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ANNIVERSARY



THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MARKS THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RESTORATION OF LITHUANIA'S INDEPENDENCE



With the 25th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuania's independence drawing close, a delegation led by Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, visited Brussels on 3–5 March 2015 where it took part in a solemn commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the day of the 11th of March. The Speaker of the Seimas was accompanied by Gediminas Kirkilas, Deputy Speaker of the Seimas and Chair of the Committee on European Affairs; Jaroslav Narkevič, Deputy Speaker of the Seimas; Andrius Kubilius, Leader of the Opposition; Arminas Lydeka, Member of the Seimas; and Algirdas Vaclovas Patackas*, Member of the Seimas and Signatory to the Act of Independence.

On 4 March, the delegation of the Seimas, together with the Lithuanian community in Belgium, marked the 25th anniversary of the restoration of independence in Solidarity Square in front of the European Parliament. Festive balloons rose to the sky during the event.

In the evening, the anniversary was commemorated in the European Parliament where congratulatory speeches were made by Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament, Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, and

* *Algirdas Vaclovas Patackas, one of the Defenders of Freedom, Signatory to the Act of Independence of Lithuania, Member of the 6th, 7th, and the current legislature of the Seimas, passed away on 3 April 2015.*



ambassador Raimundas Karoblis, Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the EU. Later that evening, Martynas Levickis, one of the most famous Lithuanian accordionists, put on a performance for the participants of the commemorative event.

of the Senate of Belgium, and Siegfried Bracke, President of the House of Representatives of Belgium.



[Address of the Speaker of the Seimas Mrs Loreta Graužinienė in the European Parliament on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuania's independence](#)



For more photos, see [here](#).

THREATS TO DEMOCRACY DISCUSSED AT THE INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY MEETING IN THE SEIMAS



While commemorating the 25th anniversary of Lithuania's independence, the Seimas hosted the international parliamentary meeting called State of Democracy around the Globe: Current Challenges and Future Prospects. The event was organised by the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy. The participants were welcomed by Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas. "Freedom became stronger than fear of any sorts of violence or fear of death. This was the victory of our nation," the Speaker said.

While assessing the success story of the restoration of Lithuania's independence, the participants of the meeting focused on the growing challenges to democracy and fostering of democratic values. They also discussed past lessons and today's challenges and threats to democracy in the global world.

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For more photos, see [here](#).

THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DAY OF RESTORATION OF LITHUANIA'S INDEPENDENCE COMMEMORATED AT THE SEIMAS



A solemn commemoration of the Anniversary of the Day of Restoration of Lithuania's Independence was held at the Seimas. The commemorative meeting was addressed by President of the Republic of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė; Speaker of the Seimas, Loreta Graužinienė; Archbishop of Vilnius, Gintaras Grušas; President of the Supreme Council – Reconstituent Seimas, Vytautas Landsbergis, and President of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson. Congressman from Illinois, Co-Chair of Baltic Caucus, John Shimkus, congratulated Lithuania on behalf of the Congress of the United States.

While congratulating Lithuania with the holiday of freedom, the President of the Republic of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, [stressed](#) that what we needed a quarter of a century after the Restoration of Independence was the unity inspired by the legendary reform movement Sąjūdis again. "When the rattling of arms is heard again from the same direction; when firearms are used to stifle the voice of freedom; when not only the outside forces, but those inside too try to divide, to belittle and to fade the light of freedom, we will be as strong as we are united," Dalia Grybauskaitė said.

In her [speech](#) the Speaker of the Seimas, Loreta Graūžinienė, expressed her gratitude to the Signatories to the Act of Independence of Lithuania: “I believe that at the moment of signing the Act of Independence of Lithuania they were already free since only free people are able to make choices and only a free man can understand that compulsion, violence, aggression and terror have no power against the inner freedom of a human being. Dear Signatories to the Act of Independence of Lithuania, your signature is a sign of boundless love to your Homeland, responsibility for its history, its future and for all those who fought and gave their lives.”

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[Speech by Loreta Graūžinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, at the solemn commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuania's Independence](#)



[Flags of the three Baltic States hoisted in Independence Square on the day of the restoration of Lithuania's independence](#)

For more photos, see [here](#).

