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PARLIAMENTARY BUSSINES

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU COHESION POLICY PRESENTED TO THE COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

On 9 December 2015, the Ministry of Finance informed the Committee on European Affairs of the use of EU investment funds for 2007–2013 and the strategy on the use of the funds for 2014–2020.

A total of 98% of the allocated funds, or EUR 6.61 m, were invested in the period from 2007 to 2013. The investments mainly boosted private investment in breakthrough sectors, increased the possibilities of SMEs to receive funding, promoted new initiatives aimed at creating jobs, and improved the services related to transportation, social care, education and utilities. At the same time, it has been observed that a more effective absorption of the funds has been hindered by concentration of investments in building infrastructure and lack of strategic planning and cooperation among the stakeholder institutions, especially at the regional level.

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SEIMAS ADOPTED THE 2016 STATE BUDGET



On 10 December 2015, in its plenary the Seimas adopted the financial indicators of the 2016 State budget and the municipal budgets. The 2016 State budget (Draft No XIIP-3651(2)) was adopted by a vote of 76 to 34 with 14 abstentions.

Pursuant to the Law adopted, the national budget will receive EUR 8.046 billion in revenue, whereas the appropriations for expenditures and acquisition of assets will amount to more than EUR 8.686 billion (appropriations exceeding the revenue by EUR 640 million). The EU and other international funding will make up EUR 2.1 billion.

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On 15 December 2015, the Seimas adopted the Resolution on the Genocide of Christians and Other Religious Minorities in the Middle East and North Africa. The document is [here](#).

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS DISCUSSED EU RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

On 16 December 2015, the Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs held a closed meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Linas Linkevičius, to discuss the current situation and the prospects of the EU-Russia relations and Lithuania's position on the issue.

It was decided after the discussion that Lithuania's position would further remain consistent and stable and that any positive changes in the relations between the EU and Russia would primarily depend on the changes in Russia's domestic and foreign policy, its efforts to strengthen democracy and respect for basic human rights and freedoms and principles of international law in both Russia and its relationship with other countries. The economic sanctions imposed by the EU have to further remain closely linked to the implementation of the Minsk Agreements in their entirety by Russia, as decided at the European Council held on 19–20 March.

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THE SEIMAS IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES UNDER THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2016

At a joint meeting held on 16 December 2015, the Seimas Committee on European Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Affairs considered the Commission Work Programme for 2016 and identified the Seimas priorities based on the proposals under the Programme.

The Seimas priorities are annually adopted on the basis of reasoned conclusions of specialised committees. The individual proposals under the Work Programme are rated as highly relevant, relevant, and not very relevant judging by their degree of relevance to Lithuania. In addition, ex-ante evaluation of compliance with the principle of subsidiarity of the draft legislation is conducted.

The Committee on European Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Affairs singled out 15 highly relevant, 5 relevant and 4 not relevant proposals. The Committees expressed their conviction that the list of the Seimas priorities under the Commission Work Programme should not only bring together the initiatives singled out by the Committees, but also prioritise the proposals as highly relevant to the Seimas. The proposals may have a substantial impact on the key policy factors that ensure citizens' welfare, including the safety of Lithuanian citizens, their social inclusion and promotion of economic growth and competitiveness.

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ANNUAL GROWTH SURVEY 2016 PRESENTED TO THE COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

On 18 December 2015, the European Commissioner, Vytenis Povilas Andriukaitis, presented to the Committee on European Affairs the 2016 Annual Growth Survey, issued on 26 November 2015 opening a new annual cycle of the European Semester.

The European Commission considers that the economic and social priorities identified in the 2015 Annual Growth Survey (investment, structural reforms and fiscal responsibility) remain valid in 2016. Taking into account the progress made and new challenges emerging, the following three priorities have been updated and proposed for 2016: re-launching investment, structural reforms to modernise our economies, and responsible public finances.

The Commissioner presented to the Committee the key steps of the 2016 European Semester and noted that better integration of the Eurozone countries with closely interconnected economies in the process of the European Semester is sought in 2016. The Roadmap for the European Semester covers two phases of the European Semester, the first being oriented more towards the tools available on the European Union level and comprising the period before the European Council meeting of March 2016 and the second being national and comprising the period between the European Council meetings in March and June 2016.

SEIMAS LEGITIMATED COMPULSORY PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

On 22 December 2015, with 59 MPs voting in favour, 9 against and 27 abstentions, the Seimas adopted amendments to the Law on Education (draft No XIIP-3375(2)) legitimating compulsory pre-school education for children.

“The findings of long-term research suggest that good quality pre-school and pre-primary education has a positive impact on further social and emotional development of all children, notably those growing under the conditions of social risk and exclusion, and helps to reduce poverty. The child’s early experience is a determining factor for his further learning achievements,” said the Minister of Education and Science, Audronė Pitrėnienė, while presenting the draft.

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CITIZENS WITH OUTSTANDING MERITS TO THE LITHUANIAN STATE WILL BE ABLE TO ENJOY DUAL CITIZENSHIP

On 22 December 2015, the Seimas adopted amendments to the Law on Citizenship (draft no XIIP-2453(2)), submitted by Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, which establish the possibility for a Lithuanian citizen with outstanding merits to the state of Lithuania to have dual citizenship. The new legislative provisions were adopted by 86 votes in favour, with 1 vote against and 2 abstentions.

