



SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

RESOLUTION ON THE FUTURE OF LITHUANIA'S DEMOGRAPHIC POLICY

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Vilnius

The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania,

being convinced that:

1) Lithuania's depopulation, just like the constant threat posed by autocratic Russia, is a long-term and major issue of the country's national security and an existential challenge to the survival of the Lithuanian nation and the State of Lithuania,

2) the population and territory are the most important factors of a state's existence determining social well-being of society, quality of economic and national life and strength for the future,

3) the demographic policy is complex and includes the policy of family and birth rate boosting, the policy of development of civic and cultural identity and loyalty ties with one's country, the policy of return of the Lithuanian diaspora and preservation of relations with Lithuania, the policy of attracting foreign students, highly qualified professionals, talents, and other workers to Lithuania and their integration, the policy of healthy lifestyle, extending the span of full life and reducing mortality,

noting that:

1) the drop in birth rates is a global phenomenon characteristic of the most developed countries of the world, it is therefore necessary to take long-term and systematic measures to reduce its negative consequences,

2) Lithuania's population decreased by a quarter, or almost a million inhabitants, between 1992 (the country's population then amounting to 3.7 million) and 2022, which is more than the current population of Vilnius and Kaunas combined,

3) Lithuania's population is ageing, with health care and social security costs currently shared by a higher relative share of the working age population than the European Union (EU)

average, however the ageing rate of Lithuania's population is almost twice as fast as the EU average,

4) the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) forecasts that, unless there occur major changes, Lithuania's population will amount only to 2.4 million in 2030 and 2 million in 2045,

5) the world is witnessing growing flows of uncontrolled migration linked to political unrest, inequality among countries, as well as huge waves of climate migrants,

expressing concern that:

1) Lithuania is facing a shortage of both highly skilled and less skilled workers, and labour shortages are particularly acute in regions that have been hardest hit by emigration, urbanisation and population ageing;

2) inadequate tax revenues will impair the ability of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to meet the growing demand for social and health care services and pensions;

3) the country's current demographic policy is inconsistent, lacking a long-term perspective and a global context, and the measures taken to date for the past three decades to contain negative demographic trends are insufficient;

4) there is a lack of a positive vision of the country's demographic development, and even proposals for future demographic management are dominated by pessimistic and realistic views that nothing else can be done and that one has to accept the fact and adapt to life in an increasingly shrinking Lithuania,

seeking to restore the country to its former population by 2050-2060, and recognising depopulation as a strategic, long-term issue that requires the constant attention of all public authorities,

expressing a strong political stance on the key aspirations of Lithuania's demographic policy and the future development of society,

urges the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, in the field of family, birth rate and healthy lifestyle policy:

1) to foster a positive attitude of society towards the family as the foundation of society and the state;

2) to improve social services for families with children, with particular emphasis on measures to protect and support the careers of women raising children and to help families unable to bear children;

3) to increase access to housing rental and acquisition for young families;

4) to implement comprehensive family support and birth boosting measures, including:

(a) financial incentives (such as lump-sum and periodic payments, tax reliefs, free or subsidised services and goods for children, housing subsidies);

(b) state support for reconciliation of work and family life (such as maternity, paternity and parental leave, childcare services, flexible forms of employment, gender equality in the workplace);

(c) social changes that support children, parenthood and motherhood in the employment policy, creating a child-friendly environment and ensuring gender equality;

5) to ensure the development and diversification of care and education services for preschoolers aged 0-6 years and to achieve full coverage of the need for nurseries and kindergartens, their accessibility, affordability and the high quality of services;

6) to ensure children's full-time daycare and non-formal education; to create a convenient system of transport services for children based on the principle of cooperation between the public and private sectors and parents, as well as to ensure the provision of additional services for families raising school-age children (such as short-term childcare facilities for preschoolers and younger school-age children in workplaces, educational and cultural institutions, and large shopping centres);