PARLIAMENTARY BUSSINES

PRESENTATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE SPRING SESSION OF THE SEIMAS

On 10 March, Seimas Speaker Loreta Graūžinienė and Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius presented the work programme of the fourth (spring) session of the Seimas.

The draft work programme registered includes 700 draft legal acts, the accompanying legislation excluded. Statistically, the Government has submitted 177 draft legislative proposals, President Dalia Grybauskaitė has put forward 12, and members of the Seimas (political groups) have made nearly 360. Furthermore, the session will hear the State of the Nation Address by Dalia Grybauskaitė and the annual activity report by the Government.

According to Ms Graūžinienė, the spring session will particularly focus on strengthening of national security and national defence, social issues, labour relations, ensuring of public financial discipline, combating the shadow economy, prevention of corruption, optimisation of court proceedings and other issues important to the public.

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SEIMAS APPROVED THE NATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION PROGRAMME

As a matter of special urgency, the Seimas adopted a Resolution on the Approval of the National Anti-Corruption Programme 2015–2025 of the Republic of Lithuania with 90 votes in favour, none against and 6 abstentions.

The National Anti-Corruption Programme 2015–2025 of the Republic of Lithuania (“the Programme”) is to ensure a long-term, effective and targeted system of corruption prevention and control in the Republic of Lithuania for the period 2015 to 2025. The Programme covers the major provisions of the national anti-corruption policy in the public and private sectors. More specifically, it is geared towards the reduction and elimination of corruption conditions and risks, as well as corruption risk management and assuming of liability for corruption-related offences.

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THE SEIMAS REINTRODUCES MANDATORY INITIAL MILITARY SERVICE FOR A FIVE-YEAR-PERIOD

Following a special urgency procedure, the Seimas has approved amendments to the law, allowing for a possibility to call up conscripts to do a 9-month-long continuous mandatory military service. The motion on amendments was passed by 112 votes in favour, with 3 votes against and 5 abstentions.

The Seimas has decided to commit the Government to draft, by 1 May 2015, amendments to primary and secondary legislation which regulate conscription. A protocol resolution on this matter was adopted by 102 votes in favour, with no votes against and 3 abstentions.

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SEIMAS HAS ADOPTED THE RESOLUTION ON THE MURDER OF BORIS NEMTSOV



International parliamentary meeting State of Democracy around the Globe: Current Challenges and Future Prospects. 10/03/2015. Photo by Džoja Gunda Barysaitė, Office of the Seimas

In the Resolution, the Seimas, which is marking the 25th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuania’s independence, recalled with deep sorrow the tragic death of Lithuania’s close friend Boris Nemtsov, his death shocking the whole country. Nemtsov was one of the key figures who inspired hope that some day Russia would embark on the road towards democracy. Nemtsov was expected as one of the key speakers at the International Parliamentary Meeting *State of Democracy around the Globe: Current Challenges and Future Prospects* organised by the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy. Nemtsov’s death is a loss for the entire free world, jeopardising the hopes of positive developments in Russia.

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THE SEIMAS RATIFIES THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN LITHUANIA, POLAND AND UKRAINE ON SETTING UP A JOINT MILITARY UNIT

At its plenary sitting, the Seimas has ratified the agreement between the Governments of Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine on establishing a joint military unit. All 73 Members of the Seimas attending the voting in the plenary voted in favour of the draft law on the ratification of the agreement. The agreement aims at setting up a joint Lithuanian–Polish–Ukrainian military brigade, defining its tasks, principles of activity, structure, and other matters related to its activities.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

MARTIN SCHULZ, PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, CONGRATULATED LITHUANIA ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RESTORATION OF INDEPENDENCE



At the European Parliament in Brussels, the Speaker of the Seimas Loreta Graužinienė met with the President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz in the framework of the solemn commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuania's independence. During the meeting, while discussing the geopolitical subjects and the Eastern Partnership in particular, Martin Schulz highlighted his serious concern over Russia's actions and their unpredictability. The President of the European Parliament stressed that Ukraine's economic situation was very delicate and that the country obviously needed help. Later, while expressing his congratulations on the anniversary of the restoration of Lithuania's independence at the official event at the European

Parliament, Mr Schulz professed his friendship with Lithuania and reiterated his sincere support to the country and admiration for its people.

