To reduce intelligence risks associated with such persons, VDD continued to hold briefings to state and local institutions, as well as public undertakings about the threats posed by foreign intelligence and security services (more information available at the end of the chapter, subsection "Countermeasures to activities of hostile foreign intelligence and security services").

It was also essential for Russia's intelligence and security services to recruit persons with access to information on NAF, NATO, companies developing military innovations and manufacturing military goods, as well as the movement of military equipment, NAF action plans and personnel.

Russia's intelligence and security services also saw high recruitment potential in Latvian nationals with pro-Kremlin views and former service members of the USSR

armed forces. Quite a large number of discharged soviet military personnel are still at an age capable of obtaining intelligence, and, in addition, such persons often have retained specific skills obtained in the army.

### ATTENTION!

**Upon entering Russia, any Latvian national comes under the attention of Russia's intelligence and security services and becomes a potential recruitment target. VDD's identified recruitment attempts of Latvian nationals have been aimed against both persons with access to non-disclosable information and individuals who do not have such access. Any person may be a useful source of intelligence for the Russian intelligence and security services, for example, by taking photos of objects of their interest or obtaining information from other persons.**

## Changes in regulatory framework: PROHIBITION OF TRAVEL TO RUSSIA OR BELARUS FOR CERTAIN GROUPS OF PERSONS



Illustrative photo, Freepik

Law on Restriction of Activities Threatening National Security entered into force on 11 July 2025, stipulating that several groups of persons – primarily employees of state institutions – are banned from visiting Russia and Belarus.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, VDD has regularly warned the public about the high intelligence and recruitment risks and participated in drafting this law.

Prohibition of travel to Russia and Belarus is applied to person groups who are subject to the highest intelligence and recruitment risks: state officials, law enforcement and NAF personnel, employees of critical infrastructure facilities etc.<sup>1</sup>

The prohibition also applies to transiting Russian or Belarusian territory.

Such prohibition has been introduced to reduce Russian and Belarusian power structures' abilities to establish direct contacts with Latvian nationals in the territory of these countries, where Latvia has limited possibilities to protect its nationals. In the territory of these countries, officers of Russian and Belarusian intelligence and security services and other power structures have unlimited possibilities to approach travellers, obtain information about Latvia's domestic processes, as well as endanger them and involve them in cooperation against the interests of the Latvian state.

Section 5 of the Law on Restriction of Activities Threatening National Security stipulates that violation of the prohibition of travel to Russia or Belarus forms sufficient grounds for terminating employment with the person. Members of the designated groups may depart to Russia or Belarus only in exceptional circumstances if it is necessary for the fulfilment of official duties or on humanitarian grounds<sup>2</sup>, obtaining authorisation to temporarily travel to the country in question in accordance with established procedure<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, VDD's past efforts to deter Latvian nationals, especially state officials, from visiting countries hostile to Latvia and subjecting themselves to high intelligence and recruitment risks have been strengthened at the regulatory level last year.

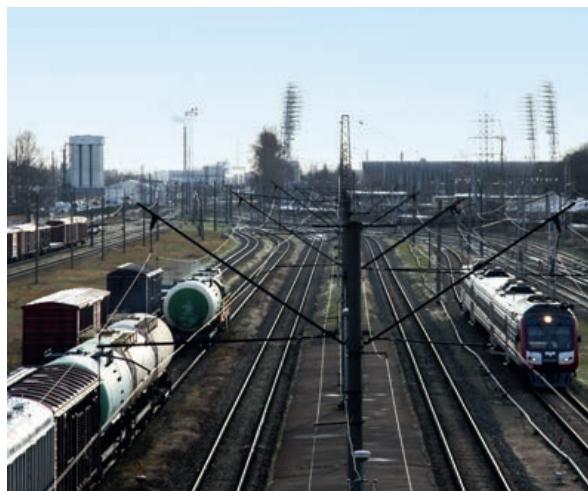
<sup>1</sup> A more detailed list of groups subject to restriction is available in Section 2 Paragraph 2 of the Law on Restriction of Activities Threatening National Security.

<sup>2</sup> Humanitarian grounds imply, e.g., serious illness or funeral of a close relative residing in Russia or Belarus.

<sup>3</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.428 of 8 July 2025 "Procedure for requesting and issuing exit permits to the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus" have been issued on basis of the Law on Restriction of Activities Threatening National Security.

### 1.4.

#### SECURITY OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE



Illustrative photo, VDD

Russia's intelligence and security services continued to pose a threat to the security of Latvia's critical infrastructure last year, recruiting Latvian nationals for obtaining intelligence regarding such objects, as well as through malign activities against Latvia's critical infrastructure.

To mitigate the risk of espionage and malign activities in 2025, VDD continued to organise regular briefings to personnel responsible for the security of critical infrastructure facilities. The aim of these briefings was to improve the capabilities of critical infrastructure security personnel to identify suspicious activities in the vicinity of facilities, as well as to promote a detailed recording of information and reporting of such incidents. Security personnel also received informative materials with examples of suspicious activities and actions to take in the event of an incident.

The reporting frequency of critical infrastructure security personnel regarding different incidents continued to increase last year. VDD considers that such trends indicate the effectiveness of the Service's briefings and the increased awareness of facility security personnel regarding existing threats. VDD duly assessed each reported case to establish the motivation of the perpetrators of the suspicious activity. The Service worked closely with the State Police to investigate the incidents. As it turned out, the majority of these incidents were committed for hooligan motives. However, in separate cases VDD had suspicions that the persons had committed the malign activities on behalf of Russia's intelligence and security services.

Additionally, the number of incidents involving unmanned aerial vehicles or drones increased more than twofold in 2025. Similar to other European countries, unauthorised drone flights also affected the civil aviation sector in Latvia, which resulted in the closure of runways and diversion of flights to other airports. As the number of drone incidents increased, VDD regularly urged owners and managers of critical infrastructure facilities to improve the protection of critical infrastructure with drone detecting equipment.

VDD's incident analysis shows that last year Russia's intelligence and security services were most interested in the railway, electricity supply and telecommunications critical infrastructure, against which malign activities were plotted. At the same time, as a result of VDD's preventive work alongside critical infrastructure security personnel and the State Police, Russia's intelligence and security service's abilities to conduct malign activities against Latvia's critical infrastructure were significantly limited last year.

In addition, VDD performed regular in-depth vetting of persons employed at critical infrastructure objects and different service providers to identify individuals who pose intelligence risks. Based on the results of the vetting, the Service declared several persons unsuited to work at critical infrastructure objects (more details are available at the end of the chapter, subsection "Countermeasures to activities of hostile foreign intelligence and security services").

It is important to note that amendments to National Security Law entered into force on 28 June 2025, imposing restrictions on Russian and Belarusian citizens, as well as citizens of other countries which support Russia's aggression to access Latvia's critical infrastructure facilities. VDD partook in drafting the amendments, and their aim was to strengthen the protection of critical infrastructure important to the safety of the state and the public by preventively reducing the possible security risks. Last year, on the basis of these amendments, several dozen Russian and Belarusian citizens were prohibited from work or provision of services at critical infrastructure objects in connection with accessing information and technical equipment crucial to the operation of the object.

##### ATTENTION!

**VDD urges the public to inform the State Police of any suspicious activity nearby important infrastructure objects by calling 110. It is recommended to film or photograph the incident.**

## 1.5.

## TRENDS IN ACTIVITY OF BELARUSIAN INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES

Last year, Belarusian intelligence and security services primarily continued working from the territory of their own country. Similar to Russian intelligence and security services, Belarusian intelligence and security services were interested in obtaining intelligence on Latvia's critical and military infrastructure, including the construction of infrastructure on the eastern border and NATO presence in Latvia, as well as other information of strategic value.

### Belarusian intelligence and security services

Two Belarusian intelligence and security services implemented activities against Latvia in 2025: the State Security Committee (KGB) and the General Staff of Belarus Armed Forces (BGRU).



KGB



BGRU

Last year Belarusian KGB also continued to carry out active measures with the aim of producing disinformation that could be used to discredit Latvia and other Western countries. For example, Belarus continued to deliberately promote illegal migration to Latvia and other European countries. At the same time, Belarusian state institutions continued to spread false information in the public space regarding alleged "human rights violations" and "violent treatment" of migrants by officers involved in Latvian border protection. In the assessment of VDD, the aim of such disinformation materials was to discredit Latvia and other NATO and European Union (ES) member states in the eyes of Belarusian society, as well as draw attention away from Belarus' domestic problems.

Among the priority tasks of Belarusian KGB remained the need to provide A. Lukashenko's regime with intelligence related to the Belarusian political opposition. For this reason, information about the Belarusian diaspora in Latvia, particularly opponents

of A. Lukashenko's regime and persons close to them that have found refuge in Latvia, remained crucial to Belarusian intelligence and security services.

Latvian residents' frequent travel to Belarus, encouraged by Belarus' unilaterally introduced visa-free regime, continued to create increased intelligence risks. Last year officers of Belarusian intelligence and security services continued to conduct random in-depth review and questioning of foreign travellers, including Latvian nationals, thus identifying potential persons for recruitment. Belarusian intelligence and security services also used other means to recruit foreigners in their territory and online. Information at the Service's disposal indicates that Belarusian intelligence and security services approached individual members of Belarusian opposition on the "Telegram" messaging application.

In 2025, Belarusian intelligence and security services prioritised recruiting individuals who permanently reside in Belarus but continue to regularly visit Latvia or other NATO or EU countries. Likewise, Belarusian intelligence and security services were interested in establishing cooperation with representatives of the Belarusian diaspora in Latvia who continue to visit Belarus.

### VDD REITERATES!

**Under the current geopolitical circumstances, travel to Russia or Belarus is dangerous. Within their territory, intelligence and security services of these countries can use aggressive and unlawful methods to obtain valuable information and compel to cooperate.**



Illustrative photo, Freepik

### 1.6.

## TRENDS IN ACTIVITY OF CHINA'S INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES

Similar to previous years, Latvia was not among the priority intelligence targets of China's intelligence and security services in 2025. At the same time, China's intelligence and security services maintained interest in intelligence on political developments, current events in the defence sector and the economic situation in Latvia, as well as the activities of our country within NATO and EU institutions and the agenda of these international organisations.

Intelligence from territory ensured the highest intelligence gathering potential for China. It was facilitated by Latvian nationals travelling to China and their uncritical attitude towards the threat posed by this country. Namely, as China's institutions and organisations provide opportunity for Latvia's residents to go on paid visits to China, China's intelligence and security services have favourable conditions to select and recruit potential information sources and lobbyists of their interests.

### China's intelligence and security services

China's intelligence and security services are the Intelligence Bureau of the Joint Staff Department of the Central Military Commission of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (JSD-IB), Chinese Ministry of State Security (MSS), which conducts intelligence and recruitment of agents abroad, and the Chinese Ministry of Public Security (MPS), which provides support to MSS intelligence activities against foreigners on Chinese territory.



JSD-IB



MSS



MPS

According to information obtained by VDD, representatives of Latvia's academic and scientific community, politicians, entrepreneurs, as well as representatives of the culture sector

took the opportunity to go on paid visits to China. Following these trips, the persons consciously and sometimes without acknowledging became lobbyists for China's interests – called for closer cooperation with China and disseminated official statements of the Chinese Communist Party about strategically important questions to China.

Last year China continued to primarily use the so-called soft power policy to build positions of influence in our country: popularised the Chinese culture, advocated for closer cooperation in the academic field and tried to use other means to create an image of itself as a reliable, peaceful partner focused on mutual benefit and development.

At the same time, VDD assesses that these Chinese activities are connected with intelligence risks, as China's statutory regulations stipulate the obligation for its companies and nationals to provide support to China if needed, including its intelligence and security services. This obligation also applies to Chinese companies registered in other countries, as well as Chinese nationals living, working and studying abroad. As a result, China uses the so called whole-of-society approach to obtain information of interest, including scientific and economic intelligence.

In the Service's assessment, China retained its most significant influence in Latvia's academic and research environment. Namely, China continued to use the already existing cooperation formats, such as the network of Confucius Institutes and cooperation agreements with Latvia's higher education institutions, and offer new ones. The Service also found that cooperation offers in the academic sector were one of the priorities during the visits of China's delegations and Confucius Institute's management to several Latvian municipalities.

VDD draws attention to the fact that cooperation with China in strategically important scientific fields, particularly in scientific projects with high innovation potential, are associated with risks of unsanctioned transferring of intellectual property and technologies. Cooperation in social and humanitarian sciences, however, can negatively impact academic freedom, promoting abstention from research of topics that are undesirable and sensitive to China.

The use of technologies made by China at objects and institutions of national importance as well as at companies that process sensitive data also continued to pose intelligence risks.

### ATTENTION!

Scientific cooperation with China in the fields of strategic importance to it, especially science projects with high innovation potential, is connected with risks of unauthorised transfer of intellectual property and technologies. Whereas cooperation in social and humanitarian sciences can negatively affect the academic freedom, namely, encourage abstention from research on topics sensitive or undesirable for China.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEMBERS OF ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

China's intelligence and security services use front organisations – NGO's, research institutes and companies – to approach representatives of academic and scientific environment, as well as officials of state institutions online (primarily on the professional networking site "LinkedIn"), offering seemingly attractive cooperation opportunities. Recruitment is often initiated by asking to provide an expert's opinion on a generic topic. Afterwards, paid visits to China or other Asian countries are organised and permanent contact is established.

Latvia's academic and scientific community's representatives are also offered a variety of paid trips to China – participation in conferences, seminars and other experience exchange events. In the assessment of VDD, the purpose of such visits is also to initiate contact with persons of interest, favourably aligning them to China with the potential of developing formal or covert cooperation in the future.

VDD recommends:

- critically evaluating the need to engage in joint research projects with China, especially in the field of STEM<sup>4</sup>;
- refraining from offers of travel to China if the expenses are covered by the Chinese side;
- critically evaluating the need to participate in scientific conferences in China, especially in the field of STEM;

- informing VDD regarding suspicious cases of contact or cooperation offers on "LinkedIn" or other social networking sites.

If, after gathering and evaluating information about the event in China, a decision is made to attend it, the Service recommends:

- observing caution in regards to the extent and sensitivity of the information discussed and revealed;
- with regard to risks of unsanctioned data retrieval, not bringing your business or private smartphone and laptop, especially if these devices contain work-related or sensitive information;
- a safer choice than the current business or private smartphone will be a blank temporary phone with a pre-paid SIM card which can be disposed of after returning to Latvia;
- not plugging any USB sticks or other data mediums received in China into your devices, including after returning to Latvia;
- while in China, not connecting remotely to any systems of your organisation;
- paying attention to untypical or increased interest of China's representatives regarding professional endeavours or specific questions, as well as attempts to establish non-formal communication;
- immediately informing VDD about such cases in China or elsewhere.

## COUNTERMEASURES TO ACTIVITIES OF HOSTILE FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES



### Migration control

Last year VDD in cooperation with other services continued to implement enhanced migration control measures both at border crossing points and within the country. Foreigners that could pose intelligence risks or other threats to Latvia's national security were banned from entering and staying in our country.

In the majority of the cases, VDD refused the entry of foreigners when they wanted to enter Latvia through one of the border control points. Based on risks to Latvia's national security identified by VDD, 1764 foreigners were denied entry into Latvia last year.

Based on risks identified by VDD to national security, the Minister of the Interior included 139 foreigners in the so-called blacklist or the list of foreigners who are prohibited from entering the Republic of Latvia. 15 of these persons were blacklisted in relation to intelligence risks established by the Service. It is important to note that last year the ban on entering Latvia was prolonged for the majority of these persons (86 persons in total, to six of them in relation to intelligence risks), with the Service reviewing the need for further application of the ban imposed in 2022 in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Immigration Law.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, based on VDD's recommendations, the Minister of Foreign Affairs included 37 foreigners in the

<sup>4</sup> STEM is an acronym for the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

<sup>5</sup> In accordance with Section 63 Paragraph 7 of the Immigration Law, the institution which took the decision to include a foreigner in the list, determining the period for entry ban which exceeds three years, shall review the decision taken every three years from the day when the relevant decision was taken and, if the necessity to include the foreigner in the list for the relevant period of time no longer exists, the decision to reduce the time period for prohibition or to revoke the entry ban shall be taken.

list of *personae non gratae*, banning them from entering Latvia. A large part of those enlisted were persons who support Russia's aggression against Ukraine.



### Criminal enforcement measures

In 2025, VDD also evaluated information about the activities of Russia's intelligence and security services aimed against the security of Latvia within criminal cases. There were two notable cases in which Latvian nationals were detained last year on suspicion of espionage on behalf of a Russian intelligence and security service (described on page 11). The criminal case against one of these individuals was initiated following information provided by MIDD. Last year, the Service also initiated investigations into five different cases of providing assistance to Russia in action directed against the security of Latvia, including malign activities on behalf of an intelligence and security service of the aggressor state.

VDD's investigations have resulted in obtaining evidence corroborating the guilt of persons in both criminal cases initiated in 2025 for espionage mentioned in this chapter, as well as three criminal cases for other forms of assistance to Russia in action directed against Latvia. The Service sent the materials of these criminal cases to the Prosecution Office, seeking criminal prosecution against these persons. The Service continues its investigation in the other criminal cases.



### Protection of critical infrastructure objects

Last year VDD continued the vetting of current and potential personnel, subcontractor experts and service providers employed in critical infrastructure objects to prevent intelligence risks or the presence of individuals who pose other threats to such objects.<sup>6</sup> In 2025, VDD vetted close to 11 thousand persons who required access to information or technological equipment crucial for the functioning of a critical infrastructure object.

As a result of the vetting, VDD provided a negative opinion about 25 persons, acknowledging them as unsuitable for work in critical infrastructure objects<sup>7</sup>. The main reason for a negative opinion was intelligence

risk identified by the Service, including pro-Kremlin views, frequent travel to Russia or Belarus and contact persons in these countries, as well as reasonable doubt about the persons' ability to safeguard limited access information and comply with the security regime of a critical infrastructure object.

According to amendments to the National Security Law, VDD also provided negative opinions about the employment of 39 Russian citizens and 10 Belarusian citizens at critical infrastructure objects.



### Vetting of aviation industry employees

Last year, VDD continued to conduct enhanced background checks on employees and job applicants in the aviation industry.<sup>8</sup> The vetting aimed to identify individuals that pose intelligence or other risks to the security of the aviation sector. Throughout the year, the Service vetted close to three thousand current and potential employees of the aviation industry. As a result of the vetting, VDD identified 24 persons who could pose a threat to the security of the aviation sector. The Service provided the employers with a negative opinion of these individuals, pointing out their incompatibility with positions related to the security of the aviation industry.

Key reasons for a negative opinion were frequent trips to Russia, Belarus or other high intelligence risk countries, pro-Kremlin stance, including support to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, contacts with employees of Russia's repressive structures or former service colleagues living in Russia, negative attitude towards the termination of cooperation with Russia, as well as reasonable doubts regarding the person's ability to safeguard limited access information and comply with the airport's security regime.



### Information measures

In 2025, VDD continued informing the public about the threat posed by Russian, Belarusian and Chinese intelligence and security services both by preparing official announcements for the public and by organising informative events for smaller audiences.

<sup>6</sup> Section 22<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 3<sup>3</sup> of the National Security Law stipulates that intelligence and security services, within the scope of their competence, at the request of the owner or legal possessor of critical infrastructure or on their own initiative, shall provide an opinion on employees and selected candidates for employment, as well as operators (their owners, board members, employees, selected candidates for the provision of services) who provide significant services in critical infrastructure or who require access to information and technological equipment crucial for the functioning of critical infrastructure.

<sup>7</sup> Section 22<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 3<sup>3</sup> of the National Security Law stipulates that the owner or legal possessor of critical infrastructure, upon receiving a negative opinion from the intelligence and security service, is obliged to deny the specific person access to critical infrastructure.

<sup>8</sup> Vetting was performed in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers regulation No.829 of 14 December 2021 "Procedures for the Performance of a Background Check and the Procedures for issuing and cancelling a Civil Aviation Aircrew Member and an Airport Identification Card".

In its official communications last year, VDD regularly reminded the public about the high recruitment and intelligence risks in the territories of Russia and Belarus, and urged Latvian nationals to refrain from traveling to these countries. Likewise, the Service regularly drew the public's attention to recruitment risks on social networking sites and online messaging applications, particularly "Telegram". In addition, the Service also drew attention to the threat posed by Russian intelligence and security services to Latvia's critical infrastructure and military facilities, urging the public

to provide information about suspicious activities near such facilities.

Last year, VDD officers continued to hold briefings at state and municipal institutions, companies and organisations exposed to intelligence risks, health-care and educational institutions, informing about the threats posed by foreign intelligence and security services. In 2025, VDD officers held a total of 155 briefings, providing information to more than 10 thousand persons, which is a significant increase from the 8300 persons briefed in 2024.

### SEEK HELP!

In case of suspicions about a possible contact with an officer of foreign intelligence and security service we ask you to immediately inform VDD by calling the 24/7 phone **+371 6720 8964**, by e-mail **info@vdd.gov.lv** or upon visiting the Service by previous appointment at 207 Brīvības gatve, Riga. VDD guarantees the confidentiality of the information and its provider.

## OUTLOOK

- Should the geopolitical situation remain unchanged, Russia will continue to pose the biggest threat to Latvia's national security in 2026. VDD assesses that the aggression level of Russia will remain high in 2026 with a tendency to increase in accordance with geopolitical developments. Russia's intelligence and security services will extend intelligence activities, malign activities, as well as psychological operations in Latvia. Russia's intelligence and security services will also use other opportunities to increase Russia's influence in Latvia and change the public opinion in accordance with the interests of the aggressor state.
- VDD predicts that Russia's intelligence and security services will continue to conduct malign activities against Latvia in 2026. The goals of the malign activities will remain the same: decreasing Latvia's support to Ukraine, spreading the sense of insecurity and distrust in state administration in society and destroying different infrastructure objects.
- It is expected that Russia will continue intensive, systematic and aggressive intelligence activities against Latvia in 2026. Russia's intelligence and security services will operate against Latvia mainly from the territory of Russia. Recruitment of Latvia's residents for long-term covert intelligence gathering will remain as the most crucial activity for Russia's intelligence and security services. Several previously identified recruitment targets will remain relevant

to Russia's intelligence and security services: officials from state and municipal sectors, as well as employees of critical infrastructure facilities, particularly persons connected with military or civil defence sectors and home affairs. Online tools will be increasingly used to recruit Latvia's residents.

- In 2026, Belarusian intelligence and security services will continue their current activities against Latvia both in terms of obtaining intelligence and implementing active measures. Latvian residents will continue to face the most significant threat within the territory of Belarus, but recruitment risks online will also remain relevant. Belarusian intelligence and security services will continue close cooperation with Russian intelligence and security services, extending some activities also in the interests of its ally Russia.
- It is expected that China's intelligence and security services will continue to prioritise intelligence from the territory, which will be facilitated by travel of Latvian nationals to China and China's growing cyber capacity. It is also expected that China will continue to purposefully build closer relations with Latvia in academic and scientific environments. The use of technology made by China in facilities and institutions of significance to national security, as well as in companies that work with sensitive data, will continue to pose intelligence risks.

## Migration Control

Last year, VDD officers continued to regularly participate in migration control measures in order to identify foreigners that could pose a threat to the security of Latvia and its society, as well as prevent such persons from staying in our country. The Service evaluated travellers at Latvia's border control points and conducted activities to identify risk persons among foreigners residing in Latvia. The Service evaluated foreigners comprehensively, seeking to identify any type of threat posed to the security of Latvia, from intelligence risks to terrorism threats.



### Common profile: Foreigner refused entry to Latvia at the border control point

**Gender:** male;

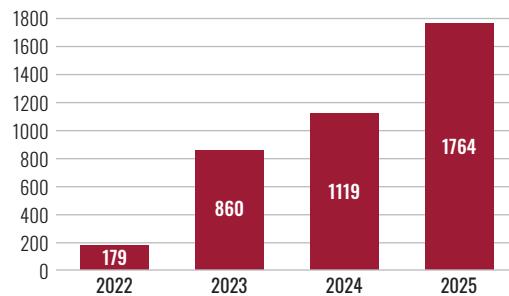
**Age:** 30 – 55;

**Citizenship:** Russian, including dual citizenship (Moldovan or Ukrainian), Ukrainian, Belarusian or Moldovan.

#### Reasons for refusal of entry:

- During the interview, the foreigner expresses open support to Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine or takes a seemingly neutral position, stating that questions of political nature are of no interest to them.
- The foreigner or their relatives or acquaintances have served/are serving in Russian or Belarusian armed forces or law enforcement institutions, especially in specialised or intelligence-related units.
- In the case of Ukrainian citizens – an identified long-term connection with Russia prior to or after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and incompatibility with the profile of a war refugee.
- Regular travel from the EU to Russia, Belarus, or Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine and vice versa.
- During the border crossing procedure, the foreigner refuses to cooperate or deliberately provides incorrect information about themselves and the purpose of their travel, and refuses to reveal/hides risk information, such as having Russian dual-citizenship.

#### Foreigners refused entry into Latvia at border control points due to risks established by VDD



## Measures implemented by VDD to prevent migration-related risks



### Enhanced migration control at border control points

Last year, VDD, in cooperation with the State Border Guard and other institutions involved in migration control, continued to exercise enhanced control of foreigners entering Latvia from Russia or Belarus. Throughout the year, service officers conducted comprehensive checks and in-depth interviews of more than 5000 persons. As a result, 1764 foreigners potentially posing risks to Latvia's national security were identified. In cooperation with the State Border Guard, these persons were denied entry into Latvian territory. Last year the Service denied entry into Latvia to almost 58% more foreigners than in 2024, when 1119 foreigners were refused entry to Latvia.

In 2025, entry into Latvia was refused to 437 Russian citizens, 297 Belarusian citizens, 209 Moldovan citizens, 75 Ukrainian citizens, as well as 355 Russian-Moldovan dual citizens, 142 Russian-Ukrainian dual citizens and citizens of other countries.



### In-depth vetting of visa and residence permit applicants

Last year VDD performed the vetting of 8193 visa applicants and 14 702 residence permit applicants. As a result of visa applicants' vetting, the Service provided Latvian diplomatic and consular missions abroad, the State Border Guard and the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (hereinafter – OCMA) with a negative opinion about a total of 295 foreigners. The majority of them were Belarusian and Russian citizens (193 and 53 respectively). The most common grounds for a negative Service opinion include non-cooperation by not providing information requested by VDD, expressing opinions that contradict national security interests (such as expressing support of Russia's aggression

against Ukraine), as well as service in Russian or Belarusian armed forces or other state institutions and the associated intelligence risks.

As regards residence permits, based on identified risks, last year the Service recommended the OCMA to refuse their issuance to a total of 144 persons. Of them, 70 were Russian citizens and 16 were Belarusian citizens. In terms of frequency, these were followed by Pakistani citizens (11), Azerbaijani citizens (8), Cameroonian citizens (7), Nigerian citizens (6) and Ukrainian citizens (6). The most common grounds for the Service's negative recommendation were failure to provide the requested information and failure to attend the interviews, deliberate provision of false information, and identified threat or risks to national security.

In addition, VDD evaluated invitations for requesting a visa and summons for requesting a residence permit for a total of 14 538 foreigners (guest workers invited by companies, family members of residence permit holders etc.).



