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## PARLIAMENTARY BUSSINES

### LITHUANIAN AND EU SMART SPECIALISATION STRATEGIES DISCUSSED AT A JOINT MEETING OF THREE SEIMAS COMMITTEES



On 11 November 2015, the Seimas Committees on Budget and Finance, on European Affairs and on Economics held a joint meeting titled *Smart Specialisation Strategy*. Presentations on smart specialisation challenges for Europe and Lithuania were delivered, followed by a discussion on national and international prospects in this regard.

A video conference was held with Ciaran Dearle, Senior Expert on Interaction of R&I and Cohesion Policies, Unit B/5 - Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation, Directorate for the Innovation Union and the ERA, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission. Mr

Dearle delivered a presentation titled *The Challenge and the Opportunity of Smart Specialisation: a chance for Europe and Lithuania*.

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### COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS MET WITH MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF THE LITHUANIAN WORLD COMMUNITY

On 13 November 2015, Members of the Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs heard the account given by Dalia Henke, Chair of the Lithuanian World Community, about the activities of the Lithuanian World Community (LWC), its goals in 2015–2018 as well as future plans.

The new Board of the Lithuanian World Community elected during the 15<sup>th</sup> Seimas in July 2015 and headed by Dalia Henke, aims to further strengthen the organisation of Lithuanians residing abroad, which is functioning in 42 countries and has been active for 65 years already. The main future goals are: to further bring together, unite and consolidate Lithuanians and their organisations based overseas; to give focus to the Lithuanian culture and studies of the Lithuanian language; to cooperate with Lithuanian institutions, and consult the Government and Seimas on diaspora issues. However, all the efforts should be directed to the most important goal – consolidation of Lithuania.

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## DUAL CITIZENSHIP PERMITTED FOR PERSONS HOLDING LITHUANIAN AND OTHER COUNTRY'S CITIZENSHIP BY RIGHT OF BIRTH



On 19 November 2015, the Seimas adopted amendments to the Law on Citizenship, specifying the conditions when a citizen of the Republic of Lithuania may also be a citizen of another state. The Law received 88 votes in favour, 1 vote against and no abstentions. The amendments repealed the requirement for persons who acquired citizenship of Lithuania and that of another state by birth to choose one citizenship or another at the age of 21.

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## SEIMAS ADOPTED AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW ON THE LEGAL STATUS OF ALIENS TO IMPROVE THE PROCEDURE FOR GRANTING ASYLUM

On 26 November 2015, the Seimas adopted, by 66 votes in favour, 8 against and 22 abstentions, the amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens.

The Law improves the mechanism for examination of asylum applications; provides for more stringent measures in cases of abuse of the asylum procedure; more thoroughly regulates the status of aliens who cannot leave on humanitarian grounds; allows individuals who have been granted a temporary residence permit pursuant to Article 40(1)(8) of the Law access to the labour market; amends and specifies, due to the changes in the asylum system, provisions on determination of the legal status of unaccompanied minors who are not asylum seekers; and regulates the mechanism for resettlement/relocation of aliens in the Republic of Lithuania.

Furthermore, the Law specifies some existing provisions implementing European Union law and regulates the amounts and specific cases of support for integration for aliens who have been granted asylum in Lithuania.

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## SEIMAS SUGGESTED THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SUBMIT A SUMMER TIME PROPOSAL TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

On 26 November 2015, considering the results of the analysis of the implications of summer time, the Seimas decided to suggest the Government should bring forward, by 30 April 2016 at the latest, a proposal to the European Commission that each Member State of the European Union could make its own summertime arrangements within its territory. The Seimas Resolution on Application of Summer-Time Arrangements on the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania received 67 votes in favour, 5 against and 28 abstentions.

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### SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS: “LITHUANIA IS PREPARED TO FURTHER ACTIVELY COOPERATE WITH GEORGIA”



On 4 November 2015, Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, met with Irakli Garibashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, and the delegation under his leadership during their official visit to Lithuania. The Speaker of the Seimas welcomed the vigorous parliamentary dialogue between the two countries and the transfer of experience in the areas of democratic reform and European integration.

During the meeting, it was pointed out that Lithuania supported Georgia and was ready to help the country in its efforts towards speedier European and Euro-Atlantic integration. According to Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, Georgia has made tremendous advances and it is essential to continue the work in progress.

The Speaker of the Seimas highlighted that Lithuania had implemented over 150 bilateral development cooperation projects in the areas of social life, healthcare, agriculture, and institutional capacity building in Georgia over the past ten years. The meeting participants went on to explore the opportunities to invigorate the development of common economic, cultural and educational projects, with a special emphasis on education and innovation.

