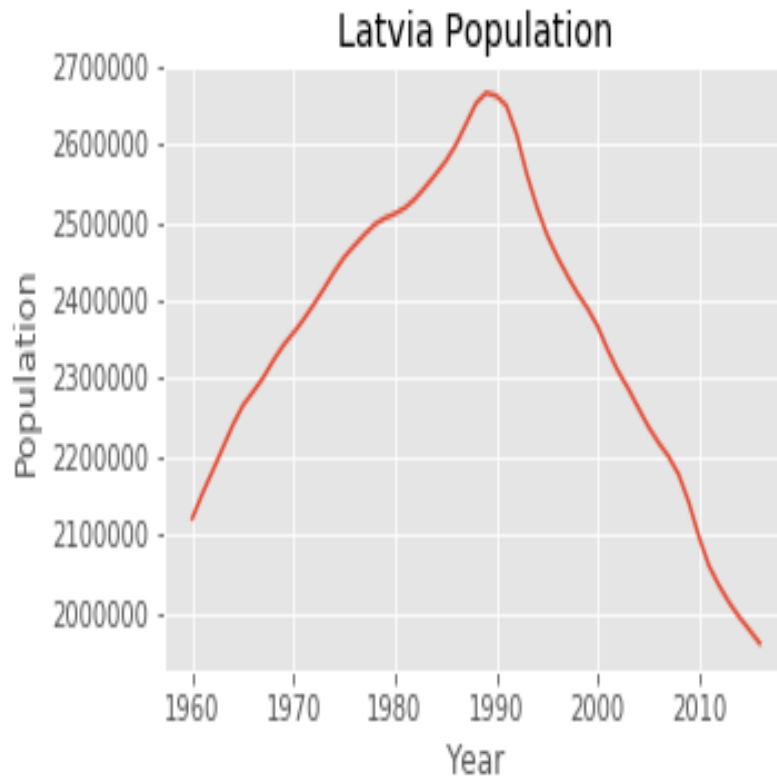


Latvia



– in Europe (green & dark grey) – in the European Union (green) – [Legend]

Latvia, (/ˈlætvi/ (listen); Latvian: Latvija [ˈlatvija]), officially the Republic of Latvia (Latvian: Latvijas Republika), is an independent republic in the Baltic region of Northern Europe. Since its independence, Latvia has been referred to as one of the Baltic states. It is bordered by Estonia in the northern region, Lithuania in the southern, to the east is Russia, and Belarus to the southeast, as well as sharing a maritime border with Sweden to the west. Latvia has 1,957,200 inhabitants and a territory of 64,589 km² (24,938 sq mi). The country has a temperate seasonal climate. After centuries of Swedish, Livonian, Polish and Russian rule, a rule mainly executed by the Baltic German aristocracy, the Republic of Latvia was established on 18 November 1918 when it broke away and declared independence from Russia in the aftermath of World War I. However, by the 1930s, the country became increasingly autocratic after the coup in 1934 establishing an authoritarian regime under Kārlis Ulmanis. The country's de facto independence was interrupted at the outset of World War II, beginning with Latvia's forcible incorporation into the Soviet Union, followed by the invasion and occupation by Nazi Germany in 1941, and the re-occupation by the Soviets in 1944 to form the Latvian SSR for the next fifty years. The peaceful Singing Revolution, starting in 1987, called for Baltic emancipation from Soviet rule and condemning the "Stalinist" regime's illegal takeover. It ended with the Declaration on the Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia on 4 May 1990, and restoring de facto independence on 21 August 1991.