## Inclusion of foreigners in lists prohibiting entry to Latvia

Based on VDD's opinion regarding persons' threats to Latvia's national security last year, the Minister of the Interior included 139 persons in the list of foreigners who are prohibited from entering Latvia, thus refusing their entry into Latvia. 123 persons were blacklisted in relation to threats to Latvia's constitutional order, and in many cases – for also participating in Russia's information influence activities directed against Latvia. 15 persons were blacklisted in connection with intelligence risks identified by the Service, whereas one – in connection with terrorism risks. 27 of the blacklisted individuals were Russian citizens, four – Belarusian citizens, one Chinese citizen, the rest – citizens of other countries.

Following VDD's recommendations, The Minister of Foreign Affairs included 37 foreigners in the list of *personae non gratae*. All of the persons were refused entry into Latvia due to risks to the security of the constitutional order, and in most cases – also risks to the security of the information space. In one case, along with risks to the security of the constitutional order, the person's stay in Latvia could have also posed risks to economic security. The majority of the blacklisted foreigners had supported Russia's war against Ukraine or its aggressive foreign policy against the Western countries in their public statements or professional

activities. Likewise, most of the foreigners (25) were Russian citizens, including a few dual citizens, whereas the rest were citizens of other countries. Foreigners included in the list represent various domains: culture and arts, sports, media, public administration and politics, as well as entrepreneurship.



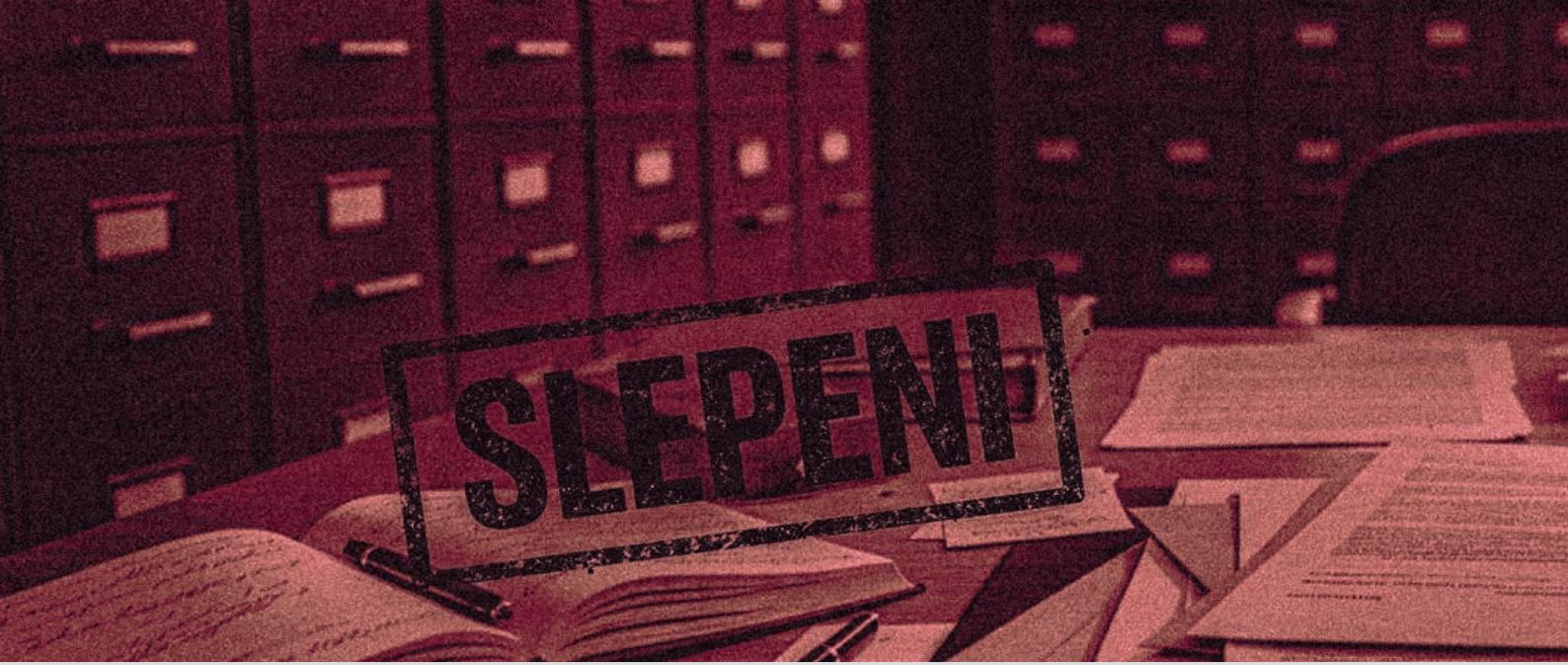
## Vetting of asylum seekers

Last year, VDD continued vetting asylum seekers from countries outside NATO or the EU. In 2025, the most common reasons for seeking asylum were persecution on the basis of religious and political affiliation, troubles with criminal organisations in the country of residence, threat to life posed by terrorist organisations, warfare or forced marriages in the country of residence. Russian and Belarusian citizens applied for asylum in connection with their political beliefs or activities, repressions of the regime, desertion from the Russian armed forces or the desire to avoid military service.

Last year, VDD initiated the vetting of 1238 asylum seekers and finished roughly 200 cases of vetting initiated in 2024. 826 asylum seekers were from terrorism risk countries, 27 – from the aggressor state Russia, 20 – from Belarus, and the other 365 – from other countries. VDD did not identify reasons for denying asylum in the most part of vetting cases. The Service prepared a negative opinion on nine persons after identifying intelligence risks or a potential threat to the security of the state or the public, including terrorism risks in one case. Five of the persons were Russian citizens, whereas four were other countries' nationals. At the beginning of 2026, VDD continues vetting a part of the cases initiated in 2025.



Illustrative photo, Freepik



# 02

## PROTECTION OF OFFICIAL SECRETS

**To reduce intelligence risks, one of the key areas of activity for VDD last year remained the vetting of persons who required access to information containing official secrets to perform work duties. In 2025, for the first time, individuals subject to vetting by VDD were also local government chairpersons and their deputies.**

The necessity to begin the vetting of local government chairpersons and their deputies following the local government elections held in June 2025 was set by amendments to the Law on Official Secret and the Local Government Law adopted in 2024, which extended the list of officials who must receive the personal security clearance (hereinafter – PSC) to perform their duties. In the assessment of VDD, considering the threat posed by Russia to the security of Latvia and the entirety of Europe, the opportunity for leading local government officials to access information containing official secrets and to participate in tasks of national significance are crucial in ensuring national security.

Similar to previous years, the Service vetted both first-time PSC applicants and PSC holders who needed to obtain it for a renewed term. VDD also conducted extraordinary vetting of PSC holders in cases when new risk-related information was obtained about them. In several cases following the request of state institutions the Service also assessed information about candidates for high-level positions, providing *prima facie* opinion about the possibility to issue the PSC to the respective persons.

VDD also continued to control the observance of official secrets protection requirements in state and municipal institutions, and evaluated economic operators and public undertakings seeking the facility security clearance (hereinafter – FSC).



## 2.1.

### VETTING OF PERSONAL SECURITY CLEARANCE APPLICANTS AND HOLDERS

Last year VDD performed the vetting of more than 2400 persons, in each case obtaining a wide range of information and comprehensively assessing the reliability of the person and their capability to safeguard official secrets.

In 187 cases, the comprehensive vetting of the PSC candidates required more time than the standard 3 months, so the Service exercised the right provided by the Law on Official Secret to prolong the vetting to six months. Similar to other years, the prolonging of the vetting was mainly related to a wide range of information that needed evaluation, difficulty to obtain information about certain stages of candidates' lives, such as residence abroad, as well as risk factors established during the vetting that required additional time to be evaluated.

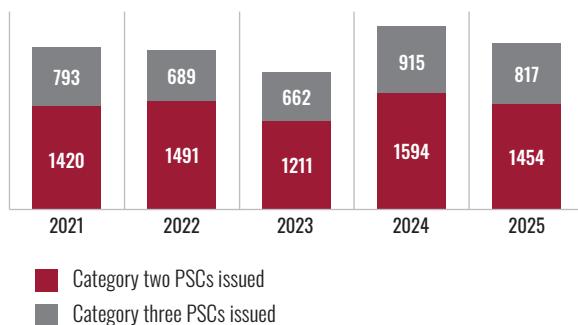
As a result of the vetting, last year VDD issued a total of 2271 PSCs. Of those, 1454 were category two PSCs which allow to access confidential and secret information. 817 were category three PSCs which only allow to access confidential information.

It should be noted that in 89 cases VDD issued the PSCs for a reduced term, i.e., for one, two or three years instead of the maximum of five years. The Service made

such decisions in cases when the vetting revealed facts which raise suspicion about potential threat to the security of the information to be protected, but, within the meaning of the law, do not constitute sufficient grounds to refuse the PSC issuance. In such cases VDD continued to pay increased attention to the activities of these persons also after issuing the PSC.

Similar to previous years, VDD supported Constitution Protection Bureau (SAB) in vetting the candidates for category one PSC, which authorises accessing the highest grade of protected information – top secret information. Category one PSCs in Latvia are issued only by SAB.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, category one PSC applicants are vetted by all three Latvia's intelligence and security services, each within the institutions under their supervision<sup>10</sup>. VDD acquired and evaluated information about 67 candidates for category one PSC. Information obtained during the vetting along with the Service's assessment was passed to SAB for decision.

#### PSC issuance dynamic



<sup>9</sup> Article 6 of Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.822 of 19 December 2023 "Regulations for protection of official secrets, classified information of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, European Union and foreign institutions".

<sup>10</sup> Section 10 of the Law on Official Secret enlists institutions where each Latvia's intelligence and security service performs the vetting to establish compliance of persons with the PSC issuance requirements.

It should be noted that VDD continued to acquire and evaluate information about persons also after the conclusion of vetting and the issuance of the PSC. Having detected risks to the security of classified information by the PSC holder, VDD conducted extraordinary vetting. Overall, in 2025, the Service performed 90 such vettings.

The most common grounds for extraordinary vettings last year:

- suspicion of involvement in criminal activity;
- contacts with Russian or Belarusian citizens or persons that live in Russia or Belarus;
- gambling addiction, excessive and harmful use of alcohol or alcohol addiction, as well as the use of narcotic substances;
- violations of requirements for the protection of official secrets;
- suspicious financial transactions and savings of uncertain origin.

In 2025, more often than in previous periods, VDD initiated extraordinary vetting based on information obtained about contacts of the PSC holder with Russian or Belarusian citizens or persons who live in Russia or Belarus. It is important to note that the persons had attempted to withhold information from VDD about these contacts, which are associated with increased intelligence risks.

Similar to last year, in 2025 one of the most common reasons for initiating an extraordinary vetting were suspicions about PSC holder's possible gambling, alcohol or narcotic substance addiction. Frequent intoxication and financial difficulties caused by addiction are associated with an increased risk that the protected information may be disclosed due to negligence or financial motivation.

Similar to other years, following requests of several state institutions, last year VDD vetted candidates to high-level positions, providing *prima facie* assessment on whether they could be issued the PSC in the event of appointment.<sup>11</sup> The Service vetted 53 such candidates to 19 high-level positions. The Service did not identify derogatory facts due to which persons could not receive the PSC.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the initial vetting cannot be considered a comprehensive and thorough assessment resulting in the PSC issuance. Should the candidate be appointed to the particular post, they must undergo a complete vetting during which the Service obtains and assesses a significantly larger amount of information. However, in some cases, the

initial vetting does allow for an accelerated process that establishes risks posed by the candidate to the security of the information to be protected.

### 2.2.

## VETTING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHAIRPERSONS AND THEIR DEPUTIES

Following the local government elections in June 2025, VDD initiated the vetting of 118 top officials of local governments: 42 chairpersons of municipal councils and 76 deputy chairpersons. Until the end of 2025, VDD concluded the vetting of a total of 93 officials, whereas the vetting of 25 officials continued.

In total, VDD had to extend the deadline in 33 cases due to the very large amount of information to be verified and additionally obtained in order to exclude potential risks, as well as risk factors identified during the vetting that require additional time to be evaluated. Among the most common risk factors were, for example, regular travels to Russia or Belarus, relatives or other contact persons in Russia or Belarus, participation in former cross-border municipality cooperation projects with Russia or Belarus, dissemination of narratives based on the Kremlin propaganda, as well as a criminal case initiated against an official.

As a result of the vetting, last year VDD refused the issuance of the PSC to one municipal chairperson based on Section 9 Paragraph 3 sub article "b" of the Law on Official Secret, i.e., finding that the person was previously sentenced for deliberate criminal offence.

Meanwhile VDD issued PSCs to the other vetted municipal chairpersons and their deputies: 30 municipal chairpersons and 62 deputy chairpersons. 87 of these officials received PSCs for the full term, i.e., five years, but five officials, i.e., two municipal chairpersons and three deputy chairpersons received the PSC for a shortened term, i.e., two years.

By the end of 2025, the Service had not received a request for the PSC issuance and the documentation necessary for initiating vetting of one municipality council chairperson.

Meanwhile four leading local government officials – one chairperson and three deputies – had already received PSCs in 2024 when they held other positions that required access to official secrets. These individuals did not need to be repeatedly vetted.

<sup>11</sup> According to Section 10 Paragraph 1 of the Law on Official Secret.

## 2.3.

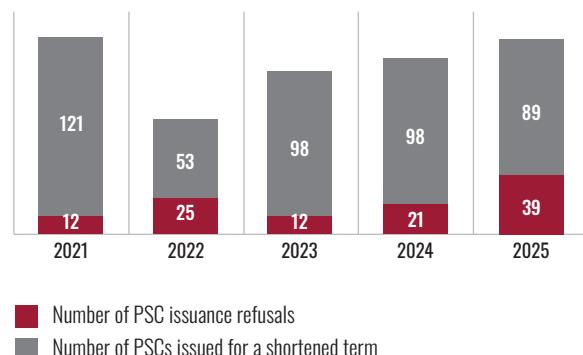
### GROUNDS FOR REFUSING THE PERSONAL SECURITY CLEARANCE ISSUANCE

In 2025, VDD refused the issuance of PSCs to a total of 39 persons. Ten of them were first-time applicants, whereas 20 were repeated applicants. Meanwhile, the Service anulled the PSCs of nine persons as a result of extraordinary vettings.

The grounds leading to a negative decision of the Service:

- In 22 cases VDD discovered information about psychological or behavioural issues, and in all cases – addictions that lead to doubt the person's ability to observe the official secrets protection requirements (Section 9 Paragraph 3 Article 7 of the Law on Official Secret).
- In 12 cases the vetting revealed facts that give reason to doubt the person's trustworthiness and the ability to protect official secrets (Section 9 Paragraph 3 Article 6 sub article "a" of the Law on Official Secret). In one of these cases VDD discovered the risks posed by the person to the security of the protected information during an extraordinary vetting.
- In four cases, the Service refused the issuance of the PSC because the person had been sentenced for deliberate criminal offence (Section 9 Paragraph 3 Article 3 sub article "a" of the Law on Official Secret).
- In one case, next to facts raising doubts about the person's trustworthiness and the ability to protect official secrets, the Service discovered information indicating that issuing the PSC to the person would contradict national security interests (Section 9 Paragraph 3 Article 6 sub articles "a" and "b" of the Law on Official Secret).

#### Dynamic of PSC issuance refusals and PSC issuance for a shortened term



The most common grounds for refusing or annulling the PSCs last year were:

- alcohol, narcotic substance or gambling addictions;
- regular travel to Russia or Belarus;
- contacts with Russian or Belarusian citizens or persons that live in Russia or Belarus;
- commission of crimes or justified suspicion of involvement in criminal activities;
- the abuse of authority;
- use of limited access data bases for personal purposes;
- repeated violations of requirements for the protection of official secrets;
- disclosure of protected information;
- pro-Kremlin expressions;
- deliberate provision of false information;
- refusal to provide information necessary to exclude certain risks;
- suspicious financial transactions and savings of uncertain origin;
- excessive financial liability;
- cases that indicate the person's unloyalty, untrustworthiness or recklessness;
- unethical, inadequate and inappropriate behaviour for a state official;
- systematic administrative violations;
- frequent failure to update the data of the questionnaire submitted to VDD;
- negative reputation.

Similar to other years, also in 2025 the most cases of PSC issuance refusals or annulments were based on more than one reason.

It should be noted that the identified addictions, primarily gambling or alcohol addictions, were the most common reason for the refusal or revocation of the PSCs. In some cases, addiction to narcotic substances was discovered, including medication containing narcotic or psychotropic substances.

Similarly, one of the most common reasons for the refusal or revocation of the PSCs was information about contacts with Russian or Belarusian citizens or persons that live in Russia or Belarus that was withheld from VDD.

In 2025, eight persons exercised the rights provided to them by the Law on Official Secret to appeal VDD's decision to refuse the PSC issuance to the Prosecutor General. In all eight cases, the Prosecutor General recognised VDD's decision to refuse the PSC issuance as substantiated and they remained in force. Meanwhile, two of the persons also appealed the unfavourable decision of the Prosecutor General in the Administrative District Court, where at the start of 2026 the cases are still being reviewed.

### Explanation: CHANGES THAT HAVE TO BE REPORTED

All holders of the PSC are obliged to inform no later than within a month the respective intelligence and security service about the changes in the previously submitted questionnaire data. The information shall be submitted in written form to the official or body in charge of ensuring the secrecy regime in the respective institution or to the respective intelligence and security service.

Holders of the PSCs must report the following changes:

- change of name or family name;
- acquisition of citizenship of another country;
- change of contact phone number or email address;
- new spouse / cohabiting partner or divorce;
- own or spouse's trips to countries outside the EU and NATO;
- contacts with persons in countries outside of the EU and NATO or citizens of such countries;

- expulsion or entry ban to another country, including if such a restriction has been applied to the spouse;
- administrative penalties imposed in Latvia or abroad;
- participation in criminal cases in Latvia or abroad, including as a witness;
- contacts, including those of relatives, with employees of foreign embassies, diplomats, foreign security services, special services, intelligence or counterintelligence services;
- offers for secret cooperation;
- exposure, including that of relatives, to blackmail, threats or other forms of endangerment;
- use of narcotic substances, including medication that contains narcotic compounds, or use of psychotropic medicine;
- consultation with a specialist regarding the use of alcohol, narcotic, psychotropic or toxic substances, gambling or other addictions;
- registration in the register of self-excluded persons for gambling and interactive lotteries<sup>12</sup>

### ATTENTION!

**Excessive use of alcohol or other substances that negatively affect the psyche and behaviour as well as excessive enthusiasm for gambling can lead to the revocation of the PSC. Gambling, alcohol or narcotic substance addiction is considered to be an increased risk to the safety of protected information.**

## CASES OF REFUSING THE PERSONAL SECURITY CLEARANCE ISSUANCE

VDD offers the opportunity to examine individual cases in an anonymised form where the Service refused the PSC issuance to state officials in the previous year.

### Case No. 1: intelligence risks

During vetting, VDD found that a Latvian citizen had regularly visited Russia, with the most recent visit taking place in 2025, despite Russia's warfare in Ukraine and its malign activities against Western countries. The male himself provided information only about a few visits to Russia prior to 2019, even though, according to information at VDD's disposal, he had travelled to Russia several times a year and the trips had continued even after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As VDD found out during vetting, the person had also attempted to withhold from the Service that, whilst staying in Russia, he had used a different phone number registered in Russia. In addition, the person had attempted to hide contacts with several Russian citizens from VDD. The Service denied issuance of the PSC based on the identified intelligence risks.

### Case No. 2: pro-Kremlin expressions and dissemination of disinformation

VDD obtained information that an official holds pro-Kremlin views and supports Russia's aggressive policy, and has expressed an opinion that gives reason to believe that they would be interested in cooperating with the intelligence and security services of the aggressor state. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the person had openly expressed to colleagues sympathies for the war criminal Vladimir Putin, pointing out that they did not believe the media's depiction of the war in Ukraine and expressed contempt against Ukrainians. During talks with VDD, the person justified Russia's aggressive behaviour by expressing views based on the Kremlin's war propaganda. During the talks, the person also expressed views that discredit the Latvian state, institutions and their decisions, including condemning Latvia's accession to the EU, the increase of funding for national defence and the strengthening of the eastern border.

<sup>12</sup> Changes that have to be reported are exhaustively enlisted under the sub-article 38.6 of Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.822 of 19 December 2023 "Regulations for protection of official secrets, classified information of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, European Union and foreign institutions".

The Service additionally established that the person has relatives living in Russia, of whom one has previously been employed in the Russian security structures. Prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the official had regularly travelled to Russia to visit their relatives. The person had stopped travelling because they did not want complications at work; however, the person continued to maintain regular contact with the relatives living in Russia through online messaging applications. VDD's monitoring of the internet environment indicated that the person's relatives living in Russia have expressed support to Russia's aggression and hatred against Ukraine. Likewise, several relatives of the official from Latvia continued to visit the aggressor state. According to information obtained by VDD, at least one of the relatives, upon crossing the border, had undergone an in-depth questioning at the Russian border control point, which points to high intelligence risks also to the person vetted by VDD.

### Case No. 3: gambling addiction

Having obtained information that an officer of a state institution was frequently gambling online, VDD referred the person to a health examination<sup>13</sup> to receive the opinion of the medical commission as to whether there are medical contraindications to the issuance of the PSC. The male denied having a gambling addiction, but the vetting indicated that he presents gambling in a distorted, favourable manner, minimising the financial and other negative consequences of gambling on his life in a way that does not correspond to the actual situation.

During the health examination, the male was diagnosed with a pathological desire for gambling, which is a contraindication for receiving the PSC. The medical commission's report also described the person as impulsive and easily influenced – such personality traits are associated with risk that official secrets can be disclosed intentionally or through negligence.

### Case No. 4: abuse of office

During vetting, VDD found that an official, in addition to the employment in a state institution, worked without authorisation at another private company, with whose manager they have a close relationship. VDD discovered information that the person, using their position and its benefits, regularly assisted the company in question to "solve" various problems, including avoiding liability for administrative violations. Likewise, the official, using databases of national significance, provided the manager with unauthorised information about competitors, calls for tenders and specific persons. In addition, the person had deliberately concealed income from this company by not including it in the annual public official tax declaration.

The set of circumstances identified by the Service indicated personality traits such as dishonesty, unreliability, as well as flawed and irresponsible attitude towards statutory regulations, which are associated with high risks to the protection of sensitive information.

## 2.4.

### VETTING OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC OPERATORS

Last year VDD continued inspecting the observance of requirements for the protection of official secrets in ministries, institutions and services under their authority, independent state institutions, as well as state-owned enterprises and private companies whose work is related to non-disclosable information or protected facilities.

During the inspections, the Service officers evaluated the compliance of infrastructure, security regime and information circulation procedures with the requirements for protection of official secrets, which were significantly enhanced in 2024. In 2025, VDD inspected a total of 58 facilities, in all cases providing

recommendations for the improvement of the official secrets' protection measures.

VDD also continued vetting economic operators and public undertakings seeking the FSC issuance. In 2025, the Service vetted the readiness and ability of 13 economic operators to conduct work that requires the necessity to access information containing official secrets and ensure their protection.

After comprehensive vetting of economic operators, VDD, in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Law on Official Secret, referred the collected information and VDD's assessment to SAB for decision. In six cases VDD's vetting activities did not reveal facts raising doubts about the readiness or ability of the economic operator to ensure the protection of information containing official secrets. Meanwhile, as of the start of 2026, seven vetting cases are still in process.

<sup>13</sup> Pursuant to Section 9 Paragraph 3 Article 2 of the Law on Official Secret.



# 03

## PROTECTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER

**Last year, Russia continued its influence measures aiming to maintain the seclusion of the Russian-speaking population from the rest of the society in Latvia, in various ways promoting dissatisfaction among this part of society with developments in the country. The part of society supportive of the Kremlin in Latvia is an important tool for the aggressor state in implementing its goals, interests and non-military influence activities.**

In 2025, a number of organisations and activists supporting Russia continued to operate in Latvia, primarily attempting to covertly promote Russia's strategic objectives and foreign policy interests in Latvia. Among these organisations were also political parties representing Russian-speakers, whose activities and public communication overlapped with Russia's foreign policy interests and propaganda narratives.

At the same time, similar to previous years, Russia remained unable to restore the non-military influence activities against Latvia at the same capacity as before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Both the international sanctions policy and the public's negative attitude towards cooperation with Russia significantly restricted Russia's abilities to extend activities characteristic of the "compatriot" environment in our country. In this context, the Kremlin continued measures to motivate "compatriots" living abroad to relocate to Russia, paying special attention to attracting youth.

In response to Latvian domestic political developments unfavourable to Russia, it mainly used information influence activities particularly focusing on keeping Russian-speakers' "rights violations" on the agenda, falsifying history and disseminating disinformation regarding the rebirth of Nazism in Latvia. Russia also continued to manipulatively use international law and diplomacy in its interests and adapted its academic domain to achieve its foreign policy objectives.

Last year, VDD continued to implement a range of measures to limit the activities of Russian-oriented organisations and activists directed against the national security interests of Latvia.



### 3.1.

## PUBLIC MOOD AND INTERNAL SECURITY

Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine and developments related to it in the past year continued to be the primary topic that attracted the attention of the Latvian public and influenced its mood.

In the assessment of VDD, Russia's aggression in Ukraine last year had an even bigger impact on the public mood in Latvia than in 2023 and 2024. Such trend was related to last year's developments in international politics, with calls even being made for Ukrainians to actually surrender, which raised doubts about the emergence of geopolitical conditions more favourable to Russian interests. International developments caused a feeling of uncertainty and insecurity in the Latvian society, raising questions about the impact of change to the security of the Baltic States.

The majority of the Latvian public, continuing to support Ukraine in its fight against the aggressor, remained vigilant last year and opposed pro-Kremlin expressions in Latvia. The public's request for fostering internal security, strengthening the positions of the official state language and reducing Russia's influence opportunities did not disappear either.

However, VDD's analysis shows that a part of Latvia's population continued to covertly or openly support Russia and its war in Ukraine. The majority of Russia's supporters are residents who use Russian language in their daily communication. The mood and expressions of this part of the society remained unchanged.

Namely, residents supporting Russia continued to oppose measures strengthening Latvia's national security and the Latvian language. Any efforts by Latvia

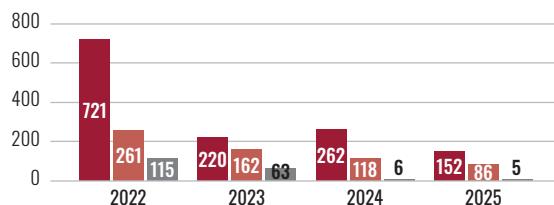
to reduce the influence of the aggressor state continued to be misinterpreted by this part of the society as "Russophobia" and "discrimination against the Russian-speakers". The consolidation of this attitude was continuously promoted by resources disseminating Russian propaganda, which are still consumed by this part of the society.

Thus, a divide in opinions between the majority of the society supporting Ukraine and the part of the society supporting Russia persisted in Latvia last year. VDD assesses that this divide of Latvia's society sustained latent ethnic tension, with the majority of the society rejecting and condemning expressions supporting Russia's aggression.

In 2025, the part of the society supporting Russia's aggression mainly expressed their views on social networking platforms. VDD's monitoring of the information space indicates that, last year, the amount of activities supporting Russia's aggression on social networking platforms increased. VDD mostly observed the increase of such expressions during periods when conditions in the international environment appeared to be more favourable for Russia. The aforementioned observations were not reflected in the street environment where pro-Kremlin expressions continued to decline.

VDD, in cooperation with the State Police, also continued to monitor pro-Kremlin expressions in the street environment. The services mostly detected cases where persons had attached symbols glorifying Russia to their garments or vehicles. Likewise, "Z" letters and other symbols supporting Russia's aggression were painted or attached to different objects in the urban environment. More commonly than in previous years, VDD received information about demonstrative playing of music glorifying Russia or the shouting of various slogans supporting the aggressor state in the street environment.