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SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS MET WITH THE PRESIDENTS OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF BELGIUM



During her working visit to Brussels, Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, met with Christine Defraigne, President of the Senate of Belgium. The bilateral cooperation, the geopolitical situation in the region, the Eastern Partnership issues and growing threats of terrorism were among the subjects discussed in the meeting. "Both terrorism and the issue of Ukraine have to be tackled in parallel. The latest events demonstrate that human rights matters must be given priority. We have shared the same view with the President of the Belgian Senate in that Europe must speak with one voice and stay strong and in solidarity when addressing geopolitically crucial matters," the Speaker said.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE IN RIGA DISCUSSED THREATS TO THE EU, THE SITUATION IN UKRAINE AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT

The delegation of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania headed by Artūras Paulauskas, Chair of the Committee on National Security and Defence (CNSD), took part in the Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy in Latvia on 4–6 March 2015. The three-day conference brought together members of parliaments of EU Member States and of the European Parliament, and EU's top officials, who discussed the challenges of the EU's foreign and security policy agenda in general debates. Besides, discussions were held on the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership in the run-up to the Summit in Riga, the strengthening of cooperation between the EU and NATO, challenges and priorities of the EU common foreign and security policy, hybrid warfare, threats to the European Union from the east and south, and activities of EU Battlegroups.

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SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS MET WITH THE PRESIDENT OF ICELAND ON THE EVE OF 11 MARCH 2015



Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, met with Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, President of Iceland. The Speaker of the Seimas underlined the importance of the visit of the President of Iceland on the eve of 11 March as Lithuania prepares for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the restoration of its independence.

“Iceland was the first independent state that dared to recognise the independence of the Republic of Lithuania restored on 11 March 1990. Therefore, it is very symbolic and important for us that you as the present leader of the Republic of Iceland and the then member of the government will join us in celebrating this important occasion,” the Speaker said.

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VYDAS GEDVILAS, FIRST DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS: “UKRAINE GREATLY APPRECIATES WHAT IT RECEIVES FROM LITHUANIA”



On 11 March 2015, Vydas Gedvilas, First Deputy Speaker of the Seimas, had a meeting with Andrii Parubii, First Deputy Chairperson of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. The First Deputy Speaker of the Seimas underlined that Lithuania had always supported the position and aspirations of Ukraine on its path to European reforms and had made continuous effort to ensure a unanimous support on the EU level. “We need to step up efforts in providing humanitarian, financial and expert assistance to your country,” Mr Gedvilas said.

Vydas Gedvilas stressed that Lithuania, most probably better than any other EU Member State, understood and felt the risk of a potential military conflict in Europe. “If Ukraine succeeds in withstanding, the threat will be eliminated. If not, Russia will sooner or later go further and the threat might well become a reality,” the First Deputy Speaker of the Seimas noted.

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EU SECRETARIES GENERAL APPROVED THE NOVELTIES OFFERED DURING THE SEIMAS’ CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE IPEX BOARD



The IPEX Annual Report 2014, submitted by Daiva Raudonienė, Secretary General of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and Chair of the IPEX Board, the Conclusions on IPEX, and the revised IPEX Guidelines were approved by the Secretaries General of the European Union Parliaments at the meeting in Rome on 13 March 2015.

The most significant novelty produced during the Seimas’ Chairmanship of the IPEX Board was the newly revised IPEX Guidelines which *inter alia* envisage the procedure of appointing the rotating Chair of the IPEX Board. The one-year-long Chairmanship of the IPEX Board falls to the Parliament which chaired the annual meeting of the Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments. The Chairmanship runs from the end of one annual Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments to the end of the next one. On 21 April 2015, the Lithuanian Parliament will hand over the Chairmanship of the IPEX Board to the Italian Parliament.

The new hiring arrangements for the IPEX Information Officer were established during the Seimas' Chairmanship of the IPEX Board in 2014. The Belgian Senate hired the IPEX Information Officer for the period of 2015–2016 on the recommendation of the Lithuanian Parliament while the 28 national Parliaments of the EU agreed to co-finance the post.

The national Parliaments of Italy, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Latvia and the European Parliament will be the *ex officio* members of the IPEX Board for the period of 2015–2016. Besides, 11 additional national Parliaments, the Seimas included, will compose the IPEX Board.

