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# Lithuanian Parliamentary Mirror

## The 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the **Baltic Assembly** was held in Vilnius



- ▶ 10<sup>th</sup> Seimas is one year old – p. 3
- ▶ Speaker of the Seimas met with the ambassadors of EU Member States to review the current issues of Lithuanian domestic and foreign policies – p. 55
- ▶ A book of memories of leader of Lithuanian partisans Juozas Lukša-Daumantas published in English was presented at the Seimas – p. 62



## **Lithuanian Parliamentary Mirror**

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# content

10 <sup>TH</sup> SEIMAS IS ONE YEAR OLD .....	3
PLENARY SITTINGS .....	6
ADOPTED LAWS AND DECREES .....	12
RATIFIED INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS .....	18
THE SEIMAS BEGAN DELIBERATION .....	19
AT THE SEIMAS COMMITTEES .....	20
INITIATIVES .....	21
TOPICALITIES .....	23
POSITION .....	24
OPPOSITION .....	26
OPINION .....	27
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS .....	28
SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS .....	47
EVENTS .....	60
AT THE SEIMAS GALLERY .....	70
Exhibitions	



# 10<sup>th</sup> Seimas is one year old

## ON 17 NOVEMBER 2009, THE 10<sup>TH</sup> SEIMAS MARKED THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FIRST SITTING

The Seimas, elected in October 2008, started its work under very difficult conditions – during the global economic crisis. Bearing in mind the then situation, the Seimas faced the task to balance the State Budget in such a manner so that the Government could ensure the main financial needs and stabilise the tax system.

Due to the above reason, complicated and unpopular measures, i.e. increase in taxes, were taken when approving the budget for 2009. The Parliament increased excise duty on alcohol, fuel and cigarettes as well as income, lottery and gambling taxes. The Seimas also decided to gradually extend the state social insurance to persons working under the authorship agreements, athletes, performers and self-employed persons, including farmers, in order to ensure their social guarantees of the state social insurance.

Members of the Seimas had to revise the main national financial document twice. When planning to reduce state budget revenues the expenditure of the budget was also reduced.

The Seimas has also reduced funds aimed at parliamentary activities as well as basic salary coefficients of state politicians and public officials, judges and civil servants of 15-20 highest categories twice this year.

Having assessed financial possibilities of the State Budget, the Seimas decided to reduce the basic salary of state politicians, judges and public officials as well as bonuses awarded for qualification categories to civil servants, officials and statutory servants.

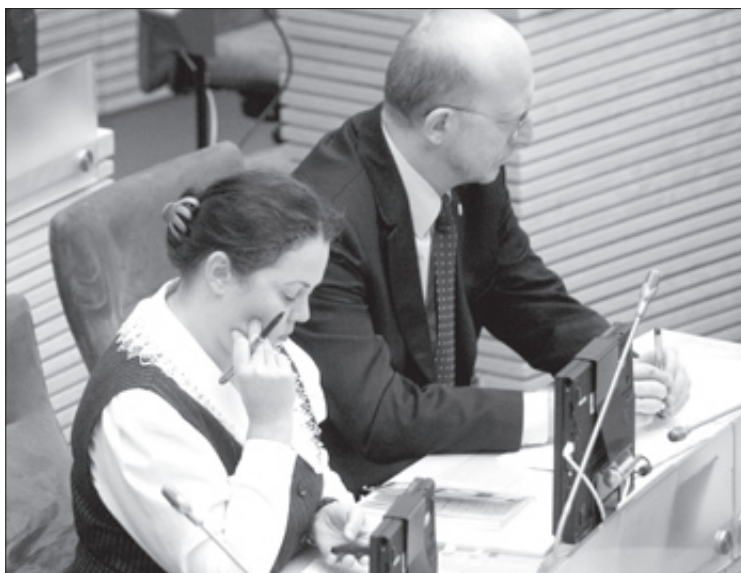
The decrease in the revenue of the State Budget resulted in the increase of the Value Added Tax (VAT). However, the Seimas, comprehending the most vulnerable fields, has extended and upheld in force the reduced VAT tariffs on books and non-periodical information publications, subsidised medicinal products and medical aid means and heating energy for the heating of residential premises, hot water supplied to residential premises or cold water for preparing hot water and heating energy used to heat the cold water.



*MPs Vytautas Gapšys, Birutė Vėsaitė, Edmundas Jonyla, Algirdas Sysas, Algirdas Butkevičius, Mindaugas Bastys (second row)*



*MPs Danutė Bekintienė, Arimantas Dumčius, Audronius Ažubalis, Vilija Aleknaitė-Abramikienė, Kęstutis Masiulis, Stasys Šedbaras, Liudvikas Sabutis*



*MPs Aurelija Stancikienė, Arūnas Valinskas*



*MPs Jonas Jagminas and Milda Petrauskienė*



*MPs Egidijus Vareikis, Valentinas Stundys*



*MPs Algis Kašėta, Dalia Kuodytė, Vytautas Grubliauskas*





*MPs Pranas Žeimys, Arūnė Stirblytė, Ingrida Valinskienė, Dainius Budrys, Vincas Babilius*

As far as the field of education is concerned, after long deliberations and discussions, the Seimas has adopted a very important document – the Law on Science and Studies. The law provides for state regulation of science and studies; the principles of ensuring the quality of science and studies; the legal basis for the establishment, winding up and reorganisation of science and study institutions; the award and recognition of qualifications and academic degrees of higher education; the management, organising and supervision of activities of science and study institutions; the rights and duties of the academic staff and research workers and students of science and study institutions; financing of science and studies and the principals of the management, use and disposal of the property of state higher education establishments. The Seimas also adopted amendments to the Law on Science and Education, which specify requirements for a person willing to work as a teacher.

A more intensive fight against corruption was one of the main works in the field of legal affairs. The Parliament decided to renew the National Anti-Corruption Programme, defined new priorities and objectives in the field of fight against corruption as well as specific measures for the implementation of these priorities and objectives.

A great deal of attention was paid to issues related to discrimination. The Seimas resolved to qualify criminal practices in expressing contempt for a group of persons or a person belonging thereto as aggravating circumstances.

Amendments to the Law on the Governing of the County, which are important for the implementation of the reform of self-governance, were adopted by the Seimas. It was resolved to amend a county management model as of 1 July 2010, i.e. to refuse governors, deputy governors and administrations of counties.

Seeking to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the growth of unemployment, the Seimas adopted the amendments

to the Law on the Support for Employment, which provide for the expansion of application of public works and the list of participants as well as additional sources of financing. However, having evaluated the situation which deteriorated due to the crisis, the Seimas adopted amendments to the Law on Unemployment Social Insurance providing that the unemployment insurance benefit shall be granted to an unemployed person, a person made redundant (dismissed from service) who was paid a severance pay or a compensation by agreement of the parties not earlier than after such a number of calendar months after termination of the employment contract (dismissal from service) that is equal to the number of months in respect of which that person was paid a severance pay or compensation in the amount of average monthly wages.

During its first year of office, the Seimas paid a great deal of attention to the field of energy. In order to avoid considerable changes in prices of gas, the Parliament established a provision that gas companies must establish tariffs for ordinary consumers every half a year thus ensuring a flexible reaction to changes in the market. The Seimas, seeking to ensure the prospect of long-term state support, has also revised the conditions and means of the provision of state support and the accumulation of funds for the modernisation of blocks of flats.

One of the key objectives of the Seimas in the near future is to approve the State Budget for 2010; therefore the Seimas is to take complicated and sensitive decisions regarding the reduction of financing of various fields as well as recalculation of contributions. However, it must be highlighted that the majority of decisions on taxes are provisional. They will stay valid until the financial situation in the country improves.

*Rimas Rudaitis,  
Public Relations Division*



# plenary sittings

4 November

Chairman of the sitting announced about the formation of the Seimas Group for Interparliamentary Relations with the Republic of **Moldova**.

17 November

17 November marks a year since the first meeting of the 10<sup>th</sup> legislature of the Seimas. On this occasion, **Irena**

**Degutienė**, Speaker of the Seimas, made an **overview of the results achieved by the Seimas during the past year** and defined the priorities to guide her further activities as Speaker of the Seimas.

*Address by Irena Degutienė, Speaker of the Seimas,  
On the occasion of the first year in office of the current Seimas*

"Colleagues,  
Members of the Seimas,

Congratulations on the first anniversary of the current legislature of the Seimas!

At the outset, I want to thank you for your joint efforts and endeavours to honestly execute the obligations conferred upon you by your electorate. It has been a tough year, with some serious struggle and some quarrels, while smiles were

scarce. I am looking forward to a more consistent, efficient, inspirational, and reassuring approach to parliamentary work at the Seimas in future.

A year ago, subject to Presidential Decree we were summoned for the first meeting during the current legislative period as representatives of the people of Lithuania. I emphasise, *we were summoned*. The sole reason for your being at the Seimas is the mandate given by the people of Lithuania to represent them.

Therefore, apart from making a profound overview of the first year of the current Seimas legislature, I will name some of the key principles and priorities of my tenure. I hope for your support and backing resulting in joint efforts for the benefit of the state as a whole.

The Seimas started off a year ago under dire conditions of the global economic crisis. In view of the situation at hand, the Seimas had to strike the right balance in the state budget in order to meet the key funding needs and stabilise

the tax system. This called for a number of complex and unpopular decisions on raising the taxes. The Seimas twice revised the budget, the core financial document of the year. Subject to decrease in state budget revenue, expenditure was slashed. We have applied cuts to our expenditure and our salaries as well. Equally, we have reduced the wage and salary rates used for the calculation of salaries of the national politicians, public officers, justices, and senior public officers.



*Irena Degutienė*

This year, the Seimas has adopted an important Law on Higher Education that had faced a lengthy discussion and debate on the eve of its adoption. The Law has transformed the state regulation over research and higher education to meet the key quality requirements. Obviously, we faced criticism where criticism was due. In view of that, amendments to the new law are urgently needed, but at least we have moved on from a standstill.

The people in Lithuania particularly suffer from the alarming rates of corruption. Therefore, we have renewed the National Anti-Corruption Programme, set new priorities and tasks for combating corruption, and envisaged specific measures intended to reach the objectives. I equally want to highlight the decision to move to a new model of administration. Since mid-2010, county heads, their deputies, and county administrations will be abolished.

For a number of years now, complaints about excessive gas fees abounded claiming that the gas prices for inhabitants failed to decrease subject to reduction in the market price of gas. Therefore, the Parliament has adopted a provision requiring the gas companies to reset tariffs for municipal customers every 6 months, thus ensuring flexibility in pricing and swift reaction to changes in the market. In an effort to ensure long-term public support, the Seimas has reviewed the conditions that have to be met by applicants for public support, the ways of providing support as well as rules governing the accumulation of funds for renovation of the multi-storey housing stock.

In an endeavour to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis on growing unemployment rates, the Seimas has adopted amendments to the Law on Support for Employment that will expand the scope of and eligibility for public works and increase additional means of funding.

These are by far not all the tasks performed by the Seimas during the past year, yet these measures are particularly important to Lithuania's inhabitants. I believe that these attainments deserve more visibility so we should emphasise them to our electorate.

Apart from achievements, the past year has offered a number of challenges. The very first meeting of the current legislature that lasted till 3 a.m. in the morning has unfortunately come to symbolise the bad fate of the decision adopted at the meeting and a number of other decisions that needed to be amended immediately after their adoption. The stone-throwing attack on the Seimas windows last winter, the rent of luxury cars, and the misplaced use of expenditure intended for parliamentary activities as well as the inadmissibly protracted debate

on the cuts to this expenditure attest to our failure to sufficiently engage with the electorate and feel their moods and realities. The situation has also demonstrated that we sometimes lack humility and self-criticism as representatives of the Lithuanian nation.

Twenty years ago, the Supreme Council was the genuine representative of the nation. Citizens defending it were ready to sacrifice their lives and shed their blood for it. Currently, we have to sadly admit the existence of an increasing gap between the Seimas and the people, resulting from a lack of trust and mutual understanding.

Something must have gone awfully wrong, if people turn to the Seimas with stones in their hands instead of proposals and if they regard the Parliament as a battlefield or a suitable place for exchanging insults. I do realise that there are substantial differences between members of the Seimas, because the people who elected us are also diverse. Even so, I still believe that surmounting our differences and arriving at mutual understanding on a daily basis is a must. Therefore, I urge both the position and the opposition to be more active with promoting their ideas and more levelheaded in seeking mutual agreement.

Colleagues,

Next year will mark the 20th anniversary of the re-established independence of Lithuania. The independence is a cornerstone of our common national and social life. Time and again, we are reminded that it was here, in the Seimas, that the Declaration of Independence was declared, the foundations of the independent state were laid, and the key provisions governing public life in the free Lithuanian state were established.

"The State of Lithuania shall be created by the Nation. Sovereignty shall belong to the Nation which will implement it through its representatives, 141 Members of the Seimas democratically elected by direct suffrage." These are not abstractions. These are the words of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania announced in this very hall and endorsed by the entire population of Lithuania through a public referendum.

Therefore, my key aim will be to ensure ousting the unnecessary quarrels and meaningless shows from the Seimas premises. The Seimas has to be the place for competition of ideas allowing for adoption of the most beneficial decisions for the country.

It is crucial to re-establish close ties between the Seimas and the citizens. I recall that ever since the Lithuanian National

Revival, there has been an idea to establish an abode for the nation, but there was no place for it in Lithuania. I am confident that the Seimas can become one and thus regain national trust.

On the other hand, the Seimas also needs to make progress in terms of the national mandate and accountability conferred on MPs by the nation and the Constitution. Only then will the people see their constitutional rights and mandate implemented. Within the past decade, I have to admit, the Parliament has become a body under the Government, rather than being an independent representative of the nation.