### Pro-Kremlin displays detected in street environment



- Expressing support to Russia: "Z" letters and other symbols glorifying Russian aggression drawn/attached to objects, shouting slogans, vandalism against various symbols of Latvian and Ukrainian independence
- Symbols attesting support to Russia attached to garments or vehicles (Russian flag, logos of Russian or Soviet Union armed forces)
- Turning against Ukrainians, their property or Latvian residents who openly support Ukraine

#### TREND

**The amount and level of aggression of pro-Kremlin expressions in the street environment continues to decrease. Nevertheless, the dynamic of these cases attests that there are still members of the public who are ready to express support to Russia outside the social networking platforms, including through methods of hooliganism and aggression.**

### 3.2.

### MAIN ORGANISERS OF RUSSIA'S NON-MILITARY INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES

Russia's non-military influence activities in 2025 were mainly aligned with the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of victory in the war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, or, as it is called in Russia, the Great Patriotic War. Russia continued to purposefully use its interpretation of history to justify its current aggressive policy.

In the assessment of VDD, Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the diplomatic corps residing in Latvia continued to play the most important role in organising and implementing Russia's non-military influence measures against Latvia. The Presidential Administration of Russia, however, continued to coordinate Russia's influence activities against Western countries, including Latvia, at a strategic level.

Last year Russia continued exploiting opportunities offered by its participation in international organisations

such as the UN, OSCE and UNESCO. According to VDD's analysis, Russia attempted to keep issues related to the alleged Russian-speakers' "rights violations" in the Baltic States on the agenda of these organisations. Representatives of the aggressor state continued to use these organisations as a platform to disseminate disinformation discrediting Latvia to an international audience.

To disseminate and reinforce narratives about the alleged Russophobic policy of Latvia and other Baltic States, Russia continued to use its academic sector, adapting the sector's activities to its aggressive foreign policy.

VDD observed that several organisations related to Russia's academic and scientific fields extended targeted activities against the Baltic region.

For example, the Institute of CIS Countries headed by Russian State Duma member Konstantin Zatulin, who is subject to the EU sanctions, Russian Military Historical Society, fund "Historical Memory", as well as the Diplomatic Academy of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is important to note that "compatriot" activists who fled from Latvia to Russia regularly



Posters from a public display organised by Russian Military Historical Society regarding the alleged "rebirth of Nazism" in the Baltic States, which were placed opposite to Latvia's Embassy in Russia in June 2025. Photos from Russia's website "VK.com".

participated in the activities organised by Russia (see more in subchapter 4.3. regarding information space security).

Likewise, activities against the Baltic States were also extended by Russia's federal agency "Rossotrudnichestvo" and the Fund for Support and Protection of the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad or the so-called "Pravfond", both of them being under the supervision of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and subject to the EU sanctions. Both institutions continued to look for ways to maintain contact with "compatriots" abroad and provide them with support. In 2025, federal agency "Rossotrudnichestvo" continued to offer Latvian nationals paid studies in Russia's universities, whereas "Pravfond" turned to providing support to "compatriots" who wish to move to Russia.

Similar to previous years, last year many different public events in Russia discussed pseudo problems such as the "increase of Russophobia" and the "threat to Russian "compatriots" in the Baltic States". VDD's analysis indicates that Russia continued intensive work to develop and maintain an alternative and distorted historical memory, purposefully disseminating relevant narratives at events not typically associated with such themes. Events of such kind include St. Petersburg International Economic Forum and 13th St. Petersburg International Legal Forum, during which the occupation of Latvia and other Baltic States was denied.

Russian Embassy in Latvia also continued its activities last year, particularly in the military-memorial field. Representatives of the Embassy regularly marked commemoration and remembrance days significant to Russia's history. Commemorating the 80th anniversary since Russia's victory in the so-called Great Patriotic War, representatives of the Embassy, with the help of local activists of the "compatriot" environment, congratulated war veterans at their homes and organised events on the premises of the Embassy.

VDD's observations show that, since 2022, Russia has significantly shifted the emphasis in the nature of commemorating the so-called victory day, turning it from a loud celebration to a remembrance day. Last year, Russia's diplomatic corps organised public flower laying ceremonies at both burial sites of fallen Soviet soldiers and at memorial sites for victims of the Holocaust.

VDD assesses that the flower laying at memorial sites for victims of the Holocaust has to be evaluated together with Russia's and Belarus' recent attempts at unjustifiably attributing responsibility to peoples occupied by the USSR, including Latvians, for the Nazi crimes committed during World War II. For example, Russia presents Latvia's and other Baltic States' efforts to remove monuments glorifying the Soviet Army and the USSR regime as

support of the Nazi Germany's regime and proof for the alleged rebirth of Nazism in Latvia.

VDD's analysis indicates that Russia's victory over the Nazi Germany as the successor to the USSR remains one of the cornerstones of Russia's ideology and policy. To mobilise Russia's society and "compatriots" abroad, Russia purposefully forms idealised perceptions on its role in World War II and equates them to its current fight against the alleged "Nazism" in Ukraine and Europe, including Latvia. This is how Russia attempts to justify its war against Ukraine, as well as the activities extended against other countries.



On 28 September 2025, Dmitry Kasatkin, Chargé d'Affaires of the Russian Embassy in Latvia, places flowers at the Salaspils Garrison Cemetery commemorating the so-called anniversary of the liberation of the Salaspils Concentration Camp. Photo from the Russian Embassy's "Facebook" page.

In the assessment of VDD, Russia uses disinformation about an imagined "fight against Nazism" to justify its aggressive foreign policy and substantiate the interference in domestic issues of other countries. Russia attempts to create a false perception that Latvia's "Russophobic" policy is a consequence of incompletely eradicated Nazism after World War II. As a result, in the view of Russia, it has an obligation to tend to events in Latvia and other Baltic States to continue the "fight against Nazism" initiated by the USSR.

### 3.3.

## ATTRACTING YOUTH TO RUSSIA'S NON-MILITARY INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES

VDD assesses that the previous efforts to involve youth in activities of the "compatriot" environment in Latvia have protractedly failed to deliver on the Kremlin's expectations. Thus, in 2025 Russia continued to invest significant resources to attract youth, continuing to develop tools and methods to prepare future defenders of Russia's interests abroad.

The Russian Embassy in Latvia continued to publish regular invitations to study in Russia's universities, including state-sponsored study slots, where the

## PROTECTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER

recruitment process was still conducted by the “Rossotrudnichestvo” agency. The Service observed that support in popularising the studies was also provided by activists residing in Russia, who moved or fled to the aggressor state after 24 February 2022 but continued to extend influence activities against Latvia.

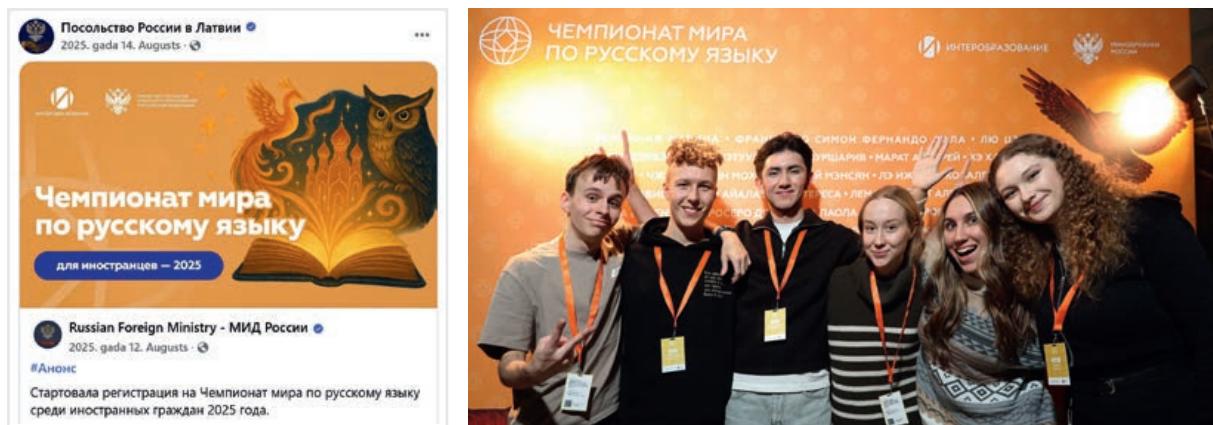
Furthermore, Russian Embassy invited pupils from 5th to 10th grade to apply for general secondary education through distance learning, emphasising the opportunity of obtaining the education in Russian. In addition to academic education, Russian Embassy in Latvia invited the youth to apply for different competitions. For example, in August, the Embassy published information about an international Russian language championship, the final of which took place on 17 December 2025 at the Skolkovo Innovation Centre in Moscow, with Russia

covering travel and accommodation expenses for the youth. “Evrazija Express”, a team representing Latvia, was among the participants.

Last year, VDD continued to identify Russia’s targeted activities in attracting the Latvian youth and conduct the in-depth assessment of risks posed by young people’s participation in events organised by Russia, including in the academic environment. Information obtained by the Service indicates that, at all levels of education, Russia expanded targeted work in the ideological education of youth, forming their understanding of current political developments and history in accordance with the interests of the Kremlin. By using ideological indoctrination, Russia aims to bring up the next generation of Russian interest promoters abroad.

### VDD REITERATES!

**Studies at Russian universities are associated with high recruitment, intelligence, and ideological influence risks. Furthermore, education documents issued in Russia significantly limit employment opportunities in Latvia, particularly in state and local government institutions.**



On the left – Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ invitation to apply to participate in the World Russian Language Championship for Foreigners republished on “Facebook” by the Russian Embassy in Latvia on 14 August 2025. On the right – “Evrazija Express”, the team representing Latvia. Photo from the championship website “Russianchampionship.com”.

### 3.4.

## ORGANISATIONS AND ACTIVISTS FAVOURABLE TO RUSSIA IN LATVIA

Last year, both the “compatriot” environment and concrete political parties that are oriented towards the Russian-speaking electorate purposefully continued to extend activities in Latvia that align with Russia’s interests. The manipulative activities of these groups were publicly presented as protecting the Russian-speakers’ rights, yet VDD assesses that their actual intent was to turn the Russian-speaking

population against the Latvian public administration, indirectly promoting Russia’s influence and interference possibilities in Latvia’s internal affairs.

### Russia’s “compatriot” environment

In 2025, the characteristics of Russia’s “compatriot” environment in our country remained unchanged – divided, disorientated and unable to organise meaningful activities to support Russia. Organisations established prior to Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, such as the “Latvian Russian Community” and its satellite organisations in the regions, as well as individual activists continued to shape the “compatriot” environment.

## CRIMINAL CASE AGAINST VIKTORS GUŠČINS FOR VIOLATION OF EU SANCTIONS



Foto, VDD

On 26 November 2025, VDD initiated a criminal case against V. Guščins on suspicion of violating the EU sanctions.

VDD discovered publications produced by the activist on a Russian propaganda website, which is managed by a fund included in the EU's international sanctions list. On 17 December 2025, VDD detained V. Guščins and conducted criminal proceedings at two sites connected to the person in Jelgava.

VDD underlines that the provision of any resources to a subject under the EU sanctions is considered a violation of the EU sanctions.

It should also be noted that V. Guščins' publications contain narratives glorifying Russia and discrediting Latvia, including the interpretation of Latvia's occupation and other historical events of World War II in accordance with Russia's interests.

V. Guščins has long been positioned among Russian officials as the main coordinator of Russian "compatriot" policy in Latvia. V. Guščins has had close relations with the Russian Embassy in Latvia and institutions coordinating the "compatriot" policy in Russia, and has continued to maintain contacts with these institutions following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

VDD assesses that V. Guščins' activities in Latvia, similar to the manifestations of other "compatriot" environment activists, have been directed at keeping Russian-speaking population under Russia's influence and setting them against the Latvian state and its institutions.

VDD reminds that no person shall be considered guilty until the guilt of such person has been determined in accordance with the procedures laid down in law.

The "compatriot" environment continued to hope for Russia's successes in the war in Ukraine and for the opportunity to resume former activities. Meanwhile, the thought-out public activities of "compatriot" environment activists indicated that they are aware of the consequences of supporting the aggressor state, including in relation to the preventive work carried out by VDD in previous years. As a result, there were few public "compatriot" events in the street environment and, in most cases, they did not violate the law.

"Compatriots" primarily conducted their activities online, disseminating narratives that discredit Latvia and are in line with Russia's interests, referring to "Russophobia" and Latvia as a failed state. Members of this environment also prepared different complaints and petitions, sending them to international organisations and top foreign officials to draw the international community's attention to the alleged Russian-speakers' "rights violations" in Latvia. The purpose of these activities was to exert the international community's pressure on Latvia and to interfere in the domestic politics of our country, which was entirely in line with Russia's interests. It is worth noting that "compatriots" also sent such complaints to the aggressor state, including V. Putin.

In the assessment of VDD, last year Russia presented anything directed against the mitigation of Russia's influence as Russian-speakers' "rights violations". The defence of Russian "compatriot" rights in Latvia and elsewhere in Europe remained as an influence measure

coordinated by Russian government to maintain narratives in line with Russia's interests on the international agenda.

In the street environment, the most visible activities of the "compatriot" environment activists were connected with the commemoration of remembrance and commemoration days important to Russia in the context of the events of World War II, where 9 May continued to be of central importance. Prior to 9 May, "compatriot" organisations organised regular clean-ups and the congratulating of veterans in cooperation with the Russian Embassy in Latvia. Furthermore, representatives of the political party "Latvijas Krievu savienība" (in English – "Latvian Russian Union", hereinafter – LKS) marked the so-called "Riga Liberation Day" on 13 October at the Pokrov Cemetery.

Similar to before, in relation to 9 May, last year VDD worked in an intensive mode, implementing control measures of the pro-Kremlin environment, monitoring the information space and conducting other preventive measures so that activities aimed at supporting Russia's aggression do not take place.

V. Guščins, head of the unregistered "compatriot" organisation "Latvian Council of Civic Organisations" (in Latvian – "Latvijas Sabiedrisko organizāciju padome"; hereinafter – LSOP), longstanding "compatriot" environment activist and pseudohistorian, continued activities supporting Russia by primarily engaging in rewriting history according to the interests of the aggressor state.

## PROTECTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER

According to information obtained by VDD in 2025 V. Guščins continued to maintain contacts with the Russian Embassy in Latvia. Likewise, V. Guščins continued to publish content in line with Russia's interests on the LSOP webpage, including content related to Russian-speakers' "rights violations". At the end of 2025, VDD initiated a criminal case against V. Guščins on the suspicion of violating the EU sanctions.

Overall, the activity of "compatriot" environment organisations in Latvian regions remained low and was limited to local scale events organised by minority groups. Activities of regional organisations are hampered by the lack of funding and other types of support that was provided by the Russian diplomatic corps prior to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Several branches of the "Latvian Russian Community" carried out activities in line with Russia's interests in the regions of Latvia last year. "Liepāja Russian Community", who elected Jeļena Osipova as its head, was the most active last year. VDD assesses that the association's increased activity was primarily related to J. Osipova's initiative and goal to increase her political capacity. Her activities were supported by both the co-chair of the political party LKS Jevgenijs Osipovs and the party's founder and long-time leader Tatjana Ždanoka.

"Rēzekne Russian Community" was also active last year. It is worth noting that Polina Kamjova, a representative of this association, participated in the annual conference "XVII Russian World Assembly" organised by the EU-sanctioned foundation "Russkiy Mir", which took place in Moscow from 20 to 22 October. Within the conference, a declaration was adopted which emphasised the role and importance of the Russian language and culture, including the need to strengthen the positions of the Russian language abroad.

Several other pro-Kremlin activists mentioned in previous VDD reports, such as Vladimirs Lindermans, Tatjana Andrijeca, Aleksandrs Gilmans and Alla Berezovska, last year continued to coordinate activities in relation to criminal cases initiated against them. These activists continued to disseminate narratives in the public space in line with Russia's interests claiming that the Latvian state is implementing political retribution against Russian-speaking activists.

### Political parties representing Russian-speakers

Last year, several political parties oriented towards the Russian-speaking electorate were active in Latvia. Their activities, in the assessment of VDD, contributed to achieving Russia's strategic objectives. The party's support to the aggressor state was indirect and

covert, the leading members clearly being aware of the potential consequences of open support including potential criminal liability or cessation of the party's activities.

In 2025, the activities of political parties oriented towards the Russian-speaking electorate were subordinated to the local government elections, attempting to mobilise the Russian-speaking part of the public to vote for them. Even though these parties outlined the need to unite the society regardless of ethnic background in their public communication, their true strategy was to emphasise and promote the seclusion of the Russian-speaking Latvian population.

VDD assesses that political parties "Stabilitātei!" (in English – "For Stability!"), "Suverēnā vara" (in English – "Sovereign Power") and LKS were the most active in promoting the seclusion of the Russian-speaking part of the society last year. These and other parties targeting the Russian-speaking electorate regularly disseminated narratives that essentially overlapped with Russia's interests. They continued to oppose policy aimed at social integration based on the knowledge of the official state language and decreasing Russia's non-military influence. These parties directly or covertly pointed to the need to resume cooperation with Russia and Belarus despite Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

In the assessment of VDD, official state language proficiency is one of the most important prerequisites for successful social integration of Latvia's Russian-speakers'. At the same time, political parties targeting the Russian-speaking electorate continued to oppose this approach. Representatives of these political parties stood against Latvia's attempts to strengthen the positions of the official state language, continuing to interpret these attempts as the state's and society's Russophobic treatment of the Russian-speaking population. The implementation of such a strategy last year was also demonstrated by the exaggerated and manipulative narratives of these parties in connection with the transition to education in the official state language.

MACĪBAS 08.10.2025

**Deputāte Djeri par mācībām latviešu valodā: Sēž skolēns un raud pie latviešu literatūras grāmatas**

Screenshot with the opinion of the representative of the political party "Suverēnā vara", Riga City Council deputy Inna Djeri regarding the transition to education in the official state language on the website "Santa.lv". Published on 8 October 2025.

## VDD PROVIDES ITS ASSESSMENT TO THE PROSECUTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE REGARDING POLITICAL PARTY'S "STABILITĀEI!" ACTIVITIES DIVIDING SOCIETY



Screenshot from the website "Nra.lv"

On 1 December 2025, following the Prosecutor General's Office request, VDD provided information at its disposal and its assessment regarding the compliance of the activities of the political party "Stabilitāei!" with the Law on Political Parties and national security interests. In the assessment of VDD, party "Stabilitāei!" had regularly disseminated narratives contradicting Latvia's national security interests, which matches Russia's strategic objectives in its actions directed against the NATO member countries. VDD submitted the assessment to the Prosecutor General's Office about the period since December 2022 when the Service issued a warning to the party for the statements made by its members to Russian and Belarusian propaganda resources subject to the EU sanctions.

It is worth mentioning that on 9 June 2025 VDD initiated a criminal case against the party's leader Aleksejs Rosļikovs in connection with his manipulative statements during the 5 June sitting of the Saeima, which were directed at promoting dissatisfaction, resentment and protest sentiment in Russians living in Latvia against the Latvian state and Latvian people. Prior to that the Service had held several preventive talks with A. Rosļikovs, warning him of the potential liability in case of the commission of a crime. On 14 November 2025, VDD asked the Prosecution Office to initiate criminal prosecution against A. Rosļikovs for the crimes stipulated in Section 78 Paragraph 2 of the Criminal Law, namely, for deliberate triggering of hatred and enmity between Latvians and Russians.

On 30 December 2025, the Prosecutor General's Office, having completed its review of the political party's "Stabilitāei!" compliance with the requirements of the Law on Political Parties, issued an official warning to the political party regarding the unacceptability of continuing activities directed against Latvia's national security interests.<sup>14</sup> Namely, during the scrutiny, the Prosecutor General's Office established that the party's activities are directed at triggering national hatred and enmity, and that its activities also indicate providing informative (propaganda) support to Russia.

Party "Suverēnā vara" was particularly active in the context of the language issue. While the majority of the public had agreed on the need to strengthen state security, including the position of the official state language, during these geopolitical conditions, representatives of the "Suverēnā vara" party continued to resist this policy. Members of this political force regularly expressed narratives inflammatory to the Russian-speaking part of the society about the implementation of the transition, simultaneously defending the need to maintain increased Russian language learning in Latvia's educational institutions.

Political party "Stabilitāei!" also criticised the transition to education in the official state language by disseminating disinformation inflammatory to the Russian-speaking part of the society and pointing out that, as a result of these reforms, Russian-speaking children will not be able to receive quality education. The party also disseminated other narratives and slogans that in fact divided the society along ethnic lines, purposefully attempting to seclude the Russian-speaking population from Latvians.

In their public communication last year, political parties oriented towards the Russian-speaking population expressed narratives contradicting Latvia's national

security interests also in the context of geopolitical developments. The parties continued to point out the need to re-establish economic cooperation with Russia and Belarus, simultaneously avoiding to comment on Russia's aggression and its crimes against humanity in Ukraine.

For example, during the pre-election period, when journalists tried to find out the party's stance on Russian aggression, leaders of the political organisation "Suverēnā vara" were unable to condemn Russia's aggression. In VDD's view, such a position indicated attempts to maintain support in the part of the society which effectively supports Russia's aggression and its crimes against humanity in Ukraine.

Whereas both before and after the local government elections, party "Stabilitāei!" expressed especially harsh criticism against Latvia for its chosen geopolitical course. By denigrating Latvia's transatlantic ties and relations with its allies, party "Stabilitāei!" emphasised that cooperation with Belarus and Russia would guarantee Latvia's future growth and success. The conformity of party's narratives' with Russia's foreign policy interests was confirmed by its positive resonance in Russia's informative space.

<sup>14</sup> Violations of the prohibitions set in Section 7 Paragraphs 4 and 5 of the Law on Political Parties have been identified in the party's activities.

## PROTECTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER

Political party LKS, which has been regularly mentioned in VDD's public reports and which participated alongside the party "Suverēnā vara" in last year's local government elections, continued to operate in accordance with Russia's strategic objectives. Since VDD initiated the criminal case against the party's leader T. Ždanoka, the party's capacity has been significantly limited.

In addition, LKS members continued their attempts to discredit Latvia on an international scale. Namely, party members continued to provide international institutions and other countries with misleading and distorted information regarding the situation of ethnic minorities in Latvia. The party interpreted measures strengthening the internal security and the position of the official state language in accordance with Russian propaganda narratives – as Russophobia existing in Latvia. Likewise, LKS deliberately attempted to divide the society, continuing to present the historical events in Latvia to the Russian-speaking part of the population in line with Russia's distorted perception of the events of World War II. In cooperation with the Russian Embassy in Latvia, several members of LKS continued to cultivate the misleading historical interpretation of "liberating" Latvia, which, in reality, was the occupation of Latvia.



A tribute to the "liberators" of Riga of 13 October 1944, published on the political party's LKS official "Facebook" page. Published on 14 October 2025.

### 3.5.

#### EXTREMISM AND RADICALISM

Last year, VDD continued to monitor the spread of extremist and radical ideas in Latvia. VDD assesses that the spread of such ideas in the society did not diminish. Different local and global scale socio-political events continued to promote the popularity of these ideas in individual groups of the society.

#### Risks posed by right-wing extremism

VDD continued to obtain information about organisations, informal groups and individual activists who can be considered supporters of right-wing extremism or radicalism. In the assessment of VDD, the scale of right-wing activities in 2025 did not constitute a direct and immediate threat to Latvia's constitutional order. However, the Service did observe that the right-wing extremist environment last year was active, continuing to pose risks primarily to public safety.

Members of this community reacted to current public discussions on sexual minority issues and especially the increasing presence of third-country<sup>15</sup> immigrants in Latvia.

According to VDD's analysis, similar to previous years, right-wing extremism activities last year were observed on social networking websites and online messaging applications, out of which "Telegram" and "TikTok" were most commonly used by the extremists. Right-wing extremists used these platforms to exchange opinions and ideas, and disseminated content characteristic of right-wing extremism. Last year, social networking websites and online messaging applications remained as the primary place where right-wing activists could reach a broader target audience and attract new followers.

In 2025, VDD identified attempts of individual members of this environment to unite like-minded individuals, gathering in small groups. However, due to VDD's countermeasures implemented in previous years, the persons did not engage in large-scale public activities to attract new members. One of the areas of activity of such closed groups was the organisation of close combat and physical training.

Likewise, one of the activity areas of right-wing extremists was establishing contact with like-minded individuals abroad. The objective of such contacts was mutual networking, as well as exchanging of experience and ideas. VDD assesses that the scale of extremists' international cooperation, which gradually increases, poses additional risks as members of this environment gain new experience, recognition and encouragement for further activities.

Last year, VDD observed that the so-called skinhead culture was popular among right-wing-inclined persons. In 2025, the Service continued to pay attention and conduct countermeasures to the activities of representatives of this subculture.

Skinhead subculture and its different expressions continued to primarily attract the attention of youth who

<sup>15</sup> Hereinafter – countries that are not NATO, EU or European Economic Area (in addition to EU Member States, Iceland, Norway, and Liechtenstein are also included) member states or Switzerland.

were ready to join this movement and identify with its ideas. In the assessment of VDD, one of the reasons for the growing recognition of this subculture was the reaction of more radically inclined youth to the dissatisfaction in a part of society with the growing presence of third-country immigrants in the country.

According to VDD's analysis, young people's overall understanding of the subculture itself was not comprehensive and only certain elements of this movement attracted them. Despite this, a heightened level of aggression was observed among the members of this subculture, which posed risks to public safety.

### Risks posed by left-wing extremism

VDD also continued to identify left-wing extremism expressions in the Latvian society last year. Latvia was no exception to the prevailing trend in Western countries, and expressions of left-wing extremism gained increasing popularity in certain parts of our society, especially among young people. By being active in public space, members of this environment were able to attract new followers and reach out to politically active persons whose knowledge on political processes in Latvia and the world was more moderate.

Also last year, the main topic for members of this environment was Israel's conflict with the terrorist organisation "Hamas". In the context of this and other issues, narratives consistent with the public rhetoric and interests of the Soviet Union and its successor Russia were detected in the environment of Latvia's left-wing extremists.

Taking inspiration from trends popular in the Western countries, members of this environment took over different elements of the left-wing movement from abroad. Left-wing-inclined individuals attempted to organise events themselves or participated in public

events organised by other more moderate social groups. However, members of this environment stood out with their provocative and intolerant behaviour against those who express different views. Likewise, during public events individual members of this environment deliberately got into altercations with law enforcement officers, which discredited the organisers and the goals of these events. In 2025, these trends were most apparent during protests dedicated to the support of Palestinians.

Members of the left-wing movement also gathered in person in a closed environment, building informal groups. When meeting in person, activists mainly exchanged ideas and opinions, reinforcing previously held beliefs and rejecting those who dared to think otherwise.

Left-wing extremists also developed areas of international cooperation, which, overall, strengthened the presence of geopolitical issues in their narratives. Local issues with social and other policies were less topical in this community, reinforcing the idea that members of this environment mostly follow the activities and narratives of like-minded peers abroad.

Last year, VDD detected the activities of Russian citizen Vladislav Romanenko directed at deliberately disseminating communist and anarchist ideas among the youth. According to information acquired by VDD, the aim of this person was to establish a larger left-wing extremist community. The Service assesses that the uncritical dissemination, acceptance and implementation of communist and anarchist ideas (which was the main goal of this individual and his followers) pose risks to Latvia's national security, as these ideologies effectively envisage the end of Latvia's existence as an independent, democratic state. Considering the risk posed by V. Romanenko's activities, VDD recommended including the person in the so-called blacklist, denying him further permission to stay in Latvia.