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### LORETA GRAUŽINIENĖ, SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS: “LITHUANIAN EXPERIENCE COULD BE EXTREMELY USEFUL FOR KOSOVO”



On 9 November 2015, Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, had a meeting with Isa Mustafa, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, during his first ever visit to Lithuania. During the meeting, Ms Graužinienė underlined the desire of Lithuania to maintain friendly bilateral relations with Kosovo and to further develop cooperation in strengthening Kosovo’s statehood and participation in the European integration process.

“Lithuania is looking forward to sharing its experience with Kosovo both in terms of European integration and internal reform. Since the restoration of its independence, Lithuania has made significant progress in implementing institutional, economic and social reforms. The experience our country has gained could be beneficial to democracy-building in the Republic of Kosovo,” said the head of the Lithuanian Parliament.

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### SEIMAS PAID TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF THE VICTIMS OF THE TERRORIST ATTACKS IN FRANCE



On 16 November, at 1 p.m., a minute’s silence was held at the Seimas in honour of the victims of France terror attacks.

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## DELEGATION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS TO THE USA DISCUSSED THE STRENGTHENING OF BILATERAL RELATIONS



The delegation of the Seimas Committee on European Affairs, which included Vydas Gedvilas, First Deputy Speaker of the Seimas, Gediminas Kirkilas, Deputy Speaker of the Seimas and Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Andrius Kubilius, leader of the opposition, and Emanuelis Zingeris, Head of the Group for Inter-Parliamentary Relations with the United States of America (USA) and Deputy Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, visited Washington, the USA, on 16–20 November 2015. During the intensive visit, the delegation met with Ron Johnson, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Dana

Rohrabacher, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, members of the House Baltic Caucus, and other influential politicians of the US Senate and House of Representatives.

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## BENEDIKTAS JUODKA, CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AND EMANUELIS ZINGERIS, MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE, MET WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ROMANIA

On 24 November 2015, Benediktas Juodka, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Emanuelis Zingeris, Member of the Committee, met with Daniel Ionita, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania. At the meeting they discussed the key regional security issues and the EU's Eastern Partnership, with particular emphasis on the ongoing reforms and challenges in Moldova and Ukraine on their way to European integration. The guest from Romania underlined that the support to Moldova from the European Union and especially from the democratic states in the region offered an opportunity to stay on track with the European integration. Mr Juodka, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, noted that the banking system reform and other necessary reforms as well as reducing corruption were essential objectives for Moldova as an Eastern Partnership country, but clear public support to the pro-European cause was the guarantee of stability in the state. Participants of the meeting also shared insights into the recent local elections in Ukraine and the ongoing reform process in the country.

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## SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS RECEIVED THE SLOVENIAN AMBASSADOR TO LITHUANIA



On 25 November 2015, the meeting between the Speaker of the Seimas, Loreta Graužinienė, and the Slovenian Ambassador to Lithuania, Robert Krmelj, centred on bilateral relations between Lithuania and Slovenia. This year, the Parliamentary Friendship Group with Lithuania has been set up at the Slovenian National Assembly and, according to Ms Graužinienė, this will even more contribute to closer cooperation between the Parliaments of our countries.

The Speaker of the Seimas expressed her satisfaction with the growing cooperation in a variety of fields. Nevertheless, she considered that there still was a lot of untapped potential for cooperation. The volume of trade growing annually clearly shows that both countries have something to offer each other. Close political and economic relations open up opportunities for development of relations in other areas such as tourism, science, education and innovation.

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## 34<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY AND THE 21<sup>ST</sup> BALTIC COUNCIL

### OPENING OF THE 34<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY AT THE SEIMAS



On 20 November, the Seimas opened the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly. Before setting to work, Giedrė Purvaneckienė, President of the Baltic Assembly and Head of the Seimas Delegation to the Baltic Assembly, invited the participants to observe a minute's silence to honour the victims of the terror acts in France.



The solemn session started with welcome speeches by the Speakers of Parliaments of the three Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, said that over the years, the successful development of the Baltic Assembly activities demonstrated that our three countries shared privileged relations, common historical experience, successful completion of joint tasks, and the wish to build our future together. However, considering the new challenges, the Speaker of the Seimas invited the participants to review the Baltic Assembly priorities, objectives and targets. “Today, security is the most important aspect for our people, our region, and Europe as a whole. With the increasing number of terrorist attacks against civilian population, it becomes clear that our countries, Europe, and the rest of the world are confronted with a challenge to which we can only respond by joining forces. Therefore, we should strengthen our Baltic cooperation in the fields of security and defence”, urged the leader of the parliament.