In the past years, we have forgotten the constitutional provision that apart from approving the Prime Minister and endorsing the Government Programme, the Seimas also has to *scrutinise the actions of the Government*. We have overlooked that apart from endorsing the budget elaborated by the Government, the Seimas also has a role in *controlling its implementation*. Unfortunately, the Constitutional provision for parliamentary scrutiny of Government actions now boils down to an unimportant Government hour, a meeting that usually takes place in a nearly empty hall and frequently bores members of the Seimas to death.

The disconcerting events in Kaunas have served as a poignant reminder of the unduly forgotten Constitutional obligation to scrutinise activities of the public officers and institutions accountable to the Seimas.

Therefore, I believe that as members of the Seimas we have to shoulder the bulk of responsibility for those tragic events and for the misconduct of the institutions accountable to the Parliament. Unfortunately, we have so far been too lenient endorsing the annual reports of the Procurator's Office, Children's Rights Ombudsman, and other bodies.

We share the brunt of responsibility for the sluggish combat with corruption and shadow economy. There is an Anticorruption Commission at the Seimas, yet its activity is often too slow and fails to bring about tangible results the people expect.

The resuscitation of parliamentary scrutiny and accountability to the Seimas as well as greater accountability in our Parliament and civil society is another important objective I will pursue during my tenure. I firmly believe that this is the only way we can gain public trust as well as public belief in the state, good initiatives, and change.

Members of the Seimas,

Our actions have to be guided by the principles of publicity, transparency, democracy, and justice. Parliamentary decision-making process should be fair and based on good conscience, rather than pressure-driven. I urge you to recall the fundamental law of the state, the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, which says, "Newly-elected Seimas members shall acquire all the rights of People's representatives only after swearing in the Seimas to be loyal to the Republic of Lithuania. (...) In office, Seimas members shall act in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the interests of the State, as well as their own consciences, and may not be restricted by any mandates." Far from being based on money and lobby interests, democratic parliamentary policy lies on the foundation of solid arguments and the ultimate truth.

So far, the assessment of the quality of operation of the Seimas and individual MPs has been based on irrelevant criteria, such as the quantity of adopted legislation and submitted drafts as well as the number of interventions, be it highly unconstructive ones, at the Plenary Sessions Hall. For this reason, I will not provide you with statistical data on the latter.

The Seimas is not a factory for producing legislation. The assessment of its performance cannot be put on a par with the calculation of the number of goods produced by the assembly line. We are no sportsmen either, and therefore working in the parliament is not about securing the fastest run or the greatest number of points.

I am convinced that the upcoming 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Independence has to bring about a change in the traditional approach to assessment of the operation of Seimas. As an alternative, we should assess our effectiveness by responding to the questions of whether our decisions have led to more justice and better quality of life in Lithuania.

I tend to think that a more active engagement of the civil society into the process of drafting legislation represents a step towards improving the effectiveness of the Seimas. The committee meetings that give an opportunity to speak out to all social groups should be key for the elaboration of laws.

I welcome the return of the social partners into the Seimas. Employers and trade unions now have their permanent in-house representatives in the parliament. The latter will be



able to take an active part in committee and commission meetings and express their opinion on legislative drafts.

I therefore encourage the chairmen of the Seimas committees to spare no effort in actively organising public hearings where the voice of the citizens should be heard.

The laws on budget and accompanying legislation on taxes adopted in haste last year and amended in mid-year are clearly the most obvious errors committed by our Parliament. It is true that the Seimas elections in autumn were to blame for the haste. The elections also paved the way to essential amendments to the draft budget submitted to the Seimas by the previous Government. As I have already mentioned, it is crucial to learn from the mistakes and never repeat them again. Therefore, I propose we start a serious debate on amendments to the Constitution so that a new date for Seimas elections could be established.

Even before we legislate on the new date of elections, and even before essential change is in place, we need a constructive agreement on budget this year. It should not be forgotten that the Constitution clearly sets out that the elaboration and adoption of the state budget is a joint task involving three fundamental public bodies: the Government, the Seimas, and the President. Therefore, next year we will ask the Government to provide the Seimas with the draft budget at an earlier date, so that the Seimas and the President are granted sufficient time for better understanding the Government proposals and discussing all the alternatives. Notably, in any process of belt-tightening under economic recession, people are more important than the belts.

The Seimas as the ultimate representative of the nation is entitled to *debate issues of foreign policy*, and not just ratify international agreements. Therefore, I believe that the Seimas as a whole and the Foreign Affairs Committee in particular could be more effective in guiding the national foreign policy in the areas of key relevance to Lithuania.

First of all, Lithuania cannot remain uninvolved into the debate on the New Strategic Concept of NATO while the Alliance struggles to define a new role for itself in the international security architecture. I think that one of the key problems NATO faces today is the lack of solidarity on the part of all of the Allies.

Lithuania should put a lot of emphasis on the negotiations on the new EU Russia Partnership Agreement. I consider that the new EU Russia Agreement should be legally binding, cover all areas of cooperation, and set clear restrictions on bilateral

agreements entered at a later stage between individual EU members and Russia.

Russia's sanctions imposed on our carriers and dairy producers this summer as well as the results of the sanctions have demonstrated that Lithuania did not have any effective mechanisms in place to allow for fast and adequate reaction to similar situations, nor was it ready to engage in proactive action. This calls for urgent solutions and casts doubts on whether we have learnt any lessons from the crises.

The EU may be in need of an institution acting as a permanent body to regulate trade conflicts and, most importantly, engage in proactive action. I think that Lithuania could consider this idea in greater detail and submit it to the relevant authorities.

Colleagues,

I am sure that the people in Lithuania do not want revolutions, nor do they support endless reforms and breakthroughs. What the people lack most is stability and predictability, as well as moderate and trustworthy future prospects. This is what we all need, including the business sector, public officers, youth, current and future pensioners, teachers, students and pupils, doctors and patients, law and order enforcement authorities.

Unfortunately, the current decade has led to a social and political paradox: the more enthusiasm, radical trends, lustre, and readiness to fight a political battle there was in political discourse, the more disillusionment and lack of trust in a better future there was in the minds of the people.

Therefore, I invite you to refrain from seeing my today's address as top-down preaching or moralisation. Instead, it was aimed to demonstrate the natural care I take in the Seimas and an attempt to restore popular trust in the parliament and improve its effectiveness.

When I referred to the errors committed by the Seimas, I criticised myself first and foremost. On this occasion, I apologise for my errors committed in my current tenure and any misunderstandings arising through my fault. Thank you for your criticism and for your understanding.

With hard times for the state ahead of us next year, I invite you to live and be governed by the words of the late Pope John Paul II, "We are separated by a mere trifle: only our views."

Thank you."

24 November

**MP LEONARDAS TALMONTAS TOOK AN OATH**

MP **Leonardas Talmontas** took an oath at the Seimas. Judge of the Constitutional Court **Romualdas Kęstutis Urbaitis** administered the oath.

Romualdas Kęstutis Urbaitis, before administering oaths of the Seimas members, explained the legal regulation established in the Constitution and the Seimas Statute, regarding the taking of an oath of the Seimas member. After having taken an oath, MP Leonardas Talmontas acquired all the rights of the representative of the Nation. Leonardas Talmontas was elected member of the Seimas on 15 November 2009 in the Vilnius–Šalčininkai constituency, after parliamentarian Valdemar Tomaševski had refused his mandate of the Seimas member because he was elected to the European Parliament on 7 June. The parliamentarian joined the Order and Justice Political Group which currently consists of 18 Seimas members.



Romualdas Kęstutis Urbaitis

Leonardas Talmontas

**THE GOVERNMENT IS PROPOSED TO IMPROVE THE DRAFT STATE BUDGET FOR 2010**

**The Seimas began the first deliberation of the draft State Budget for 2010** (draft Law No. XIP-1220 on the Approval of Financial Indicators of the State Budget and Municipal Budgets for 2010), during which Seimas members listened to a report of the Committee on Budget and Finance, conclusions of other committees, opinions and commentaries presented by political groups and individual Seimas members.

The principle Committee on Budget and Finance, having considered appropriations authorised by appropriation managers who fall within the competence of the committee, as well as conclusions of Seimas committees and commissions, proposals of Seimas members, notes of individual institutions and municipalities, proposed the Government improving draft law, taking account of conclusions of the National Audit Office and proposals of Seimas committees, commissions and Seimas members. Pursuant to the Statute of the Seimas, Seimas shall not vote after the first deliberation of the draft law.

**Kęstutis Glaveckas**, Chairman of the principle committee – the Committee on Budget and Finance – who presented a conclusion on the draft law for the next year, claimed that the committee, while deliberating on the draft Law

on the Approval of Financial Indicators of the State Budget and Municipal Budgets for 2010, received requests from Seimas committees, commissions, Seimas members, individual public authorities and municipalities to increase (reallocate) the State Budget's appropriations by LTL 1,250 billion. Seimas committees and commissions proposed increasing the appropriations by LTL 428,9 million. Moreover, Seimas members submitted 169 proposals to increase (reallocate) the State Budget's appropriations by LTL 767,8 million. Other public authorities, institutions and municipalities requested an additional allocation of LTL 54 million.



Kęstutis Glaveckas

According to the Chairman of the committee, Seimas members and committees, by indicating the financial source to cover additional expenditure, as it is the case every year, proposed reducing appropriations designed

for the management of the debt on behalf of the state, reducing appropriations for expenditure relating to state administration, and appropriations intended for investment projects of certain objects (the Royal Palace, administrative buildings of the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

The conclusions of the principle committee provide proposing the Government reduce the State Budget's appropriations: LTL 15 million for the programme "Fulfilment of Obligations to Judges regarding the Unpaid Part of the Wage" of the Ministry of Justice; LTL 5 million for the implementation of the investment project "Reconstruction of the Royal Palace of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania" of the Ministry of Culture.

In addition, the Government is proposed increasing the appropriations: LTL 4 million to courts (for expenses); no less than LTL 6 million to the Prosecutor General's Office (for expenses); LTL 12 000 for the for expenses of the National Health Board (for rent of premises); LTL 8,7 million to the Office of the Seimas, of which LTL 2,788 million for wages, and LTL 864 000 for social insurance contributions; LTL 1 million to the Ministry of Social Security and Labour to support Child Day Centres.

According to Mr. Glaveckas, the Committee on Budget and Finance proposed the Government searching for financial sources for the following additional appropriations: LTL 300 000 for other measures of the programme "Implementation of the Rights of the Child to Protection, Provision and Participation in Public Life" of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour; LTL 361 000 for the programme "Implementation of Youth Policy" implemented by the

Ministry of Social Security and Labour; LTL 260 000 to the Lithuanian Genocide and Resistance Research, Victim Support and Immortalisation Foundation.

The committee approved to part of the proposals submitted by committees and Seimas members, regarding the reallocation of appropriations among programmes and investment projects without changing the total amount of appropriations. Moreover, the Committee on Budget and Finance proposed the Government considering part of proposals regarding the increase of appropriations by LTL 320,5 million.

Pursuant to Article 177 of the Statute of the Seimas, the second deliberation of the draft State Budget shall be conducted within 15 days after the primary deliberation of the draft State Budget, during which the Government shall present the draft revised in accordance with the received proposals and commentaries.

*The proposal put forward to the Seimas is to approve for the following year the State Budget revenue of LTL 21 044 million, inclusive of the financial assistance of the European Union and other foreign countries, and expenditure of LTL 26 227 million. The projected budget deficit for 2010 is LTL 5 183,7 million or 6.21 per cent of GDB.*

*The projected State Budget revenue excluding the European Union assistance will amount to LTL 13 152 million, or LTL 1 245,3 million less than in 2009. The budget expenditure for 2010 excluding the European Union assistance will be LTL 18 328 million, which is LTL 891 million less than in 2009. EU assistance is expected to be LTL 7 891,9 million or LTL 1 474,5 million more than in 2009.*

26 November

Chairwoman of the sitting, Seimas Speaker Irena Degutienė announced about the registered Group for **Interparliamentary Relations with Kyrgyzstan** in the Seimas. **Bronius Pauža** is Chairman of the group and **Edmundas Pupinis** – Deputy Chairman.

Chairman of the sitting read a statement of the Liberals Movement Political Group regarding the change in the management of the political group. **Erikas Tamašauskas** was elected Elder of the political group, **Audrius Endzinas** – First Deputy Elder, and **Dalia Kuodytė, Dalia Teišerskytė** – Deputy Elders.





# adopted laws & decrees

5 November

## JONAS MILERIUS WAS APPOINTED SEIMAS SECRETARY GENERAL



Jonas Milerius

Seimas Resolution on the Appointment of **Jonas Milerius** Seimas Secretary General was adopted by the emergency procedure. Voting results: for – 98, abstained – 2.

The Seimas, pursuant to paragraph 2 of Article 31 of the Seimas Statute and taking into consideration the proposal put forward by the Seimas Speaker, resolved to appoint Jonas Milerius Seimas

Secretary General for five-year tenure. Up until now Jonas Milerius assumed the post of Director of the Seimas Department of Information Technologies and Telecommunication.

Speaker of the Seimas **Irena Degutienė** in the introduction of the candidate emphasised that her choice of Jonas Milerius was determined by his personal traits: "Principled adherence to his convictions and fair world-view determined my strong belief that Jonas Milerius is the best candidate to the post of the Seimas Secretary General. Fast and effective decision-making, promotion of innovations in the sphere of information technologies, self-management, a responsible attitude towards the tasks assigned to him – are all the qualities that he has assumed while working at the Seimas Office since 1990, when he was invited by the then Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania to work in a group of specialists at the state delegation of the Republic of Lithuania in the negotiations with the USSR.

"There is hardly anyone else besides Jonas Milerius in the Seimas Office who could have such thorough and perfect knowledge of this institution from within. Jonas Milerius greatly contributed to the first introduction of technologies at the Office of the Seimas and has been improving them for 20 years up until now. A long-term experience in the Seimas Office, vast knowledge in the sphere of information technologies, eagerness to learn and introduction of new technologies are the qualities that can ensure a productive and effective work of the Office of the Seimas. I am certain that Mr. Milerius is not only an experienced specialist, but also a great leader. The trust of the staff of the Office that Jonas has earned with his particular diligence, pieces of advice, composed intellectuality, accountability for words and actions, ability to solve conflict situations has also brought him (...) of public organisations, public authorities and citizens; all of these features honour a civil servant," Speaker of the Seimas Irena Degutienė pointed out.