7) to ensure that children, regardless of their social status, have access to secondary and higher education of equal quality, with a commitment by the State to provide sufficient support for children who are unable to access education, including higher education, due to poverty;

8) to develop a healthy lifestyle policy for all age groups, ensuring healthy life expectancy at the level of developed countries;

9) to develop opportunities for older persons to remain active in the labour market and in public life at their own choice;

urges the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, in the field of fostering Lithuanian identity, loyalty and civic awareness:

1) to strengthen civic and cultural education at all levels of the education system, revealing the values and richness of the Lithuanian identity, the advantages and opportunities presented by Lithuania as a country worth building one's life in;

2) to develop general social and humanitarian studies in higher education institutions, promoting critical reflection on the development of Lithuanian society, consolidation of the foundations of democracy, and growth of an open, tolerant and humanistic Lithuanian civic identity;

3) to encourage children and youth to choose to study and live in Lithuania;

4) to create, while focusing on the training and retention of talents in Lithuanian higher education and research institutions, a system of incentives for talented youth to choose the fields

of research and technology in which the country lacks competence, by attracting foreign scientists who are needed to develop talents and by combining the studies of talented youth in Lithuania and abroad;

5) to focus, when promoting youth employment, on entrepreneurship, innovation, sharing success stories and socio-economic revival of regions;

urges the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, in the field of the policy of return of the Lithuanian diaspora and preservation of relations with Lithuania:

1) to promote, by expanding the involvement of diplomatic missions of the Republic of Lithuania, education encouraging re-emigration, informing the diaspora about possibilities of entering the labour market of Lithuania, social and health care system, business development and career development;

2) to implement measures to strengthen diaspora ties with Lithuania by promoting the political, economic, social and cultural integration into Lithuanian society of Lithuanian citizens who have left Lithuania, their descendants and stakeholders from other countries;

3) to establish networks of Lithuanian professionals and professionals of Lithuanian descent abroad in countries where they are most numerous, to maintain regular communication with their members, seeking to involve highly skilled professionals and researchers in projects or programmes in Lithuania;

4) to create an attractive financial and fiscal framework with a view to attracting highly skilled Lithuanian-descent professionals and talents from abroad;

5) to significantly improve direct air connectivity with Lithuania;

6) to create a separate programme for the diaspora to enable every person of Lithuanian descent to visit Lithuania and to get to know better its present, history and culture;

7) to encourage Lithuanian scientists who have left abroad for work to return to Lithuania and work in Lithuania;

8) to resolve the issues of legal regulation of dual citizenship in implementing the policy of fostering diaspora ties with Lithuania;

urges the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, in the field of the policy of attracting to Lithuania and integrating foreign students, especially highly skilled professionals, and talents:

1) to improve legal regulation, with a view to facilitating conditions for foreign students to study and to stay in Lithuania for work after graduation;

2) to develop a programme for improving the attractiveness of Lithuania and Lithuanian higher education and research institutions for foreign students, including free Bachelor's degree studies in Lithuania for students from other countries, actions by Lithuanian public authorities, higher education institutions, diplomatic missions, business, public and non-governmental sector

partners intended to better inform foreign students, to improve conditions for studying and living in Lithuania, with a particular focus on attracting foreign students and trainees, their socio-cultural adaptation and involvement in the labour market, and other conditions most favourable for their integration in Lithuania;

3) to encourage Lithuanian higher education institutions to develop high-quality study opportunities for foreign students, to improve the English language skills of teaching staff, and to attract qualified foreign teaching staff to teach in Lithuania;

4) to improve study placement and employment opportunities in Lithuanian enterprises, establishments and organisations for students from other countries, including those studying outside Lithuania, to strengthen their linguistic and cultural integration, and to improve social services;