## COUNTERMEASURES TO ACTIVITIES POSING THREAT TO LATVIA'S CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER



### Monitoring pro-Kremlin activities in the urban environment

In 2025, VDD continued to analyse information received from the State Police regarding pro-Kremlin activities identified in the urban environment. The Service evaluated these cases according to its competence, aiming to identify persons who could pose a genuine threat to Latvia's constitutional order, as well as psychological operations organised by Russia's intelligence and security services.

Compared to previous years following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the number of pro-Kremlin expressions in the urban environment continued to decrease last year. VDD assesses that the gradual decrease of pro-Kremlin expressions in the urban environment can be explained by the growing realisation among Russia's supporters that any pro-Kremlin expressions may result in liability, ranging from fines to imprisonment of several years.

In the assessment of VDD, the decrease in spontaneous pro-Kremlin expressions in the street environment

was one of the reasons why Russia's intelligence and security services organised psychological operations in the street environment last year, i.e., staged support of Russia. It was important for the aggressor state to create the illusion of unwavering motivation of pro-Kremlin-inclined residents to continue supporting Russia.



### Preventive talks and warning about liability

Last year, VDD continued to hold preventive talks with members of the "compatriot" environment and politicians oriented towards the Russian-speaking electorate. During the talks, the Service warned these persons about the criminal liability in case of committing criminal activities against Latvia's constitutional order.

In total, VDD held talks with 20 such persons in 2025, for example, A. Rosļikovs from the party "Stabilitātei!", Jelena Osipova and Jevgenijs Osipovs from the party LKS, as well as Maksims Galkins from the party alliance "Suverēnā vara/ Apvienība jaunlatvieši" (in English – Sovereign Power/Alliance of Young Latvians).



### Criminal enforcement measures

Out of the criminal cases initiated by VDD last year, 17 were related to threats posed by individuals to Latvia's constitutional order. Four of the cases were initiated on suspicion of providing assistance to Russia in activity directed against Latvia, and one – for actions directed against Latvia. The Service initiated three criminal cases last year on suspicion of Latvian nationals' participation in warfare in Ukraine as part of the Russian armed forces, an identical number – for providing financial means or other goods to Russian armed forces, whereas one criminal case – for activity aiming to assist Russia to act against Ukraine.

VDD also initiated eight criminal cases on suspicion of hate speech directed against Latvia's national security interests: five cases for public glorification and justification of war crimes, two for triggering national hatred and enmity, and one for calls against the Republic of Latvia. See more in Chapter 7 on pre-trial investigation.



### Controlling protests and other public events

VDD continued cooperating with Latvian municipalities, evaluating the announced protests, marches and other public events according to its competence. The Service aimed to identify events during which activities directed against the democratic order or other unlawful

activities might take place, and in such cases provide timely recommendations for the prevention of security risks, or in exceptional circumstances – prohibit the organisation of the event.

Last year, VDD recommended not to authorise one public event in Riga, because information obtained by the Service indicated that, during the meeting, support of Russia will be expressed by disseminating narratives directed against Latvia with the aim of dividing society.



### Inclusion in the lists prohibiting entry into Latvia

In 2025, based on the risks that VDD identified to the security of Latvia's constitutional order, the Minister of the Interior blacklisted 123 foreigners (43 first-time bans, 80 extensions). Reasons for including the persons in the blacklist included expressing support to Russian full-scale aggression against Ukraine, participation and assistance to Russia's humanitarian and information influence activities, participation in left-wing extremism and communist ideology movements and the support of such ideas.

Based on the risks that VDD identified to the security of constitutional order, the Minister of Foreign Affairs declared 37 foreigners *personae non gratae*. The majority of the foreigners included in the list had supported Russia's war against Ukraine or its aggressive foreign policy against Western countries in their public statements or professional activity.

It is important to note that, based on VDD's recommendation, 14 Russian athletes who in January 2026 planned to participate in the Luge World Cup stage in Sigulda under the status of the so-called individual neutral athletes were declared *personae non gratae*. In VDD's assessment, Russia uses the status of the so-called individual neutral athletes to circumvent the restrictions imposed on it and effectively be present in international competitions.



### Other administrative instruments

In 2025, VDD also continued to employ other administrative instruments to prevent the potential threat to Latvia's constitutional order. For example, last year VDD sent the OCMA information about 26 Latvian nationals who, in addition to Latvian citizenship or Latvian non-citizen status had acquired Russian citizenship. In accordance with the current regulatory framework, Latvian citizens cannot simultaneously hold Russian citizenship<sup>16</sup>, while

<sup>16</sup> Section 9 of the Citizenship Law.

Latvian non-citizen status can only be held by persons who do not have citizenship of any other country<sup>17</sup>. These persons were stripped of Latvian citizenship in order to prevent their free travel to Latvia, posing risks to national security.

In addition, VDD used the rights stipulated in the National Security Law to recommend that the Minister of the Interior applies a ban on leaving the country to individual Latvian citizens. Based on VDD's recommendations, last year the Minister of the Interior issued a travel ban to one Latvian citizen based on reasonable suspicion that the person could implement activities directed against our country after leaving Latvia.



### **Countermeasures to right-wing and left-wing extremist activities**

In 2025, VDD continued implementing a range of preventive measures to reduce the spread of right-wing and left-wing extremism ideas in society.

The Service obtained information about different environments, continuing to analyse the spread and dynamic of radicalisation in society, particularly among the youth. For example, VDD conducted surveys at more than 450 different Latvian education establishments, among which were higher education institutions, general secondary education schools, colleges and technical schools.

Similar to 2024, last year VDD identified several young people who had turned to radical ideologies and conducted activities of aggressive nature. Throughout the last year, the Service held preventive talks with nearly 40 young people, warning them about potential criminal liability in case of continuing the said activities.

In addition, the Service continued close cooperation with the State Police in identifying and detaining radically inclined persons, especially when these persons, driven by ideological motives, attacked other members of society. In most cases, the persons were connected with the so-called skinhead subculture.

## **OUTLOOK**

---

- In 2026, the mood of supporters of Russian aggression residing in Latvia will be affected by geopolitical developments in the region. If Russia will gain success in international politics and diplomacy, the scope of activity and aggression of Russia's supporters will increase as well.
- Russia will continue to use academic and scientific research environments as well as international law as tools to achieve its aggressive foreign policy objectives. Russia will also use academic research to justify and plan at strategic level measures to influence foreign countries, whereas legal instruments – to discredit Latvia internationally.
- The aggressor state will continue to use measures implemented by “compatriot” environment activists residing in Latvia, manipulatively presenting them as Latvian civil society’s natural support for Russia’s foreign policy to Russia’s domestic audiences. On

official international formats, however, Russia will use “compatriot” calls to resolve Russian-speakers’ “rights violations” in the Baltic States to legitimise its interference in the internal affairs of the Baltic States.

- Political parties oriented towards the Russian-speaking electorate will not change their public communication and activity vectors. These parties are interested in the Russian-speaking segment distant from the rest of Latvian society, which provides and increases the chances of them being elected to the 15th Saeima in 2026.
- Security risks will continue to be posed by persons who, by using radical, extremist and violent content materials available on the internet, will self-radicalise. The availability of such information can incite certain persons to commit violence against members of society who they deem as undesirable.

---

<sup>17</sup> Section 1 of the Law “On the Status of those Former U.S.S.R. Citizens who do not have the Citizenship of Latvia or that of any Other State”.



# 04

## INFORMATION SPACE SECURITY

**The information influence activities extended against Latvia by Russia and its ally Belarus last year remained at a high level. The dissemination of aggressive and hostile propaganda and disinformation narratives also in 2025 was one of Russia's main areas of activity against Latvia. Despite the high intensity of information influence activities, the Kremlin's narratives had a limited impact on Latvian society.**

The aggressor state's possibilities to disseminate narratives in line with its interests to Latvian public remained limited both due to international sanctions imposed by the EU and Latvia's, including VDD's, targeted efforts in strengthening the security of Latvia's information space.

In 2025, the majority of Latvian society continued to demonstrate resilience against Russia's information influence activities. In the assessment of VDD, last year Russia did not manage to destabilise Latvia's internal political situation or reduce the public's support to Ukraine with its war propaganda and hostile narratives.

Last year, Latvian society closely followed the current developments related to Russia's war in Ukraine and the peace settlement process, actively expressing their opinions and concerns in discussions on social networking websites. According to VDD's monitoring in 2025, the majority of the public continued to confirm their strong support of Ukraine and condemn Russia's aggressive policy.

Nevertheless, in the context of international and other developments, last year VDD identified a significant increase in aggression manifestations from pro-Russian inclined persons in the internet environment, therefore the situation in Latvia's information space could be described as tense.

Belarus continued to align its information influence activities to Russia, providing support in disseminating narratives supporting the Kremlin's aggressive foreign policy. Meanwhile China continued to focus on building a positive image in Latvian society to increase support for its initiatives at international level.



## 4.1.

### TRENDS OF RUSSIA'S INFORMATION INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES

According to information at VDD's disposal, last year Russia continued to invest significant resources in its propaganda activities against European countries, including Latvia. Russia's public communication and targeted propaganda activities against Latvia in 2025 were mainly aligned to its goals in Ukraine.

VDD assesses that Russia's war propaganda primarily remained focused on influencing the opinion of its domestic audience. As such, the usual narratives that depict NATO and EU member states as an external enemy, whereas Russia – as the only defender of Russian-speakers' rights and interests, remained relevant. At the same time, in 2025 the Service continued to identify even more distinctive attempts of the Kremlin to influence the international community in its interests. To shape the views of domestic and international audiences, the Kremlin purposefully disseminated narratives about the Baltic States including Latvia being Russophobic and Nazi.

Similar to 2024, last year Russia's information influence activities were aimed at dividing and destabilising NATO and the EU, discrediting Ukraine, influencing Latvia's public opinion against its government and state institutions, as well as regaining favour of the international community.

Russia primarily continued to implement information influence activities targeting Latvian society in the internet environment, adapting to the ban to rebroadcast Russian television channels in Latvia. The Kremlin attempted

to reach the Latvian public through social networking websites as well as online messaging applications.

At the same time, the so-called traditional Kremlin propaganda resources, including television channels that are prohibited from being retranslated in Latvia, maintained a significant role in disseminating Russia's aggressive foreign policy narratives in Latvia. Content of Russia's television channels was regularly reuploaded on social networking websites "TikTok", "Facebook" and "Instagram", as well as the video sharing site "Youtube" by channels that usually circulate Kremlin propaganda narratives.

A part of society continued to consume Russian propaganda content through illegal television service providers. In addition, several Russian television channels and radio stations were freely available for reception in populated areas along the Russian border. Thus, VDD assesses that a portion of Latvian nationals were exposed to Russia's aggressive war propaganda and information manipulations also last year.

According to VDD's analysis, Russia continued to intensively use the messaging application "Telegram" for its information influence activities. With the help of this application, the aggressor state continued to ensure availability of content created by Russia's propaganda resources in Latvia's information space. Several Russian propaganda resources, such as "Izvestija" and "RIA Novosti"<sup>18</sup>, disseminated their content in such a manner.

Last year the "Telegram" platform was also used to develop an alternative network of propaganda channels. Pro-Kremlin activists who had protractedly been under VDD's radar and had fled to Russia and Belarus in recent years continued to be actively involved in the creation of this network.

<sup>18</sup> In the beginning of 2025, "Telegram" publicly announced plans to limit the availability of content produced by Russia's information resources subject to the EU sanctions. At the same time, according to VDD's monitoring of information space, the majority of these channels were still available within the territory of Latvia last year.

### EXAMPLES OF RUSSIA'S INFORMATION INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES



In June of last year, Russia's propaganda resources depicted a Russian passport issuance ceremony to the Morozovs family, who had moved from Riga to Smolensk Oblast in Russia. This case was manipulatively presented as proof of the allegedly existing "discrimination of Russian-speakers" in Latvia. Photos (from left) from 15 June 2025 publication on the website of the so-called Russian Peace Foundation and 13 June 2025 publication on the "Smolenskaya Gazeta" news website.

Last year, Russia often used cases of Russian-speakers resettling from Latvia to Russia to discredit Latvia and to restore its image both domestically and internationally. The aggressor state presented these cases to the public in a distorted and manipulative manner, adapting them to the usual disinformation narratives regarding the "discrimination" and "violation of Russian-speakers' rights" in Latvia.

In accordance with its interests to reflect cases of Russian-speakers departing from Latvia, Russia continued to purposefully popularise the repatriation or voluntary relocation programs of "compatriots" living abroad, for example, "Nashi" and "Putj Domoj" (translation from Russian - "Our people" and "The road home"). All levels of Russia's propaganda system were used to advertise this program – from Russia's state officials and its largest propaganda resources all the way to "compatriots" who had fled to Russia and Belarus.

In conducting its information influence activities, Russia also continued to use the amendments to the Immigration Law of Latvia adopted in 2022, which stipulate that Russian citizens living in Latvia must pass the state language proficiency test in order to continue residing in the country.<sup>19</sup> Last year VDD regularly observed that Russian citizens subject to these requirements were engaged in short-term disinformation campaigns organised by the Kremlin, attempting to discredit Latvia and position Russia as the only protector of Russian-speakers. Senior Russian citizens were most commonly used in these

disinformation campaigns, purposefully creating emotionally charged stories about the persons' difficulties in meeting the requirements for the retention of residence rights and simultaneously ignoring the fact that prior to the amendments entering into force, these persons had several dozens of years to learn the Latvian language. Information about the persons and their reasons to leave Latvia were manipulatively distorted in these stories. To garner extra resonance, in these propaganda activities Russia often used the so-called internet trolls who continued to share the stories on social networking websites.



Last October, Russia's propaganda resources widely shared disinformation regarding Latvia's supposedly forced expulsion of 75-year-old Ludmila Mežīja, citing the person's opposition to the demolition of objects glorifying the Soviet army in Latvia as the reason. In reality, this person had been issued a Latvian residence permit and moved to Russia voluntarily along with her husband. Screenshot (on the left) from a video by the propaganda resource "Russia Today" regarding L. Mežīja's "expulsion" shared on social media in October 2025 and a photo of A. Mamikins together with L. Mežīja and her husband in Pskov shared on Mamikins' "Facebook" profile on 27 October 2025.

<sup>19</sup> On 24 September 2022, amendments to the Immigration Law made by the Saeima entered into force, according to which Russian citizens who have been living in Latvia for a long time had to obtain the EU long term resident status in order to continue living in our country. To obtain this status, these persons had to submit proof of A2 level proficiency to the OCMA. The aim of these amendments was to strengthen the internal security and the position of the Latvian language, and to promote the full integration of Russian citizens protractedly living in Latvia. By the end of last year, more than 800 Russian citizens had not submitted the necessary documents to apply for a new residence permit and thus had to leave Latvia.

The “Telegram” application continued to serve as an important tool of Russia’s intelligence and security services in activities directed against Latvia. “Telegram” was used for collecting intelligence, as well as for organising and coordinating malign activities and psychological operations in the territory of Latvia. For example, as mentioned in the Report’s chapter on counterintelligence, the group of perpetrators of malign activities detained by VDD in spring 2025 were tasked via this application regarding the reconnaissance and arson of specific objects, and reported the completed tasks to contact persons in Russia. Likewise, the intelligence activities of the Latvian citizen detained by VDD on 27 August on suspicion of espionage were coordinated on “Telegram”, and in this case the application was also used to pass along intelligence.

Last year, members of the criminal organisation “Baltic anti-fascists” continued to participate in the Kremlin’s propaganda activities and the collection of intelligence that could be used against Latvia’s national security. The self-proclaimed “Baltic anti-fascists”, who continued their activities directed against Latvia from Russian territory, also last year used their “Telegram” channel to call to provide information that could be used by Russia’s law enforcement institutions and intelligence and security services to target Latvian residents. The

channel administrators also participated in raising funds and material benefits for the armed forces of the aggressor state and disseminated hateful narrative directed against Latvia and Latvians.

In 2025, the Service observed that Russia continues to use the so-called trolls – foreign-based and Russian-speaking fraudulent accounts – in their information influence activities against Latvia. The purpose of these accounts was to disseminate narratives justifying Russia’s aggressive foreign policy in the sections of news articles regarding global events and Russia’s war against Ukraine. VDD assesses that these activities were closely linked to Russia’s attempts at reducing the Latvian society’s support for Ukraine and efforts at creating a false impression of significant support to Russia’s aggressive policy among the Latvian public.

Likewise, Russian efforts to increasingly use AI tools in propaganda activities appeared as an important trend last year. AI generated content was mainly shared on social networking websites. In the assessment of VDD, increasing use of AI tools indicates Russia’s desire to conceal its activities in Latvia’s information space, ensuring the availability of a seemingly alternative and “neutral” range of information resources.

## TREND

**The Kremlin understands that Latvian society is resilient to its propaganda narratives, therefore last year an even bigger emphasis was placed on automating and diversifying information activities using AI tools. At the same time, considering that this content often was of low quality and contained known pro-Kremlin narratives, these activities could not significantly influence the Latvian society.**

## 4.2.

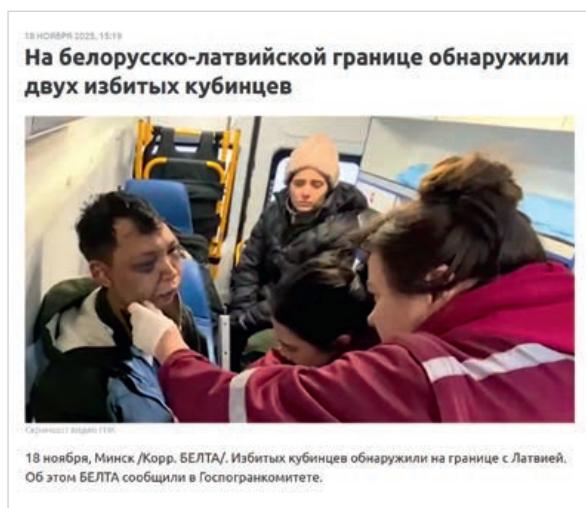
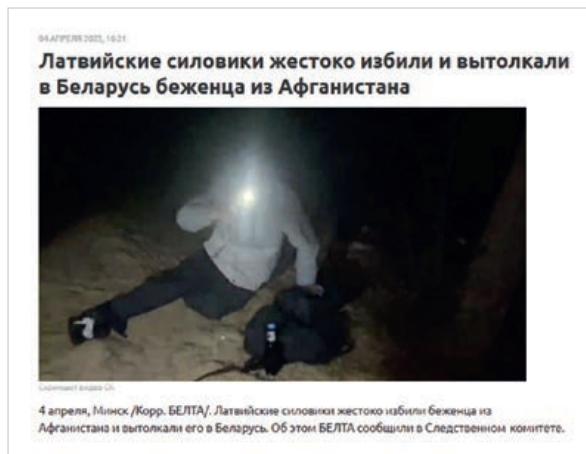
### INFORMATION INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES OF BELARUS

Last year, the Belarusian propaganda system primarily kept its focus on building a positive public image of Belarus and its authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko. To divert its society’s attention from internal problems also Belarus’ information resources purposefully discredited Latvia as an economically, socially and morally failed state. At the same time, in its information influence activities directed against Latvia, Belarus continued to disseminate narratives that support the Kremlin’s aggressive foreign policy.

Aiming to discredit Latvia, Belarus continued to disseminate lies about the alleged “human rights violations” by Latvian services against third countries’ migrants on the Latvian and Belarusian border. Based

on reports fabricated by the Belarusian Investigation Committee, last year Belarusian propaganda resources regularly implemented disinformation campaigns discrediting Latvia. Similar to 2024, such campaigns last year spread lies regarding Latvian border guards’ and soldiers’ cruelty against “refugees” who try to cross the Latvian border.

To promote the credibility and gain a wider resonance of the fabricated stories, Belarusian propaganda resources created fake “evidence” of cruelty attributed to Latvian officials, such as photographs and video footages of alleged victims and fatalities of violence committed by the Latvian power structures. These materials were distributed on various social networking platforms. VDD’s analysis indicates that, by using such fabrications, Belarus not only attempted to discredit Latvia, but also continued the attempts to cast blame on Latvia and other EU states for the “migration crisis” on the Latvian and Belarusian border that Belarus itself deliberately provoked and sustained.



Screenshots of publications from the official Belarusian news agency "Belta" which disseminate lies about the physical injuries and deaths of migrants as a result of Latvian border security's alleged involvement. The articles (top down) were published on 4 April and 18 November 2025.

In 2025, Belarusian propaganda resources also heavily criticised Latvia's foreign policy. To its population, Belarus continued to describe decisions taken by Latvia as "unfounded" and "hysterical". To discredit Latvia's policy, Belarus, similar to Russia, disseminated propaganda narratives about the growing "Belarusophobia" in Latvia.

In addition, last year VDD continued detecting in Latvian information space targeted attempts to popularise medical tourism, as well as cultural and sporting events in Belarus. Such narratives were disseminated by both individual pro-Kremlin activists and bloggers who fled to Belarus. The aforementioned activities can be regarded as Belarus' attempts to improve its image in the Latvian society and encourage uncritical Latvian nationals to travel to this country, therefore subjecting themselves to high intelligence and recruitment risks without realising it.

### 4.3.

## USE OF ACTIVISTS WHO HAVE FLED TO RUSSIA AND BELARUS

Last year, the pro-Kremlin activists who fled to Russia and Belarus retained a significant role in Russia's information influence activities against Latvia. Taking into account the existing restrictions and local activists avoiding open cooperation with the aggressor state, VDD observed that for the purposes of their propaganda needs Russia and Belarus continued to make intensive use of defected "compatriot" policy activists and other persons that have moved to Russia or Belarus, especially within the framework of Russia's so-called repatriation or voluntary relocation programs.

According to VDD's analysis, the defectors positioned themselves as "politically repressed persons" and the Baltic States "experts" during regular interviews to Russia's and Belarus' propaganda resources, and expressed narratives discrediting Latvia. Similar to 2024, also last year the Kremlin's information influence activities were supported by the pro-Kremlin activists who had fled to Russia, for example, Sergejs Vasiljevs, Aleksejs Stefanovs, Ruslans Pankratovs, Andrejs Mamikins, as well as Romāns Samuļs, who lives in Belarus. VDD found that this circle of individuals was supplemented by pro-Kremlin blogger Dmitrijs Matajevs, who fled to Minsk. In addition to supporting the aggressor states' propaganda resources, these persons continued developing their own individual propaganda projects.

The pro-Kremlin activist A. Stefanovs, who is one of the content creators of "Sputnik", a propaganda resource of the news agency "Rossiya Segodnya", received a letter of thanks from V. Putin last year "for contributions to media development and many years of diligent work". It is important to note that A. Stefanovs is wanted in Latvia for the violation of the EU sanctions by providing publications to the propaganda website "Sputnik".

Former Latvian member of the European Parliament A. Mamikins, who is wanted in Latvia for public glorification and justification of Russia's war crimes, last year continued to disseminate narratives discrediting Latvia on Russian propaganda resources, his own channels on social networking websites, and during the "compatriot" events in Russia. For example, on 19 October 2025, A. Mamikins gave an interview to the Russian radio channel "Komsomolskaya Pravda", spreading false statements about events in Latvia.



A. Stefanovs with V. Putin's letter of thanks. Photo from pro-Kremlin activist's "Telegram" channel published on 10 December 2025.



A. Mamikins. Photo from A. Mamikins' "Facebook" account, published on 19 October 2025.



R. Samuļs. Screenshot from the activist's "YouTube" blog. In this video address, which was published on 20 November 2025, R. Samuļs expresses statements discrediting the Baltic States and Ukraine, as well as support to Russia and Belarus.



D. Matajevs. Screenshot from an interview published on 4 September 2025 on the "YouTube" channel of the Belarusian propaganda resource "Belta".

One of the most conspicuous runaways to Belarus last year was Romāns Samuļs, who, in addition to regularly giving interviews to Belarusian and Russian information resources, attempted to restart his personal "YouTube" video blog. On this blog, R. Samuļs continued to disseminate propaganda narratives about Russian-speakers' "rights violations" in Latvia, and closely worked with other Russian propagandists who regularly used hostile and aggressive statements against Latvia. R. Samuļs' cooperation partners included, for example, Nikolay Mezhevich, head of the Russian Association for Baltic Studies, and Oleg Besedin, an Estonian pro-Kremlin activist<sup>20</sup>.

Blogger D. Matajevs also continued activities against Latvia from the territory of Belarus, for example, by giving an interview to the official Belarusian news agency "Belta", in which he spoke about his escape to Belarus, explaining it with allegedly unfounded repressions against him and "Russophobia" in Latvia. It is important to note that prior to fleeing to Belarus, D. Matajevs served a one-year imprisonment in Latvia for publishing videos on "TikTok" glorifying and justifying crimes of Russia's armed forces in Ukraine and provoking national hatred against Latvians.

Alongside the usual propaganda activities, Russia included the pro-Kremlin exiles in academic and scientific events, during which the activists gave speeches on developments in the Baltic States as "experts" and "professors".

Last year, targeted activities against Latvia and other Baltic States were extended by the Institute of CIS Countries, which supposedly studies developments in countries near to Russia's borders and disseminates narratives justifying its aggressive foreign policy. The Institute of CIS Countries is headed by K. Zatulin<sup>21</sup>, a member of the Russian State Duma subject to the EU sanctions, who previously closely cooperated with the long-standing "compatriot" policy activist T. Ždanoka. According to information published by Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service (EFIS), Russian intelligence and security services use the Institute of CIS Countries as a front organisation to promote Russia's interests.<sup>22</sup>

On 4 February 2025, Institute of CIS Countries organised a roundtable discussion in Moscow titled "Russian compatriot ethnocide in the Baltic States as a factor in Russia's preparations for war". Several Baltic "compatriot" activists who have fled to Russia participated in this

<sup>20</sup> On 4 November 2025, Estonian Internal Security Service (KAPO) detained O. Besedin on suspicion of crimes against Estonia's national security. The pro-Kremlin activist was detained in connection with possible violation of the EU sanctions and participation in Russia's information influence operations in cooperation with persons working in the interests of Russia's intelligence and security services since at least 2022.

<sup>21</sup> Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/332 of 25 February 2022 implementing Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine.

<sup>22</sup> EFIS Annual Report for 2023, p. 50.

discussion, expressing a series of public calls directed against Latvia's security and independence, as well as triggering national hatred between Latvians and Russians.

Several Latvian nationals also took part in the discussion, including long-standing "compatriot" activist Aleksandrs Gaponenko, who joined the discussion online from Latvia. A. Gaponenko, who was announced as a "professor, activist and anti-fascist", expressed deceitful statements discrediting Latvia and called on Russia to carry out military aggression against the Baltic States, as well as glorified Russia's war against Ukraine.

### VDD DETAINS A. GAPONENKO FOR CALLS TO HARM LATVIA'S SECURITY



Screenshot from A. Gaponenko's online speech during his participation in the discussion in Moscow on 4 February.

In connection with statements made during the discussion organized by the Institute of CIS Countries on 4 February 2025 that were directed against the security of Latvia, VDD initiated a criminal case. On 13 February, the Service detained one of its participants – the pro-Kremlin activist A. Gaponenko, who had called to harm the security of Latvia.

