

History of the Cabinet of Ministers

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On November 18, 1918, the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed. Its first legislative institution was the People's Council. The first official meeting of the Provisional Government of Latvia was held on 26 November 1918.

The Constitutional Assembly was Latvia's first legislative body elected by the people that drafted the supreme law of the state — the Constitution (Satversme) — and continued the legislative work of the independent state: adopted a law on agrarian reform, a law on the election of the Parliament (Saeima), and other laws.

The legislative work begun by the Constitutional Assembly was continued by the Saeima. Elections of the 1st Saeima were held on October 7 and 8, 1922.

Until 1934, the activities of the Cabinet of Ministers were regulated by the "Law on the Structure of the Cabinet of Ministers" of 1925. The law stipulated that there were 9 ministries in Latvia - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of War, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of People's Well-being, the Ministry of Justice.

By May 15, 1934, 18 Cabinets of Ministers replaced one another.

On 15 May 1934, a coup led by Kārlis Ulmanis took place. The Cabinet of Ministers exercised not only executive functions, but had also become a legislator, completely taking over the functions of the Saeima.

On 17 June 1940, Latvia came under the occupation by the Soviet forces. The USSR administration tried to achieve the conditions under which further annexation of Latvia would seem legal – the public institutions continued to work under strict supervision by the USSR for the following few months.

For the following 50 years, the territory of Latvia remained under foreign powers. During 1941–1945 the territory of Latvia was under control by the Nazi Germany. After the defeat of Germany in World War II, the Soviet occupation regime returned to the territory of Latvia. A further sovietisation of Latvia was being carried out, the government of the Latvian SSR and its administration did not act in the interests of the Latvian nation.

Elections of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia were held on 18 March 1990, where for the first time since the Soviet occupation, candidates from various political movements were allowed to participate.

After the adoption of the declaration of independence of the Republic of Latvia on 4 May 1990, the democratic reforms in the public administration of Latvia were launched, and the reorganization of all USSR structures was carried out.

In spring 1990, the Supreme Council passed the Law on the Structure of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, stipulating that 19 ministries there had to be developed in the composition of the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers consisted of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, two deputies, ministers and a Minister for Government Affairs who was in charge of the government apparatus.

Following complete restoration of independence of Latvia in August 1991, the reorganization of the government took place.

The number of ministries was reduced up to 16. The posts of a Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and a Minister for Government Affairs were liquidated, while the post of the State Minister was established.

The Supreme Council imposed a transitional period for de facto restoration of the statehood, which ended with the convening of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia.

Following the elections of the 5th Saeima in 1993, the Satversme (Constitution) of 1922 was completely restored; thereby the government regained the name "The Cabinet of Ministers" and the grounds for work within the framework of a traditional parliamentary system.

On 16 July 1993, the law "On the Renewal of the 1 April 1925 Law "Structure of the Cabinet of Ministers"" was adopted (since 1 June 1996 this law goes by the name "Law of the Structure of the Cabinet of Ministers").

(Information prepared in cooperation with the National History Museum of Latvia)

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