

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



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COUNCIL OF EUROPE – LEADERSHIP IN DEFENCE OF DEMOCRACY AND VALUES

Statement of main ideas

by **ANDRIUS KUBILIUS**

former Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania,
candidate Secretary General of the Council of Europe

EXPERIENCE. Since 1990 Lithuania has achieved remarkable progress in restoring democracy, the rule of law and human rights. I have had the possibility of taking an active part in those processes: in 1990-1992 as Executive Secretary of Sąjūdis, the Lithuanian National Independence Movement, since 1992 as a Member of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, and twice in 1999-2000 and 2008-2012 as Prime Minister, having served during two major financial crises and consequently became known as ‘the crisis Prime Minister’. Due to the strategic decisions by our Government, Lithuania’s economic recovery from the economic crisis of 2008-2009 was one of the fastest at that time in Europe. The experience gained may be of great value for the countries which are currently going through a similar transformation process, and for the Council of Europe itself which is facing various short-term and long-term challenges. With the experience of an inclusive builder of democracy, consensus, accountable and responsible policy, I would be honoured to serve the Council of Europe.

THE EXCEPTIONAL ROLE OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE. For the last 70 years the Council of Europe has played an exceptional role on the continent of Europe as a ‘full-scale factory for democracy’. The Council of Europe is a powerful instrument enabling the European vision of ‘Europe whole, free, and at peace’. This goal can be achieved only if we are united by the same fundamental values of democracy. Being at the crossroads of Europe, we know from our own history that democracies do not go to war against each other. The exceptional role of the Council of Europe in bringing and maintaining peace and stability in Europe through the common values of human rights, rule of law and democracy, remains as relevant today, as it was when the organization was established 70 years ago.

CHALLENGES TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE - DIALOGUE, VALUES AND RULES. The Council of Europe is the most important venue for a pan-European dialogue. However, such a dialogue has no meaning if it is not based on shared values. It would be very important that the Russian Federation stays a member of the Council of Europe and Russian citizens continue having access to the instruments of the Council of Europe to defend their human rights. However, at the same time, the Council of Europe needs to preserve its reputation and authority to defend fundamental values, and not to lower its standards. For the Council of Europe to be able to lead by example, it has to remain a rules-based organization. In order to find a rational solution to this challenge, we should look for a way to have both the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers on the same page. For that reason, a gap between political ‘sceptics’ and ‘enthusiasts’ should be bridged. As a former Prime Minister of Lithuania, I have the experience

and capacity to build bridges of this kind. At the same time, the Council of Europe as a rules-based organization needs the financial capacity in the form of an 'insurance stability fund' in order to offset the non-constructive actions of a member state.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S MISSION AND THE CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRACY. The 21st century is bringing a lot of change and multiple new challenges to the functioning of the fundamental value of democracy. All over the continent the member states of the Council of Europe are facing external and internal challenges to democracy, in the first case, in the shape of hybrid threats, disinformation, and in the second - the spread of populism, radicalism, violent extremism, and a backlash against human rights. The development of new artificial intelligence and information technologies will bring into life more and more features of a post-industrial society and will make it much more individualized. That will push traditional institutions of democracy into fragmentation. The phenomenon of 'democracy erosion' might become the biggest challenge in Europe. The erosion of democracy is the first stage, after which usually comes erosion of the rule of law and a backlash against human rights. That is why the Council of Europe needs to develop instruments of 'early warning' and a timely reaction system in order to prevent 'democracy erosion' evolvement into 'democracy cancer'. We need to look into how the Council of Europe can help democracies steer through stormy waters, what kind of new legal, monitoring and promotion instruments the Council of Europe might develop to effectively assist the people of Europe in protecting democracy. Why not to look into the possibilities of having a Commissioner for Human Rights and Democracy? The Council of Europe is unique in being the only organization of its kind on the whole continent, with the experience and intellectual capital to assist the member states in this task to defend democracy, and at the same time to defend the rule of law and human rights, against the coming challenges. We must respond by building inclusive and equal societies based on respect for human rights, by fighting discrimination on every level, promoting and developing democratic competences, as well as focusing on the participation of young people in democratic processes.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND EUROPE. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Council of Europe proved to be a very effective organization in assisting the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to transform into states adhering to the values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. In the coming decade the mission of the Council of Europe will be to implement the same success stories in other European countries that embarked on the path of transformation. Another international organization - the European Union - through its enlargement, neighbourhood policies, external action and other numerous instruments can have a significant impact on the stabilization of young democracies. The Council of Europe and the European Union have a lot of synergy and the same ambitious goal – 'Europe whole, free and at peace'. We need to look more deeply into how that synergy can be utilized in even more effective ways.