The criminal case was initiated on suspicion of crimes stipulated in Section 811 Paragraph 2 and Section 78 Paragraph 2 of the Criminal Law, i.e., assisting Russia in action directed against the security of Latvia, as well as for triggering hatred against Latvians. On 30 May 2025, VDD asked the Prosecution Office to initiate criminal prosecution against A. Gaponenko for the aforementioned crimes.

Meanwhile, VDD continues to investigate a separate criminal case initiated against other Latvian nationals who participated in the discussion.

*VDD reminds that no person is considered guilty until their guilt is proven in accordance to the law.*



R. Pankratovs during discussion at the Institute of CIS Countries on 23 September. Photo from R. Pankratovs' "Facebook" profile, published on 1 October 2025.

It should be noted that Ruslans Pankratovs, a propagandist who fled to Russia and a former member of the Riga City Council, is employed as a researcher in the Institute of CIS Countries and moderated the discussion of "Russian compatriot ethnocide in the Baltic States". In addition to this discussion, on 23 September 2025, R. Pankratovs organised a similar format discussion directed against the Baltic States titled "Russian-speaking population's rights in the Baltic States: current trends, international judicial aspects and protection initiatives". This discussion also touched upon the alleged ethnocide policy against Russians in the Baltic States.

In March 2025, the Diplomatic Academy of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs opened an in-depth research club on the Baltic States and the Kaliningrad Oblast. The opening event was attended by Vadims Aleksejevs (Avva), a propagandist who fled to Russia, and Igors Gusevs, a pseudo-historian.



"Telegram" post of the in-depth research club on the Baltic States and the Kaliningrad Oblast depicting the Baltic States as a bridgehead and buffer zone of NATO in its war against Russia. Published on 12 May 2025.

Last year, the aforementioned research club created a channel on the “Telegram” application, regularly publishing interpretations of events in the Baltic States in accordance with the interests of Russia’s foreign policy. Likewise, the channel includes information regarding discussions that the club organises at the Diplomatic Academy, which are led by its teaching staff and are attended by students. The creation of the channel can be assessed as yet another attempt of Russia to interfere in the political and social agenda of foreign countries with the help of information influence measures.

#### 4.4.

### CONSEQUENCES OF WAR PROPAGANDA

According to VDD’s analysis of monitoring data, Latvia’s society retained a heightened level of distress and concern throughout the last year due to different international and domestic developments. It was also manifested through discussions on social networking websites.

Compared to 2024, last year saw a significant increase in the level of verbal aggression in discussions on social networking websites. In 2025, VDD identified a two-fold increase in the amount of aggressive comments compared to 2024. A particularly high level of verbal aggression on social networking websites was recorded at the end of 2025. VDD found that the spread of verbal aggression last year neared the level of 2022, when social networking websites were flooded with pro-Kremlin and hateful narratives in relation to Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

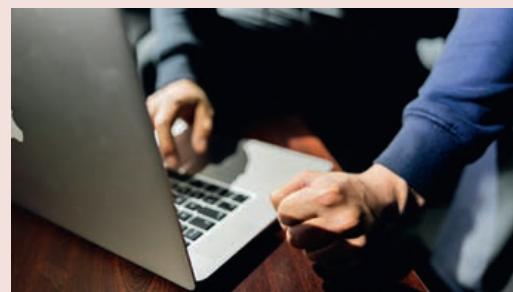
VDD’s analysis shows that aggressive behaviour in the information space was exacerbated by the following situations:

- Developments in the peace talks to end the war in Ukraine started by Russia;
- Latvia’s and other allied states’ support to Ukraine;
- Developments in Europe’s regional security and Latvia’s defence sector;
- Remembrance Day of the Latvian Legionnaires on 16 March;
- Commemoration Day for the Victims of Communist Genocide on 25 March;
- 9 May and the celebration of the so-called “victory” day in Russia;
- Remembrance Day for the Victims of the Genocide of the Totalitarian Communist Regime Against the Latvian People on 7 December;
- Activities of Latvian nationals that align with Russia’s interests – the statements of A. Roslikovs during the Saeima plenary sitting on 5 June, Jelena Kreile’s

pro-Kremlin manifestations and appeal against her prison sentence, Aleksandrs Vabiks’ attack on Ukrainians on a train in Switzerland, etc.

VDD’s analysis shows that under the influence of Russian propaganda, aggressive commenters in 2025 in their statements attempted to discredit Ukraine, Latvia and other Western countries, glorified and justified Russia’s military aggression, provoked national and ethnic hatred, and turned against Latvia. Commenting on events pertaining to regional security commenters supporting Russia tried to spread concern and fear about the future to the Latvian society, discredit Latvian NAF, as well as reduce the public trust in state and international institutions, including NATO and the EU.

#### Profile of a typical aggressive pro-Kremlin commenter: AN UNFULFILLED MIDDLE-AGED MAN



Illustrative photo, VDD

- between the ages of 40 to 69;
- Latvian citizen or non-citizen;
- language of communication – Russian;
- place of residence declared in Latvia, mostly resides in Riga, often – abroad.

Last year, the posts of pro-Kremlin commenters mostly depicted and supported Russia’s war in Ukraine, disseminated hateful statements against Latvian and Ukrainian people, and shared calls directed against Latvia.

Similar to previous years, VDD identified the following reasons for manifesting aggression on the internet: low level of income and welfare; low level of education; addiction to alcohol and other intoxicating substances; mental health problems; lack of emotional intelligence and emotional self-control; disappointment with the political system and a lack of faith in state institutions; distrust of Latvian media and the use of alternative information sources.

Uncritical and nostalgic attitude to the Soviet occupation period and anti-Western views are also characteristic of pro-Kremlin commenters.

VDD assesses that pro-Kremlin expressions were encouraged also by developments in Latvia's domestic politics and society. For example, a significant increase in verbal aggression in the information space was caused by A. Rosļikovs' public statements provoking hatred between Latvians and Russians, as well as activities of other pro-Kremlin activists. Likewise, ethnic tensions in online discussions were accelerated by different remembrance days, such as 16 March, 25 March and 7 December.

In relation to 9 May, last year VDD identified the social media profiles of more than 260 pro-Kremlin individuals who had posted pictures with symbols associated with Russia's aggressive nationalism, including the so-called ribbon of Saint George, the red five-pointed star, hammer and sickle. According to jurisdiction, VDD forwarded information regarding these persons to the State Police, which is responsible for imposing administrative penalties for the public display of symbols glorifying military aggression and war crimes, as well as symbols of totalitarian regimes, including the USSR.

The Service observed that in 2025, pro-European persons loyal to Latvia and supportive of Ukraine were actively engaging in discussions on social networking sites, confronting pro-Kremlin commenters and refuting disinformation spread about events in Latvia, Ukraine, and elsewhere Europe. In VDD's assessment, this trend confirms that the Latvian society continues to show low tolerance for pro-Kremlin expressions, which indicates the society's proactive resilience against Russia's disinformation.

Following the increase of aggression levels in the Latvian information space last year, compared to 2024, VDD identified by a third more unique users disseminating aggressive narratives – around 500 persons in total. Compared to 2024, last year VDD detected a larger share of comments expressing support for Russian aggression (51% compared to 39% in 2024). The Service assesses that the increase can mostly be attributed to developments seemingly favourable to Russia's interests in the peace negotiation process. Publications about a potentially unfavourable outcome of the war for Ukraine encouraged the pro-Kremlin social networking sites' users to use a more aggressive rhetoric.

VDD regularly held preventive talks with the most aggressive pro-Kremlin commenters, warning them about the criminal liability if their content will constitute a criminal offence.

Similar to 2024, VDD rather often identified calls for violence and threats to state officials, which can be attributed to the tension in society regarding internal

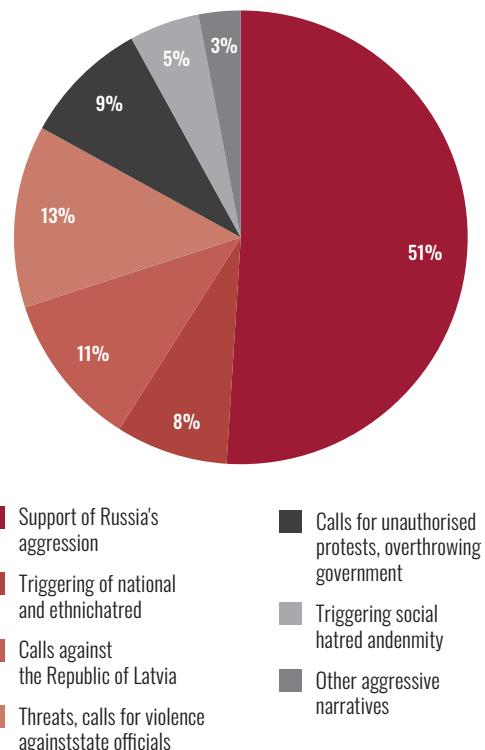
policy and economic developments. Comments aimed at triggering national and ethnic hatred were identified, primarily – against Latvians and Ukrainians.

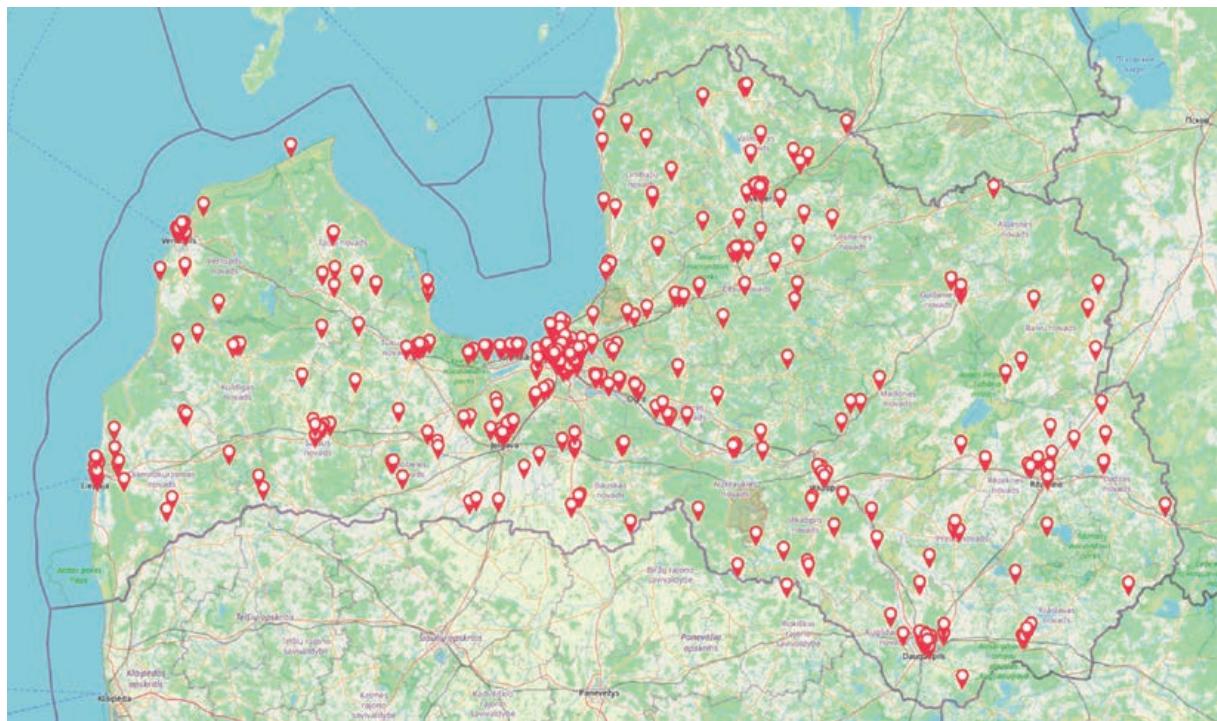
Even though VDD consistently conducted a comprehensive monitoring of Latvia's information space aiming to identify activities directed against the security of the state, significant support in identifying such activities was provided by members of the public. In 2025, VDD received several thousand reports from the public informing the Service about different activities on social media sites and online messaging applications:

- pro-Kremlin expressions that support Russia's aggression and propaganda;
- hateful, aggressive posts aimed at triggering national or ethnic hatred;
- persons who have come to the attention of reporters as potentially disloyal to Latvia;
- the use of symbols supporting Russia and its aggression;
- other expressions that can pose threats to national security.

VDD carefully evaluated each report, in several cases holding preventive talks with the commenters mentioned in the reports and warning them of potential criminal liability.

### Topics of aggressive comments





The distribution of authors of comments that are aggressive and support Russia within the territory of Latvia, as detected by VDD in the internet environment in 2025.

#### 4.5.

### CHINA'S INFORMATION INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES

Similar to previous years, one of China's priorities last year was to build its positive image in our country. Namely, China tried to ensure that Latvia follows its so-called "One-China" policy, scrupulously following Latvian institutions' and organisations' contacts with Taiwan. Special attention was paid to interest in cooperation with Taiwan of institutions and organisations of Latvian defence, academic and culture sectors.

To demonstrate China's allegedly undisputed rights to Taiwan to the Latvian society, representatives of this state attempted to disseminate China's interpretation regarding the history of the Second World War in Latvia's public space. VDD assesses that in separate cases China's rhetoric overlaps with the Kremlin's views and attempts to rewrite the history.

Last year China continued to build and solidify the influence positions in Latvia's political, academic, scientific, economic and media sectors. The long-term goal of China remains the same – influencing the public opinion, promoting favourable political decisions and support to China's initiatives at international level. Likewise, one of China's geostrategic goals in both



Illustrative photo, Freepik

Latvia and globally was to popularise its international policy initiatives. For example, last year VDD identified China's attempts to disseminate its vision regarding the desired global security architecture that China offers as an alternative to the current international order based on democratic values. In this way, it attempted to weaken the strong transatlantic ties between Europe and the US.

Several organisations established in Latvia, whose goal is to promote Latvia's cooperation with China, provided support to China in implementing its influence activities last year. Likewise, Latvian nationals who were favourably inclined towards China lobbied for its interests and values in their respective sectors.

### COUNTERACTION TO INFORMATION INFLUENCE MEASURES



#### Monitoring the information space

Last year VDD continued to consistently monitor the information space to identify persons and groups who share narratives directed against Latvia's national security interests. Throughout the year, the Service identified several thousand posts published on the internet that express support to Russia's aggression, promote ethnic tension or contain other statements directed against Latvia's security interests.

VDD identified an increase in the aggression level on social networking platforms. To mitigate it, the Service held preventive talks with the most aggressive commenters, in some cases initiating criminal cases against the persons.



#### Preventive talks and warnings

Last year VDD continued to hold preventive talks with persons whose activities in the internet environment were directed at justifying Russia's aggression or triggering hatred against Latvians or Ukrainians, but did not constitute sufficient grounds to initiate criminal cases.

Last year the Service held preventive talks and officially warned about the criminal liability enforceable in case of the commission of a crime over 200 Latvian nationals who had disseminated statements directed against Latvia's national security interests on various platforms in the internet environment. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, more than 2000 such internet users have been warned about the potential criminal liability.



#### Criminal enforcement measures

In cases when the statements of individuals in the internet environment crossed the boundaries of freedom of expression containing the elements of criminal offences, VDD initiated criminal cases. Overall, last

year VDD initiated eight criminal cases for statements made by individuals in the internet environment. Of those, five cases were initiated for public justification and glorification of war crimes (in four cases for crimes against Ukrainians, in one – crimes against Hebrews). Two criminal cases were initiated for activities in the internet environment directed at triggering national or ethnic hatred, whereas one – for calls against the Republic of Latvia.



#### Closing of propaganda resources

According to its competence, in 2025, VDD continued assessing the content of different internet websites to identify sites that are used for Russia's information influence activities against Latvia or publish other content that could pose threats to Latvia's national security. Upon detecting such internet websites, VDD, in accordance with the procedure stipulated in the Electronic Communications Law, informed the National Electronic Mass Media Council, recommending to restrict access to these sites from the territory of Latvia.

Last year the Service recommended restricting access to 179 such internet sites. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the number of Russian propaganda websites blocked in Latvia following the Service's recommendations is nearing 400.



#### Informing the public

In 2025, the Service continued its public communication activities to draw the attention of Latvian society to national security risks. In the area of information space security, the Service publicly provided information about propaganda and disinformation narratives disseminated by Russia and Belarus, explaining their goals. Likewise, the Service informed the public about criminal cases initiated against persons who in the internet environment incited hatred between Latvians and Russians or glorified Russia's war against Ukraine, thus encouraging the reporting of such activities.

## OUTLOOK

---

- Russia will continue its war propaganda and disinformation activities directed against Latvia and the Baltic States as a whole. Furthermore, in the subsequent peace negotiations, Russia will with increasing aggression seek to promote narratives that align with the Kremlin's strategic objectives to garner support from the international community and create conditions favourable to its desired peace settlement in Ukraine. To achieve this objective, Russia will continue to seek methods that diminish European solidarity and split transatlantic relations.
- "TikTok", "YouTube", "Facebook" and "Telegram" will remain the principal platforms for dissemination of Russian propaganda and disinformation narratives. Russia will continue to create different channels on these platforms to disseminate propaganda content in the territory of Latvia. Russian intelligence and security services will continue to use these platforms to further their interests as well.
- In parallel to activities on social networking sites and online messaging applications, it is expected that Russia will try to use the geopolitical situation in its interests to reduce restrictions on traditional information resources. It can be expected that the pressure exerted by Russia and its attempts to return to the media and entertainment markets of European countries, including Latvia, will increase.
- Belarus will continue to provide support to the dissemination of narratives justifying Russian aggression. Latvian nationals who in the past years fled to Russia or Belarus will continue to play an important role in the propaganda activities of these countries directed against Latvia. To discredit Latvia, the Kremlin will continue to use both pro-Kremlin activists already known to VDD and recruit persons that have not come to the Service's attention.
- China will continue to develop and consolidate its influence positions in different environments in Latvia to foster a positive image of China in the public and promote narratives that align with its interests in Latvia's information space. The goals of China's propaganda activities will remain promoting favourable political decisions in Latvia and supporting China's initiatives globally, as well as reducing support to Taiwan and its attempts to gain the status of an independent state.

# 05

## ECONOMIC SECURITY

**The main source of risks to Latvia's economic security last year was the direct and indirect economic cooperation of individuals and businesses with Russia, which was sometimes implemented without evaluating the increased risks of sanctions violations or by purposefully attempting to circumvent sanctions imposed by the EU. In 2025, VDD initiated 22 criminal cases on the suspicion of violating the EU sanctions imposed against Russia or Belarus.**

The majority of the criminal cases initiated by VDD were related to the unlawful provision of services to companies in Russia, as well as the supply of military-use goods to Russia.

In the area of financial and economic security, VDD continued vetting individuals and companies who wished to gain influence in commercial companies of importance to Latvia's national security on the basis of investment, as well as in other cases where decisions regarding sectors of significance to the national economy had to be made.

In the previous year, the most important issue pertaining to Latvia's energy security was the Baltic States' disconnection from the BRELL<sup>23</sup> electrical supply grid, which for many years connected Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia with Russia and Belarus. The disconnection from BRELL and connection to the Continental European synchronous grid at the beginning of last year proceeded according to plan and without any significant security incidents, causing no disruption to residents' everyday life.

The successfully implemented desynchronization process from the BRELL revealed that the Baltic States can effectively implement joint projects and achieve the desired result. Close cooperation between the Baltic States will remain a crucial prerequisite for the successful progress of the European standard gauge railway construction project "Rail Baltica". Last year in Latvia, the "Rail Baltica" project continued to experience noticeable delays, posing significant risks to the implementation of the first phase of the project within the previously planned deadline of 2030.

<sup>23</sup> BRELL – electricity supply grid which, on the basis of an agreement concluded in 2001, for a long time connected the electricity supply systems of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to Russia and Belarus; the abbreviation contains the initials of the involved states.

## 5.1.

### SITUATION REGARDING APPLICATION OF SANCTIONS

In the past year, VDD continued to pay close attention to processes that are related to increased risks of violating or circumventing sanctions.

In 2025, eastward cross-border business transactions of goods subject to the EU's import or export restrictions by both local and foreign economic operators continued to pose significant risks. In VDD's assessment, elevated risks of sanctions violations can still be attributed to the trade of sanctioned goods with countries in Asian and Middle East regions, as they have not implemented trade restrictions with Russia.

VDD's information analysis indicates that last year, as a means to make profit, unscrupulous economic operators continued their attempts to conceal the true nature and links with Russia of their business transactions. To circumvent the EU restrictions to the import or export of specific goods, economic operators continued to forge accompanying documents of goods, involved intermediaries in Europe and third countries, and chose complex and economically unjustified delivery routes and modes. According to jurisdiction, two departments of the State Revenue Service – the National Customs Board and the Tax and Customs Police Department<sup>24</sup> – continued to prevent and investigate the infringements of sectoral sanctions (violations of prohibitions on the export or import of specific goods).

Last year VDD identified several breaches of sanctions where natural persons had unlawfully provided certain

services to companies in Russia. Several of these persons had entered into employment contracts a company registered in Russia, whereas others had unlawfully provided services to companies in Russia working as self-employed persons.

Evaluating the nature of these actions, VDD observed that some of these persons had not identified and critically assessed the risks of sanctions violations related to employment relationships and responsibilities, for example, those pertaining to the remote provision of services.

Last year VDD continued cooperation with several state institutions in improving and enforcing the sanctions regime imposed by the EU against Russia and Belarus, as well as in identifying cases and risks of sanctions violations. In improving the sanctions regime and its enforcement, last year VDD had the strongest cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is the coordinating body for imposing sanctions in Latvia, including correspondence with international organisations and foreign competent institutions. In the identification of violations of sanctions, however, the Service had the strongest cooperation with the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), which regularly sent information about possible sanctions violations to VDD.

In the assessment of VDD, to reduce Russia's aggression, it is necessary to continue to reinforce the EU sanctions regimes against this aggressor state by introducing additional sanctions against both natural and legal persons, and economic sectors in Russia. In this context, last year VDD in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, continued gathering the necessary evidence to include new aggressor state subjects into the EU sanctions lists.

<sup>24</sup> On 1 January 2026, the Tax and Customs Police Department became a new and separate direct public institution – the Tax and Customs Police, which is under the supervision of the Minister of the Interior.

In addition, last year VDD continued to draw the attention of institutions involved in enforcing the sanctions regime to the risks of circumventing sanctions, which are related to the delivery of goods subject to sanctions and payment flows with companies in third countries where the EU sanctions against Russia and Belarus are not enforced or the monitoring of compliance with sanctions is incomplete. Last year, Asian and Middle East region countries, including China, were most commonly involved in sanctions circumvention schemes.

### ATTENTION!

**Last year VDD identified cases where individuals had used the services of Russian banks sanctioned by the EU to receive their salaries from companies in Russia and other payments. VDD stresses that the EU sanctions prohibit direct or indirect availability of financial assets to many Russian commercial banks and financial institutions. Unawareness or indifference against sanctions imposed by the EU does not relieve of one's responsibility for the violations.**

## 5.2.

### INVESTIGATING SANCTIONS VIOLATIONS

VDD obtained information on possible violations of international sanctions by both operational methods and by receiving information from other state institutions, financial institutions, companies and members of public. The Service's most productive cooperation last year was with FIU – on the basis of FIU's opinion last year VDD initiated several criminal cases.

In 2025, VDD initiated 22 criminal cases on the suspicion of violation of sanctions imposed by the EU against Russia or Belarus<sup>25</sup> Similarly to 2024, the majority of the cases (10 cases) were initiated on the suspicion of unlawfully providing services to companies registered in Russia, with natural persons providing services either within Russian territory or remotely from the territory of Latvia. Seven criminal cases were initiated for unlawfully providing goods to Russia, while one criminal case was initiated for unlawfully providing goods to Belarus. The Service initiated another four criminal cases on the suspicion of unlawful provision of financial resources or other resources to Russian businesses or, in one case, organisation included in the EU sanctions lists.

In 2025, criminal cases regarding unlawful provision of services to Russian companies were initiated against both Latvian citizens and Russian citizens with residence rights in Latvia. The suspects had provided Russian companies with services such as advertising and public relations, programming and IT consultations, project management, as well as consultations on economic activities and management. The majority of the persons had provided consulting services to companies in Russia in the areas of economic activities and management, taking up positions such as general director, advisor to the general director, financial director, and chief economist at Russian companies. Several individuals had also provided IT services.

Out of the criminal cases initiated by VDD in 2025 on the suspicion of unlawful export of goods to Russia, the majority or six criminal cases were related to military purpose items and goods that could potentially be used in warfare in Ukraine, for example, satellite internet kits "Starlink Mini", ammunition and electronic components. One criminal case was connected to the unlawful procurement and shipment of other goods subject to sanctions to Russia.

In one criminal case VDD found that a company registered in Latvia may have been involved in a financial scheme in the interests of a company registered in Belarus. The Service suspects that the Latvian company made payments to a Turkish company for the delivery of sanctioned goods to Belarus.

Likewise, two criminal cases were initiated last year on the suspicion of unlawful provision of economic resources to Russian entrepreneurs included in the EU sanctions lists, whereas one criminal case – for unlawful provision of financial resources to a Russian entrepreneur included in the EU sanctions list. In the latter, VDD identified a potential financial transactions scheme involving one Serbian company and two Latvian companies, out of which one is under the control of a Russian entrepreneur subject to sanctions. The Service suspects that, as a result of the trilateral contract concluded by these companies, the sanctioned Russian entrepreneur gained indirect access to financial resources used to cancel specific debts.

As a result of the investigations, VDD obtained sufficient body of evidence in seven of the criminal cases initiated in 2025, asking the Prosecution Office to initiate the criminal prosecution of the suspects. Five criminal cases referred for criminal prosecution are related to unlawful provision of services to companies in Russia, while two are related to unlawful supply of military-use goods to Russia. Investigation is still ongoing in 15 of the criminal cases initiated in 2025.

<sup>25</sup> 21 criminal cases were initiated on the suspicion of violation of sanctions imposed against Russia, whereas one – on the suspicion of violation of sanctions imposed against Belarus.

In addition, last year VDD referred three criminal cases initiated in 2024 and two criminal cases initiated in 2023 for the violation of the EU sanctions to criminal prosecution. Two of these criminal cases were related to unlawful provision of services to companies in Russia, one to the supply of military-use goods to Russia, whereas two – to provision of financial and other resources to persons included in the EU sanctions lists.

In another criminal case initiated in 2024 and referred for criminal prosecution, the suspect admitted their guilt in committing the criminal offence and concluded an agreement on the punishment with the prosecutor. In this criminal case, the person received a fine (a more detailed description of the case is available in the section “Sanctions breach detected – unauthorised provision of IT services to a Russian company”).

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE THE RISKS OF VIOLATING SANCTIONS

VDD reminds that the obligation to comply with the EU sanctions applies to everyone: to natural persons and individual economic operators, as well as private companies, organisations, state institutions and public undertakings.



Illustrative photo, Pexels

### Recommendations for public

VDD recommends Latvian residents not to enter into employment relations with Russian and Belarusian companies, and to refrain from providing any services to companies of these countries under the EU sanctions, as such cooperation could result in criminal liability.

- Cooperation restrictions also apply to companies of countries that are related to Russia or Belarus (owners, real beneficiaries, etc.).
- The EU has established a list of services that shall not be provided to companies and other legal persons in Russia. This list includes IT services, accounting services and auditing, legal advice services, consultations on economic activity and management, public relations and advertising services, construction, architecture and engineering services, market research and polling, mediation and several other types of services.<sup>26</sup>

- The EU sanctions regulations strictly prohibit providing direct or indirect availability of financial or economic assets (including any services) to natural or legal persons included in the EU sanctions lists for actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine or destabilising the situation in Ukraine.<sup>27</sup>

### Recommendations for businesses

VDD recommends that Latvian entrepreneurs, when evaluating any potential business partner and transaction, always carefully assess whether these actions are not subject to the EU sanctions against Russia or Belarus.

