

## LATVIA

*Population:* 2,37 Mio

*Area:* 64.589 km<sup>2</sup>

### Part 1: Laws concerning Homosexuality

*Forbidden by law:* No

*Age of consent:* Equal

*Registered partnership/marriage:* No

*Differences to heterosexual couples:* There do not exist any specific rights or protection for lesbian or gay couples. It is totally unusual to be openly lesbian/gay. The society is not quiet ready for accepting people of different sexual orientation.

*Anti-discrimination law, protecting lesbians/gays (L/G) against discrimination:* No

*At work:* No

*On the housing market:* No

*In other areas:* No

*Other groups in the society protected through such a law:* Yes

The law generally grants freedom to groups and single persons.

*Incidents that briefly describe the situation of L/G in society:*

It is not easy to be open. It's something new for society, and it means that many people have prejudices concerning this topic. You can't hold hands in public. Some time ago there was a big publishing company in Latvia which initiated a writing competition, – asking people to write essays underlining that homosexuality is a terrible thing which will ruin the country if it is “let loose”. This competition was supported by several politicians on a high level.

### Part 2: Situation in the Church(es)

*Open L/G welcome to*

*Eucharist:* No

*Comments:* It's painful. People don't show their sexual orientation openly. Thus, most people don't feel guilty when they go to Eucharist, but it's a shame to be forced to live such a secret life. It hurts.

*Do volunteer work:* No

*Work as ordained ministers:* No

*Other employment in church(es):* No

*Partnership blessing possible:* No

*Incidents/outspoken attitudes that briefly describe the situation of L/G in the churches:*

The Lutheran Church says it's a sin, and if you are open, then you will be thrown out of the Church.

Not so long ago (2002/2003) the minister Maris [REDACTED] lost his job in the Lutheran Church because he came out publicly as a gay man. Maris [REDACTED] is the leader of a group for Christian lesbian and gay people. They have services in Riga almost every Sunday.

### Part 3: Christian Lesbian/Gay Networks

*Network name:* Evangeliska Atverta Drauze (Protestant Open Parish).

*Leader:* Maris [REDACTED]

Two general web pages in Latvia (not specifically for Christians): [www.gay.lv](http://www.gay.lv),  
[www.lesby.lv](http://www.lesby.lv)

*Questionnaire filled in by* Waterlily, Lativa *and some information added by* Bård and Randi  
[REDACTED]