The candidate presented to the Seimas political groups did not raise any doubts as to his competence to assume the post either, therefore, it was resolved to withdraw further procedures established according to the Seimas Statute, i.e. meetings of the candidate with political groups.

Jonas Milerius promised not to repeat the mistakes of his predecessor: "Standing at this tribune I cannot give you specific answers to your questions about my further actions. There is more than one solution to every problem, and indeed I would not like to create big commotion in the media or raise concern to the colleagues and Lithuanian people. I have a considerably larger pile of problems, therefore, I would deeply appreciate it if sooner or later you could find time to discuss the matters of your concern with me in political groups".

*Curriculum Vitae of the Seimas Secretary General*

Jonas Milerius was born on 1 April 1949, when his parents were being deported. On 25 March 1949 his parents were deported from the Geldėnų village, Barstyčių parish of the Skuodas District. They were brought to the destination – the Krasnaja Zaria village, Bolshoi-Uluisk, Krasnoyarsk Krai – on 18 April.

When Jonas Milerius returned with his parents to Lithuania in 1958, in September he started attending Barstyčių secondary school in the Skuodas District, and graduated from it in 1969. From 1969 to 1974 he studied at the Faculty of Mathematics-Mechanics, Vilnius University, and in 1974 he graduated from it. Jonas Milerius began working as an engineer in the design and construction office of the Vilnius Automatic Management Systems. From 1977 to 1989 he assumed the position of project senior constructor, and managed the design and creation of the software of computerised systems in more than ten companies, located on the territories of Lithuania, Latvia and Ukraine. From 1989 he worked as a chief engineer at the Research Institute of Computing Equipment and Informatics at the “Sigma” amalgamation.

On 7 November 1990, under the resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, Jonas Milerius was included in the specialists working group at the state delegation of the Republic of Lithuania in the cross-border negotiations with the USSR. Together with other specialists in informatics working in this group, he was responsible for the

equipment of hardware and the introduction of other advanced information technologies in order to secure the work of the above working group. He worked in this group of specialists until December 1991. During the events of January 1991, in addition to his usual duties in the working group, he also maintained hardware, collected and systemised information received from the state administration authorities, companies, and Lithuanian population, and disseminated video material, photographs and copies of documents about the events of those days to journalists who came from abroad.

From December 1991, after the Unit of Computerised Data Management had been set up in the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania, Jonas Milerius became deputy head and senior consultant of the unit. On 12 December 1995 he was appointed Head of the Unit of Computerised Data Management of the Office of the Seimas.

From 19 January 1998 until now – Head of the Information Technologies Unit, Director of the Department of the Office of the Seimas. From 6 April to 8 October 2006 he was acting Secretary General of the Seimas.

Jonas Milerius was awarded the Commemorative Medal of 13 January, Knight's Cross of the Order “For Merits to Lithuania”, and a commemorative statue “Gražina” of the Speaker of the Seimas for contribution to Lithuania's membership in NATO.

## FUNDS FOR PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES WERE CUT

**The Statute of the Seimas concerning Amendment of Articles 16 and 15(3) of the Seimas Statute** was adopted. Voting results: for – 76.

**It was resolved to temporarily reduce funds for parliamentary activities from 1 January 2010 to December 2010.** The amount of 1 average monthly wage (AMW) will be allocated under the reporting obligation on a monthly basis to cover representation costs of the Speaker of the Seimas (up until now 2 AMW has been allocated), and the amount of 0.5 AMW will be allocated to cover representation costs of Seimas Deputy Speakers (up until now 0.7 AMW has been allocated). The amount of 1 AMW will be allocated under the reporting obligation on a monthly basis to Seimas members to cover costs related to parliamentary activities (up until now 1.5 AMW has been allocated). Presently AMW amounts to LTL 2173.

As of 1 January 2011, the amount of 3 AMW will be allocated under the reporting obligation on a monthly basis to cover representation costs of the Speaker of the Seimas, 1 AMW – to cover representation costs of Seimas Deputy Speakers, 1.7 AMW will be allocated under the reporting obligation on a monthly basis to Seimas members to cover costs related to parliamentary activities.

In addition, the revised version of Article 16 of the Statute of the Seimas provides that “The Seimas member shall be

entitled to have personal secretary-assistants, whose salaries shall be paid from the State Budget; they are also entitled to have assistants who work on a voluntary basis. Secretary-assistants of the Seimas members shall be hired or relieved of their duties in accordance with the procedure established by laws. One Seimas member shall be entitled to not more than 3 posts of secretary-assistants of the Seimas member. Wages of secretary-assistants of the Seimas member shall be regulated in the procedure established by legal acts.”



*Vytautas Gapšys*

After the voting Elder of the Labour Party Political Group **Vytautas Gapšys** promised in the future to register an amendment, thereby reducing parliamentary costs to zero: “The Labour Party Political Group has consistently spoken about the need to reduce parliamentary costs to zero. We have registered such amendment. Since the Seimas is not ready to adopt such amendment yet, we are prepared to register the amendment again in the future, and our political group will vote in its favour”.

## GINTARAS KRYŽEVIČIUS WAS APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT OF LITHUANIA

Seimas **Resolution on the Appointment of Gintaras Kryževičius the President of the Supreme Court of Lithuania** was adopted. Voting results: for – 96, against – 1, abstained – 6.

The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, pursuant to paragraph 2 of Article 112 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and taking into account Decree No. 1K-160 of the President of the Republic of 16 October 2009 on the Proposal to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania to Appoint Judge of the Supreme Court of Lithuania Gintaras Kryževičius President of the Supreme Court of Lithuania, resolved to appoint Gintaras Kryževičius President of the Supreme Court of Lithuania.

According to MP **Vidmantas Žiemelis**, Gintaras Kryževičius belongs to a younger generation of lawyers, and he is capable of being a good President of the Supreme Court, in terms of his professional skills and personal traits: "What concerns his professional skills, despite being a representative of younger generation, he has gained a wide professional experience, working for over 20 years as a judge and being Vice-President of the Supreme Administrative Court at one time. Therefore, there are no doubts as to the candidate's qualifications. What concerns his personal traits, he is a man of principles. This has been repeatedly evident in specific works of the judge. I have



*Gintaras Kryževičius*



*Vidmantas Žiemelis*

heard from several colleagues of the candidate about his professional qualities, adherence to principles and fairness. I would also like to draw everyone's attention to the fact that not even media representatives were able to find any negative, compromising material against this candidate," the Seimas member pointed out.

*Pursuant to paragraph 2 of Article 112 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the Seimas shall appoint and dismiss judges of the Supreme Court – including the President – upon the proposal of the President of the Republic.*

## SEIMAS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE WAS REQUESTED TO CARRY OUT A PARLIAMENTARY INVESTIGATION

Seimas draft Resolution Nr. XIP-1294(2) **on Requesting the Seimas Committee on National Security and Defence to Carry Out a Parliamentary Investigation regarding the Possible Transportation and Imprisonment of Persons Detained by the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States of America in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania** was adopted. Voting results: for – 67, against – 2, abstained – 9.

The Committee was requested to answer the following questions:

1) whether persons detained by the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States of America were transported to and imprisoned in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania;

2) whether public authorities of the Republic of Lithuania (politicians, officials, civil servants) considered the issues relating to activities of secret centres of detention of the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States of America in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania, the transportation and imprisonment of detained persons in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania;

3) whether secret centres of detention of the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States of America were operating in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania.

The Committee is to submit conclusions of the parliamentary investigation to the Seimas by 22 December 2009.



10 November

**RESOLUTION REGARDING THE ADDRESS TO THE COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES WAS ADOPTED**

The Seimas adopted without amendments **Seimas Resolution on the Address of the Republic of Lithuania to the Court of Justice of the European Communities**. Voting results: for – 52, against – 9, abstained – 6.

The Resolution, which was drafted by MP **Mantas Adomėnas**, states: “The Seimas (...) believes that Resolution regarding the Law on the Protection of Minors against Detrimental Effect of Public Information of the Republic of Lithuania, and particularly its point 1, adopted by the European Parliament on 17 September 2009, is an unlawful act because of the lack of competence, pursuant to Article 230 of the Treaty establishing the European Community.

Expresses its concern that if this resolution of the European Parliament is not officially declared invalid, it can serve as a dangerous precedent in the creation of conditions for the European Parliament and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights to infringe prerogatives of the European Commission and the Court of Justice of the European Communities, pursuant to Article 226 of the Treaty establishing the European Community.

Urges the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, following Article 230 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, by 17 November 2009 to institute proceedings to the Court of Justice of the European Communities

regarding the lawfulness of the Resolution adopted by the European Parliament, and to request that the Resolution regarding the Law on the Protection of Minors against Detrimental Effect of Public Information of the Republic of Lithuania, and particularly its point 1, adopted by the European Parliament on 17 September 2009, are declared invalid.

*Mantas Adomėnas*

Regrets and expresses deep concern over the attempts of the European Parliament to doubt about the legitimacy of the law, adopted by the large majority of members of the democratically elected parliament of the Member State, although it can be considered that this issue does not fall within the competence of the European Parliament.

Instructs the Speaker of the Seimas to forward this Resolution to the President of the Republic of Lithuania, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania, the European Parliament, the Council, the European Commission, governments and parliaments of European Union Members States and candidate countries, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the Council of Europe”.

12 November

**AMENDMENTS TO LAWS ADOPTED BY THE SEIMAS WILL ALLOW RESIDENTS APPLYING TO THE PLACE OF THEIR CONVENIENCE REGARDING THE ISSUANCE OR CHANGE OF A DOCUMENT**

Taking into account residents' needs, **the Seimas adopted amendments to the Law on Identity Cards and the Passport Law, thereby allowing citizens to apply to any authorised institution which is the most convenient to them regarding the issuance or change of an identity card and passport.** (Law Amending Article 5 of the Law on Identity Cards (draft No. XIP-645 (2), Law Amending and Supplementing Articles 2, 5, 6, 7, 9 of the Passport Law (draft No. XIP-1070 (2).

According to provisions to Laws currently in force, a citizen residing in the Republic of Lithuania must appear in person for the issuance or change of a passport or identity card at an authorised institution in accordance with a place of residence recorded in the Population Register. According to draftsman MP **Vytautas Grubliauskas**, such requirement of the place of residence increases inconvenience to persons, who have officially declared their place of residence

in one city, whereas they have been living in another city for a long time without having an opportunity to change the information in their declaration on the place of residence. Therefore, in his opinion, such persons have to travel to another city and incur additional expenses only to apply for the issuance or change of a passport or identity card. As of 1 January 2010 the amendments to the laws adopted by the Seimas will come into force, and residents will be able to avoid such inconvenience resulting from the currently enforced above requirement.

*Vytautas Grubliauskas*

17 November

**INSPECTOR OF JOURNALIST ETHICS WAS APPOINTED**

The Seimas, pursuant to paragraph 2 of Article 49 of the Law on Public Information and taking into account the proposal submitted by the Ethics Commission for Journalists and Publishers, resolved to appoint **Zita Zamžickienė**, who has a Law degree, Inspector of Journalist Ethics for five-year tenure. 57 Seimas members voted for **the Seimas Resolution on the Appointment of Zita Zamžickienė Inspector of Journalist Ethics**, 1 Seimas member abstained.

*Since 2000 Zita Zamžickienė has been appointed Seimas Ombudswoman for two tenures. The second tenure ends on 17 October of this year.*



&lt;&lt; Zita Zamžickienė

19 November

**THE SEIMAS PROLONGED THE PARTICIPATION OF THE LITHUANIAN ARMED FORCES IN INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS**

The Seimas resolved to prolong for another three years – **until 31 December 2013** – the participation of Lithuanian military units consisting of soldiers and civil servants designated to the armed forces in international operations in the regions of the Balkans, Central and South Asia, South Caucasus and the Persian Gulf. The adopted Seimas resolution establishes the same regions and the same maximum number of soldiers and civil servants designated to the armed forces – 420 – as it is established in the current Seimas resolution.

Presently the Lithuanian military units are participating in NATO's operation of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, EU's operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in NATO's operation in Kosovo. The explanatory note states that so far there are no plans to participate in any new international operations, however, the Seimas committees will be informed in advance about every new initiative to send Lithuanian military units to participate in international operations in the regions indicated in the Seimas resolution.



## SEIMAS DELEGATED RASA BUDBERGYTĖ TO THE COURT OF AUDITORS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

The Seimas approved of the nomination of Rasa Budbergytė to members of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities. 49 Seimas members voted for **the Seimas Protocol Resolution Regarding the Approval of Nomination of Rasa Budbergytė to Members of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities**, 1 Seimas member voted against. The term of office of the current member of the Court of Auditors ends on 6 May 2010.

Rasa Budbergytė claimed that the position of the member of the Court of Auditors of the European Communities is very important, and this institution assumes a significant place among all European Union institutions. According to her, the Court of Auditors performs a similar function to the one of the National Audit Office in Lithuania, only the Court of Auditors performs it in respect of European Union funds. "The Court not only performs large-scale financial audit and audit of activities, but it also takes an active part in the preparation of draft legal acts regulating financial control system of the European Union," Rasa Budbergytė, currently Head of the National Audit Office, said.

In the presentation of her objectives and works in the Court of Auditors, the State Ombudswoman stressed that she would try to contribute to the increasing of the effect of the carried out audit, by facilitating administrative procedures of the Court of Auditors and together with the interested parties ensuring a better understanding of auditors' reports and fulfilment of expectations. "Moreover, I promise to inform as much as possible the Seimas, the Government and other authorities, and, certainly, my colleagues from the National Audit Office about all novelties, trends, opinions and even moods relating to the administration and audit of the European Union, to share my new experience and seek a multi-fold and deep practical cooperation," the Head of the National Audit Office described her goals.