- Before engaging in transactions, carefully evaluate all of the involved parties so as not to unknowingly become a participant in schemes circumventing sanctions imposed against Russia or Belarus.
- Maintain extra caution when conducting business transactions with goods that are banned from being exported to Russia or Belarus or imported from these countries.
- Take into account that increased risks to the circumvention of sanctions also apply to export and import transactions with Russia's neighbouring countries and Middle East region countries, as Russia can be the true destination or the source of origin of these goods.
- Identify and manage the risks of sanctions violations associated with your business activities by periodically improving internal risk control mechanisms and implementing appropriate risk mitigation measures.

<sup>26</sup> Article 5n and similar of Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 of 31 July 2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine.

<sup>27</sup> Article 2 of Council Regulation (EU) No 269/2014 of 17 March 2014 concerning restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine.

### **VDD REITERATES!**

**Everyone has an obligation to verify if the business activities, employment relations or provision of services will not violate sanctions imposed by the EU. Unawareness does not relieve one of responsibility. Violation of the EU sanctions may result in imprisonment of up to 12 years.**

### **Sanctions breach detected – UNAUTHORISED PROVISION OF IT SERVICES TO A RUSSIAN COMPANY**



Illustrative photo, Freepik

Last year, as a result of VDD's investigation, a Latvian citizen pleaded guilty to violating the EU sanctions by unlawfully providing IT services to a company in Russia, and concluded an agreement with the prosecutor on a fine. In addition, more than 36 000 euros obtained through the unlawful cooperation were confiscated from the person by a court order in favour of the state.

VDD initiated the criminal case against this Latvian citizen on the suspicion of violating sanctions imposed by the EU on 22 July 2024. The Russian company that the suspect cooperated with is engaged in IT system software development, providing their services to both Russian state institutions and private companies that continue operating in Russia despite the war in Ukraine initiated by the aggressor state.

VDD's investigation revealed that in 2023 the Latvian citizen had entered into an employment contract on remote work with this Russian company, which entailed the development and maintenance of

software solutions, the organisation of adaptation process for the new employees of the software development team, and other tasks. The person remotely performed the duties of the lead software engineer in a unit of the Russian company, thereby providing IT consulting services subject to the EU sanctions to this Russian company on a long-term and systematic basis in exchange for payment.

On 9 December 2024, VDD referred the criminal case to the Prosecution Office, asking to initiate criminal prosecution against the person for the violation of sanctions imposed by the EU.

#### **Result of the investigation:**

The person pleaded guilty and concluded an agreement with the prosecutor for a 9620 euro fine, which the court upheld on 22 May 2025. Likewise, the court ruled that the funds seized from the person's bank accounts – a total of 36 787 euros – were to be confiscated as proceeds of crime in favour of the state.

## UNAUTHORISED EXPORT OF MILITARY PURPOSE GOODS TO RUSSIA



Illustrative photo, VDD



Part of the “Starlink Mini” devices seized during searches.  
Photo: VDD

### Attempted delivery of bullets to Russia

On 24 November 2025 VDD asked the Prosecution Office to initiate criminal prosecution against a Russian citizen for the attempt to violate the EU sanctions by attempting to transport a large quantity of firearm ammunition components (10 thousand bullets) across the Latvian border and into Russia.

The goods were found hidden in the cabin of the truck operated by the suspect at the Terehova customs control point and were subsequently seized. VDD was informed about the hidden packages containing bullets by the National Customs Board of the State Revenue Service.

VDD initiated the criminal case against the individual on 27 September 2025 pursuant to Section 15 Paragraph 4 and Section 84 Paragraph 2 of the Criminal Law, i.e. for the attempt to violate the EU sanctions.

In response to Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine, since 7 October 2022, the direct or indirect sale, supply, transfer, or export of firearms, their parts and essential components, as well as ammunition to Russia has been banned by the EU<sup>28</sup> and any violation of this ban is subject to criminal liability.

The set of evidence and testimonies obtained by VDD during the investigation confirmed the suspect’s intention to deliver military purpose goods to the aggressor state.

### Provision of portable internet kits to Russian army

On 5 March 2025, VDD asked the Prosecution Office to initiate criminal prosecution against four persons for purchasing and supplying portable satellite internet kits to the Russian army for use in warfare against Ukraine, violating the EU sanctions. On 6 June 2025, VDD asked to initiate criminal prosecution against two more persons involved in the criminal activities.

VDD initiated the criminal case on 9 October 2024 on suspicion of provision of internet kits to the Russian army. Information obtained by VDD indicated that a group of persons ordered online and afterwards sent to Russia several dozen “Starlink Mini” portable satellite internet kits – portable antennas developed by the U.S. company “SpaceX” that provide internet access from almost any location. The EU has imposed a ban on transferring such systems to any natural or legal person in Russia.

During the investigation VDD found that the aforementioned satellite kits were delivered to Russia by involving truck drivers in the smuggling of the goods.

The Service incriminates the persons for crimes stipulated in Section 77<sup>2</sup> and Section 84 Paragraph 3 of the Criminal Law, i.e., collecting and transferring financial resources to a party involved in an armed conflict taking place outside the territory of the Republic of Latvia, whose action is directed against the territorial integrity of another state, as well as violating EU sanctions imposed against Russia by a group of persons according to a prior agreement, causing substantial harm.

Criminal prosecution is sought against an Azerbaijani citizen, three Latvian citizens, and two Latvian non-citizens.

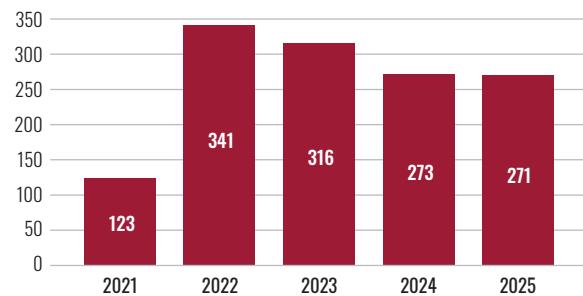
<sup>28</sup> Article 2aa of Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 of 31 July 2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia’s actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine.

### 5.3.

## REPORTS RECEIVED OF POSSIBLE BREACHES OF SANCTIONS

Alongside targeted acquisition of information, last year VDD evaluated information about possible violations of international sanctions received from other state institutions and the private sector.

### Dynamic of reports received by VDD



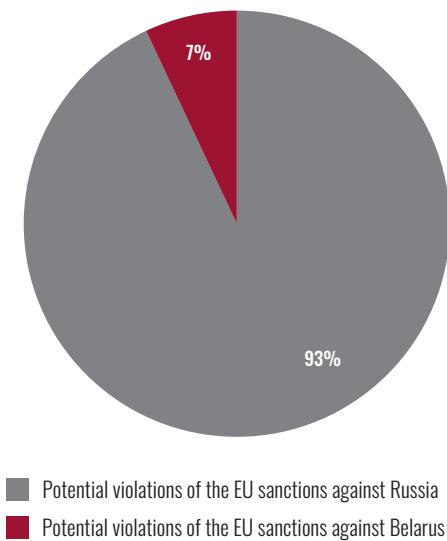
Last year VDD received a total of 271 reports of possible sanctions violations. 145 reports came from state institutions, out of which the majority – 127 reports – came from FIU.<sup>29</sup> The Service received 110 reports from banks and other financial service providers, 12 reports from natural persons, whereas four reports came from companies and other legal persons.

It is important to note that following amendments to the Law on International Sanctions and National Sanctions of the Republic of Latvia adopted on 10 June 2025, the reporting procedures have been simplified in cases of suspected violations or attempted violations of international sanctions, designating a single authority as the recipient of such reports, namely, the FIU. The reporting obligation is stipulated in Section 17 of this law. FIU conducts in-depth review into the transactions mentioned in the reports, and, in cases of reasonable suspicion, sends its opinion to VDD for further review and potential investigation.

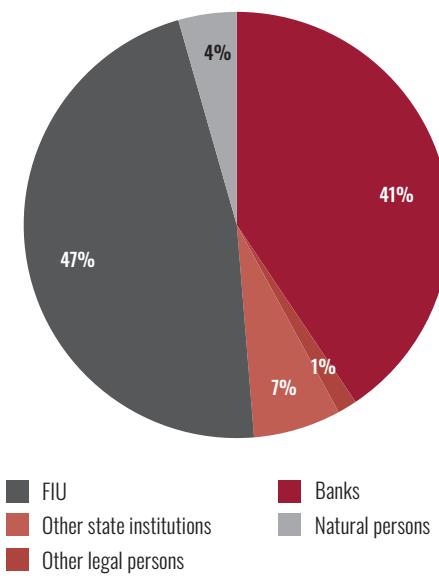
Taking the aforementioned amendments into account, in 2025, the number of reports received by VDD from FIU increased (83 in 2024), whilst the number of reports from other state institutions and the private sector significantly decreased (190 in 2024). Part of the institutions, primarily banks and other financial service providers, continued to send reports to VDD or to both institutions as a habit. VDD's assessment indicates that

this trend will continue, and that even more reports will be received from FIU that will already include qualitative case analysis. The number of reports from other institutions and the private sector will gradually decrease, adapting to the new reporting procedure.

### Reports received of possible EU sanctions violations, by sanctioned country



### Reports received by VDD, by origin



The Service conducted an in-depth analysis of each case for which information was received. Identifying elements of criminal offence, VDD started criminal proceedings. Last year, following the opinions of FIU, the Service initiated a total of 13 criminal cases on the suspicion of violating the EU sanctions.

<sup>29</sup> The primary recipients of 37 reports from the aforementioned number were other law enforcement and sanctions supervisory institutions.

The majority or 93% of reports received by VDD were regarding potential violations of the EU sanctions imposed against Russia, whereas 7% of the reports were regarding potential violations of the EU sanctions imposed against Belarus. The Service also received one report regarding potential violation of the EU sanctions imposed against Iraq and Iran.

As in 2023 and 2024, the majority of reports received by VDD last year were regarding possible breaches of EU sectoral sanctions or bans on the import or export of specific goods or services.

## 5.4.

### INVESTOR VETTING

Last year, VDD continued vetting investors who, on the basis of their investments, sought to acquire a significant shareholding or decisive influence in commercial companies of importance to Latvia's national security.<sup>30</sup> Within the vetting, the Service assessed whether investments by foreign citizens or businesses in strategically important companies and sectors of national economy would have a negative impact on Latvia's national security.

In 2025, the Service within its remit vetted nine potential investors in commercial companies of national security significance, providing opinions on them to the Ministry of Economics. In all of the cases, VDD gave a positive opinion, as the assessment of the specific investors did not indicate threats to national security.

In accordance with the EU regulations<sup>31</sup> and the procedure established by the Cabinet of Ministers<sup>32</sup>, the Service also assessed the information regularly received from the Ministry of Economics on potential direct investments of third-country investors – companies and natural persons that are being assessed in other EU Member States. In 2025, the Service received 658 notifications from the Ministry of Economics (275 in 2024) on potential direct investments of third-country investors in other EU member states. As a result of the vetting, VDD did not identify any risks to Latvia's national security interests related to these investors and investments.

In 2025, VDD, at the request of the Bank of Latvia, also continued vetting potential financial service providers, primarily financial technology companies that wanted to launch their activity in Latvia. Following the request of the Bank of Latvia, last year VDD vetted twelve such company owners, board members and true beneficiaries. In five cases, VDD identified increased risks related to the financial services provider and informed the Bank of Latvia accordingly. The risks included, for example, the persons of influence previously being involved in financial fraud, links to Russia and the inclusion in other countries' national sanctions lists.

Last year VDD provided a detailed assessment to the Ministry of Economics regarding potential Chinese investments in our country. The Service drew attention not only to the risks of economic dependence, but also to potential sensitive data coming into the possession of Chinese subjects. The Service also drew attention to the risks that are related to the use of Chinese technology in objects of strategic importance to the state. In the assessment of VDD, not only in the private sector, but also in state institutions, an overly uncritical attitude is often observed concerning the use of Chinese technology, despite the high risks to unauthorised retrieval of information.

In another case, VDD provided the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with an opinion on risks pertaining to the potential investments in the Latvian aviation sector by a fund controlled by an entrepreneur included in the EU sanctions lists and registered in another EU Member State. VDD recommended the decision maker not to participate in investment transactions with this particular fund.



Illustrative photo, Freepik

<sup>30</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.311 of 20 June 2023 "Procedure for preventing threats to commercial companies, associations and foundations significant to national security".

<sup>31</sup> Regulation (EU) 2019/452 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 March 2019 establishing a framework for the screening of foreign direct investments into the Union.

<sup>32</sup> Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No.311 of 20 June 2023 "Procedure for preventing threats to commercial companies, associations and foundations significant to national security".

### APPLICANTS FOR TEMPORARY RESIDENCE PERMITS ON THE BASIS OF INVESTMENT

Last year, VDD also continued vetting foreigners who wished to obtain a temporary residence permit (TRP) in our country on the basis of investments made in the Latvian economy.<sup>33</sup>

In the course of vetting, the Service assessed whether the stay of these foreign nationals in Latvia could pose a risk to Latvia's national security<sup>34</sup>. VDD forwarded its findings to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (hereinafter – OCMA), which decides on the issuance of TRPs, taking other criteria into account as well.

Last year, VDD received 698 applications from foreign investors for TRPs based on investment in Latvian economy. This number includes both investors (284) and their family members (414 in total – spouses, minor children, etc.). 217 persons reapplied for TRPs on investment grounds as their previous permit was about to expire, whilst 481 persons applied for TRPs for the first time.

As in previous years, the majority of foreigners vetted by the Service last year wished to obtain a TRP on the basis of real estate purchased in Latvia. More detailed information about the types of investment is listed in the diagram below.

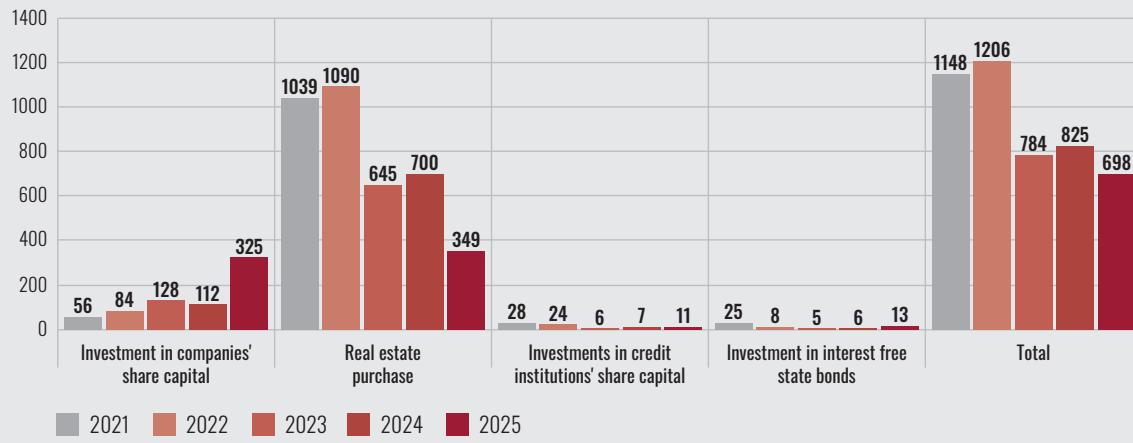
Among the nationals of risk countries vetted by VDD last year who sought to obtain a TRP on the basis of investment, the largest number were Turkish nationals (199 persons). The most frequent applicants for investment-based TRPs last year were also citizens of Israel

(55 persons), India (50 persons), Kyrgyzstan (41 persons), Ukraine (36 persons), Uzbekistan (28 persons), China (28 persons), Pakistan (24 persons), Vietnam (18 persons), USA (15 persons), Azerbaijan (14 persons) and Kazakhstan (14 persons). A small number of TRP applicants came from almost 40 other countries.

It should be noted that in accordance with amendments to the Immigration Law of 23 September 2022, citizens of Russia and Belarus are no longer eligible to apply for residence rights in Latvia in exchange for investments. Citizens of these countries were automatically denied TRPs.

The Service cooperated closely with OCMA in the process of vetting foreigners. Last year OCMA denied or revoked TRPs to a total of 266 foreigners that applied for a TRP based on investments. 123 of them were Russian citizens, but two were Belarusian citizens who were automatically denied TRPs, whereas the other 141 – citizens of other countries. Following VDD's recommendations in particular, TRPs were denied to a total of 15 foreigners: five citizens of Israel, three citizens of Azerbaijan, two citizens of Australia, two citizens of Egypt, one citizen of the United Kingdom and one citizen of Armenia. In several cases, the persons also had a Russian citizenship that they tried to hide. In one case, the Service had suspicions about risks to illegal immigration, but in the other cases the persons did not cooperate and did not submit additional documents and information requested by the Service due to suspicions of certain risks.

#### Dynamic of TRP applicants, by type of investment



<sup>33</sup> This possibility is provided for in Section 23 Paragraph 1 Articles 28, 29, 30 and 31 of the Immigration Law.

<sup>34</sup> The Service carries out such vetting of foreign nationals from the so-called risk countries. A list of these countries is set out in the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 21 June 2010 No. 554 "Regulation Regarding the Countries for the Citizens of which an Additional Assessment shall be Performed when Issuing a Visa or a Residence Permit".

## 5.5.

## ENERGY SECURITY

The primary event for Latvia's energy security last year was the disconnection from the BRELL electricity supply grid that linked Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian electricity supply systems with those of Russia and Belarus. By disconnecting from the electricity supply grid of Russia and connecting to the European electricity network, the Baltic States strengthened their energy independence and security.

As Latvia prepared to disconnect from BRELL, VDD according to its competence was involved in the identification of risks and the planning and coordination of security measures. Prior to disconnecting from BRELL, VDD regularly exchanged information with Lithuanian and Estonian partner services on identified risks and their assessment. VDD also warned the responsible institutions and officials in Latvia about the identified risks, including potential Russian malign activities against critical energy infrastructure with the aim of disrupting or discrediting the disconnection process. VDD prepared a risk assessment for the State Police, and informed the contact persons of critical infrastructure objects about the potential risks and the necessity to increase security measures.

While monitoring the information space prior to and during the disconnecting from BRELL, the Service

continued to identify disinformation regarding the negative consequences of disconnection in Russian and Belarusian information spaces. The prevailing message was that, by disconnecting from BRELL, the Baltic States inflict irreversible economic damage and significantly reduce the security of their energy supply. In the assessment of VDD, the primary purpose of this narrative was to discredit the Baltic States and their decision in the eyes of Russian society.

In the assessment of VDD, the publicly visible security measures, as well as the presence of the State Police, NAF and the National Guard nearby critical energy infrastructure objects ensured that the disconnection from BRELL in early February 2025 took place as planned and without any significant security incidents. Russia did not carry out malign activities against the Baltic States' energy infrastructure during the disconnection process.

In the months following the disconnection from BRELL, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia demonstrated their ability to ensure a stable operation of the electricity supply systems without connection to Russian and Belarusian electrical grids. In addition, gradual development of the electricity balancing market and energy storage infrastructure was implemented last year, which could positively impact electricity balancing costs in the future.

In the assessment of VDD, Latvia and the other Baltic States must continue to pay increased attention to the security of energy infrastructure in order to reduce the potential risk of malign activities organised by Russia.



Screenshot from the LTV broadcast "Panorāma" of 8 February 2025 about the successful disconnection from BRELL.

### 5.6.

#### DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN TRANSPORT SECTOR

No significant changes were observed within the transport sector in the previous year, with the situation remaining tense. Transport sector companies continued to operate under reduced cargo turnover conditions and adapt to current trends.

Similarly to 2024, in 2025 VDD also obtained information about individual transport sector companies' interest to continue their collaboration with Russia and Belarus by attracting shipments from these countries and transporting goods to these countries. Although not a general trend, VDD assesses that transport sector entrepreneurs last year began to be less critical of potential collaboration with Russia and Belarus on goods that are not subject to the EU restrictions on import or export. The change in attitude of some of the entrepreneurs was caused by the situation where, by not having a general prohibition on cooperation with Russia and Belarus, certain groups of Latvian entrepreneurs continue to profit from cooperation with these aggressor states.

Last year, several state-owned transport sector companies continued to face financial challenges

due to various circumstances. In 2025, VDD informed senior state officials of the current risks to the operations of VAS "Latvijas dzelzceļš" and AS "Air Baltic Corporation".

Last year VDD also continued to inform senior state officials about risks to the progress of the "Rail Baltica" railway infrastructure project vital to national security interests, emphasising the need to implement an active construction process of the main track. The construction work on the main track is still seen as a key milestone for the progress of "Rail Baltica" in Latvia. In the Service's assessment, even with reduced funding, Latvia must continue to seek solutions to ensure the creation of a functioning European gauge railway line in the shortest possible time.

As in previous years, VDD according to its competence and following the request of project implementers continued to evaluate companies that were planned to be involved in the implementation of the "Rail Baltica" project. In total, the Service evaluated information about 11 companies in 2025, ensuring that they do not pose any intelligence or other risks to the "Rail Baltica" project. Likewise, VDD continued vetting the employees of companies involved in the project implementation and other persons who, for legitimate reasons, required access to facilities related to "Rail Baltica", vetting a total of 105 such persons throughout the year. As a result of the vetting, none of the persons were denied access to "Rail Baltica" facilities.



Illustrative photo, Freepik

## OUTLOOK

---

- Sanctions circumvention risks related to the eastbound flows of goods will continue to pose challenges to Latvia's economic security. Sanctions' violators will continue to develop new sanctions evasion schemes, making them even more sophisticated and difficult to detect. Latvia's responsible services will have to continue to invest large resources to identify cases of sanctions evasion, their investigation and prevention.
- VDD does not foresee a significant influx of investment from countries unfriendly to Latvia. At the same time, capital flows related to these countries will continue to pose risks, particularly in business transactions with third countries involving goods and services subject to sanctions.
- Baltic States' disconnection from BRELL and connection to European electricity network has neutralised Russia's ability to directly influence the energy supply and energy security of the Baltic States. However, considering Russian-organised malign activities in Europe, there will be the need to pay increased attention to the security of energy infrastructure.
- Taking into account the economic cooperation of some Latvian companies with Russia and Belarus, a part of Latvian transport sector companies may gradually lose interest in observing the currently applied fundamental refusal to do business with the aforementioned countries. In the assessment of VDD, Latvia must continue to take a firm stance aimed at decreasing the economic presence of Russia and Belarus.
- The complicated progress of the "Rail Baltica" project will continue to fuel political debate about the project's justification and the appropriateness of allocating public funds to it. However, "Rail Baltica" will continue to be an extremely important strategic infrastructure project for all of the participating countries, therefore Latvia must continue purposeful progress of the implementation of the project, mainly by accelerating the construction of the main track.



# 06

## COUNTERTERRORISM

**Terrorism threat trends in Europe remained unchanged last year. Terrorists and supporters of violent ideologies continued to pose a threat to the security of European countries. The terrorism threat level in several European countries remained high or elevated, whereas the terrorism threat level in Latvia remained low.**

Similar to 2024, the most significant terrorism threats to European countries in 2025 were posed by local supporters of the Islamic terrorist groups “Daesh”, “Al-Qaeda” and “Hamas”. A significant increase in terrorist activities last year was observed in the Sahel region of Africa, where the terrorist groups based there launched organised attacks against the authorities of several African countries and attempted to increase their influence in the region.

In 2025, the overall security situation in Europe continued to be affected by the armed conflict between Israel and the Gaza-based terrorist group “Hamas”, as well as other Middle East terrorist groups supported by the Iranian government. Even though a ceasefire was reached in this conflict, VDD assesses that the unstable security situation in this region will continue to affect Europe’s security.

According to VDD’s analysis, last year terrorists and their supporters increasingly used artificial intelligence tools to produce propaganda materials of their ideology, thus seeking to increase the amount and spread of propaganda content online.

In Europe, right-wing and left-wing extremist terrorism threats remained at an elevated level. Last year Europe experienced plots and attacks against different targets by both right-wing and left-wing extremists.

In 2025, the terrorism threat level in Latvia remained low. VDD continued preventive work to avert radicalised persons from posing a threat to public safety. VDD also participated in controlling the flow of asylum seekers to restrict the entry of persons associated with terrorism into Latvia.

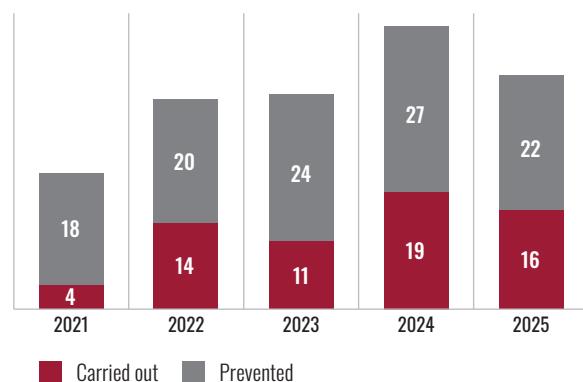


## 6.1.

### TERRORISM THREAT SITUATION IN EUROPE

In 2025, Europe experienced 16 terrorist attacks. All of them were small scale attacks with a relatively small number of victims. The majority of these attacks (12) were perpetrated by persons influenced by Islamic terrorist propaganda. Four terrorist acts were perpetrated by followers of other ideologies that justify violence.

#### Terrorist attacks in Europe



In addition, services of European countries managed to prevent 22 planned attacks at different stages of preparation: 15 Islamist attacks, as well as seven planned attacks by supporters of other ideologies that justify violence. The similar number of incidents that occurred and were prevented last year and in previous years clearly indicates that the terrorist threat in Europe remains constant.

Terrorists continued to use non-sophisticated methods that do not require prior preparation. In 12 of the 16 past attacks, terrorists used sharp objects. In three attacks, terrorists used a vehicle to ram into a crowd, and in one of them a knife was also used to inflict damage. In one attack, terrorists used improvised explosive devices.

It is important to note that in 2025 no attacks with firearms took place, however, in several cases European services uncovered weapons and ammunition caches belonging to supporters of the terrorist group "Hamas", as well as evidence of plans to use firearms in terrorist acts. In one case in Belgium, investigating authorities found that the attackers had planned to use an unmanned aerial vehicle to inflict damage.

Furthermore, methods used to carry out terrorist attacks in other regions of the world last year, as assessed by VDD, indicated that terrorists in Europe could increasingly plan to use unmanned aerial vehicles and remote-controlled devices equipped with explosives for the attacks.

Last year's terrorism threat trends in Europe remained similar to previous years. Terrorists mainly planned lone wolf attacks, including with the goal of taking retribution against Israel for developments in the Middle East. This trend is also confirmed by several prevented cases where persons had planned to carry out attacks on objects that were related to Israel's diplomatic corps or the Jewish community.

VDD's analysis shows that terrorist attacks in European countries last year were perpetrated by the so-called homegrown terrorists – local residents who were born and raised in their respective country, as well as asylum seekers who had entered Europe using migration flows. Similar to 2024, minors continued to come to the attention of authorities of different European countries for activities related to terrorism last year.

In 2025, terrorists continued to use the internet as the primary channel for recruiting persons and inciting them to commit violence. Propaganda materials produced and distributed by terrorist organisations and their supporters contained practical guidelines for carrying out terrorist acts and through ideological manipulation urged to take action. To reach the widest possible audience, terrorists more often used the AI tools available online to create and diversify their propaganda materials.

