



LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS
SEIMAS

Lithuanian
Parliamentary
Mirror

www.lrs.lt

NEWSLETTER | 2016 JANUARY
No 1 (45)

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- THE SEIMAS COMMEMORATED THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEFENCE OF FREEDOM OF LITHUANIA
- VISIT OF LORETA GRAUŽINIENĖ, SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS, TO UKRAINE
- SEIMAS SPEAKER AND CHAIR OF THE SENATE OF THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM DISCUSSED CURRENT ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
- AMBASSADORS PRESENTED EU PRESIDENCY RESULTS AND PRIORITIES AT A JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

PARLIAMENTARY BUSSINES

Committee on Human Rights: the EU needs common accessibility requirements on products and services for all consumers, including people with disabilities

At its meeting on 13 January 2016, the Seimas Committee on Human Rights discussed compliance with the principle of subsidiarity of the Proposal of the European Commission for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States as regards the accessibility requirements for products and services.

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Latvian Saeima's initiative on a "green card" discussed by the Committee on European Affairs

At the meeting of 14 January 2016, the Committee on European Affairs of the Seimas discussed the initiative by the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia on the draft "green card" concerning the review of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (hereinafter referred to as the Directive). The Committee agreed in principle with the initiative, but in the light of the opinions delivered by the responsible specialised committees of the Seimas recommended to revise some aspects of the proposal.

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New proposal of the European Parliament discussed by the Committee on European Affairs

At the meeting of 14 January 2016, the Committee on European Affairs discussed the proposal of the European Parliament for the Council Decision adopting the provisions amending the Act concerning the election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage. Apart from technical aspects, the proposal recommends the amendment of the procedure for establishing constituencies for elections to the European Parliament and of the procedure for the election of the President of the European Commission.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Seimas Speaker and Chair of the Senate of the Kingdom of Belgium discussed current issues in international politics



On 14 January 2016, Loretta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, met with Christine Defraigne, Chair of the Senate of the Kingdom of Belgium, who was on an official visit to Lithuania. The meeting focused on bilateral political and economic relations and current events on the international stage.

“I sincerely thank you for your visit at such an important time for Lithuania – 25th anniversary of 13 January,” said Ms Graužinienė.

The Speaker of the Seimas welcomed active interparliamentary cooperation between Belgium and Lithuania and expressed hope

that, in the future, it would be even greater. Other points of the discussion included attraction of investment and innovation as well as cooperation in high technology. A strong emphasis was put on energy security matters.

Concerning major European policy challenges such as the growing threat of terrorism and refugee crisis, the Speaker of the Seimas noted that “small countries like Lithuania and Belgium were to call for the European Union to remain united and consistently defend common European values while at the same time ensuring the control and effective management of the EU’s external borders without prejudice to the Schengen area.”

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Secretary General of the Seimas presented the Memorandum of Understanding between Lithuanian and Israeli parliaments



Daiva Raudonienė, Secretary General of the Seimas, visited Israel at the invitation of Ronen Plot, Director General of the Knesset. The Secretary General brought the Memorandum of Understanding signed by Loretta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, and Yuli-Yoel Edelstein, Speaker of the Knesset, and presented it to Mr Plot.

In the Memorandum, the parties agreed to promote meetings between committees to examine topics that are of importance and interest to the two parliaments, with special emphasis on Green

Parliaments, computerisation and information security, as well as food and water security and sustainability. The Memorandum provided for regular exchanges between civil servants for the purposes of promoting greater exchange and sharing best practices regarding the operation of the respective parliamentary administrations, paying particular attention to drafting of legislation and documentation, administrative organisation and the use of new technology.

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Chair of the Committee on Education, Science and Culture met with the French Embassy's attaché for French

On 21 January 2016, Raimundas Paliukas, Chair of the Committee on Education, Science and Culture, met with Nicolas Torres, cooperation attaché for French of the Embassy of France in Lithuania. The meeting focused on new strands of cooperation in education, science and culture as well as possibilities of diffusion of the French language and culture.

The Embassy of France has set up a vibrant francophone community in Lithuania that unites schools and universities as well as business, cultural and other organisations. The attaché stressed that various ideas and innovation could be easily put into practice in Lithuania as the francophones kept close contacts and cooperated actively with each other.

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Ambassadors presented EU Presidency results and priorities at a joint committee meeting

On 22 January 2016, the Committee on European Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Seimas held a joint meeting with the participation of Gijsbert Hendrik Christiaan van der Lingen, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Lithuania, and André Flammang, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Luxembourg. The ambassadors presented to members of the Committees the achievements of the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the priorities of the Dutch Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which has recently started.

Besides the usual issues on the EU's agenda, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, which held the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2015, faced two major challenges, namely, management of migration flows that had reached the EU and security issues in the context of Paris terror attacks. Deepening of the EU's social dimension and strengthening of the EU's competitiveness dominated the legislative agenda.

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VISIT OF LORETA GRAUŽINIENĖ, SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS, TO UKRAINE

Speaker of the Seimas: "It is vital for Ukraine to preserve political unity and stability"



On 2 February 2016, at the meetings between the Baltic and Nordic (NB8) Speakers of Parliaments and the highest ranking Ukrainian officials in Kiev, Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, highlighted the necessity of political stability in Ukraine and determination to continue the vital reforms.

"As Ukraine follows the path of European integration, it needs undivided political will. It is an essential platform which should become the basis for dealing with all vitally important matters for Ukraine, including implementation of Minsk agreements, ensuring of stability and introduction of reforms in the country, and further European integration of Ukraine," stressed the Speaker of the Seimas after the meeting with Oleksandr Turchynov, Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine; Volodymyr Groysman, Chairperson of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine; chairs of political groups of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine; and Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Prime Minister of Ukraine.