The objective of IPEX is to support interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union by providing a platform for the electronic exchange of EU-related information and opinions on parliamentary scrutiny, including aspects of subsidiarity, between Parliaments in the Union, as well as for organising the calendar of interparliamentary meetings.

SEIMAS' SPEAKER MET WITH THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE VERKHOVNA RADA IN KYIV



Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, met with Volodymyr Groysman, Chairperson of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, in Kyiv. Together with other Speakers of Parliaments of the Nordic and Baltic countries, they discussed possible programmes of the Nordic and Baltic countries and the Council of Europe in support of the Ukrainian Parliament, with special attention to the reform process. The Speaker of the Seimas attended the meetings together with Mogens Lykketoft, Speaker of the Folketing of the Kingdom of Denmark; Gundars Daudze, Deputy Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia; Olemic Thommessen, President of the Storting of the Kingdom of Norway; and Urban Ahlin, Speaker of the Riksdag of the Kingdom of Sweden.

Mrs Graužinienė stressed that difficult economic reforms and the concern to maintain people's trust required certain sensitivity. The citizens should see positive results of the ongoing reforms in fighting corruption and other negative phenomena.

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SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS DISCUSSES POSSIBILITIES OF ASSISTANCE TO UKRAINE WITH SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE



During her visit in Kiev, the Speaker of the Seimas, Loreta Graužinienė, together with other Speakers of Nordic and Baltic parliaments, met with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland. While assessing the outcomes of recent working meetings in Kiev, the participants of the meeting discussed ways how the parliaments of their countries and the Council of Europe could contribute to providing assistance to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

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[The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted a statement condemning the continuation of the occupation and annexation of Crimea](#)

[The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted a statement on the creeping annexation of Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali by the Russian Federation](#)



CONFERENCE OF THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY AND THE BALTIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

CONFERENCE OF THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY AND THE BALTIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS: “WE HAVE TO REITERATE OUR COMMITMENT TO THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP”

The conference of the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers EU Eastern Partnership from Vilnius to Riga: achievements, challenges and future prospects was held at the Seimas. This was the fourth event of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Baltic Assembly.

The participants of the conference were welcomed by the Speaker of the Seimas, Loreta Graužinienė. After having stressed that the Baltic States had put a great deal of effort to ensure success of the Eastern Partnership, the Speaker recalled her visit in Ukraine and expressed her satisfaction with the positive changes observed. She noted that in the new Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine there were many representatives of the new generation with a wider attitude of mind who were ready to take over the experience of the EU partners and who aspired to pursue the road of European integration chosen by the country. Ms Graužinienė noted that the members of the Verkhovna Rada acknowledged they would be facing new challenges in late April and early May. However, Ukraine was determined to put substantial efforts to defend both itself and us. The Speaker added in this context that a certain degree of disillusionment could be felt in Ukraine as “we failed in doing something, we spoke too much and offered too little support.”

In her introductory address the President of the Baltic Assembly, Giedrė Purvaneckienė, suggested that the Vilnius Summit held in 2013 was a historic breakthrough, which launched a new direction of geopolitical development. The subsequent events in Ukraine changed the lives of many nations, and a massive external pressure could be felt due to the intentions to develop closer cooperation between the EU and Eastern Partnership countries. Ms Purvaneckienė argued that Russia seemed to be prepared to apply all the possible means to convince our partners to reverse the European course. The President of the Baltic Assembly urged the participants to formulate the key message and “to transfer our parliamentary dimension and the parliamentary attitude towards the discussion about the Eastern Partnership”, to be announced at the Eastern Partnership Summit to be held in Riga on 21–22 May under the framework the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

[More about the event](#)

PHOTO MOMENTS



*Presentation of the book *Jews in the History of Lithuanian Chess* at the chess tournament Cup of the Seimas 2015. 7 March 2015*



Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, at the exhibition arranged by the Embassy of Georgia to the Republic of Lithuania, dedicated to mark the long-lasting historical relations between Lithuania and Georgia. 10 March 2015



Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, welcomes the Speakers of foreign countries' parliaments at the commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the Restoration of Lithuania's Independence. 11 March 2015



Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, meets with Adrian Candu, President of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova. 12 March 2015

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

TEXT

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