The services of European countries, including VDD, continued to pay an increased attention to events in several regions of the world and zones of armed conflict in which Islamist terrorist groups and their offshoots continue to operate. In 2025, the conflict in the Middle East reached a ceasefire, yet the situation remained tense. Terrorists in this region continued to carry out attacks attempting to free their fighters from prisons and exert pressure on local authorities.

“Al-Qaeda” and “Daesh” affiliated terrorist groups in the Sahel region regularly conducted well organised large-scale attacks on the armed forces and infrastructure of several countries in the region, succeeding significantly and taking control of increasingly larger territories. Last year, the terrorists continued to pose a significant threat to Mali and other countries of the Sahel region, as well as to Western nationals residing in these countries.

Compared to previous years, in 2025, services of European countries identified a larger number of terrorist supporters residing in Europe that planned or attempted to travel to terrorist-controlled territories in the Sahel region with the goal of joining terrorist groups or providing them with different types of support. As a result of preventive measures implemented by the services, these persons were deterred from carrying out this intention. In some cases, individuals abandoned their intention themselves after facing different difficulties.

VDD assesses that there is a risk that, by continuing their offensive, the Sahel-based terrorist groups could in the near future take control of an even larger territory and pose a more direct threat to the security of European countries. At the moment, the Sahel region has become the primary terrorist hub in the world, which, in the assessment of the Service, can pose a serious threat to European countries and Western citizens in the foreseeable future. Likewise, this conflict can foster a wider third country migrant flow to Europe.

In some European countries, right-wing and left-wing extremists also continued to pose a terrorist threat last year. The threat posed by right-wing extremists was confirmed by several planned attacks and one implemented attack that was directed against members of different ethnic minorities. Whereas the left-wing extremists carried out an attack against the infrastructure of a financial institution.

### 6.2.

## TERRORISM THREAT TRENDS IN LATVIA

The terrorism threat level in Latvia remained low in 2025. Similar to previous years, VDD did not detect the presence of any terrorist groups or individual terrorists in Latvia.

In 2025, the main terrorism risks in Latvia continued to stem from radicalisation of particular persons, as well as the possible entry in Latvia of foreigners linked to terrorism. Similar to previous years, VDD observed some individuals' interest in the ideology distributed by terrorist groups. In some cases, residence abroad had contributed to these Latvian nationals coming under the influence of ideology justifying violence.

It should be noted that last year VDD became aware of an asylum seeker who had previously come to the attention of VDD's foreign partner services in connection with involvement in activities of terrorism nature. The Service had information about the asylum seeker's contacts with members of Islamist terrorist groups. Considering this information, in cooperation with the State Border Guard the asylum seeker was detained and placed in a detention centre for foreigners. Afterwards, following VDD's recommendation, the Minister of the Interior included the person in the list of foreigners who are prohibited from entering the Republic of Latvia, therefore the person was expelled from Latvia, averting a potential threat to the security of Latvia and its society.

VDD continued to follow the Middle Eastern conflict's impact on the security situation in Latvia. Within its competence, VDD conducted enhanced monitoring of situation in Latvian society, including within the Muslim community. During these activities, VDD did not identify narratives justifying terrorism or calls to engage in violent activities, or expressing support to terrorist groups.

## CONVERT SENTENCED TO FOUR YEARS IN PRISON FOR SELF-TRAINING FOR TERRORISM AND STORING EXPLOSIVES



Illustrative photo, VDD

On 11 December 2025, Riga Regional Court sentenced the convert detained by VDD in 2024 to four years of imprisonment and one year of probation for self-training for terrorism and unlawfully storing explosives.

VDD initiated the criminal case against the person on 22 April 2024. During the investigation VDD established that the person is expressing support on "Telegram"

to ideology propagated by the terrorist group "Daesh". VDD detained the suspect on 2 May, seizing more than 400 grams of trinitrotoluene suitable for causing explosion during the search of the person's place of residence. Ammunition suitable for firing, as well as a package of sulphuric acid were also found on site. In addition, the person had also gathered detailed instructions for carrying out terrorist attacks, including manufacturing explosive devices.

Information obtained by VDD during the investigation indicated that the person was preparing to carry out a terrorist attack.

It is important to note that this was the second instance court's verdict. On 18 February 2025, the court of first instance sentenced the person to three years of imprisonment and one year of probation, but the prosecutor lodged a protest against the decision and the person also appealed the verdict. As a result, the court of second instance increased the prison sentence to four years. In the beginning of 2026, the judgement of the court of second instance had not yet entered into force.



## POINT OF CONTACT FOR REPORTING TERRORIST CONTENT

Last year, VDD continued to operate as the national point of contact for reporting terrorist content online.

According to the EU regulation on tackling the dissemination of terrorist content online<sup>35</sup>, since 2021, VDD is the main competent authority in Latvia which takes measures to limit the distribution of radical content in Latvia's information space, including the provision of possibility to report such content.

VDD reminds that material that incites or calls for terrorist acts or provides guidelines on how to manufacture weapons, explosive devices, or how to carry out terrorist acts using other methods is considered terrorist content.

According to the Regulation, VDD has the right to issue terrorist content removal orders, which require operators of internet platforms, including social networking websites, to remove content that incites terrorism.

During information analysis of reports received from the public in 2025, VDD did not identify terrorist content, nor was such content identified within the monitoring of Latvia's information space. As such, VDD did not need to issue terrorist content removal orders last year.

VDD invites to report terrorist content identified online by e-mail to [kontaktpunkts@vdd.gov.lv](mailto:kontaktpunkts@vdd.gov.lv).

<sup>35</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/784 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 on addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online.

### 6.3.

#### PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO DECREASE TERRORISM RISKS

Last year, systematic work towards the prevention of terrorism in Latvia remained VDD's priority in the field of counterterrorism. The Service closely cooperated with other institutions in identifying and preventing the radicalisation of individuals, and mitigating radicalisation risks. Likewise, VDD regularly participated in improving the security at terrorism risk objects and heightened risk public events, providing recommendations to security personnel.

In addition, the Service continued to function as the national point of contact for reporting suspicious attempts to acquire explosives precursors<sup>36</sup>, and participated in revising legal regulations of the counterterrorism field in accordance with the most recent terrorism threat trends.

In 2025, VDD continued to coordinate the review and adaption of the individual action plans of institutions involved in the counterterrorism system to the National Counterterrorism Plan approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2024. By providing consultative support in the course of work, the Service reviewed and approved 18 internal action plans implementing the activities set out in the National Counterterrorism Plan.<sup>37</sup>

Like every year, last year the Service organised meetings of the Counterterrorism Centre Expert Advisory Council. In meetings of 2025, VDD experts, together with representatives of institutions involved in the counterterrorism system, discussed current terrorism threat trends in Europe, counterterrorism activities conducted and planned by VDD in Latvia, as well as further development of the counterterrorism system. It should be noted that last year the Counterterrorism Centre Expert Advisory Council initiated the development of Latvia's counterterrorism strategy for 2027–2031.



##### Radicalisation prevention measures

As in previous years, preventing radicalisation and limiting the spread of ideologies that justify violence was one of VDD's priorities in the field of counterterrorism last year. The Service continued

to lead the Inter-institutional Working Group on Preventing Radicalisation "Prevent"<sup>38</sup>, which consists of representatives from state and local government institutions, whose personnel, in the performance of their duties, regularly comes into contact with social groups most vulnerable to radicalisation.

One of the working group's "Prevent" objectives last year was to timely identify and prevent the spread of radicalisation in the country. To achieve this objective, VDD continuously evaluated the activities of persons who have come to the attention of the Service due to radical behaviour, and purposefully obtained information on other persons with signs of radicalisation. Timely identification and activity monitoring of radically inclined persons remained as one of the prerequisites for the prevention of terrorism-related crimes last year.

Several meetings of the working group "Prevent" took place last year, during which VDD and representatives of several other institutions analysed current radicalisation trends in Europe and Latvia, as well as the impact of armed conflicts and terrorist acts in other countries on radicalisation processes in the society and the security situation in Latvia.

As part of "Prevent" work last year, VDD experts organised 11 informative seminars regarding radicalisation and its characteristics to different audiences: officials of several state institutions as well as employees of the Adolescent Resource Center, the Child Protection Centre and the International Youth Program Agency. During this seminar, the Service officers briefed roughly 450 persons about radicalisation, its characteristics and prevention measures.



##### Strengthening the security of terrorism risk objects

Last year, VDD continued the work on improving the physical security regime of terrorism risk objects - critical infrastructure objects and mass gathering sites. For this purpose, the Service continued its regular cooperation with contact persons in charge of security at the facilities, exchanging information on risks and suspicious activities.

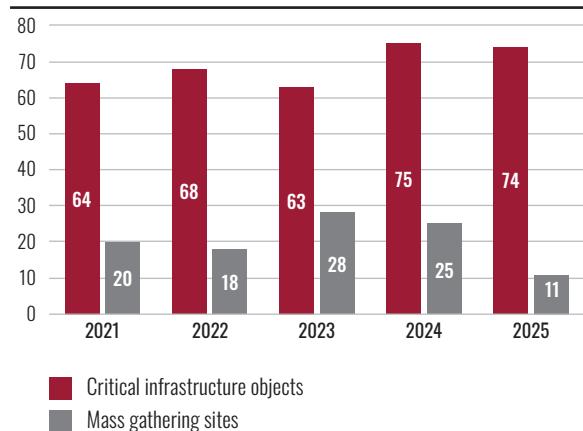
The Service paid increased attention to terrorism risk object security personnel's readiness to duly identify and prevent different malign activities against the facilities, including diversions and sabotage acts,

<sup>36</sup> Explosives precursors – substances or mixtures of substances that can be used for illegal manufacture of explosives.

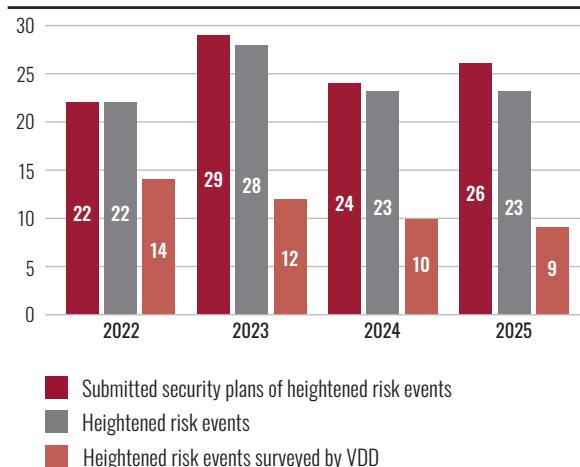
<sup>37</sup> National Counterterrorism Plan is a classified document that sets the preventive counterterrorism measures to be implemented depending on the level of terrorism threat declared in the country, covering 19 areas of preventive measures. In 2024, VDD improved the plan in accordance with global terrorism threat trends of the past few years, adding new preventive measures to the document.

<sup>38</sup> Inter-institutional Working Group "Prevent" was established in 2019 by VDD's Counterterrorism Centre Expert Advisory Council, which also oversees the group's activities.

### Terrorism risk objects surveyed by VDD



### Heightened risk events



which, in their nature, resemble terrorist activities. The Service organised training for facility personnel on how to recognise suspicious activities and how to respond when such activities are detected. In addition, VDD tested personnel's reaction skills in practice, organising unannounced physical security regime inspections. To ensure the availability of personnel, the Service made regular notification checks at different times of the day using different communication channels.

The Service continued to survey terrorism risk objects, assessing the physical security regime and, if necessary, providing recommendations for its improvement. In 2025, VDD surveyed a total of 85 terrorism risk objects, evaluating the physical security regime and providing recommendations for its improvement. 74 were critical infrastructure objects, whereas 11 - mass gathering sites.

As a result of surveying critical infrastructure objects, VDD provided recommendations for improving security measures for 63 facility owners or managers. For the most part, the Service's recommendations were related to the necessity to improve the security systems installed at the facilities, for example, installing new cameras and access systems that are more suitable for current security challenges, and improving the coordination of security guard work.

In several cases, the Service also recommended organising personnel training, raising awareness about identifying suspicious activity and the reporting procedure for such activities, as well as improving internal security procedures.

The 11 mass gathering sites surveyed by VDD last year consisted of five entertainment and sports centres, five

hotels and one shopping centre. Following the surveys, VDD officers gave recommendations for the improvement of the facility's security to the managers of 10 facilities. At the same time, standard recommendations on action in case of identifying suspicious activities or objects were provided to all 11 facilities.

Last year, the Service also continued its work on enhancing the security of ionising radiation objects. The Service offered consultative support to representatives of the facilities regarding the transit of ionising radiation sources through the territory of Latvia and approved one physical protection plan for an ionising radiation facility.



### Improving the security of public events

According to its competence, VDD regularly engaged in planning and implementation of security measures for heightened risk events<sup>39</sup> last year, primarily focusing on reducing terrorism risks. In 2025, the Service also continued to conduct explanatory work with organisers of events, local governments and other services, informing them of the security measures for organising heightened risk events as stipulated in legal regulations.

Last year, VDD paid increased attention to the security planning of the "XII Latvian School Youth Song and Dance Festival", which was initiated at the end of 2024. Within the planning, VDD conducted a physical security assessment of the largest venues, identifying potential security challenges.

VDD also engaged in ensuring the unimpeded running of the European Basketball Championship "EuroBasket 2025". During the course of the championship, which,

<sup>39</sup> Heightened risk event – a public event with a planned total number of visitors and participants exceeding 5000 persons or, in case the event is organised in the borderland or the target audience of the event is a group of specially protected persons, 1000 persons, or which the organiser considers to be a heightened risk event. Specially protected persons include children, seniors, persons of reduced mobility and persons with special needs.

in total, was attended by more than 195 thousand spectators, VDD regularly exchanged information on potential risks with the organisers and the involved services, evaluating the efficiency of security measures at the venue. The aforementioned events took place without significant safety incidents.



Screenshots from the informative video produced by VDD last year, which is intended for demonstration during public mass gatherings.

Last year, VDD received and assessed a total of 25 heightened risk event security plans from the event organisers. VDD, the State Police and the State Fire and Rescue Service made a collective decision to not approve the security plan of one event in relation to significant deficiencies in the planned security measures. As a result, the municipality did not allow the event to take place during the planned dates, postponing it until 2026.

With EU co-financing last year, the Service prepared an animated video for the organisers of public mass gatherings to inform attendees about the need to pay attention to suspicious activities or persons and reporting them to security personnel. Alongside measures to strengthen the security of public events, the video was created to promote visitor awareness regarding the need to be vigilant and collaborate to ensure collective safety. The informative video was demonstrated during the largest music festivals last year.



### Explosives precursors' circulation control

VDD's analysis indicates that radically inclined persons' interest in manufacturing explosive devices and attempts to do so remained a persistent threat in 2025. This assessment is reinforced by materials containing instructions for manufacturing explosive devices seized from residences of persons detained in recent years by VDD in connection with criminal cases initiated for self-training in terrorism. Likewise, services of other European countries have found components of explosive devices and explosive devices in various stages of manufacture in possession of persons who were planning to carry out terrorist attacks.

VDD continued to act as the national point of contact for reporting suspicious attempts to purchase explosives precursors, as well as their disappearances or thefts. Throughout the last year, the Service did not receive any reports of suspicious cases regarding explosives precursors, including persons' attempts to obtain explosives precursors for terroristic purposes. At the same time, VDD continued systematic work to improve its cooperation with companies that trade in explosives precursors.

Last year, the Service updated the list of companies involved in the circulation of explosives precursors, adding new sales outlets and carrying out explanatory work regarding the risks and requirements of legal regulations. The Service drew attention of the companies involved in the circulation of explosives precursors that they are obligated<sup>40</sup> to report thefts of explosives precursors, attempts to purchase large quantities of precursors without a reasonable justification, and attempts to purchase precursors without presenting identity documents.

In the field of control of explosives precursors' circulation, VDD improved cooperation with the State Police, which, since October 2024, has the authority to impose administrative penalties to economic operators and other persons for violations of the circulation of explosives precursors.<sup>41</sup> Within the scope of this work, VDD trained the State Police officers on how to recognise explosives precursors and how to respond to suspicious activities involving precursors. Likewise, VDD in cooperation with the State Police developed the action framework for further supervising economic operators trading in explosives precursors.

<sup>40</sup> In accordance with Section 9 of the Regulation (EU) 2019/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the marketing and use of explosives precursors economic operators who market any of the substances included in the list of explosives precursors attached to the Regulation are obligated to inform VDD regarding any suspicious cases related to explosives precursors.

<sup>41</sup> According to Section 3 of the Law on the Circulation of Explosives Precursors adopted in 2024, the State Police is designated as the state inspection body with the right to issue administrative provisions pertaining to explosives precursors.

Last year, VDD also regularly exchanged information with the State Revenue Service on cases of transit, import and export of explosives precursors to countries outside of NATO and the EU.

### INFORM VDD!

If you have information about plans or attempts to purchase components for the manufacture of explosives or explosive devices, please provide all details of the specific case to VDD! You can contact the Service via the e-mail address [kontaktpunkts@vdd.gov.lv](mailto:kontaktpunkts@vdd.gov.lv) or by calling the 24/7 phone **+371 6720 8964**.

## 6.4.

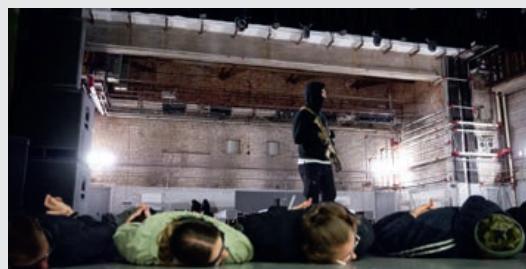
### IMPROVING RESPONDING CAPACITY

One of fundamental objectives of Latvia's counterterrorism system is timely prevention of all threat of terrorism nature. At the same time, participating institutions must also be ready to react in case the threat turns into a genuine attack. Thus, alongside the implementation of preventive measures, VDD placed a strong emphasis on improving response capabilities by organising different scale exercises and training for services involved in the response, also improving the algorithms set out in response plans.

The most important event organised by VDD last year testing and improving the response readiness of services was the national-scale counterterrorism exercise "Dinaburg 2025", which took place in the Latgale region in the end of September. According to the exercise scenario, following a staged terrorist attack on a mass gathering site in Daugavpils, the participating special units and services conducted a comprehensive hostage rescue and terrorist neutralisation operation.

More than 500 participants from different institutions participated in the "Dinaburg 2025" exercise. It should be noted that it was the first time that representatives of NATO Multinational Brigade in Latvia joined VDD's counterterrorism exercise and the Canadian Air Force CH-146 "Griffon" helicopters were used. In contrast to previous exercises, one of the elements of this exercise was also the protection and evacuation of state officials in the event of a terrorist threat. Conclusions drawn during the exercise will serve as a basis for the improvement and mutual alignment of response procedures of emergency services and special units in strengthening their response readiness.

### COUNTERTERRORISM EXERCISE “DINABURG 2025”



Photos from the "Dinaburg 2025" exercise organised by VDD, authors – VDD, NAF.

To promote a common understanding among the units of institutions of the Latgale region regarding the set of measures to be taken on site and the necessity for a mutual coordination of activities, VDD organised an informative seminar prior to the national-level exercise. This seminar provided the representatives of regional units with information regarding the counterterrorism system, the key terrorist threat trends in Europe and Latvia, as well as the guiding principles of response.

In addition, prior to the “Dinaburg 2025” exercise, VDD organised theoretical or the so-called table-top exercises, during which, in accordance with the scenario prepared by VDD, representatives of the institutions planned and presented activities to be carried out in reaction to the consequences and threat posed by the terrorist attack. Participants of the table-top exercises analysed potential risks, cooperation challenges and other aspects.

VDD has organised counterterrorism exercises with full force deployment since 2007, and “Dinaburg 2025” was the fourteenth such exercise.

In addition to strengthening response readiness, last year with the EU co-financing the Service produced a video on recommended actions in the event of a terrorist attack, raising public awareness of how to protect their own life and safety and that of others in a terrorist threat situation. Recommendations in the video are characterised by three key words: “Run! Hide! Report!”. The video was released to the public immediately after the “Dinaburg 2025” exercise.

### 6.5.

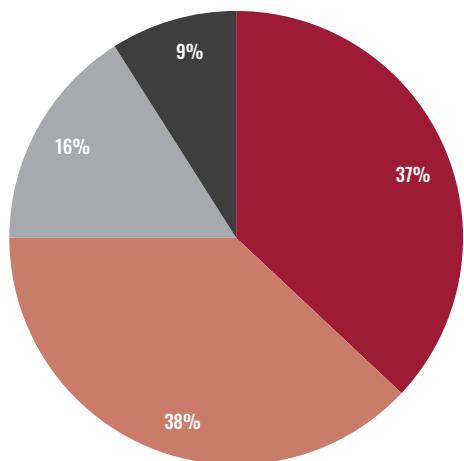
## PROCESSING OF AIRCRAFT PASSENGER DATA

In 2025, VDD continued improving the State information system “Aircraft Passenger Data Register”. The system, which stores passenger data from air carriers’ reservation systems and departure control systems, remained an important tool for solving and investigating national security threats, serious and especially serious crimes, as well as terrorist activities. VDD used the system both in its own work and to provide support to other intelligence and security services and law enforcement institutions of Latvia and other EU Member States.

Last year, VDD responded to a total of 873 justified requests for information about planned and actual flights by persons involved in criminal and hazardous activities, providing data from the Aircraft Passenger Data system. Of those, 683 passenger data requests were submitted by Latvia’s intelligence and security services (including VDD) and law enforcement institutions, whereas 190 requests were submitted by competent authorities of other EU Member States or the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol).

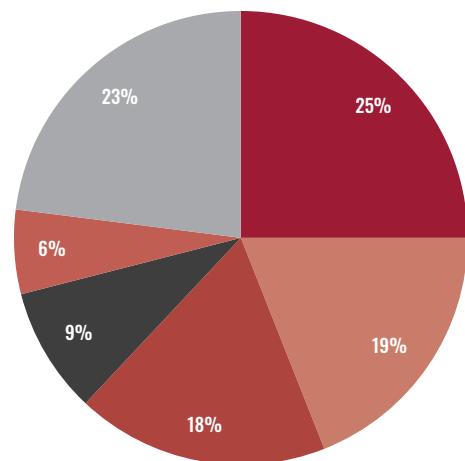
Similar to previous years, the majority of passenger data requests in 2025 were related to national security threats and criminal offences such as money laundering, participation in a criminal organisation or

**Passenger data requests by Latvia’s institutions**



■ Intelligence and security services   ■ State Police  
■ State Border Guard   ■ Other competent institutions

**Requests for passenger data from foreign countries**



■ Estonia   ■ Germany   ■ Lithuania   ■ Europol  
■ Poland   ■ Other countries

the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Within several criminal cases, VDD in cooperation with Latvian and foreign law enforcement institutions and Europol conducted large-scale passenger data analysis to identify and neutralise international criminal networks in Latvia and Europe. International criminal networks uncovered last year with the support of VDD were primarily related to drug smuggling, organised crime and financial fraud.

Based on lists of international criminals, wanted persons and risk persons, in 2025 VDD on its own initiative provided Latvian and foreign partner services with pre-emptive information on more than 14 thousand persons and their planned flights. In all of the cases, VDD officers conducted in-depth data analysis and transferred the information to the responsible services. It is important to note that in cooperation with the State Border Guard last year, VDD achieved significant results in detecting and preventing illegal migration attempts by using risk profiles and conducting in-depth analysis of different flight passenger data.

To continue providing responsible institutions with timely and accurate information, VDD continued to improve and develop the system data processing

capacity and carried out several infrastructure improvement activities by using funding of the EU Internal Security Fund. Work on improving the system and developing cooperation with national and international partners also continues in 2026.

It is important to note that on 28 January 2025, two important EU regulations<sup>42</sup> entered into force, facilitating passenger data retrieval from air carriers and therefore making it easier to identify the true identity and location of persons involved in criminal activities. According to these regulations, air carriers will have to send passenger data to all EU Member States via a centralised EU technical solution.

Last year, VDD also continued to participate in the international cooperation programs of the UN Counterterrorism Bureau and the OSCE, providing support and training of passenger data processing to Ukrainian, South East Asian, East African and Middle Eastern countries' services. VDD continued to strengthen cooperation with other EU Member States by leading the EU informal Passenger Data Register Working Group for the fourth year, which is responsible for improving the processing and exchange of passenger data and the introduction of a unified approach at the EU level.

## OUTLOOK

---

- Several European countries will continue to face a high terrorist threat in 2026. Conflicts in the Middle East and other geopolitical developments will continue to impact the security situation in Europe. In 2026, incidents in Europe in which the attackers target the Jewish community or objects related to Israel are also possible.
- Islamist terrorists will continue to constitute the biggest terrorist threats to European security as, similar to previous years, they will conduct the majority of attacks in European countries. Right-wing and left-wing extremists will also continue to participate in terrorist activities.
- It is expected that in 2026 mass gathering sites, officers of law enforcement institutions and symbolic objects will remain the main targets for terrorist attacks in Europe. At the same time, the growing diversity of terrorist threat and the mobilisation of terrorist groups in other regions of the world may constitute a negative impact on the security situation in European countries, including Latvia.
- In 2026, the terrorism threat level in Latvia will remain low. The principal terrorism threats will stem from individual cases of radicalisation and potential engaging in violent activities influenced by ideologies justifying violence disseminated on internet platforms. Likewise, the entry of persons associated with terrorism into Latvia will continue to pose terrorism threats.
- Taking into account the region's security situation, the threat to terrorism risk objects will remain elevated in 2026. There is a risk that such objects may face different targeted intelligence activities or provocations. Russia's intelligence and security services will retain their interest and look for opportunities to carry out malign activities against terrorism risk objects and symbolic objects to intimidate the public and reduce its support for Ukraine.

<sup>42</sup> Council Regulation (EU) No 2025/12 of the European Parliament and the Council of 19 December 2025 on the collection and transfer of advance passenger information for enhancing and facilitating external border checks, as well as Council Regulation (EU) 2025/13 of the European Parliament and the Council of 18 December 2024 on the collection and transfer of advance passenger information for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences and serious crime.

# 07

## PRE-TRIAL INVESTIGATION

**Last year VDD continued intensive pre-trial investigative work, initiating and completing investigations in the largest number of criminal cases in the last ten years. VDD focused on the identification and detection of crimes directed against Latvia's national security or carried out in support of the aggressor state Russia's interests.**

In 2025, VDD launched investigations into a total of 65 criminal cases, of which eight were taken over from the State Police in accordance with jurisdiction. The most common reason by far for initiating criminal cases was suspicion of violating the EU sanctions imposed against Russia or Belarus, accounting for a third of the criminal cases. Several criminal cases were also initiated for offences such as deliberate obstruction to the free exercise of electoral rights, also known as the so-called vote buying, during local government elections of 2025, justification and glorification of war crimes, provision of assistance to Russia in action directed against the Republic of Latvia, espionage, unlawful participation in war in Ukraine on the side of Russia's armed forces, as well as transferring financial or other goods to the armed forces of the aggressor state.

As a result of its investigative work, last year VDD obtained and corroborated the evidence in 41 criminal cases, asking the Prosecution Office to initiate criminal prosecution against a total of 58 persons. The most common grounds for VDD to ask to start criminal prosecution was the violation of the EU sanctions imposed against Russia. The second most common reason was the unlawful participation in warfare in Ukraine in the ranks of Russia's armed forces, which VDD incriminated to a total of seven Latvian nationals. The majority of last year's criminal cases sent for criminal prosecution were also initiated in 2025.

