

# Edgars Rinkevics is elected President of the Republic of Latvia

On 31 May, the 100 MPs of the Saeima, the single chamber of Parliament, elected Edgars Rinkevics as President of the Republic of Latvia. The outgoing Foreign Minister succeeds Egils Levits, who chose not to stand for re-election.

Edgars Rinkevics was elected in the 3rd round of voting with 52 votes: 26 votes from the New Unity (JV). party of Prime Minister Arturs Krisjanis Karains; 16 votes from the Union of Greens and Farmers (ZZS), the party of Ventspils mayor Aivars Lembergs, and 10 votes from the Progressives (PRO), the party of candidate Elina Pinto, who withdrew from the presidential race after the 2nd round.

His opponent, Uldis Pilens, founder and leader of the United List (AS), received 25 votes (15 from his party, 9 from Latvia First (LPV), the right-wing party of Ainars Slesers, and one from Non-attached MP Glorija Grevcova).

The National Alliance (AN), a party led by Raivis Dzintars, which has 13 MPs, and For Stability! (S!), a populist party formed from a split with the Russian-speaking Harmony (S) party led by Aleksejs Rosļikovs, which has 10, had chosen not to support any of the candidates. For Stability! voted against both men in the 3rd ballot, while members of the National Alliance did not take part in the vote.

"I will do everything in my power for our country, to ensure its prosperity and security," declared Edgars Rinkevics, adding: "The head of state's ability to unite Latvian society depends on maintaining dialogue and

explaining Latvian state policy. "Latvia is in good hands for the next four years," said Egils Levits.

Edgars Rinkevics was congratulated by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who described him as "a true friend of Ukraine". "Support for Ukraine, a very firm policy in the face of Russian aggression and continued active participation in NATO and the European Union will remain the cornerstones of our foreign policy, which means 'no surprises, no changes'," said Edgars Rinkevics.

Edgars Rinkevics, 49, from Jurmala, a town near Riga, studied history and philosophy at the University of Latvia, then political science and international relations at the University of Groningen (Netherlands). He began his career as a journalist specialising in foreign policy at Latvijas public radio. He then worked as a senior civil servant in the Ministry of Defence before being appointed Director of the Chancellery of President of the Republic Valdis Zalters between 2008 and 2011. In 2011, Edgars Rinkevics was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs by Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis (JV). He was subsequently reappointed to this post by all successive heads of government.

**Presidential election in Latvia**31st May 2023

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The question now is whether there will be a government reshuffle. Indeed, many political observers are wondering whether the Union of Greens and Farmers and Progressives have negotiated their support for Edgars Rinkevics in

exchange for a place in government. We'll have the answer in a few weeks' time.

Edgars Rinkevics, one of the country's most popular politicians, will officially begin his four-year term on 8 July.

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Publishing Director : Pascale JOANNIN

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