AUTHORITY, VISIBILITY AND LEADERSHIP. The Council of Europe can fulfil its mission in the 21st century only if the organization is credible and widely visible as a defender of core fundamental values and if it upholds and defends clear rules in its activities. The strengthening of the Convention system, the authority of the European Court of Human Rights and the implementation of its judgments must remain our priority. The visibility of the Council of Europe can be enhanced if the member states and especially their parliamentary institutions become the areas for the most important national debates on fundamental values and the Council of

Europe's activities. To achieve this, the practices of national parliaments should be enhanced. Most importantly, the deliberations of Council of Europe affairs in national parliaments would allow citizens to have their say on fundamental issues in their respective countries. Moreover, attracting and involving national parliaments will contribute to the inclusive implementation process of the decisions and recommendations of the Council of Europe.

MODERNIZATION AND REFORM. For the Council of Europe to be ready for the challenges ahead, it needs to become an organization of the 21st century. Reforms, which have been started, should be continued and accelerated. For the Council of Europe to strengthen its authority and voice, it needs to be an organization with clear leadership and with the highest management standards. The Council of Europe needs to become a lean and clean organization. It needs to be an effective local and global actor, able to concern itself with local democracy and share fundamental values on a global level. Most importantly, the Council of Europe needs to stay an organization of values and rules, with strengthened capabilities to be loud and clear in defence of those fundamental values. Moreover, the organization has to increase its relevance to all member states and more than 800 million European citizens. The Council of Europe has to solidify its role, by, amongst other things, streamlining its activities, building resilience to financial crises and strengthening its synergies with other international organizations, including the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation and the European Union.

THE NEXT 70 YEARS. This year the Council of Europe celebrates its 70th Anniversary. It is the ideal occasion to look into the future of the next 70 years and to prepare for the challenges to come. It is my hope that during the next 70 years Europe will become truly whole, free and at peace, and that the Council of Europe plays a crucial role in achieving this dream.

Let's get ready for this task!



Andrius Kubilius



Biography

- Mr Andrius Kubilius studied in the Faculty of Physics, Vilnius University, graduating in 1979.
- He was Secretary-in-Charge of the Lithuanian National Independence Movement Sąjūdis in 1990-1992.
- A re-elected Member of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania since 1992, Mr Andrius Kubilius has held different positions in the leadership of the Seimas and been the Leader of the Opposition.
- Mr Andrius Kubilius served twice as Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania, on both occasions during economic crises (1999-2000; 2008-2012).
- He led the biggest centre-right political party in Lithuania, the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats, from 2003 to 2015.
- He was the Chairman of the Knowledge Society Council under the President of the Republic of Lithuania in 2001-2003. He is a member of the International Advisory Council of the International Republican Institute, USA; a member of the Advisory Board of the Atlantic Council's EuroGrowth Initiative, USA; and a member of the Honorary Board of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies.
- Mr Andrius Kubilius has received national awards from the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Lithuania, the Kingdom of Spain, the Kingdom of Sweden, and Ukraine.
- He pursues wide-ranging interests: political science, history, economics, and cross-country cycling.
- Mr. Andrius Kubilius was born on 8 December 1956 in Vilnius, Lithuania. He is married and has two children. He speaks Lithuanian (his native language), English, and Russian.



First steps towards freedom and democracy: at the commemoration of the Day of Restoration of the State of Lithuania (16 February 1918) with Prof. Vytautas Landsbergis, leader of the Lithuanian National Independence Movement. Vilnius, 16 February 1989. Photo by Zenonas Nekrošius.



Lithuania's path towards the European Union: with Hans van der Broek, European Commissioner for Central and Eastern Europe, in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. Vilnius, 21 July 1998. Photo by Gintaras Mačiulis. ©, Archive of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.

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Traditional bicycle ride *Take Your Own Bike to Europe* to celebrate Lithuania's membership of the EU and Europe Day. Commemoration of the 5th anniversary of the EU membership. 9 May 2009. Photo by Rimvydas Petkevičius. ©, Archive of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.



Together with Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, at the European Council. 18 June 2009. ©, Office of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.



Together with the European leaders at the commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the Collapse of Communism in Central Europe. Krakow, 4 June 2009. ©, Office of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.



Unity of the Baltic States: solemn ceremony of hoisting of the flags of the three Baltic States and welcoming of the Baltic Torch to mark the 20th anniversary of the Baltic Way. 23 August 2009. Photo by Olga Posaškova. ©, Archive of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.



NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on his visit to Lithuania on 19 January 2012. ©, Office of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.