Rasa Budbergytė

Currently, Rasa Budbergytė runs the National Audit Office. The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania appointed her to this post for a five-year tenure on the proposal of the President of the Republic of Lithuania. On 4 February 2005 she began working at the National Audit Office.

*Rasa Budbergytė was born in the town of Plungė. In 1983 she graduated from Vilnius University, the Faculty of Law (specialised in the Civil Law). In 1983–1985 she was Head of the General Division of Marijampolė Town Board. 1985–1992 – leading inspector of the Division of the Disabled Affairs, senior consultant of the Law-Making Division of the Ministry of Social Security. 1992–1993 – advisor to the Division of Law and Contracts of the Ministry of International Economic Relations. In 1993 she was an assistant to the Prime Minister. 1995–1997 – legal councillor at a public limited company "Lelija". 1997–1998 – Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice. In 1998–2000 – Vice-Minister of Justice. 2001–2002 – Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of the Interior. 2002–2005 – Undersecretary of the Ministry of the Interior. Since 2005 she has been Head of the National Audit Office of the Republic of Lithuania.*

## THE GOVERNMENT IS PROPOSED TO DRAFT A LAW SETTING A NO-FAULT COMPENSATION MODEL FOR THE DAMAGE INFLICTED ON PATIENTS' HEALTH

The Seimas adopted a new version of **Law Amending the Law on the Rights of Patients and Compensation for the Damage to their Health**, thereby establishing patient's rights and obligations, representation peculiarities, procedure for consideration of complaints and principles of compensation of damage inflicted upon the patient's health. Voting results: for – 87, abstained – 1.

Moreover, according to a joint agreement, a protocol resolution was adopted, thereby the Seimas, taking into consideration experiences of other countries in the introduction of a no-fault compensation model for the damage inflicted on patients'

health, considering that no-fault compensation is a realistic way to improve the quality of services and ensure safety for patients, because it creates a possibility of acknowledging mistakes made by doctors and analysing them, approving to proposals of Union of Lithuanian Doctors and patients' organisations saying that such means of compensation is more acceptable to a large number of patients and it would not cause a confrontation between patients and doctors, proposes the Government to draw up and submit to the Seimas **draft Law on the Social Insurance of Patients of the Republic of Lithuania** by 31 December 2010.



## SEIMAS RESOLUTION ON THE EXTENSION OF PROHIBITION OF SELLING LAND OF AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST USE TO FOREIGNERS WAS ADOPTED

Seimas Resolution **on the Extension of Prohibition of Selling Land of Agricultural and Forest Use to Foreigners** was adopted. Voting results: for – 82, against – 2, abstained – 11.

The Seimas, taking into account the necessity to increase competitiveness of agricultural structures in order for the land market of the Republic of Lithuania to be equivalent to land markets of other European states, considering the unfinished land reform and incompleteness of restoration of the rights of ownership of citizens to land and land return, proposes to the Government to enter into an argumentative negotiation with the European Commission and to prove **the necessity** of extending the period of prohibition of selling land of agricultural and forest use to foreign entities **until 2010**.

*The following Seimas resolution was adopted:*

“The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, taking into account the necessity to increase competitiveness of agricultural structures in order for the land market of the Republic of Lithuania to be equivalent to land markets of other European states,

considering:

- 1) the unfinished land reform and incompleteness of restoration of the rights of ownership of citizens to land and land return,
  - 2) the unformed land market, when there is a particularly distinct difference in prices in our country and many other European countries, and farmers have absolutely limited financial resources, and they cannot be equivalent partners in the land market to foreign entities,
- proposes to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to enter into an argumentative negotiation with the European Commission and to prove the necessity of extending the period of prohibition of selling land of agricultural and forest use to foreign entities until 2010.”



# ratified international documents

19 November

## SEIMAS RATIFIED THREE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Law on **Ratification of the Convention of the Issuance of Multilingual Extracts from Civil Status Records** (for – 84, against – 1, abstained – 13).

Law on **Ratification of the Amendments to the Convention on the Control and Marking of Articles of Precious Metals** (for – 99, abstained – 1).

Law on **Ratification of the Convention on Centralised Customs Clearance concerning the Allocation of National Collection Costs Retained when Traditional Own Resources are Made Available to the EU Budget** (for – 90, abstained – 8).



# the Seimas began deliberation

5 November

## SUBMITTED AMENDMENTS SHOULD PREVENT DISSEMINATION OF DETRIMENTAL INFORMATION

**Solveiga Cirtautienė**, Chief Adviser to the President, submitted draft Law No. XIP-1262 Amending Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9 of the **Law on the Protection of Minors against Detrimental Effect of Public Information**. Following the submission, it was decided to approve the draft law (for – 37, against – 2, abstained – 11) and to commence the deliberation procedure. For the deliberation of this draft, the Committee on Education, Science and Culture was assigned as the principal committee, and Committees on the Development of Information Society and on Social Affairs and Labour, on Legal Affairs and on Human Rights were assigned as additional committees. The preliminary date of deliberations in the sitting of the Seimas is 24 November\*.

The aim of the draft Law is to develop the grounds for the recognition of public information having detrimental effect on minors and mechanism of the application of the Law. These amendments should lay down regulation which would allow protecting interests of minors, and especially of children under 14 years of age in best possible way, with a minimum effect to the freedom of speech, i.e. by establishment of appropriate balance between protection of interests of minors and the freedom of speech.

According to the speaker, this draft Law contains several new provisions. It is proposed to lay down within the law the concept of information having detrimental effect on minors, which would relate the attribution of public information to this category with the real harm of such information to minors, rather than with the formal corresponding of the content thereof with the criteria established within the Law. According to Solveiga Cirtautienė, pending the decision on the necessity to restrict dissemination of public information, the starting point should be interests of minors, which are jeopardised by the information under evaluation. For the purposes of legal explicitness and clarity, together with principal conception of information having detrimental effect on minors, it is necessary to establish more detailed criteria. "The current version of the Law already establishes criteria describing principal detrimental information.

However, it must be noted, that some of them must be developed. Therefore, the submitted draft adjusts the lists of connection criteria. This means that it abandons repeat concepts, which are already laid down within the Law on Submission of Information to the Public and other Laws, as well as adjusts criteria relating to the promotion of undesirable behaviour by proposing alternatives, doubts relating to the conformity of the Law to the criteria set within the Constitution and international commitments in the field of human rights. These provisions should be replaced by ones which would allow protecting minors in the same effective way from the detrimental effect of public information", the speaker stated. According to the Chief Adviser of the President, seeking the aims of the Law, it is not sufficient to provide the conception of information having detrimental effect on minors, and the criteria for the identification of such information, to establish responsibility for the persons who have violated the requirements of the law. "For the effective protection of minors it is nonetheless important to prevent dissemination of detrimental information and to encourage the disseminators of public information to evaluate in advance the possible effect of information", Solveiga Cirtautienė stated. Due to this, according to the speaker, it is proposed by this draft to charge the Inspector of Journalist Ethics with a task of preparation of the guidelines for the application of the law and the particular criteria described therein, to submit recommendations upon requests of interested persons and to provide consultations to them, to prepare summaries of the practice of application of the law and as well to contribute to the implementation of arrangement principle of duties and responsibilities for the protection of interests of minors of state and its institutions, authors, disseminators and participants thereof of public information, journalists and the trade-unions thereof and parents of minors.

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*\*Following the deliberations the Seimas decided to return the draft to the principle committee for further improvements.*



# at the Seimas committees

11 November

## THE COMMITTEE ON BUDGET AND FINANCE AGREED WITH THE SENIOR ANALYST OF “DNB NORD” BANK

During a meeting of the Seimas Committee on Budget and Finance with a senior analyst of “DnB Nord”, Professor **Rimantas Rudzkis**, the economic and fiscal policy, which is planned to be implemented when forming the State Budget for 2010 and seeking coherence and stability of the tax system, was discussed. **Rimantas Rudzkis** noted that one of the key reasons, which pushed the Lithuanian economy into the crisis, was the overheating of the economy of Lithuania due to too vast flows of bank loans directed at the consumption and the field of real property, whereas expenses on efficient production measures in Lithuania were considerably lower than in the majority of Member States of the European Union (statistical data: in 2006, the net foreign loan flows amounted to 12 per cent of the GDP, in 2007 they reached 13 per cent of the GDP). Moreover, there was no encouragement of foreign and local investments in promising manufacture.

In order to considerably push up the standard of living thus putting it closer to the EU average standard of living within the shortest time frame possible, which is a particularly important aim for our state at present, Mr. Rudzkis brought forward concrete proposals with regard to measures which should be implemented in the short and in the long run. They include the following measures which are specified as



*Rimantas Rudzkis*

particularly important ones: development of a legislation and business management system favourable for the development of economy, enhancement of the efficiency of the public sector, maximum encouragement of foreign and local investments into the promising exported production, increasing the competitiveness of the country and actively combating unemployment.

*Danguolė Zabulėnienė,  
Assistant to the Office of the Committee*



# initiatives

2 November

## THE STATE MUST BE COMMITTED TO HELP “SODRA”

Member of the Seimas Labour Party Political Group **Mečislovas Zasčiurinskas** registered the amendments to the Law on State Social Insurance. The amendments propose providing for the obligatory allocation of appropriations, in certain cases, from the State Budget to “Sodra”, which is currently experiencing difficult times. These measures are proposed to be taken when legal acts adopted by the Seimas or the Government cause an increase in costs of a given type of social insurance or a decrease in revenues, whereas social insurance contributions for this type of social insurance change insignificantly or remain the same.

The version of the law currently in force provides for this possibility, but it does not oblige to allocate state funds for it.

According to Mečislovas Zasčiurinskas, the allocation of appropriations from the State Budget or other state monetary resources to cover the costs related to the

reform of the pension system when compensating social insurance contributions transferred to pension funds managed by pension accumulation companies must not be optional but obligatory.

“This amendment is necessary in order to protect the interests of the employed, which may be violated when the Government’s resolutions deteriorate the situation of “Sodra”. People cannot be hostages of experiments implemented by public authorities,” Mr. Zasčiurinskas claimed.

*Member of the Seimas Mečislovas Zasčiurinskas*



*Mečislovas Zasčiurinskas*

24 November

## SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS PROPOSES TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF THE SEIMAS OMBUDSMEN

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania **Irena Degutienė** addressed the Secretariat of Plenary Sitzings and registered draft amendments to the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen, where she proposes to reduce the number of the Seimas Ombudsmen from five to two. Such a decision would result in saving about LTL 200,000 of the state budget funds per year.

The draft proposes establishing that the Seimas shall appoint two Seimas Ombudsmen on the recommendation of the Speaker of the Seimas: one ombudsman for investigating the activities of officials of state government institutions and agencies and one ombudsman for investigating the activities of officials of local government institutions and agencies and county governors’ administrations. The proposal has also been submitted by the Seimas Committee on Human Rights, which was assigned by the Board of the Seimas to analyse the activities of the Seimas Ombudsmen’s Office.

“In accordance with the constitutional regulations, there must be more than one Seimas Ombudsman. Since Article 73 of the Constitution defines the powers of the Seimas Ombudsmen as covering two separate groups of officials, i.e. state government officials and local government officials, the Committee holds a position that the number of the Seimas Ombudsmen should be limited to two (one ombudsman for investigating complaints on the abuse of authority and bureaucracy by state government officials and one ombudsman for investigating complaints on the abuse



*Irena Degutienė*

of authority and bureaucracy by local government officials). Having assessed the number of complaints investigated by each Seimas Ombudsman from 2007 to 2009, we can see that two Seimas Ombudsmen for investigating the activities of officials of state government institutions and agencies and three Seimas Ombudsmen for investigating the activities of officials of local government institutions and agencies and county governors' administrations received almost an equal number of complaints (in 2007 – 764 and 786 respectively, in 2008 – 831 and 813 respectively, and over nine months of 2009 – 608 and 570 respectively),” states the explanatory note attached to the amendment to the law.

The term of office of one of the Seimas Ombudsmen has already expired and the Seimas has passed a resolution on the dismissal of this official from office. The terms of office

of the other two Seimas Ombudsmen will expire on 15 February 2010. Therefore, according to Speaker of the Seimas Mrs. Degutienė, it is not appropriate to appoint new Seimas Ombudsmen. After the resolutions on the dismissal of the Seimas Ombudsmen upon expiry of their terms of office are adopted, there will remain two Seimas Ombudsmen whose terms of office will expire later. Therefore, she proposes to stipulate the date of 16 February 2010 as the date of entry into force of the law amending the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen.

The Speaker of the Seimas had committed to revise and streamline the activities of the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office when she delivered her speech before being elected the Head of Parliament.

27 November

### **SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS SUGGESTS STIPULATING AN OBLIGATION FOR THE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, WHO FAILED TO AVOID A CONFLICT BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INTERESTS WHEN USING THE FUNDS ALLOCATED FOR PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES, TO REPAY THE FUNDS**

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania **Irena Degutienė** addressed the Secretariat of Plenary Sitzings and registered an amendment to the Statute of the Seimas. This amendment stipulates an obligation for members of the Seimas to repay the funds allocated for parliamentary activities into the state budget, if these funds were used in violation to the Law on the Adjustment of Public and Private Interests in the Civil Service.

The Seimas Speaker suggests the following wording to be included in the Statute: “Should it be established that the

Seimas Member used the funds allocated for parliamentary activities for the purpose, other than stipulated, or in violation to the Law on the Adjustment of Public and Private Interests in the Civil Service, the Seimas Member shall repay this amount from his/her personal funds.”

According to the Head of Parliament, such a provision will help guarantee that the state budget funds are used in a transparent and rational manner, in accordance with the purpose established and in compliance with the existing laws.