5) to prepare and implement a programme for addressing the need to attract top-level foreign scientists in priority areas of science and technology where the country lacks scientific and innovative competence (such as robotics, quantum computing, synthetic biology, nanotechnologies, artificial intelligence, etc.) and to propose to develop a financial instrument for this purpose, unconstrained by bureaucratic restrictions and allowing for the award of grants to top-level international scientific leaders in relevant fields who undertake to work with Lithuanian scientific talents;

urges the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, in the field of a flexible policy of attracting highly skilled and medium-skilled workers and workers in shortage occupations (labour immigration) and integrating them, taking into consideration the fact that the State must control the immigration process and that Lithuania has so far been a country receiving mostly Russian-speaking workers from the territory of the former USSR, the fact that attracting third-country workers must not be limited to the Eastern neighbourhood, as it is necessary to maintain a linguistic and cultural balance in order to avoid the creation of single-language, religion or nationality ghettos, also the need to expand the geography of the workforce entering Lithuania:

1) to draw up and approve a list of countries whose nationals are subject to facilitated labour migration rules, based on the criteria of high added value, friendliness, humanitarian, national security, value, cultural, religious and other criteria, and whose emigrants in Lithuania would not give preference to communication in Russian;

2) to establish, in accordance with a list of countries whose nationals are subject to facilitated labour migration rules as approved by the Government, long-term quotas for immigration to Lithuania and its municipalities (by balancing the size of the quotas according to the following objectives: consistent population growth, solving the issue of labour shortages without turning Lithuania into a country of cheap labour and reducing the role of the Russian

language as a *lingua franca*; effective integration of immigrants, without allowing the formation of isolated cultural and religious groups);

3) to actively carry out in the countries included in the list of countries whose nationals are subject to facilitated labour migration rules as approved by the Government an information campaign aimed at attracting the best workers to Lithuania through the relevant employment agencies of those countries, Republic of Lithuania embassies, consulates, honorary consulates, migration service representatives, etc., with a particular focus on attracting highly skilled workers and persons in shortage occupations in Lithuania;

4) to shorten all immigration processes (time limits for the issue of national visas, temporary residence permits, etc.), to waive excessive institutional regulation, taking into consideration the best practices of the EU Member States and neighbouring countries, where the criterion would be the best customer service practices which are faster than in other EU Member States, rather than the service capacities determined by responsible authorities themselves, thus contributing to the creation of a competitive environment; by imposing strict liability for non-compliance with deadlines, bureaucratic delays and poor customer service, while providing for the employer's responsibility for setting requirements for the employee's qualifications (proof of qualifications);

5) to create conditions, wherever possible, for any students and immigrants with higher education and work qualifications to enter Lithuania with close family members;

6) to more actively involve municipalities in the process of reception of immigrants, having regard to the municipalities' needs and commitments regarding integration;

7) to ensure full access to Lithuanian language learning, favourable conditions for getting to know the country, its culture, career and self-employment opportunities, to solve the issues of acculturation and integration of immigrants with the participation of businesses, by providing them with adequate accommodation and social services;

undertakes, in the light of these long-term demographic policy objectives and taking into account the complexity of the issues raised and their importance for the life of the State, to draw up, by 1 October 2023, a national agreement between the political parties of Lithuania on demographic issues, providing for a plan of measures and financing of its implementation, with the coordination of the drawing up of the agreement to be entrusted to the Seimas Committee on Social Affairs and Labour;

proposes that the Government of the Republic of Lithuania:

1) institutionalise the implementation of the demographic policy by appointing an authorised special officer (establishing an office, agency) under the Government who would possess all the necessary powers for inter-institutional empowerment, coordination, preparation of

necessary strategies and programmes, coordination with business and trade union representatives with a view to fully and promptly implementing the provisions of this Resolution;

2) assign to this authorised special officer, as a separate matter requiring urgent action, the coordination of preparation and implementation of a programme of measures for integrating newly arrived foreign nationals, in particular Ukrainians, Belarusians and Russians, first and foremost through the provision of these foreign nationals with an opportunity to learn the fundamentals of the Lithuanian language for free;

instructs Seimas committees to supervise the implementation of this Resolution.

Speaker of the Seimas

Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen