



## THE STATE OF NATIONAL URBAN POLICY IN LATVIA

Name of national urban policy	<i>Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030; National Development Plan 2014-2020; Regional Policy Guidelines until 2019</i>
Date of national urban policy	2010; 2012; 2013
Explicit or partial	Partial
Legal status (e.g. act of the legislature, executive order, administrative guidance, etc.)	<i>Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia 2030 and the National Development Plan 2014-2020 are hierarchically highest in the state's strategic development planning documents, adopted by the national parliament – accordingly they have the status of legal act</i>
Previous/secondary policies	Particular sectoral policy planning documents partially cover urban policy issues, for instance: <i>Transport Development Guidelines 2014-2020; National Industrial Policy guidelines 2014-2020; Social Services Development Guidelines 2014-2020; Education Development Guidelines 2014-2020; etc.</i>
Stage of development	Implementation
How developed (e.g. through a participatory/stakeholder process, or act of parliament, etc.)	All the above-mentioned documents were developed using a wide scale participatory approach, among others involving all relevant stakeholders
Implementing body	The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development; line ministries; planning regions, local municipalities and local communities
Government system	Partially decentralised
Type of national urban agency	General national planning authority. The State Regional Development Agency – a national regulatory authority promoting regional development, operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
Implementation mechanism (e.g. committee, involvement of multiple agencies, national-local co-ordination)	The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development provides vertical and horizontal policy co-ordination. The Regional Development Coordination Council, consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, relevant line ministries, and other stakeholders, evaluates local development programmes, investment plans.

### Current national urban policy

Latvia does not have an explicit national urban policy. Urban policy is a part of comprehensive national regional policy defined by the following development planning documents:

1. *Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030* (the main long-term territorial development planning document in Latvia, adopted by the Latvian Parliament in 2010);
2. *Latvian National Development Plan 2014-2020* (the main medium-term territorial development planning document in Latvia, adopted by the Latvian Parliament in 2012); and
3. *Regional Policy Guidelines until 2019* (medium-term policy planning document, adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2013).

National regional policy defines the network of development centres – 9 cities or development centres of national importance and 21 of the largest towns that are defined as development centres of regional importance (these towns are part of urban-rural municipalities). This network is considered as the main “backbone” of polycentric settlement structure, which can reduce the existing negative regional disparities and provide balanced and sustainable regional development. The network of cities and towns was determined during the elaboration of the national long-term strategy and is based on the size of settlements, their development indicators and potential, amount of services provided, their service areas and location, as well as taking into account regional level planning documents. The distances between the closest cities and towns that form the network ranges from 25-90 km which means that on average every development centre is at the reach of maximum 50 km distance (with a few exceptions). In these centres there is concentrated economic and social activity and resources that are crucial for growth – 71% of population, 100% of higher education institutions, 84% of commercial companies, 81% of employed people, and more than 80% of direct foreign investment.

Since Latvia is facing significant demographic challenges, as the number of inhabitants is decreasing in the whole country except the areas around the capital city, it is important to stimulate entrepreneurship in the centres throughout the country that have the most development potential in order to provide employment opportunities for the remaining population.

In order to fully enable the 30 largest cities and towns to fulfil the role of a development centre of national and regional significance, since 2007 specifically targeted support measures are available for these urban areas. The mentioned cities and towns can decide on investment projects that are the most crucial for their development according to their integrated local development strategy.

### Areas covered by current urban policy

Sector	Sectoral representation in the <i>Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030; the Latvian National Development Plan 2014-2020 and the Regional Policy Guidelines until 2019</i>
Economic development	Extensive
Spatial structure	Extensive
Human development	Extensive
Environmental sustainability	Extensive
Climate resilience	Moderate

## Specific issues covered by current national urban policy

The Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030 includes the following characteristics:

Criteria for national urban policies	Appears in the policy
Responds to population dynamics	X
Promotes a territorial approach (in particular urban-rural linkages)	X
Addresses the urban systems (from large to medium and small cities) and the connectivity among cities	X
Prepares for infrastructure and services in cities (including public space)	X
Promotes urban land-use efficiency	X
Enhances environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change	X
Develops effective urban governance systems (horizontal co-ordination and vertical alignment)	X
Promotes effective municipal finance systems	X
Supports partnership and co-operation between urban actors	X
Safeguards inclusiveness and participation in the process and outcomes (inequity, segregation, safety, etc.)	X
Ensures robust and comparable urban scale data	X

## Bibliography

Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre (CCSC) (2012), *National development plan 2014-2020*, [www.pkc.gov.lv/images/NAP2020%20dokumenti/NDP2020\\_English\\_Final.pdf](http://www.pkc.gov.lv/images/NAP2020%20dokumenti/NDP2020_English_Final.pdf).

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia (2013) *Regional Policy Guidelines until 2019*, [www.varam.gov.lv/lat/pol/ppd/?doc=20773](http://www.varam.gov.lv/lat/pol/ppd/?doc=20773) (accessed 14 February 2017).

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia (2010), *Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030*, [www.varam.gov.lv/lat/pol/ppd/?doc=13857](http://www.varam.gov.lv/lat/pol/ppd/?doc=13857) (accessed 14 February 2017).