# topicalities

18 November

## AN ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES' EXPENSES BY THE COMMITTEE ON AUDIT WAS PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF THE SEIMAS

Under the decision of the Board of the Seimas, the Seimas Committee on Audit for the first time performed and submitted to the Board an analysis of cost saving measures of institutions subject to the Seimas, the State Enterprise Centre of Registers, public institution Lithuanian Radio and Television, the Office of the Government (the Prime Minister's Office) and individual ministries (change in the wages of heads of these institutions, the number of posts, the number of wages, expenses on transport, representation, qualification upgrading, studies, research, audit services, business trips) in 2009 and the plans of cost saving measures for 2010.

As Speaker of the Seimas **Irena Degutienė** noted, in the context of the crisis, some ministries are saving, whereas other ministries have even increased their expenses: "With the decrease in wages in the public sector, the salary of officers of political (personal) credibility of some ministries has been increased by 12 per cent".

The analysis has shown that in a number of cases funds were saved at the expense of institutions subject to the Seimas, by reducing wages of employees of the lowest levels, whereas a large part of bonuses was paid to heads of ministries. In 2009, half a million litas were paid as bonuses to ministries' civil servants of political (personal) credibility.

After the Seimas has suspended membership fees in some international organisations on a temporary basis, ministries

continue declaring their highest aspirations for qualification upgrading and training. There have been cases identified when institutions, after having received the audit conclusions of the National Audit Office, requested the services of private auditors, whose recommendations overlapped with the assessment of the National Audit Office, and for which large part of budgetary funds was spent. The analysis also shows that not all the recommendations submitted by the National Audit Office are being implemented. The key recommendations which require systemic changes do not receive due attention.

According to Chairwoman of the Committee on Audit **Loreta Grauzinienė**, although the mass media usually blames the Seimas with regard to expenses, the submitted analysis shows that the Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania and the Seimas are the institutions which have been saving most this year.

With regard to the fact that the function of parliamentary control of relevant fields and ministries has been delegated to the Seimas committees, the Board of the Seimas approved of the proposal to present to the committees the analysis implemented by the Committee on Audit in order to have a better insight into individual issues of the planning and use of appropriations.

*Saulė Eglė Trembo,  
Head of Public Relations Unit*

*Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Audit Bronius Bradauskas, Head of the Committee's Office Daiva Raudonienė, Chairwoman of the Committee Loreta Grauzinienė, Auditor General Rasa Budbergytė, Minister for Finance Ingrida Šimonytė*





# position

24 November

## MEMBER OF THE SEIMAS VITAS MATUZAS: THE ADOPTION OF THE BUDGET FOR 2010 WILL BE AN EXAM ON THE POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH MEMBER OF THE SEIMAS

The Seimas is to take a very important exam in the near future, i.e. the adoption of the budget for 2010. It is not merely voting, but reaching an agreement over the fact that a number of public fields strive for changes.

As members of the Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrat Political Group believe, the decision regarding the budget will prove whether the statements about the joint work for the welfare of the nation are true or not, allow assessing the political courage of parliamentarians as well as will show their ability to comprehend the difficulties of the current situation and the factors for economic development in the future. It would be naïve and irresponsible to think that the economy will stabilise by itself. This is what reforms are necessary for. One of the main reforms, the need of which is emphasised not only by us, but also by experts of economy and finance, is the consolidation of public finance. The limits have been defined, i.e. the budget deficit must not exceed 10 per cent of the GDP. This is the threshold we cannot overstep. It means that we have to limit expenses in almost all fields. Only the inner consolidation will help us regain competitiveness. International experts, i.e. the International Monetary Fund and the European Commission have assessed the actions taken by the Change Coalition and the Government in order to overcome the crisis as efficient and the reforms introduced as necessary.

On 23 November, the credit rating agency "Moody's" announced the latest report about Lithuania. "Moody's" positively evaluated the fact that the Government did not allocate funds to local banks but managed to regain the confidence of international markets. In the report, the Agency highlighted that the economic growth in 2006-2008 was not balanced and was based on the domestic demand influenced by loans, which considerably exceeded the export. All the above resulted in large private debts and artificially boosted property prices.

The economic growth focused on the domestic market did not guarantee the stability. Lithuania did not accumulate any financial reserves during the economic growth but increased its liabilities in a very irresponsible manner in 2006-2008 (increases in wages and social benefits), which

it continues fulfilling now, thus leaving a difficult option for overcoming the crisis – refrain from any reductions while seeking to maintain the optimum provision of public services and ensure the implementation of state functions.

In order to avoid the accusations of being biased, I would like to quote "Moody's":

The new Government has taken actions to cope with the situation from the very start of its office. An agreement has been recently reached with representatives of business and trade unions regarding the recovery of economy and financial condition. The agreement covers the obligation of the Government to refuse to increase taxes, to reduce the income tax rate, regulation of labour relations, decrease of the number of civil servants, decrease of budgetary costs, etc. Business representatives committed to maintain jobs and work officially without retrieving into "shadow".

The only financial instrument which could act as a measure to help the national business is the infusion of EU funds into the Lithuanian economy as soon as possible. I would like to believe that at least LTL 3 billion will be infused this year and LTL 8 billion – next year. To my mind it is the only source in the times of the crisis, which will slightly revive the national business. Experts also note that our state has serious possibilities of improving its productivity, whereas the EU funds will facilitate this process. The latest data of the European Commission says that the absorption of structural funds in Lithuania is the highest in the European Union. With the recession in the economy and decrease in the revenues of the budget, these funds are the essential support for the national business and economy. In 2010, the EU funds will be invested in all sectors of the national economy.

A number of parliamentarians submitted proposals and requests regarding the financing of some objects and



Vitas Matuzas

programmes. And we were heavily criticized by our political opponents. They claim that the budget is a trap for the people of Lithuania. They claim it is a short-sighted budget, drafted out of despair. The main idea of proposals and critics is that appropriations should not be reduced in any sector. To put in other words, the Government must fulfil all its obligations with considerably more modest financial resources as if nothing happened.

I would like to stress that these critics usually forget the essence of the criticism, and they provide not the criticism but unjustified political statements and play with people's feelings and expectations, which is very irresponsible in the context of this difficult period. So far, none of the critics has named an alternative source of funds necessary to fulfil all current obligations of the state. They just continue coming up with practically impossible scenarios.

They blame us for approving the budget, which they consider to be short-sighted. But do they, i.e. the ones who require living on credit, not live in the present? We borrow at the expense of our children's future. Maybe the ones who propose these measures should think about their personal responsibility? Yes, it is very popular to claim that we will not decrease anything, but on the contrary, we will increase everything and borrow funds from the IMF. We have to understand that the IMF is not just a good uncle with a sack of money. He will claim back such things, which will leave us sneezing for many years. Are you well aware of what you are suggesting for the future of Lithuania? An impasse? Prime Minister **Andrius Kubilius** has said: "When we deprive our people of the possibility of hoping for a better future by voicing too much criticism, we are the first to suffer from that, because the economy is too much intermingled with people's trust and mutual confidence in their personal future

as well as in the future of the whole country. I wish all of you to have more hope and not to take it from others."

This is not the issue of fulfilling political ambitions. We seek agreement on the future of our state during this very difficult period. The budget deficit should not be increased thus ensuring economic, financial and social stability, which is the most important aim at present. We have to borrow as little funds as possible thus reaching a maximum balance between revenues and expenditure. I mean not only the ability to live to the possible extent. We must gain investors' confidence in our state. Concrete actions are more persuasive rather than declarative statements. "The most important thing is that Lithuania must have a budget at the end of the year. This would show that the country is able to control the situation on its own, thus gaining the confidence of international markets," the President of the Republic of Lithuania claimed as well.

The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrat Political Group will take full responsibility in respect of Lithuanian people and approve of the draft State Budget and municipal budgets for 2010. We believe that the budget of the forthcoming year should be balanced, realistic, without any unjustified illusions; therefore, the plans of accumulation of the budget should be implemented. Moreover, it is expected that the economy will start recovering in the second half of 2010. Our political group encourages leaving all political ambitions behind during this difficult period and showing good faith. All Lithuanian people, businesses and investors expect that from us, i.e. to approve the draft budget for the forthcoming year.

*Assistant to Member of the Seimas Rasa Šošič*

# opposition

## SOCIAL DEMOCRATS' ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME WAS PRESENTED

On 3 November, the Social Democratic Party Political Group had a discussion, during which an alternative Government programme was presented. Apart from Elder of the political group **Algirdas Butkevičius** and its members, Honorary Chairman of the Seimas Lithuanian Social Democratic Party Political Group, President **Algirdas Brazauskas** and other members, who had contributed to the development of the alternative programme, participated in the discussion.

During the presentation of the programme, President Algirdas Brazauskas emphasised that at present, the state is in great need of qualified specialists and people able to work in an orderly manner.

"We have worked on and deliberated over this document for a while, and we have leaned on its implementation. The time has come for drastic changes in Lithuania," Mr. Brazauskas said.

Elder of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party Political Group Algirdas Butkevičius claimed that the steps presented in the programme would help attract income into the budget. "Revenues are the most important factor today. We

are suggesting introducing progressive taxes, encouraging economic recovery by using the support of the European Structural Funds, attracting the funds of the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Nordic Investment Bank, and other international institutions. We have to stimulate the construction sector and reduce taxes for small and middle-sized business," the Elder of the political group named the suggestions of the political group.

The programme presents other measures of business promotion as well. It proposes not reducing state investments in infrastructure projects: roads, railways, energy objects. The state can and must be a good client. The programme also suggests restoring the reduced VAT on medicines, books, newspapers and other periodical issues, certain food stuffs, heating and passenger carrier services by routes established by municipalities, as well as revising the excise duty on fuel in order to ensure that the prices of fuel in Lithuania do not exceed the fuel prices in neighbouring countries.

*Information of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party Political Group*



*Social Democrats: Seimas Deputy Speaker Česlovas Juršėnas, Elder of the Political Group Algirdas Butkevičius, MP Algirdas Sysas, First Deputy Elder of the Political Group Irena Šiaulienė*



# opinion

## BIO-FUEL PRODUCTION FROM GRAINS – A CRIME AGAINST HUMANKIND

The European Union has encouraged the production of bio-fuel from grain crops and its dilution in oil products – diesel and petrol, whereas farmers and recyclers have been appreciated with subsidies and reduced excise duties. The production of bio fuel across the world has been growing robustly claiming one third of the world's grain harvest. However, this policy has turned to be neither far-sighted nor progressive. During the growth of economy, it considerably increased prices of grains, claimed forests in Latin America, what further stimulated the global climate change.

However, the most terrible outcomes are waiting ahead. The resources of underground drinking water are rapidly decreasing in many places of the world. Africa and Southeast Asia are experiencing the fastest pace of this phenomenon. Unlike such satellites of climate change as droughts and fires, which attract a great deal of public attention and concern, the decrease of water resources stays practically unnoticed. However, scientists are sounding the alarm of danger and claim that the third world war will be caused by the shortage of water.

One may ask how it is related to the production of bio-fuel from grains. The answer is simple. After the extinction of drinking water resources, countries will not be able to raise enough grains, which make the main share of the ration of residents of developing countries.

The unregulated population growth in developing countries should also be taken into consideration with regard to this issue, what leaves a very gruesome picture. It should be noted that one person drinks 4 litres of water per day on average and uses 2000 litres of water to raise, process and prepare food. Some rich countries, such as Saudi Arabia, have transferred its agricultural production to developing

countries in order to save as many of its drinking water resources as possible.

Although the European continent does not face the peril of the extinction of water resources and in the near future it will be practically the main granary of the world's grain resources, the production of bio-fuel from grains is a crime.



*Birutė Vėsaitė*

The European Commission has to admit that the policy of promotion of the bio-fuel production from grains was a mistake, suspend the subsidising of these activities and apologise to recyclers, who have been misled by this policy and constructed bio-fuel processing factories. There is no doubt that it will not be easy to reach agreement with European farmers, because at present, it is a very favourable business for them. However, in order to avoid more problems and cataclysms in the future, it should be done as early as possible.

P.S. The author brought these ideas from the conference "Cairo + 15", which took place last week in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). During the conference, apart from other issues, the issues of the development of population and climate change were discussed.

*Chairwoman of the Parliamentary Group for Society  
Development and Reproductive Health and  
Rights Birutė Vėsaitė*



# international relations

On 6 November the VII forum session **“What Obligations does the Neighbourhood Impose?”** was held between the Seimas Group for Interparliamentary Relations with the Russian Federation and parliamentarians of the Kaliningrad Regional Duma in the Seimas. Chairman of the Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs **Audronius Ažubalis** and

Speaker of the Kaliningrad Regional Duma of the Russian Federation **Sergey Bulychev** made presentations during the session. Later participants of the forum discussed on the following topics: “What will the Kaliningrad Region Gain and Lose in the Construction of the Nuclear Power Plant?” and “Will Our Joint Efforts Save the Curonian Lagoon?”



*First row: Chairman of the Seimas Committee on National Security and Defence Arvydas Anušauskas, Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs Justinas Karosas, Deputy Speaker of the Seimas Česlovas Vytautas Stankevičius*



*At the microphone – Seimas First Deputy Speaker Raimondas Šukys, at the table – Speaker of the Kaliningrad Regional Duma of the Russian Federation Sergey Bulychev and Chairman of the Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs Audronius Ažubalis*



*From the left: Seimas Deputy Speaker Česlovas Vytautas Stankevičius, Mr. Bulychev and Felix Alekseyev, Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment Protection of the Kaliningrad Region Duma*



11 November

The Seimas Group for Interparliamentary Relations with the Republic of Austria met with Ambassador of the Republic of Austria **Helmut Koller**.

