

Women in Military in Latvia, March 9, 2026

The two outstanding and significant roles of Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Latvia are to build strategic partnerships and bring to attention and discuss topics important and crucial to local and international societies, advocate and support policies that bring economic and social wellbeing, peace and security.

Acting on a challenging global political scene, defense and security ranks amongst the highest political priorities of every nation demanding involvement of every individual on every level – from civil to military, from tactical tasks to building partnerships, men and women.

Today, on the Eve of International Women's Day, the focus is on the role of women in military in Latvia securing peace and equality in defending democracy, independence and freedom, providing security to all members of society.

Context:

Latvia is a member of NATO since 2004 and aligns its defense policy accordingly, including NATO's Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) policy adopted in 2007. Approach is to make security more effective, inclusive, and sustainable by integrating gender perspectives across everything it does—from planning operations to building partnerships.

In 2023 Latvia reinstated compulsory military service, effective from January 2024 mandatory only for men, women aged 18–27 can apply voluntarily for military service.

Women in Latvia armed forces make one of the highest proportions among NATO members — around 18 % of the total. Female participation is present across military branches and in international operations, and women serve in various specialties and leadership roles.

The Latvian Ministry of Defense and policymakers have been discussing the possibility of extending conscription to women by 2028 to enhance gender equality in defense responsibilities.

Concrete steps, such as uniform and infrastructure adjustments, are planned before any new requirement would take effect.

This proposal reflects broader discussions both domestically and in comparisons with other NATO countries where gender-neutral service exists.

Is proposal welcome by Latvia society, what is the level of acceptance among women, what are the main challenges and how bilateral chambers, like Can Cham in Latvia, be helpful in decision making and negotiation process?

Today with applause we welcome the strong voice and visible leader in military, our honorary guest and speaker Headquarters Battalion Commander, Colonel Antonina Blodone.