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Speaker of the Seimas met with the President of Ukraine



On 3 February 2016, Mrs Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, together with the Speakers of the Nordic and Baltic Parliaments (NB 8), continued her visit to Kiev where she met with the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko. The meeting focused on the implementation of the Minsk agreements, security situation, and the ongoing Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Since the beginning of this year, 12 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed and 40 injured in eastern Ukraine.

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EVENTS



THE SEIMAS COMMEMORATED THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEFENCE OF FREEDOM OF LITHUANIA

On 7–17 January 2016, the Seimas hosted a number of events to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Defence of Freedom of Lithuania. The commemoration focused on the events of 1991, when the people of Lithuania resisted the Soviet aggressors and defended the independence of the country through their strong determination and dedicated actions.

COMMEMORATION OF THE DAY OF THE DEFENDERS OF FREEDOM

25th anniversary of the events of 13 January 1991 was marked at the meeting of the defenders of freedom



On 12 January, 2016, on the eve of the Day of the Defenders of Freedom, the Seimas hosted a traditional meeting of the defenders of freedom. Prior to the meeting, a commemorative plaque was unveiled in the Stained Glass Gallery in tribute to the defenders of freedom who took an oath in 1991 in this very area. The event was followed by a solemn formation of the defenders of freedom.

Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, welcomed the defenders of freedom, pupils, young riflemen, signatories to the Act of Independence and other distinguished guests who gathered in the historical Hall of the Act of 11 March.



The Speaker of the Seimas stressed that “the story about our road to freedom and independence declared on 11 March 1990 will be incomplete without the events of 13 January 1991. What lie behind that story are the deaths of Lithuanian people and the fates of thousands of defenders of freedom. The fates of those of you who were aware of the imminent danger but were not frightened and did

not step back; on the contrary, you stood firmer shoulder to shoulder for the cause of defending the freedom and independence of Lithuania”.

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Seimas solemnly marked the 25th Anniversary of the Defence of Freedom of Lithuania



On 13 January 2016, the Seimas hosted a solemn commemoration of the Day of the Defenders of Freedom to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Defence of Freedom of Lithuania.

Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas, commenced the commemoration, held in the historical Hall of the Act of 11 March, and invited everyone to observe a minute of silence in tribute to the fallen fighters for freedom. “It is the 25th time today that we are marking the Day of the Defenders of Freedom of Lithuania and honour the memory of those who died for freedom. The names of

those who gave away the most precious thing they had – their lives – for the future of Lithuania were inscribed in the history of our Freedom,” the Speaker of the Seimas underlined.

Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, said that it was a special day when our thoughts went a quarter of a century back to the challenging and tragic night of the 13th of January. “The participants of the events of the 13th of January are connected by a unique and unbreakable bond that forges a link across generations. The children who were born in 1991 breathed in freedom together with Lithuania, and together with Lithuania they learnt to stand on their feet. Today, they are grown-up young men and women, walking down the path of life. Their hearts are encoded with resolve and determination to defend Lithuania if such a need arises,” the President of the Republic said.

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Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas: “Our unity helped us gain freedom”



The Flag Hoisting Ceremony, held on 13 January, 2016 in Independence Square near the premises of the Seimas, was part of the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Day of the Defenders of Freedom.

Speaker of the Seimas, Loreta Graužinienė, highlighted in her speech at the solemn ceremony that it was the people’s unity that helped the country to gain freedom 25 years ago.



“On that memorable night, the whole nation joined together to defend its sovereign state and the right of the people and their children to live in a free country. Everyone felt summoned by the homeland for the crucial battle and all were determined to persevere to the very end. The night of the 13th of January bore testimony to the powerful people’s unity and trust in victory, in the face of which weapons proved to be powerless. We were truly determined to fight for freedom, even if it came to be at the cost of our lives,” the Speaker of the Seimas said.

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The Seimas leadership and members of the government met with the relatives of the deceased defenders and the survivors who fought for the cause of Lithuania's freedom



On the occasion of the Day of the Defenders of Freedom, Loreta Graužinienė, Speaker of the Seimas; Algirdas Butkevičius, Prime Minister; Members of the Seimas and ministers had a meeting with the relatives and close ones of the victims of the aggression of the 13th of January and survivors of the tragic events.

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Seimas marked the 25th anniversary of the National Defence Volunteer Forces



On 17 January 2016, the Seimas held celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of the National Defence Volunteer Forces (NDVF) of the Lithuanian Armed Forces.

A solemn parade in the Independence Square was followed by a commemoration in the Hall of the Act of 11 March. In his welcome speech to the guests, Vydas Gedvilas, First Deputy Speaker of the Seimas, said: "The fact that so many citizens in Lithuania understand the benefit and importance of personal contribution and so many

people act in the interests of the state rather than in their personal interests is very important. It is a very relevant, telling and welcome fact declaring that we do care and that we are ready for defence."

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PHOTO MOMENTS



Visit by Eduard Sharmazanov, Vice President of the National Assembly of Armenia, at the Seimas. Photo by the Office of the Seimas. 14 January 2016



Meeting between Vydas Gedvilas, First Deputy Speaker of the Seimas, and Nemekh Bataa, Ambassador of Mongolia to the Republic of Lithuania. 15 January 2016



*Meeting of the Chairpersons of the European Affairs Committees of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.
25 January 2016*



*Interinstitutional discussion about the 2016 parliamentary priorities in Lithuanian foreign policy and its current issues.
26 January 2016*

For more photos of the January 2016 events and meetings, see [here](#).

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