17 November

## STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS REGARDING THE DECADE LASTING FAILURE TO FULFIL ISTAMBUL COMMITMENTS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

10 years ago a historical Summit of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe was held in Istanbul, during which Heads of State of the organisation took on firm commitment on a free and democratic area from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

This statement was not merely an empty declaration, but on the contrary: specific commitments were agreed upon, which are set out in the Istanbul document. These commitments have contributed and continue contributing to the securing of peace and stability in Europe.

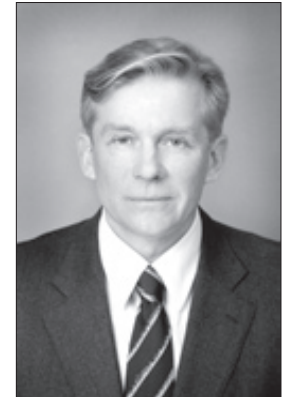
One of the most significant achievements of the Istanbul Summit was Russia's commitment to fully withdraw its armed forces from the territory of Moldova and to withdraw its military bases from the territory of Georgia (by 1 July 2001 from Gudauta and Vaziani, and later, from Batumi and Akhalkalaki).

By assuming these commitments Russia clearly demonstrated its aspirations to become a modern European state that respects sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries, to spread democracy and protect human rights.

Unfortunately, these essential commitments have not been fully implemented, even ten years later: the so-called Russian "peacekeepers" are still dislocated in the Moldovan region of Transnistria, Russia has occupied a part of the Georgian territory: Abkhazia and South Ossetia Regions. Russian military infrastructure is being actively developed in these Georgian regions.

It is only unfortunate that at first Russia assumed commitments, then it fulfilled them on selective basis, and later it began spreading interpretations which clearly contradict to the assumed commitments.

Therefore, it is strange at the very least that Russia now is suggesting in abstract terms changing the entire system that ensures safety and stability in Europe, because it is not functioning in Russia's opinion, when Russia itself does not fulfil the obligations it has assumed, and does not respect sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries, violates the international law, and thus hinders the achievement of peace and stability in Europe.



*Audronius Ažubalis*

I suggest Russia starting the fulfilment of its own international commitments first, and only then submitting specific proposals regarding the improvement of activities of the currently functioning structures that ensure European safety and stability.

I believe that a position stated by Russian President Dmitri Medvedev in the state of the nation address regarding the promotion of democracy and the respect of the rule of law in the domestic policy gives certain hope that analogous principles will be applied in Russian foreign policy too.

*On 16 – 19 November 1999 in Istanbul (Turkey) the Summit of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe took place during which the Istanbul Declaration and the Charter for European Security were adopted, and the Agreement on the Adapted Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty was signed.*

*Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Audronius Ažubalis*

## STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS REGARDING THE REFUSAL OF BELARUSIAN VISA TO MP EMANUELIS ZINGERIS

Refusal to issue visa of the Republic of Belarus to MP **Emanuelis Zingeris** who was planning to visit a meeting organised by Aleksandr Milinkevich, one of the leaders of Belarusian opposition, raises serious doubts as to the sincerity of the government of the Republic of Belarus in its objective to strengthen the relations between the European Union and Belarus. The time and circumstances of the making of the decision by the Belarusian government also raise certain questions. On 16 – 17 November 2009, a meeting of General Affairs and External Relations Council of the European Union will take place, in which Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the European Union are planning to exchange opinions and adopt decisions regarding further steps of the European Union in the reopening of cooperation with Belarus. Equally important is the fact that after long negotiations the European Union commenced active implementation of the Eastern Partnership Programme, seeking closer and open relations with Eastern neighbours of the European Union, including Belarus. It is hardly believable that in light of such important EU initiatives Belarus is trying to destroy them even before the beginning of its full participation in them. I strongly believe that created artificial barriers to the formation of an open dialogue with both, position and opposition hamper not only the development of productive bilateral cooperation, but also raise serious doubts as to the actual and not only alleged wish of Belarus to participate in the EU's Eastern Partnership Programme. The next steps of the Belarusian government will show its true intentions and resolve on the initiatives of the European Union and Lithuania to develop a closer and open cooperation with Belarus. At the same time the decision made by Belarus shows a necessity at European Union level to define a list of



*Emanuelis Zingeris*

specific conditions applied to Belarus, according to which the European Union and each Member State could objectively evaluate actual progress made by Belarus in the path of democratic reforms.

*Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Audronius Ažubalis*

## STATEMENT OF THE SEIMAS GROUP REGARDING THE STATEMENTS MADE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

On 17 November a proposal put forward by MPs **Gintaras Songaila, Saulius Pečeliūnas, Kazimieras Uoka, Auksutė Ramanauskaitė-Skokauskienė, Arimantas Dumčius, Algis Kazulėnas, Evaldas Jurkevičius, Rytas Kupčinskas, Vida Marija Čigriejienė, Pranas Žeimys, Vincė Vaidevutė Margevičienė** to Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania Vygaudas Ušackas, regarding the statements made by the President of the State of Israel, was read during the Seimas sitting:

*“On 14 November 2009, the daily “Lietuvos Rytas” published an interview of Birutė Vyšniauskaitė with Israeli President*

Shimon Peres. The interview revealed interesting and meaningful ideas about the relations between Lithuania and Israel, their past and future prospects. We welcome the fact that Israeli President would like to visit Lithuania and believe that such visit would serve both, the Lithuanian and Israeli interests.

However, we, members of the Seimas, are concerned over the idea of the President of Israel, stating that “Stalin’s brutality was necessary”, and that we should not compare his crimes with the crimes committed by Hitler; the Israeli President himself would not rush to making judgments.

We believe that such position of the Israeli President contradicts our state's efforts to restore historical justice and memory in international politics by condemning Stalinism, as well as in the domestic policy, i.e. by persecuting not only persons who took part in criminal activities, but also the ones who deny crimes committed by the Stalinism regime. Moreover, such sentiment does not go in line with documents that have been recently adopted by the Council of Europe.

We propose for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania by diplomatic means to seek clarification of the official position of Israel on these issues and to deliver the position of the Republic of Lithuania.

*Seimas members: Gintaras Songaila, Saulius Pečeliūnas, Kazimieras Uoka, Auksutė Ramanauskaitė-Skokauskienė, Arimantas Dumčius, Algis Kazulėnas, Evaldas Jurkevičius, Rytas Kupčinskas, Vida Marija Čigriejienė, Pranas Žeimys, Vincė Vaidevutė Margevičienė*

## REPRESENTATIVE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS "HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH" PAID A VISIT TO THE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

On 19 November Chairman of the Committee on Human Rights **Arminas Lydeka**, Deputy Chairman of the Committee **Valerij Simulik** met with representative of the international organisation of human rights "Human Rights Watch" **Boris Dietrich**. The human rights watcher came together with Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands **Joep Wijnands**.

Boris Dietrich is responsible for the issues of sexual minorities in the organisation "Human Rights Watch". In Lithuania the guest took interest in the amendments to the Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information which are currently being considered. Boris Dietrich is concerned whether the law protecting minors will not be amended in such a way that certain provisions would raise doubts as to possible violation of the rights of sexual minorities. The guest was interested to hear the position of the Committee on Human Rights regarding the restriction of freedom of self-expression of sexual minorities when they were not allowed to organise demonstrations. After the meetings in Lithuania, the human rights watcher will draft a report and present it to the United Nations Organisation, the Council of Europe and public authorities in Washington.

Chairman of the Committee Arminas Lydeka welcomed the guests and pointed out that it is always easy to talk about human rights to the Dutch, since the Kingdom of the Netherlands guarantees human rights at the highest level. Mr. Lydeka explained to the human rights watcher that the draft Law Amending the Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information is drawn up with the aim of improving the fundamentals of determining which information has a detrimental effect on minors and

thus avoid the cases of disproportionate restrictions of the supply of information.

According to the Chairman, the law protecting minors should prohibit any promotion of sexual abuse of minors in the media, but it should not restrict educational programmes. Mr. Lydeka stated that as soon as the culture of the supply of public information attains a higher level, the law protecting minors against detrimental information will become redundant. Today in Lithuania the freedom of speech is frequently enjoyed notwithstanding the interests of minors, therefore, legal means are sought to restrict the accessibility of detrimental information to children. Arminas Lydeka also explained committee's position regarding the organisation of demonstrations of sexual minorities. The Chairman of the committee said that the freedom of self-expression should not be restricted. He also emphasised that the issue of permits for the organisation of demonstrations does not fall within the Seimas competence, since this function is delegated to the municipality.

*"Human Rights Watch" is an international organisation protecting human rights, operating in 80 countries with approximately 300 staff members working there. The mission of the organisation is to monitor the situation of human rights. The organisation presents its reports to the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Commission. In 1997 the "Human Rights Watch" was awarded the Nobel Prize, and in 2008 – the United Nations Prize for Merits in the Field of Human Right.*

*Eglė Gibavičiūtė,  
Advisor to the Office of the Committee*

23 November

**SUCCESS OF THE SEIMAS DELEGATION TO THE NATO  
PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY IN EDINBURGH**

On 13–17 November as many as three representatives of the Seimas delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly were elected to various posts of committees of this organisation in the 55th annual NATO Parliamentary Assembly held in Edinburgh. Head of the delegation and Chairman of the Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs **Audronius Ažubalis** became Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on NATO Partnerships, **Juozas Olekas** – Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Democratic Governance of the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security, **Petras Auštrevičius** – Chairman of the Sub-Committee on East-West Economic Cooperation and Convergence of the Economics and Security Committee. In 2006–2009 Petras Auštrevičius was Rapporteur of the Sub-Committee on Trans-Atlantic Relations. Members of the Seimas Delegation to the NATO PA **Andrius Mazuronis** and **Arvydas Anušauskas** also took part in the session.

About 400 parliamentarians from 28 NATO countries and over 20 delegations from non-NATO states, including parliamentarians from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Australia, and South Korea, participated in the session in Edinburgh. Key points of the agenda of the sessions concerned the situation in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, NATO's new strategic concept, NATO's relations with Russia, cyber defence and energy security, terrorism, etc.

15 draft reports and 6 draft resolutions were submitted to five Assembly's committees. Petras Auštrevičius presented



*Members of the Seimas Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly  
Petras Auštrevičius, Arvydas Anušauskas, Audronius Ažubalis*



*Members of the Seimas delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Audronius Ažubalis, Petras Auštrevičius, Juozas Olekas and Arvydas Anušauskas  
together with the representatives from the Lithuanian Atlantic Treaty Association who attended the session in Edinburgh as observers*



a report on food price shocks and their implications at the Economics and Security Committee, and submitted amendments to the resolution on the global economic crisis which was deliberated at the committee.

A heated debate took place in the Committee on Partnerships, and Head of the Seimas Delegation Audronius Ažubalis submitted amendments to two reports of the committee – regarding the resetting of NATO's relations with Russia and regarding Georgia's relations with NATO. The amendments aimed at drawing attention of NATO parliamentarians to important facts that are not given due attention in the reports, for example, Russia's decade lasting failure to fulfil Istanbul commitments regarding the withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova and closing down of military bases in Georgia. In response to the question posed by the Head of the Lithuanian Delegation – whether we can consider Russia a reliable partner when it does not fulfil important international obligations it has assumed – NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said that Russia should think about its behaviour. Mr. Ažubalis also proposed to adequately evaluate Russia's national security strategy in which NATO was named as a potential enemy to Russia. The reports and one of the resolutions of the Committee on

Partnerships highlight NATO's open door policy, however, out of five candidate countries wishing to join the Alliance only Macedonia was evaluated as the country that has made the major progress.

The Assembly's Standing Committee more or less unilaterally evaluated the Russia's current policy and the lack of resolve to fulfil its international commitments, and upheld the decisions adopted during the sitting of the Standing Committee that was held in April 2009 in Vilnius, thereby restricting activities of Russian delegation in the organisation.

NATO's territorial defence and air police mission were among the most urgent issues discussed at the Defence and Security Committee, a report on the nuclear Renaissance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century raised great interest in the Science and Technology Committee, one of the most topical reports presented in the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security concerned the internal situation in Moldova and its prospects for Euro-Atlantic integration.

*International Relations Department of the Office of the  
Seimas, Head of International Organisations Unit  
Snieguolė Žiūkaitė*

## PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF ACCOUNTS OF MOLDOVA VISITED THE COMMITTEE ON AUDIT

On 24 November a delegation of the Chamber of Accounts of the Republic of Moldova headed by President of the Chamber **Ala Popesku** paid a visit to the Committee on Audit. Chairwoman of the Seimas Committee on Audit **Loreta Graužinienė** introduced the representatives of the Moldovan delegation with the activities of the Committee on Audit, cooperation trends between the Committee on Audit and the National Audit Office, and emphasised the importance of parliamentary control carried out by the Committee on Audit. Members of the committee and representatives of the

Moldovan delegation took an active part in the discussion on the specifics of cooperation between the Committee on Audit and the National Audit Office – the highest audit authority of the Republic of Lithuania – and shared good practices. Issues of cooperation between the Moldovan audit authority and the Seimas Committee on Audit were covered during the meeting.

*Rūta Petrukaitė,  
Assistant of the Office of the Committee*

25 November

## MP SAULIUS PEČELIŪNAS WAS AWARDED THE OFFICER'S CROSS OF THE ORDER OF MERIT OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

President of the Republic of Poland **Lech** Kaczyński awarded citizens of Lithuania, Estonia, Georgia and Ukraine for outstanding merit in the support of democratic changes and aspirations for independence in Eastern and Western Europe. Moreover, the Polish President decided to honour merits of citizens of Belarus, Russia and the United Kingdom. Lithuanian MP **Saulius Pečeliūnas** was also among the awarded. The Lithuanian parliamentarian was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland. The head of the neighbouring country also awarded the following citizens of the Republic of Lithuania: **Antanas**

**Terleckas, Leonardas Vilkas, Genovaitė Šakalienė, Elena Terleckienė, Andrius Tučkus, Tadas Vyšniauskas.**

*Information submitted by the  
Homeland Union-Lithuanian  
Christian Democrat Political  
Group*

*Saulius Pečeliūnas >>*



# the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the Baltic Assembly was held in Vilnius

The Baltic Assembly (BA) is an international organisation for cooperation of the parliaments of the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Estonia and the Republic of Latvia, established pursuant to the joint decision of the Supreme Councils of the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Estonia and the Republic of Latvia adopted on 1 December 1990 in Vilnius, and working on the basis of provisions of the Baltic Assembly, approved on 8 November 1991 in Tallinn, Agreement On Cooperation of the Parliaments and Governments of the Baltic States, signed on 13 June 1994, BA Statutes and other legal acts adopted by the Baltic Assembly and its bodies. The Baltic Assembly is an international legal entity with the Office of the Secretariat located in Riga, Latvia.