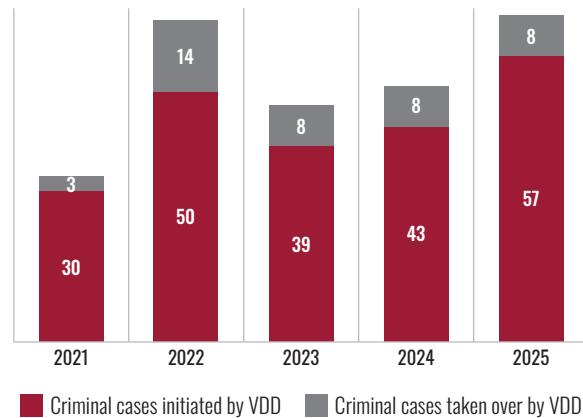
Alongside investigative work, VDD also conducted in-depth verification of information received from various sources on possible criminal offences with the aim of both establishing the elements of a possible crime to initiate a criminal case and assessing the potential future risks created by persons and preventing the commission of potential crimes.

## 7.1.

### INITIATED CRIMINAL CASES

In 2025, the Service launched investigations into the largest number of criminal cases in the last ten years – 65 new criminal cases. VDD launched 57 of these criminal cases by its own initiative, whereas eight were taken over from the State Police according to jurisdiction. The Service also continued investigations within criminal cases initiated in previous years.

#### Dynamic of VDD's criminal cases



The most common grounds for initiating criminal cases last year were suspicion of violating sanctions imposed by the EU. VDD initiated 21 criminal cases on suspicion of violating the EU sanctions against Russia, and one – for violating the EU sanctions against Belarus. Similar to 2024, the majority or ten of the criminal cases initiated on suspicion of this criminal offence were related to unlawful provision of certain services to companies registered in Russia. Six criminal cases were initiated on suspicion of unlawful provision of sanctioned goods to Russia or – in one case – to

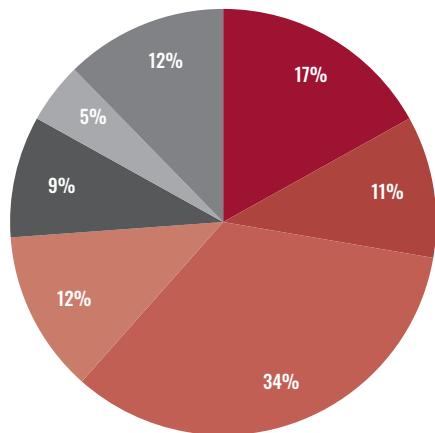
Belarus. Meanwhile, the Service initiated four criminal cases on suspicion of unlawful provision of financial or other resources to natural or legal persons included in the EU sanctions lists. More information regarding these criminal cases can be found in Chapter 5.

The second most common grounds for initiating criminal cases last year were suspicion of deliberately obstructing the free exercise of electoral rights, also known as the so-called vote buying, during local government elections of 2025. In total, VDD initiated or took over six such criminal cases. To identify violations aimed at disrupting the fair electoral process, VDD worked closely with the State Police, which supported the Service in the verification of information on suspicious activities received from members of the public. VDD took over the criminal cases initiated by the State Police according to jurisdiction. Despite the fact that the identified vote buying cases had no impact on the results of the elections, VDD paid increased attention to the investigation of these cases. In the assessment of the Service, attempts to illegally influence the results of elections cannot be tolerated.

Similar to previous years since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, also in 2025 one of the most common reasons for initiating a criminal case was the public justification and glorification of war crimes. The Service initiated a total of five such criminal cases. In four of the cases identified by the Service, the persons had publicly justified and glorified Russia's crimes in Ukraine, but in one case – the genocide of Jews by the Nazi Germany.

In another four cases VDD launched the investigation on suspicion of providing assistance to Russia in activity directed against Latvia. One of the criminal cases was initiated on suspicion of organising malign activities in the interests of Russia, whereas three – on suspicion of potential involvement in Russia's information influence activities targeting Latvian society.

### Criminal cases initiated and taken over by VDD, by type of crime



- Espionage, provision of assistance to Russia in activity directed against Latvia and other activity in Russia's interests
- Participation in war against Ukraine or provision of other assistance to Russia in activity directed against Ukraine
- Violations of the EU sanctions
- Hate speech
- Violations related to elections
- Unlawful acquisition or disclosure of official secrets or other information
- Other

Similar to 2024, also last year VDD identified several persons who may have participated in the warfare in Ukraine on the side of Russian armed forces. Further scrutiny resulted in VDD initiating three criminal cases within the year on suspicion of unlawful participation in the war in Ukraine. VDD initiated an identical number of criminal cases on suspicion of providing financial resources or other supplies to Russian armed forces.

The Service also initiated criminal cases on suspicion of other crimes: espionage, disclosure of official secrets, triggering of national or ethnic hatred or enmity, involvement in a criminal organisation, provision of assistance to Russia in action directed against Ukraine, calls directed against the Republic of Latvia, etc.

Similar to previous years, also in 2025 VDD most often initiated criminal cases based on information obtained through its operational activity. A significant portion of criminal cases were also initiated based on information provided by other services. Last year VDD maintained a productive exchange of information on potential crimes with MIDD, State Police, FIU, National Customs Board of the State Revenue Service and other institutions. VDD also initiated some of the criminal cases based on information submitted by natural and legal persons.

Likewise, several criminal cases were initiated by separating them from other existing criminal cases on VDD's books.

### 7.2.

### IN-DEPTH VERIFICATIONS

In 2025, VDD continued to regularly receive submissions and letters from natural and legal persons regarding possible criminal activities. Such information was received from residents, state officials, state institutions, non-governmental organisations, companies and others. Service officers evaluated all provided information to decide on the need for in-depth verifications, preventive measures or other activities.

Last year, the majority of submissions and letters to VDD were about possible provocation of national hatred or the justification and glorification of war crimes in the online environment, possible vote-buying cases during local government elections, as well as possible violations of the EU sanctions imposed against Russia. Likewise, the submissions and letters pointed to commission of such crimes like activity directed against Latvia, provision of assistance to Russia in activity directed against Latvia, calls directed against Latvia, terrorism threats, unlawful participation in warfare in Ukraine, disclosure of official secrets or other non-disclosable information.

In 20 cases, VDD initiated criminal cases on the basis of the information received. Nineteen of the letters that served as the basis for initiating criminal case were received from law enforcement institutions and Latvia's intelligence and security services, whereas one – from a public undertaking.

In 62 cases, the in-depth verification did not confirm the statements made in the initial submissions and letters about the commission of a crime and VDD made the decision to refuse to initiate a criminal case, also informing the respective authors about this decision. In 195 cases VDD officers provided written explanations to the submission authors about the possibilities to solve their particular situations.

VDD's in-depth verifications had multiple objectives: not only to determine the necessity to initiate a criminal case, but also to identify persons causing risks and potential threats in cases when the crime had not yet been committed. In several cases VDD officers held preventive talks with the involved persons to prevent potential criminal activity.

The Service also forwarded part of the submissions for further evaluation to other institutions according to jurisdiction.

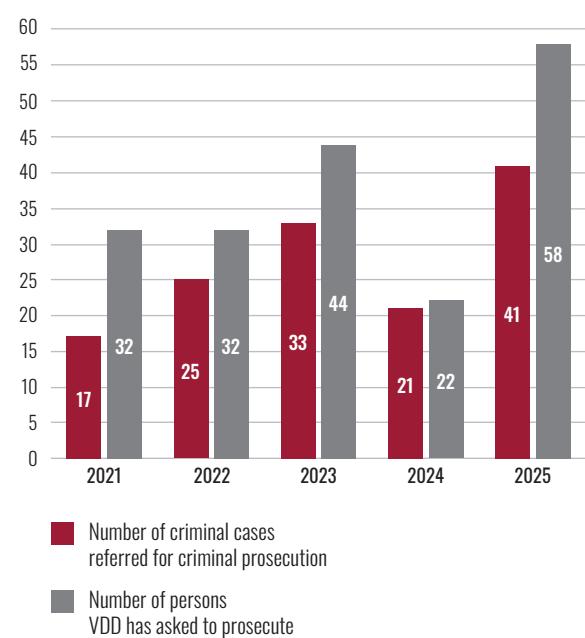
### 7.3.

## CRIMINAL CASES REFERRED FOR CRIMINAL PROSECUTION

In 2025, VDD referred the largest number of criminal cases in the last ten years to the Prosecution Office – a total of 41 criminal cases, asking to initiate criminal prosecution against 58 persons in total. Four of these persons were state officials during the commission of the crime.

Of the criminal cases referred for prosecution, 23 were initiated last year, 14 – in 2024, three – in 2023, whereas one – in 2021.

### Dynamic of VDD's criminal cases referred for criminal prosecution

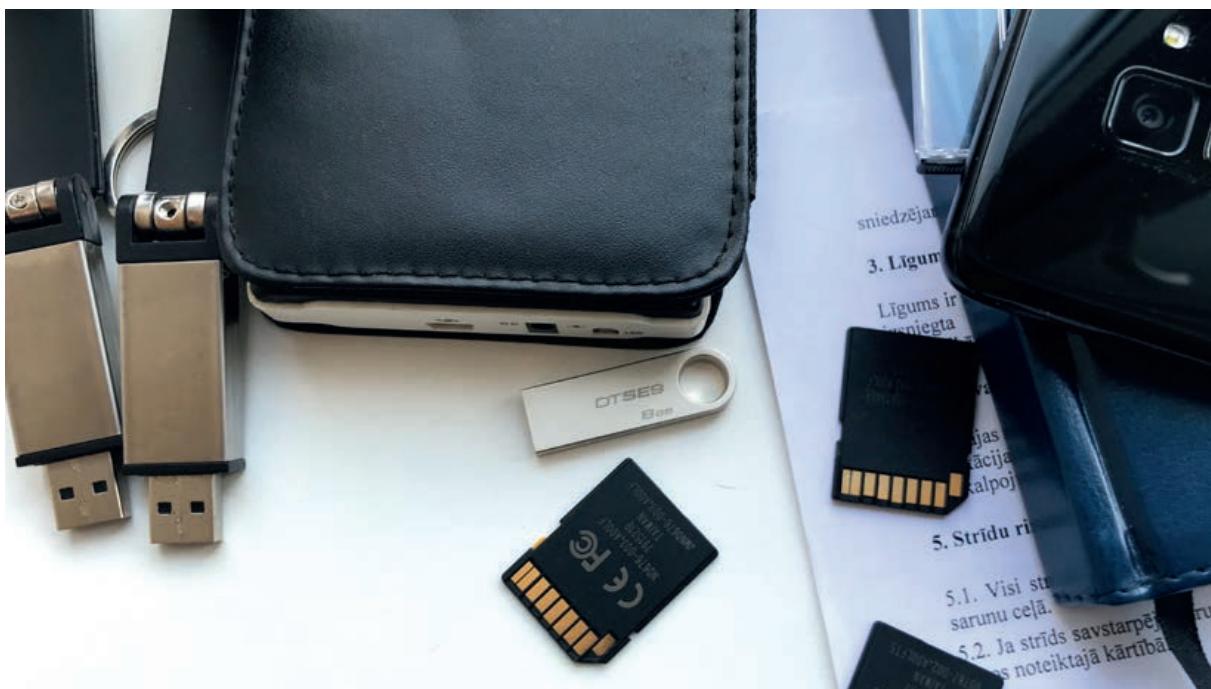


Among the cases referred for criminal prosecution, the most noteworthy include:

- 12 criminal cases against a total of 19 persons for violating the EU sanctions imposed against Russia. In one of these cases, four persons are additionally incriminated with collecting and providing supplies to Russia's armed forces;
- seven criminal cases for unlawful participation in warfare in Ukraine and service in Russian armed forces;

- three criminal cases against a total of seven persons for unlawful influencing of voters' choices or the so-called vote buying during local government elections of 2025;
- three criminal cases for justifying and glorifying Russia's war crimes and triggering national hatred against Latvians. In one of these cases a person is additionally incriminated with calls directed against Latvia;
- two criminal cases for espionage on behalf of Russian intelligence and security services;
- two criminal cases for deliberate disclosure of official secrets;
- two criminal cases for public justification and glorification of Russia's war crimes, with one case additionally incriminating the individual with illegal storing of explosives;
- one criminal case against four persons for assisting Russia in activity directed against Latvia by planning, organising and implementing malign activities against different objects in the territory of Latvia;
- one criminal case for assisting Russia in activity directed against Latvia and for triggering national hatred and enmity against Latvians;
- one criminal case against two persons for leading the pro-Kremlin criminal organisation "Baltic anti-fascists" or participating in the crimes committed by this organisation;
- one criminal case for triggering national hatred against Latvians;
- one criminal case for triggering racial hatred;
- one criminal case for distributing materials glorifying and justifying terrorism;
- one criminal case against two persons for incitement to disclose non-disclosable information, as well as bribery and disclosure of non-disclosable information.

Like the newly initiated criminal cases, also the criminal cases referred for criminal prosecution in 2025 were most frequently related to the violation of the EU sanctions imposed against Russia. In total, the Service sought criminal prosecution in 12 criminal cases against a total of 19 persons. In one of these cases, where the Service asked the Prosecution Office to initiate criminal prosecution against a total of four persons, in addition to the violation of the EU sanctions they were also incriminated with collecting and providing goods to the Russian armed forces in Ukraine. Seven criminal cases referred for criminal prosecution were connected with unlawful provision of services to companies in Russia, three were connected with unlawful delivery of military-use goods to Russia, whereas two – with provision of financial and other resources to persons included in the EU sanctions lists. The Service initiated seven of these criminal cases last year, three – in 2024 and two – in 2023.



Illustrative photo, VDD

The second most common crime, for which VDD asked the Prosecution Office to initiate criminal prosecution, was unlawful participation in warfare in Ukraine in the ranks of Russian armed forces. Last year, VDD obtained and corroborated evidence regarding seven Latvian nationals and their illegal service in Russian armed forces and participation in the war against Ukraine. VDD issued a wanted notice for all of the persons last year (see the end of the Chapter). The Service initiated three of these criminal cases last year, whereas four – in 2024.

Similar to previous years, last year VDD rather frequently asked the Prosecution Office to prosecute persons for hate speech directed against Latvia's national security interests. Persons were incriminated for crimes such as justification and glorification of Russia's war crimes, triggering of national or racial hatred and enmity, as well as calls directed against the Republic of Latvia. The Service referred a total of eight such criminal cases for criminal prosecution, out of which four were initiated last year, and an identical number – in 2024.

In three criminal cases, VDD sought criminal prosecution against persons for the so-called vote buying during local government elections of 2025.

Out of criminal cases that the Service referred to the Prosecution Office, three criminal cases regarding activities against Latvia's national security interests on behalf of Russian intelligence and security services stand out in terms of significance: two criminal cases for espionage and one criminal case against a group

of persons for providing assistance to Russia in activity directed against Latvia by planning, organising and implementing malign activities against different objects in the territory of Latvia (more information regarding these criminal cases in Chapter 1).

As part of criminal cases investigated by VDD last year, more than 840 thousand euros, approximately 13 thousand US dollars, as well as goods worth approximately 56 thousand euros were recognised as criminal assets and confiscated in favour of the state. Likewise, persons involved in the criminal cases investigated by VDD were fined with approximately one million euros.

### 7.4.

## CRIMINAL CASES TRANSFERRED TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS OR TERMINATED

Last year, VDD transferred six criminal cases to other investigative bodies in accordance with jurisdiction. Five criminal cases were transferred to the State Police, whereas one – to a US investigative body.

13 criminal cases that were on the Service's books were terminated last year. Six criminal cases were terminated as no crime elements were established during the investigation. In four criminal cases VDD ceased investigation because it was not possible to identify the perpetrator with any of the methods available to

the Service. One criminal case was terminated because the investigation revealed that the crime had not been committed. The Service terminated one criminal case because of the death of the suspect. It was also decided to discontinue another criminal case as a fair settlement of property relations was reached (more than 800 thousand euros and 12 thousand US dollars

were recognised as criminal assets and confiscated in favour of the state), but acquisition of additional evidence to prove the person's guilt would require disproportionately large expenses.

At the beginning of 2026, VDD has 44 criminal cases on its books.

## INVESTIGATION OF RUSSIA'S WAR CRIMES IN UKRAINE



Thousands of Ukrainian civilians have died in attacks of the Russian armed forces. At the same time, the aggressor state has not managed to break the Ukrainian unity, fighting spirit and will to restore their country. Photos from the official "Flickr" account of the President of Ukraine, taken on 31 July 2025 in Kyiv.

Last year VDD continued to participate in the international investigation of war crimes, as well as crimes against humanity and crimes against peace committed by Russia in Ukraine.

VDD continued its cooperation with other European investigative bodies in the Joint Investigation Team (JIT)<sup>43</sup> created in 2022, which compiles evidence about crimes committed in Ukraine by Russian armed forces. Likewise, VDD continued its work in the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA)<sup>44</sup>, which investigates crimes committed against Ukraine by Russian top political and military leadership with the goal to bring the responsible officials to justice in the Special Tribunal.

JIT and ICPA mutually cooperated, including by using the Core International Crimes Evidence Database, which is intended for storing and analysing evidence obtained by the Member States.

In 2025, VDD continued to identify and interview witnesses to Russia's crimes who had entered Latvia. Last year the Service focused on interviewing and

interrogating Latvian nationals who had joined the Ukrainian armed forces, as well as former members of the Russian armed forces. Among them also deserters from the Russian army. As a result of the conducted interviews, VDD obtained testimonies about breaches of the international laws of war and humanitarian rights, for example, deliberate murder of Ukrainian civilians, use of prohibited weapons and ammunition, marauding, and other crimes.

Obtaining evidence on torture, murder, and cruel treatment, including unlawful prison camps, which are prohibited by laws of war, of Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war committed by Russian soldiers remained as one of VDD's investigatory priorities last year. In the assessment of VDD, Russia purposely does not apply laws of war to military personnel from other countries who have joined the Ukrainian armed forces.

Last year, more than 30 persons were interviewed about their experiences in Ukraine. Thus, the total number of individuals interviewed since Russia's invasion in Ukraine exceeds 260.

<sup>43</sup> Joint Investigation Team (JIT) for the investigation of Russia's war crimes was established on 25 March 2022 with the support of the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), and currently its participants are the competent institutions of seven states – Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia and Romania, as well as Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC and Europol.

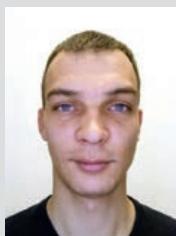
<sup>44</sup> International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA). ICPA prosecutors from different countries work together to provide support to the investigation of crimes of aggression.

## PERSONS DECLARED WANTED BY VDD IN 2025



### Mārtiņš Duncītis

Wanted since 6 January 2025 on suspicion of committing crimes stipulated in Section 95<sup>1</sup> and Section 77<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Law, i.e., service in Russian armed forces and unlawful participation in warfare in Ukraine.



### Normunds Potapovs

Wanted since 9 June 2025 on suspicion of committing crimes stipulated in Section 95<sup>1</sup> and Section 77<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Law, i.e., service in Russian armed forces and unlawful participation in warfare in Ukraine.



### Oleg Matveev, Russian citizen

Wanted since 20 March 2025 on suspicion of committing crimes stipulated in Section 77<sup>2</sup> and Section 84 Paragraph 3 of the Criminal Law, i.e., collection and transfer of goods to Russian armed forces and violation of the EU sanctions imposed against Russia committed by a group of persons according to a prior agreement.



### Andrejs Šatskijs

Wanted since 25 June 2025 on suspicion of committing crimes stipulated in Section 95<sup>1</sup> and Section 77<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Law, i.e., service in Russian armed forces and unlawful participation in warfare in Ukraine.



### Vadims Aleksejevs

Wanted since 14 May 2025 on suspicion of committing the crime stipulated in Section 89<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 2 of the Criminal Law, i.e., participation in the pro-Kremlin criminal organisation "Baltic anti-fascists" and the especially serious crimes committed by this organisation against Latvia.



### Olegs Makejevs

Wanted since 25 August 2025 on suspicion of committing crimes stipulated in Section 74<sup>1</sup> and Section 78 Paragraph 2 of the Criminal Law, i.e., public glorification and justification of Russia's war crimes as well as activity aimed at triggering national and ethnic hatred and enmity (against Latvians).



### Alīna Gerliņa

Wanted since 14 May 2025 on suspicion of committing the crime stipulated in Section 89<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 2 of the Criminal Law, i.e., participation in the pro-Kremlin criminal organisation "Baltic anti-fascists" and the especially serious crimes committed by this organisation against Latvia.



### Olegs Stefanovičs

Wanted since 29 August 2025 on suspicion of committing crimes stipulated in Section 95<sup>1</sup> and Section 77<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Law, i.e., service in Russian armed forces and unlawful participation in warfare in Ukraine.



**Oļegs Kovalenko**

Wanted since 29 August 2025 on suspicion of committing crimes stipulated in Section 95<sup>1</sup> and Section 77<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Law, i.e., service in Russian armed forces and unlawful participation in warfare in Ukraine.



**Oļegs Džišiašvili**

Wanted since 4 November 2025 on suspicion of committing crimes stipulated in Section 95<sup>1</sup> and Section 77<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Law, i.e., service in Russian armed forces and unlawful participation in warfare in Ukraine.



**Mārtiņš Lavrinovičs**

Wanted since 20 October 2025 on suspicion of committing crimes stipulated in Section 74<sup>1</sup> and Section 78 Paragraph 2 of the Criminal Law, i.e., public glorification and justification of Russia's war crimes as well as activity aimed at triggering national and ethnic hatred and enmity (against Latvians).



**Sergejs Šuravins**

Wanted since 4 November 2025 on suspicion of committing crimes stipulated in Section 95<sup>1</sup> and Section 77<sup>1</sup> of the Criminal Law, i.e., service in Russian armed forces and unlawful participation in warfare in Ukraine.

---

Information about persons wanted by VDD since Russia's invasion of Ukraine can be found in VDD's Annual Report for 2024.

VDD reiterates that no person shall be considered guilty until their guilt in committing the crime has been proved in accordance to the law.

You can contact VDD by calling the 24/7 phone **+371 6720 8964** or by e-mail **[info@vdd.gov.lv](mailto:info@vdd.gov.lv)**.

# 08

## DIGNITARY PROTECTION

**In 2025, VDD continued to provide protection to the Chairperson of the Saeima (Parliament) and the Prime Minister. The Service also ensured the safety of heads of foreign parliaments and governments, as well as ministers of foreign affairs and leaders of international organisations during their visits to Latvia.**

Similar to previous years, in 2025, VDD bodyguards provided protection to the Chairperson of the Saeima and the Prime Minister not only in the territory of Latvia, but also during their working visits abroad. Last year VDD officers provided protection to the Chairperson of the Saeima on 22 foreign visits, whereas to the Prime Minister – on 21 foreign visits. VDD organised and implemented measures according to the respective threat level for each of the visits.

Continuing to affirm Latvia's unwavering support to Ukraine, last year Latvian dignitaries continued to go on working visits to Ukraine. To ensure the protection of Latvian dignitaries in a country where active warfare is taking place, the dignitaries were accompanied by a specially trained and equipped team of VDD officers. Last year VDD officers, in close cooperation with Ukrainian partner services, ensured the protection of the Chairperson of the Saeima, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs during their visits to Ukraine. In total, last year VDD organised and implemented security measures for two visits of the Chairperson of the Saeima, two visits of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as one visit of the Prime Minister to Ukraine.

As in previous years, last year the Service bodyguards also provided security to foreign dignitaries during their visits to Latvia.

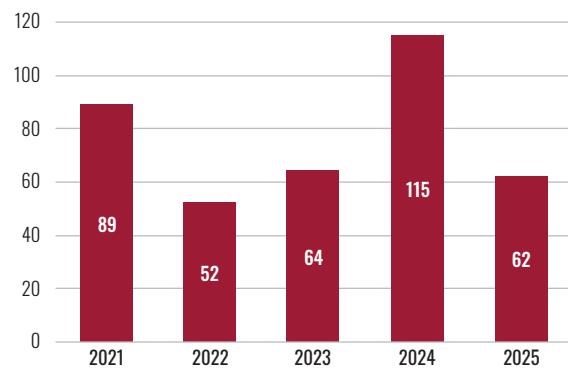
Overall, in 2025 the Service organised the undisturbed stay in Latvia of a total of 62 foreign representatives. The Service ensured their physical integrity, undisturbed movement, security of their places of stay and implemented measures to prevent unsanctioned obtaining of information at the disposal of these officials. The set of security measures was determined on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the results of threat analysis conducted by VDD.

In 2025, some of the most notable foreign officials' visits to Latvia included the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar, and Palestinian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Varsen Aghabekian, during which VDD implemented enhanced security measures. Due to the implemented security measures, no significant security incidents occurred during these visits.

Last year VDD continued to coordinate and oversee the security regime of various public events attended by dignitaries that are under the Service's protection. In total, throughout last year, the Service, in close cooperation with the State Police and other services, ensured the protection to Latvian and foreign dignitaries as well as public security and order during 45 different scale events in Latvia. These included both national and international events.

A significant portion of VDD's resources last year was dedicated to the organisation and provision of security measures during local large-scale events such as the XIII Latvian School Youth and Dance Festival and the European Basketball Championship "EuroBasket 2025" that were attended also by Latvian dignitaries. These events drew large crowds of people, with "EuroBasket 2025" also drawing thousands of supporters from other countries, prompting the responsible services to implement enhanced security measures.

#### **Provision of security to foreign officials during their visits to Latvia**



VDD also organised enhanced security measures during the "Riga Conference 2025" (Nordic Region Security and Foreign Policy Forum) that took place from 9 to 11 October. Within the forum, Latvian and foreign dignitaries and experts discussed important topics such as strengthening Europe's defence, Ukraine's long-term security and restricting Russia, therefore provocations initiated by Russia could not have been ruled out.

During the aforementioned events, VDD not only ensured the protection of Latvian and foreign dignitaries, but also coordinated and oversaw the security regime. As a result of cooperation between VDD, the State Police and other responsible services, no significant safety incidents occurred.

To identify threats against the dignitaries under VDD's protection, in 2025 the Service continued to evaluate online statements made against these dignitaries. In case threats or calls for violence were detected, the Service implemented measures to establish and prevent the possibility of a real threat. In some cases, VDD held talks with the threat authors, warning them about the criminal liability in case of committing violent

## DIGNITARY PROTECTION

offences. Overall, in 2025 VDD held preventive talks with approximately 30 persons, in some cases with the support of the State Police.

In September, VDD bodyguards also took part in VDD's counterterrorism exercise "Dinaburg 2025" in Daugavpils, simulating the evacuation and protection of dignitaries in the event of a terrorist threat, as well as in other threat situations.

In May 2025, VDD organised an international competition for bodyguards and specialised units that aimed to demonstrate and strengthen their skills in disciplines such as tactical shooting, driving, as well as different strength and endurance tests. Teams from Latvia and European partner services took part in the competition.



On 12 December 2025, the Baltic Council of Ministers meeting at the level of prime ministers took place in Riga. VDD provided security to the Latvian Prime Minister Evika Siliņa, and Estonian and Lithuanian heads of government Kristen Michal and Inga Ruginienė. Photo: State Chancellery.

# **LATVIAN STATE SECURITY SERVICE (VDD)**

## **ADDRESS**

207 Brīvības gatve  
Riga, Latvia, LV-1039

## **CONTACTS**

Phone 67208964  
E-mail [info@vdd.gov.lv](mailto:info@vdd.gov.lv)  
Website: [www.vdd.gov.lv](http://www.vdd.gov.lv)

## **VDD on social media:**

