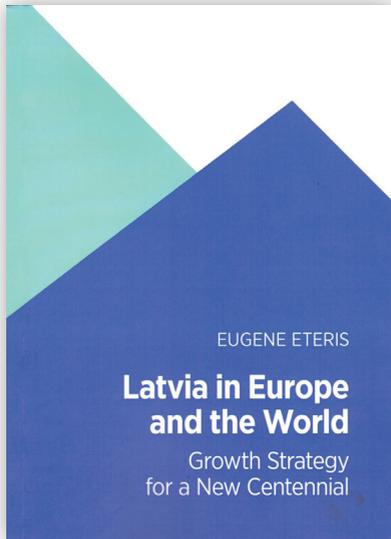


VALUABLE IMPETUS INTO THE LATVIAN CENTENNIAL



Eteris E. *Latvia in Europe and the World; Growth Strategy for a New Centennial*. Riga: Zinātne Publishers, 2018, 208 pp.

Latvia is celebrating its centennial jubilee this November. Various spheres of Latvian socio-economic activities are making their own efforts to commemorate the country's statehood. The Latvian scientific community initiated their own "present" devoted to the event. The new book provides a vivid picture of the country's present challenges and shows some perspective paths for the years to come.

Latvia has become an independent state in November 1918, after the end of the First World War. That was the period of several new states' emergence: the Austro-Hungarian, Russian, German and Ottoman empires broke up and new states appeared, among them Finland (in December 1917), Lithuania and Estonia in February 1918, Czechoslovakia in October 1918, and Poland in November 1918.

Combining external and internal factors

The idea of the "centennial" book by E. Eteris, *Latvia in Europe and the World; Growth Strategy for a New Centennial*, is to provide Latvian politicians, economists and the general public with a modern analysis of the challenges facing Latvian modern socio-economic development. According to the author, these challenges are of a double nature: stemming from the **external** factors (e.g., from the European Union side and from the globalisation processes) and from **internal**, Latvian socio-economic and political factors. Another sub-idea is to introduce to the public a new Latvian narrative in a fruitful effort to connect the political ideas and government efforts (through the national governance structures) with the ordinary lives of Latvian people. In author's view, a *narrative* is an account of events and experiences, a sort of a

“story” that connects and explains a set of challenging events.

The book consists of three parts: the first one is devoted to analysis of global and European challenges for Latvian development; the second part describes formation of Latvian political economy through the modern narrative; and the third part addresses Latvian growth perspectives through new challenges. Quite easy for reading is that each chapter of the book (there are 16 chapters in total) has an introduction, a resume and extensive notes and references. An inquisitive reader can enlarge apprehension by following the provided references.

Narrative issue

The narrative issue in the author's approach is becoming more productive for Latvian growth in several instances: from stimulating the national public space to creating a “shared purpose” among citizens, to activating cultural spheres, to increasing Latvia's role in Europe and globally. The author

suggests that the narrative for Latvia will be a “theoretical catalyst” triggering intellectual contribution to country's progressive future formed with the shared European values and experiences.

Importantly, the narrative will demonstrate the ways in which Latvian political and economic elites can empower citizens through identifying cultural values on the European platform of shared values in the European social market economy. The Latvian narrative aims at connecting the Latvian public with the European values and concepts of integration, mobilising the “Latvian spirit” towards more ambitious goals. However, as the author correctly notices, in order for the Latvian narrative to materialise, there shall be established a “social contract” among Latvians coped with a strong social drive in line with the EU's narrative idea, to pave the way to a well-functioning Latvian political economy.

The importance of the Latvian narrative shall be in designing the optimal and progressive national development directions based



on the EU political/economic guidance as well as the challenges from globalisation and the 4th industrial revolution. The European Union's idea of smart specialisation strategy (the so-called 3S platform) for the member states makes it easier for the Latvian political economy to proceed along the already scientifically designed paths in progressive development. The role of politicians is to deliver these ideas to the general public and see to it that Latvian establishment correctly implements them.

Latvia is currently living through a time of sweeping transformations: a new generation of Latvians is appearing to shape the new narrative: Latvian community has to "write its own new history" based on past and present achievements while oriented towards future. This is a unique and innovative path that Lat-

vians should be proud of. Hence, the book has an additional importance: serving as a guiding reference for the coming elections. Constructive ideas from the book can help politicians to deliver on their promises to Latvian community at the parliament/Saeima's elections.

In conclusion it should be mentioned that the book provides good grounds for productive reading both for political/economic elites and the general public. No doubt, it will be welcomed by all people interested in the Latvian socio-economic development. Besides, the author has shown a stimulating interest in analysing European issues: during the last decade, it is his fifth book published in Latvia, generally at the European Studies Faculty of Riga Stradiņš University.

Ojārs Spāritis