Each parliament of the Baltic States, following adopted rules of procedures and the principle of proportionate political representation in the national delegation, approves 20 parliamentarians (the national delegation, including its chairman and deputy chairman).

The BA addresses issues and projects that are of the concern for members of national delegations and member states and, following the principles of equal treatment, mutual benefit and unity, make decisions, develop cooperation with other regional and international organisations, as well as with inter-parliamentary organisations.

## NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES, THE SITUATION IN GEORGIA AND FORMS OF FURTHER COOPERATION WERE AMONG THE KEY ISSUES IN THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY SESSION IN VILNIUS

On 27–28 November, the 28<sup>th</sup> session of the Baltic Assembly – an organisation for cooperation between the parliaments of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – was held in the Seimas buildings.

According to President of the Baltic Assembly and Chairman of the Lithuanian delegation to the Assembly, Dr. Mantas Adomėnas, the **new security challenges were among the key issues on the agenda of the session**. In his opinion, it is very important for the Baltic States to search for the opportunities to cooperate with the member states of the Nordic Council, which have developed regional security plans – the so-called Stoltenberg Report.

The head of the Georgian parliament participated in this session together with heads of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian parliaments (see below). Another important issue that was addressed is the **situation in Georgia**. The issue has been included on the agenda by no accident. This year, which is



*The Presidium of the Baltic Assembly: Erika Zommere, Mantas Adomėnas (BA President), Trivimi Velliste*



*Participants of the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly at the March 11 Hall of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania*



*Third from the right – Seimas Speaker Irena Degutienė, next to her – Seimas guest, Speaker of the Georgian Parliament David Bakradze*



also the year of Lithuania's presidency over the Baltic Assembly, cooperation with GUAM countries (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) has been developed and a cooperation agreement on the provision of political support to GUAM countries has been adopted. The President of the Baltic Assembly indicated the search for ways to diversify the country's energy sector as an example of benefit brought to Lithuania by its cooperation with GUAM countries.

The declaration on the situation in Georgia, initiated by Lithuania and adopted during this session of the Baltic Assembly, is highly important in drawing attention of European countries to the problem of Georgia's territorial integrity, aspiration of the country to become member of Euro-Atlantic structures seeking the right solutions concerning the territories annexed by Russia, the issues of returning of refugees, indemnification, and other issues relevant to international security in the South Caucasus region. According to Mr. Adomėnas, participation of David Bakradze, Speaker of Parliament of Georgia, in the plenary session of the Baltic Assembly shows that this form of cooperation with the Baltic States and support for these countries is particularly necessary. (The joint statement on further cooperation with the GUAM Parliamentary Assembly was signed during the session).

Lithuania also initiated **discussions on the forms of further cooperation between parliamentarians of the Baltic States**. All Baltic States recognise the necessity of the Baltic Assembly in coordinating actions, yet they expect to find ways to ensure an even more effective format of regional cooperation and integration.

The **final document** stating the position of the Baltic Assembly on the issues discussed was adopted at the end of the 28<sup>th</sup> session, on 28 November.



*Deputy Chairwoman of the Seimas Delegation to the BA Irena Šiaulienė*



*Member of the Seimas Delegation to the BA Liudvikas Sabutis (on the right)*



## OPENING OF THE BA SESSION

During the BA session, Speaker of Estonian Parliament **Ene Ergma** (on 27 November), Speaker of Latvian Parliament **Gundars Daudze** (on 26–27 November) and Speaker of Georgian Parliament **David Bakradze** (on 26–28 November) paid visits to Lithuania. **On 27 November Speaker of the Seimas Irena Degutienė and heads of Estonian, Latvian and Georgian parliaments took part and delivered speeches in the opening ceremony of the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly (BA) held in the Seimas.**

*Speech by Mrs. Irena Degutienė, Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, on the occasion of the opening of the 28th Session of the Baltic Assembly*

Mr President of the Baltic Assembly,  
Excellencies Speakers of Parliaments, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Honourable Members and Guests of the Baltic Assembly,  
Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome all the representatives from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly. I hope that open discussions and diversity of opinion that have always been an inseparable part of the Baltic Assembly this time and again will facilitate our communication and work discussing both the present and the future of our states.

We have been continuing the tradition of the Baltic Assembly for 20 years now. The objectives of historic sovereignty identified under the Soviet occupation were achieved a long time ago. As a result, we can sometimes be confronted with the question of whether this parliamentary forum of the Baltic States is still needed. Can it make a practical influence on our life? Or perhaps the Baltic Assembly has already accomplished its historical mission? Otherwise, should it retain its current form or should it undergo a reform and look for a new scope of activity that is more closely related to the challenges of today?

I am among those who have an unambiguous and a clear view on this: **our Assembly, as an excellent example of historical cooperation among the Baltic States, can and must continue to function.** It should undergo quality renewal, react to current realities of life, respond to newly emerging problems, and in this way gain a new value.

Unfortunately, some problems, which emerged from the very beginning of its activity, have not been solved so far. First of all, I have in mind the lack of the unity among the Baltic States. Often, the competition in respect to some minor details overshadows the entire potential of cooperation.



*Seimas Speaker Irena Degutienė*



*Speaker of the Estonian Riigikogu Ene Ergma*

**Whereas, in general the Baltic States have the same interests in all strategic issues of international policy and economy. I want to underline that, basically, we have the same interests in all issues.** Consequently, the benefit or progress of one country becomes of benefit to the entire region, while the problems of one state directly affect the quality of life or security of others.

Therefore, it is necessary to continue tangible and dynamic activities of closer integration. **The Assembly should become the initiator of joint projects of the Baltic States, which generates modern ideas of cooperation.**

I believe that the voice of the Baltic Assembly should become significant when addressing strategic issues and its decisions should not be of symbolic and recommendatory character only, they should be binding too. I welcome the efforts for strengthening the dialogue among the Parliaments of the Baltic States and looking for new forms of interaction between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers. In turn, this would enable stronger parliamentary control of the cooperation among the Baltic States.

In order to avoid a standstill, the Baltic Assembly should set strategic objectives, formulate medium-term projects, define the criteria for efficient activities, and consistently follow its goals. **This way the Assembly would gain more weight in its cooperation and in taking decisions relevant to all three Baltic States.**

In the international arena, I see the Baltic Assembly as a platform that inert alia could coordinate mutual actions of our states in the EU institutions and propose a common Baltic vision on various issues essential for the development of the entire EU. In general, the Baltic Assembly can give a number of stimuli in forming the common foreign policy of our states on the basis, for instance, of the experience of close and historically proven cooperation among the Nordic Countries. This approach would promote the development of the Baltic States as an integral community which sees security, economic or political problems of one state as common problems of all the Baltic States.

For this purpose **the Baltic Assembly should further strengthen its ties not only with the Nordic Council but also with respective parliamentary fora of the Organisation for Democracy and Economic Development and the Benelux countries** in order to learn from and share the experience of joint activities and also in order to ensure a more efficient network of parliamentary relations between the EU and partner countries in the Eastern neighbourhood.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have touched upon only several aspects of the activities of the Baltic Assembly. Certainly, there are many more. Therefore, I invite you to discuss openly and work in solidarity making use of as much potential as possible. We are the nations that have experienced the same



*Head of the Latvian Saeima Gundars Daudze*



*Speaker of the Georgian Parliament David Bakradze*

historical fate; we are neighbours actually not only in the geographical sense. Let us keep this in mind when seeking strategic objectives and engaging in everyday activities.

I hope this will come true. I welcome you once again and wish success to the 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly.

## PARLIAMENTARIANS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS OF THE BALTIC STATES AGREED UPON COOPERATION PRIORITIES FOR 2010

On 27 November, at the Seimas, the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers gathered to the **15<sup>th</sup> Baltic Council** to evaluate the progress of cooperation priorities for 2009 and to set cooperation priorities for 2010. The following priorities for cooperation were defined:

- economic stabilisation and promotion of competitiveness;
- security, including energy security and environment protection;
- strategic cooperation between the Baltic States and the Nordic countries.



*Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania Vygaudas Ušackas and BA President Mantas Adomėnas*



*Press conference of the heads of the BA Presidium and the BA Council of Ministers: Latvian Minister for Foreign Affairs Maris Riekstins, Head of the Saeima Delegation to the BA Erika Zommere, Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Affairs Vygaudas Ušackas, Head of the Seimas Delegation, BA President Mantas Adomėnas, Estonian Minister for Foreign Affairs Urmas Paet*



The Baltic Council confirmed the necessity of tripartite cooperation of the Baltic States at parliamentary and governmental levels and the resolve to continue promoting relations of the three countries **in the formation of the European Union and NATO policies** serving the interests of these states. Moreover, the Baltic Council announced its support for the initiative to declare 23 August **the European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Stalinism and Nazism**.

It was resolved to devote special attention to **the economic stabilisation** in Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, in particular in ensuring sustainable growth and the promotion of competitiveness, knowledge economy and research development. A support for joint projects on energy and transport infrastructure was expressed. Attention was drawn to the current **situation of security and threats posed to**

**it** – it was resolved to increase NATO's visibility in the region and continue developing joint Baltic projects, such as the Baltic Battalion, Baltic Defence College, etc.

The Baltic Council agreed to promote instruments **ensuring energy security**, and paid attention to the issues of **climate change**. The Baltic Council agreed to coordinate policies that would help ensure **a flexible and secure labour market**, and develop an approach in various sectors comprising social security policy, life-long learning and professional training, and strategies for economic development.

Annual joint meeting of the Baltic Council – the Baltic Assembly and the Council of Minister of the Baltic States – an institution operating since 1994 for cooperation of governments of the Baltic States.

## THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY PRESENTED AWARDS

On 27 November, as a tradition, the Baltic Assembly awarded the laureates of science, literature and art. The event took place in the Vilnius City Hall.

On 16 October, in the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia, during the sitting of the Joint Commission it was decided to present the following awards: Art Award – to painter **Marko Mäetamm** (Estonia); Literature Award – to **Inga Ābele** (Latvia); Science Award – to academician, professor, doctor habilitatus, researcher at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore **Leonardas Sauka**.

Artist Marko Mäetamm was awarded for professional and internationally acclaimed exhibitions, as well as for the achievements in art over the past several years. The commission admitted that the works of the artist particularly well reflect universal human values in such difficult times for humanity.

Inga Ābele was awarded for her novel "Flood" ("Paisums"), although the writer has tried all literary genres: prose, dramaturgy, poetic prose; she has published journals and written travel notes. The writer has been awarded with several literature prizes, her works have been translated to other languages – French, English, German, Russian, Italian and Lithuania.

Leonardas Sauka was awarded for the fundamental study of folklore consisting of four volumes "Folk Tale Eglė the



Head of the Seimas Delegation, BA President Mantas Adomėnas

Queen of Serpents" ("Pasaka Eglė žalčių karalienė"). Mr. Sauka studied different variants of this tale in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and other countries. The commission members recognised the fact that the future of small nations is closely related to ethnography, therefore, the researcher's works will help future generations better understand the past.





*Laureates of BA awards: Inga Abele, Marko Maetamm, Leonardas Sauka*

The Baltic Assembly awards given for the achievements in literature, art and science were set following the resolution of the Baltic Assembly adopted on 31 October 1993, seeking

to promote the development of literature, art and science in the Baltic States, evaluate the most prominent achievements in these spheres and promote them in other countries.

*Media release of 28 November 2009*

## The 28<sup>th</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly Ended

Representatives of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian parliaments who had gathered for the 28th session of the Baltic Assembly in Vilnius finished their work. The parliamentarians addressed the issues of cooperation of the Baltic States in face of economic crisis and objectives of future cooperation of the Baltic States seeking to strengthen security, stability and development, as well as cooperation agenda of the Baltic States institutions, long-term priorities and development.

The Baltic Assembly stated its position on the issues covered during the session in the **final document** (see p. 44).

Parliamentarians of the Baltic States set the following **priorities** of the Baltic Assembly for 2010:

- **economic stabilisation of the Baltic States;**
- **safe society and quality of life;**
- **strategic cooperation between the Baltic States and Nordic countries.**

**Priorities** for cooperation between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers were also defined:

- **economic stabilisation of the Baltic States and promotion of regional competitiveness;**
- **security of the Baltic States;**
- **strategic cooperation between the Baltic States and Nordic countries.**

During the final sitting reports of the Presidium of the Baltic Assembly – the organiser of the Assembly's work – and committees of the Assembly were delivered, new management of the Baltic Assembly and chairmen of committees were elected. Latvian representative **Ērika Zomere** was elected President of the Baltic Assembly for 2010. **Mantas Adomėnas** (Lithuania) and **Trivimi Velliste** (Estonia) were elected Vice-Presidents.

With regards to the present economic situation, **it was resolved to reduce the budget of the Baltic Assembly for 2010 by 17 per cent.**

The 29<sup>th</sup> session of the Baltic Assembly will take place on 21–23 October 2010 in Riga (the Republic of Latvia) during the Latvian presidency.