Based on the amendments, the President of the Republic, pursuant to this Law, will be able to make a decision whereby a citizen of the Republic of Lithuania with outstanding merits to the Lithuanian state who has obtained the citizenship of another state may keep his citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania.

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UP TO 130 TROOPS AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL OF THE NATIONAL DEFENCE SYSTEM TO TAKE PART IN INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS IN 2016–2017



On 22 December 2015, the Seimas established the legal basis for the engagement of the Lithuanian military units, troops and civilian personnel of the National Defence System in international operations from 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2017.

The Resolution of the Seimas on the engagement of the military units of the Republic of Lithuania in international was approved by 73 votes in favour, with no votes against and 2 abstentions. Based on the Resolution, a new maximum number of troops and civilian personnel of the National Defence System taking part in international operations is set at 130.

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THE SEIMAS ADOPTED AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW ON PACKAGING AND PACKAGING WASTE MANAGEMENT AS REGARDS THE COLLECTION OF PACKAGING

On 23 December 2015, by 75 votes in favour, none against and three abstentions, the Seimas adopted amendments to the Law on Packaging and Packaging Waste Management regarding the collection of packaging.

Under the new provisions, in respect of packaging of all the of goods covered by the deposit scheme, vendors of packaging have to return the deposit to consumers either in cash or, should the consumers so desire, in goods and services offered by the vendor, amounting to the sum equal to the deposit.

The provision allowing consumers to transfer the money received in return for the packaging as charity to the beneficiaries identified in the Law on the Funds of Charity and Support, due to come into effect on 1 February 2016, was deleted.

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SEIMAS COMPLETED THE AUTUMN SESSION



On 23 December 2015, the Seimas completed its regular 7th (autumn) session. Between 10 September and 23 December 2015, the Parliament held a total of 48 sittings, resulting in the adoption of over 300 legislative acts.

The autumn session was focused on the issues of finance, reduction of social exclusion, reinforcement of the economy, national defence and security, as well as on matters pertaining to energy, public administration, law and order, environmental protection, health, education, science, and culture.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

LORETA GRAUŽINIENĖ, SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS: “NEW CHALLENGES SHOULD NOT OVERSHADOW UKRAINE”



On 2 December 2015, at her meeting with the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko during his working visit to Lithuania, Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, stressed the importance of continuity of the EU Eastern Partnership and the need for further support to Ukraine.

“The issue of Ukraine and the need to implement the Minsk agreements should not be overshadowed by today’s geopolitical situation and the new security challenges faced by Europe and the world. Lithuania has always supported and will continue to support the independence, freedom and territorial integrity of Ukraine. I believe that it is our duty to keep moving in the direction outlined by the Eastern Partnership and contribute to the smooth European integration of Ukraine,” the Speaker of the Seimas stressed.

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ANNUAL SUMMIT OF THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY AND THE NORDIC COUNCIL 2015

On 7 December 2015, the Seimas hosted the last event of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Baltic Assembly (BA), namely, the Annual Summit of the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council (NC). The event was followed by a seminar on Belarus and the Eastern Partnership after the presidential elections in Belarus.

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE NORDIC COUNCIL AND THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY DISCUSSED AT THE SEIMAS



The Seimas hosted the Summit of the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly, which discussed the cooperation in the ending year, defined new tasks for the next two years, and identified the areas where more coordination between the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council was needed.

“I believe that our joint efforts—to make our countries and organisations more visible in the EU—have been successful this year. Jointly we should continue to strengthen the Baltic–Nordic parliamentary influence at the European Union,” said Giedrė Purvaneckienė, President of the Baltic Assembly and Head of the Seimas Delegation to the Baltic Assembly. “Voice of the Baltic Assembly and the Nordic Council on the EU issues has to be louder. We have to pool our resources and to appear as a grouping on the EU level. By pooling our resources, we can form a group of European frontrunners in research, smart technologies and growth.”

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GIEDRĖ PURVANECKIENĖ: “BELARUS REPRESENTS ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT CASES FOR THE EU IN BRINGING FORTH A DEMOCRATIC CHANGE”

“The case of Belarus represents a great challenge not only to democracy promoters but also to scholars, since the country has been rather insensitive towards all the policies employed with regard to it,” said Giedrė Purvaneckienė, Head of the Seimas Delegation to the Baltic Assembly and President of the Baltic Assembly, as she welcomed the participants of the seminar on Belarus and the Eastern Partnership after the election in Belarus.

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[*More about the event*](#)

PHOTO MOMENTS



Solemn meeting dedicated to the International Human Rights Day and the 25th anniversary of the Seimas Committee on Human Rights. 9 December 2015



Presentation of the analytical study Economic Challenges of Ukraine and Moldova on the Way to EU. 11 December 2015



Gediminas Kirkilas, Deputy Speaker of the Seimas, met with Claire Lawrence, Ambassador of the UK to Lithuania. 11 December 2015



Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, participated in the solemn launching of NordBalt and LitPol Link interconnections. 14 December 2015



Gediminas Kirkilas, Deputy Speaker of the Seimas, received Toyoei Shigeeda, Ambassador of Japan to Lithuania. 18 December 2015



A delegation of Members of the Seimas visited the Foreigners' Registration Centre in Pabradė, Lithuania. 18 December 2015



Gediminas Kirkilas, Deputy Speaker of the Seimas, received Einars Semanis, the newly appointed Ambassador of the Republic of Latvia to Lithuania. 22 December 2015

For more photos of the December 2015 events and meetings, see [here](#).

TEXT

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