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### LORETA GRAUŽINIENĖ, SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS: “NEW THREATS SHOULD NOT DIVERT THE ATTENTION FROM THE CORE OBJECTIVE OF THE BALTIC STATES”



Towards the end of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Baltic Assembly (BA), a press conference of the heads of parliaments of the three Baltic States was held.

Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania; Eiki Nestor, President of the Riigikogu of the Republic of Estonia; and Ināra Mūrniece, Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, discussed the relevant economic and energy projects and the new challenges to the Baltic States. “The emerging threat of terrorism is a huge challenge for Europe and the rest of the world. The Baltic States approach this challenge very seriously. However, we should not forget that emerging threats should not divert the attention from the core objective of the three Baltic countries, on which we have worked together for many years in a targeted way. I am referring to the Eastern Partnership programme. The three heads of parliaments have a shared opinion that it is our obligation to keep on track in this area and prevent even the most challenging events from overshadowing this initiative. It is our moral right to help the people who have been fighting for the democratic path and the path towards the European family. We cannot leave them alone in this critical situation. In the near future, the leaders of the Nordic and Baltic countries intend to travel to Ukraine and meet with the officials of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and other civil servants,” the Speaker of the Seimas said.

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## BA SESSION: LITHUANIA SUPPORTS THE BROADEST POSSIBLE APPLICATION OF SMART SOLUTIONS TO THE EU'S EXTERNAL BORDER CONTROL



Internal and external security issues of the EU were discussed at the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly. Tomas Žilinskas, Director of the Public Security Policy Department, Ministry of the Interior of Lithuania, who delivered a presentation on the subject, underlined that Lithuania's priority had always been protection of the EU's external borders. "Even though we are a small country, we are responsible for the protection of one of the longest EU external border sections, stretching for more than 1000 kilometres," Mr Žilinskas said.

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## THE STATEMENT OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> BALTIC COUNCIL PRESENTED AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE

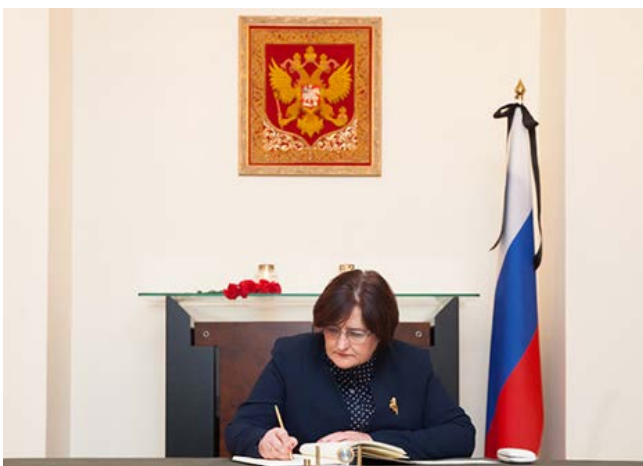


"At the beginning of its activities the Baltic Assembly focussed primarily on political goals such as fight for independence, and accession to NATO and the European Union. Having achieved these goals, the BA shifted to more practical and economic matters that required joint efforts of the three Baltic States," said Giedrė Purvaneckienė, President of the Baltic Assembly, Chairperson of the Seimas Delegation.

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[More about the event](#)

## PHOTO MOMENTS



*The Speaker of the Seimas, Loretta Graužinienė, signs in the book of condolences at the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Vilnius expressing her sympathy with the victims of the Russian airliner crash in Egypt. 2 November 2015*



*The Member of the Seimas, Signatory to the Act on the Re-establishment of the State of Lithuania, Head of the Group for Inter-Parliamentary Relations with the USA, Emanuelis Zingeris, receives the former US Congressman, Bill Sarpalius, who participated in the delegation that visited Lithuania even before 11 March 1990. 7 November 2015. Photo by Rimantas Stankevičius*



*Members of the Group for Inter-Parliamentary Relations with the United States of America meet with the Congressional Staff Delegation from the USA. 10 November 2015*



*The Deputy Speaker of the Seimas, Chair of the Committee on European Affairs, Gediminas Kirkilas, signs in the book of condolences at the Embassy of Israel in Vilnius on the death of the former President of the State of Israel, Yitzhak Navon. 10 November 2015. Photo by Rimantas Stankevičius*



*The Speaker of the Seimas, Loreta Graužinienė, pays tribute to the memory of the victims of terrorism at the Embassy of the French Republic. 15 November 2015*

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

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