*Concluding press conference of the BA Presidium: Ērika Zommere, Mantas Adomėnas, Trivimi Velliste*



*Head of the Delegation of the Latvian Parliament Erika Zommere takes over the presidency of the Baltic Assembly for one year*

## FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE 28<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY

### The Baltic Assembly,

**having convened** on 26–28 November 2009 in Vilnius, the Republic of Lithuania, for its 28<sup>th</sup> Session,

**having discussed** cooperation of the Baltic States in circumstances of economic crisis and future tasks for cooperation of the Baltic States in increasing security, sustainability and growth as well as the agenda, priorities and development of cooperation among institutions of the Baltic states in the long-term perspective,

**adopted** the following documents:

**Resolution** on Increased Cooperation of the Baltic States in the Schengen Area;

**Resolution** on Increasing Energy Efficiency, Energy Saving and Adapting to Climate Change;

**Resolution** on Ensuring Sustainable Economic and Social Development in the Baltic States;

**Resolution** on Development of Education in Alignment with Labour Market Needs;

**Declaration** on New Challenges for Security Agenda;

**Recommendation** on Joint Measures for Development of Common Baltic Business Environment;

**Declaration** Concerning Proposals Related to the Solution of the Problem of Nagorno-Karabakh;

**Declaration** on the Situation in Georgia;

**approved** the Baltic Assembly Budget Report for 2008;

**adopted** the Baltic Assembly Budget for 2010;

**defined** the following priorities of the Baltic Assembly for 2010:

- economic stabilization of the Baltic States;
- safe society and the quality of life;
- strategic cooperation between the Baltic States and the Nordic countries;

**defined** the following priorities for co-operation between the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers for 2010:

- *economic stabilization of the Baltic States and promotion of regional competitiveness;*
- *security of the Baltic States;*
- *strategic cooperation between the Baltic States and Nordic countries, and* **decided** that the 29<sup>th</sup> Session of the Baltic Assembly will take place on 21–23 October 2010 in Riga, the Republic of Latvia.

President of  
the Baltic Assembly

**Dr. Mantas ADOMĖNAS**  
Republic of Lithuania

Vice President of  
the Baltic Assembly

**Ērika ZOMMERE**  
Republic of Latvia

Vice President of  
the Baltic Assembly

**Trivimi VELLISTE**  
Republic of Estonia

Vilnius, 28 November 2009

## DECLARATION ON NEW CHALLENGES FOR SECURITY AGENDA

The changing security environment in the early twenty-first century creates new challenges for all countries, whereas the concept of security, challenges, threats, and vulnerabilities has changed significantly. The arsenal of threats and the means for their prevention are closely related to a country's internal development, the state of the international system, and changes in its structure, as well as internal dynamics of the system units. Since the nature of the Cold War has changed, in many EU and NATO countries a wide security concept has emerged that has added economic, societal, energy, and environmental dimensions to the narrow military and diplomatic functions. In a changing security environment, new threats are emerging, and not all of them are predictable.

The Baltic Assembly appreciates the efforts of parliaments and governments of the Nordic countries to promote the Nordic cooperation on foreign affairs and security policy, which started in 2008. The Baltic Assembly will carefully follow Nordic parliamentary and governmental discussions on the cooperation among the five Nordic countries. The Baltic Assembly expresses hope that when preparing their cooperation strategy the Nordic countries will take into consideration not only individual security demands and interests but also those of other regional partners and of partners in the global arena.

### The Baltic Assembly declares:

*it is important to develop a democratic society, peaceful and constructive relations with neighbouring countries by establishing democracy and stability in the region;*

*the geographical proximity, common foreign and security interests and serious changes in security agendas contribute to the development of a new approach to the resolution of security problems with a view to addressing threats in a co-ordinated and complementary way, avoiding duplication;*

*the European Union, NATO, and other international organisations, working on new security strategy concepts, should also hold local and regional discussions on a new security concept at the Baltic level;*

*for increasing security on the regional level, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania should work actively on implementing such EU partnership strategies as the EU Baltic Sea Strategy, the EU Eastern Partnership, and the EU Neighbourhood initiatives, all the countries should develop their ability to meet new challenges for national security, including cyber attacks, information warfare, and attempts to destabilise societies and states.*

Vilnius, 28 November 2009



## DECLARATION CONCERNING PROPOSALS RELATED TO THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**expressing concern** over the persistence of regional conflicts in the Southern Caucasus;

**supporting** a peaceful solution of the problem of Nagorno-Karabakh based on the main norms and principles of international law;

**emphasising** the principles of non-use of force and territorial integrity in accordance with norms of international law,

**expresses hope** that Armenia and Azerbaijan will, in the nearest future, manage to find the solution acceptable to both sides;

**supports** the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group towards a peaceful settlement of the crisis on the basis of the principles, commitments, and provisions of the OSCE;

**supports** the efforts of the EU Member States and other countries to solve the problem through peaceful dialogue.

*Vilnius, 28 November 2009*

## DECLARATION ON THE SITUATION IN GEORGIA

**The Baltic Assembly,**

**concerned** about continuing tension in the relations between Georgia and the Russian Federation, which is increasingly escalating after the military aggression by the Russian Federation against Georgia and occupation of a part of its territory, just over one year ago, in August 2008;

**expressing** its growing concern over the actions of the Russian Federation who is entrenching occupation of the parts of the sovereign and independent state of Georgia and concentrating its military forces in such Georgia's regions as Abkhazia and South Osetia, thus violating the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia as well as jeopardizing international peace, security and stability;

**regretting** about the decision of the Russian Federation to veto continuation of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Observer Missions in Georgia, since suspension of these missions contributes to further worsening of the complicated situation in the region and obviously does not meet the interests of the civil population of this conflict zone;

**reminding** of the importance of ensuring full and unconditional fulfilment of the commitments of the Russian Federation, in compliance with the cease-fire agreements of 12 August 2008 and 8 September 2008, primarily with regard to withdrawal of the Russian troops illegitimately deployed on Georgia's territory;

**reiterating** support to preservation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia without violating its internationally recognized borders,

**urges** all the countries to refrain from actions that could destabilize the situation in the South Caucasus even more and thus harm stability and security in the whole Europe;

**urges** the Russian Federation to start fulfilling its commitments listed in the 12 August 2008 and 8 September 2008 agreements: to withdraw the occupational forces from the territory of Georgia recognized by the international community and engage in constructive co-operation to resolve the issues related to the activities of international Observer Missions in the entirely internationally recognized territory of Georgia, since these missions are indispensable with a view to enhancing mutual trust, stability and security in these regions and ensuring provision of humanitarian assistance to civil population;

**invites** the governments of the European Union and the NATO member countries, representatives of the national parliaments, the European Parliament, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the United Nations Organisation and its members, the Council of Europe, civil society and the international community to continue active pursuance of the policy of non-recognition of the alleged "independence" of Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and South Osetia and to increase pressure on the Russian Federation to oblige it to fulfil its international commitments, to continue to raise the issues of ensuring Georgia's territorial integrity and seek for solid and efficient solutions in this regard, invoking the Geneva international peace talks;

**urges** the governments of the European Union and NATO, the European Parliament, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the United Nations Organisation, the Council of Europe, civil society and the international community to be active mediators in resolving the situation of the IDPs from Abkhazia and South Osetia and provide conditions for them to return to their homes in compliance with the requirements of the international documents, including the Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations of 9 September 2009, by guaranteeing their security and human dignity, and by ensuring that they receive just compensation for the losses incurred from the parties responsible;

**underlines** the importance of continuation of democracy development and local reforms in Georgia for it to become a fully-fledged member of the European and Euro-Atlantic structures and to efficiently solve its internal political problems, as well as the necessity to create the model of governance attractive to the population of Abkhazia and South Osetia regions and capable of securing minority rights,

**urges** all the political forces of Georgia to unite their efforts and conduct a constructive dialogue with a view to cherishing democratic values, entrenching the principles of the rule of law and seeking joint solutions in implementing important local reforms through promotion of the broad support of Georgia's society.

*Vilnius, 28 November 2009*



## JOINT STATEMENT OF THE GUAM PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY AND THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY

### **The GUAM Parliamentary Assembly and the Baltic Assembly,**

**welcoming** the Declaration on Cooperation between the Baltic Assembly and the GUAM Parliamentary Assembly, signed by the Chairman of the GUAM Parliamentary Assembly and the President of the Baltic Assembly in Vilnius, the Republic of Lithuania on 19 June 2009;

**confirming** that the foundation of such cooperation is promotion of democratic, socio-economic and cultural development of the GUAM and Baltic countries, contribution to resolution of the protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and provision of political support for regional cooperation;

**willing** to further develop cooperation between the GUAM and the Baltic regions in the spheres of mutual interest such as energy/energy security, conflict resolution in the GUAM area, climate change and environmental protection, social welfare, healthcare, culture, science and education, cross-border cooperation, trade and economy, infrastructure and communications, support and sharing of the experience on the issues of EU and NATO integration, and implementation of international policy;

**underlining** that protracted conflicts in the GUAM area constitute the main threat to regional and international peace, security and stability and a threat to democracy and economic development;

**considering** that the unstable character of supply of energy resources creates a threat to economic development of the region and difficulties for the population,

**call on** the international community to support the GUAM States in facilitating a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the GUAM area based on norms and principles of international law, the fundamental ones being the principles of territorial integrity and inviolability of borders;

**stress** that the territory of a state may not be a subject of acquisition or military occupation resulting from the threat or use of force in breach of the relevant norms of international law. No territorial acquisitions and the resulting self-declared entities may be recognized as legal under any circumstances whatsoever;

**support** the European aspirations of the GUAM Member States and agree to have a regular exchange of experience on the issues of EU and NATO integration;

**intend** to coordinate the steps aimed at strengthening energy security through the use and development of pipeline networks and other transport infrastructure to increase export and transit of energy supplies, diversification of their supply and enhanced coordination of the development of alternative energy sources;

**consider** as unacceptable the use of energy supply and transit as a means of pressure on producer, transit and consumer countries, and urge all players of the energy market to develop transparent mutual relations on the basis of partnership, equality, and mutual benefit;

**recommend** to respective state institutions to present specific draft proposals to be implemented in the spheres of mutual interest within the GUAM – Baltic cooperation framework,

**have agreed** to coordinate the time and venue of the next round of consultations between the GUAM PA and the Baltic Assembly via diplomatic channels.

**Dr. Mantas ADOMĖNAS**

President of the Baltic Assembly

**Vano KHUKHUNAISHVILI**

Chairman of the GUAM Parliamentary Assembly



# speaker of the Seimas

3 November

## **SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS URGED TO PUT AN END TO NON-CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT REPLACING THE PRIME MINISTER OR THE WHOLE CABINET**

Speaker of the Seimas Irena Degutienė urged to put an end to non-constructive discussions about replacing the Prime Minister or even the whole Cabinet.

“The Government headed by Andrius Kubilius is stable and, together with the Seimas, searches for all possible ways during the crisis in order to help Lithuanian people suffer as little as possible from the current economic and social difficulties,” said Mrs. Degutienė. “Now, when we are starting consultations over the next year’s budget, replacement of the Prime Minister or even the whole Cabinet would be detrimental to the country, since we would waste our precious time and could not adopt the decisions necessary for economic recovery.”

The Seimas Speaker noted that other states facing the global financial crisis also seek a dialogue and consensus concerning ways to overcome the crisis among all political powers, but they do not create any comprehensive government structures. Therefore, the Head of Parliament started looking for compromises in the Seimas, as well as consulting the heads of political groups of the opposition parties and experts.

“We have to listen to all rational proposals submitted by both, political parties and experts. Therefore, I have started consultations and I hope to hear constructive and valuable ideas that will help mitigate the consequences of this crisis. I believe that we will find solutions which could be then implemented by Mr. Kubilius’s Government,” said Mrs. Degutienė.



*Seimas Speaker Irena Degutienė and Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius*

6 November

## **SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS: I WISH THAT LITHUANIANS LIVING IN SPAIN REPRESENT DIGNIFIED AND RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION AND TRUST IN OTHER LITHUANIANS, AND WHERE NECESSARY – CONSOLATION AND HELP OFFERED**

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Irena Degutienė greeted the participants and guests of the assembly of the Lithuanian community in Spain held on 7 November.

In her letter, the Head of Parliament noted that the national memory and spiritual roots of all Lithuanians lie in Lithuania, although due to certain circumstances the community she addressed was referred to as the “Lithuanians of Spain”.

“Although Spain has become your second homeland, I sincerely wish you to emphasise the word “Lithuanians” in this phrase. I wish you to always cherish all the bright and valuable experiences you gained from your homeland and your nation, and pass them as a value to your children – the youngest generation of Lithuanians living abroad,” Mrs. Degutienė writes in her greeting.

The Seimas Speaker highlighted that a really numerous Lithuanian community live in Spain to date and wished them to foster human solidarity and the true Lithuanian spirit.

“I really wish that Lithuanians living in Spain represent dignified and respectful communication and trust in other Lithuanians, and where necessary – consolation and help offered. Namely this gesture leads to the true national and human solidarity and the true Lithuanian spirit,” Mrs. Degutienė writes. “I sincerely wish intense activities specifically based on these values, which would unite Lithuanians from all generations and with different attitudes and which would strengthen their mutual relationships as well as their relationship with Lithuania.”

## **SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS GREETED TEACHERS OF LITHUANIAN SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Irena Degutienė greeted the participants of the professional training seminar for teachers of Lithuanian schools, which was held in London (United Kingdom).

According to the Head of Parliament, such events demonstrate a beautiful and meaningful harmony of general education and national upbringing of young people, inducement to boldly face the modern world and loyalty to national values.

“It would be truly unfair to consider the teaching of the Lithuanian language and literature, history and ethnography as simply the knowledge provided to young people. It is particularly important that this knowledge helps consolidate the relationship of children and youth with Lithuania, the language and culture of their parents and ancestors, which could be compared to sowing a seed of love for the homeland or maybe a hope of returning someday in the future,” Mrs. Degutienė writes in her greeting.

The Seimas Speaker also reminded of the tragic experience of the older generation of emigrants.

“All enlightened persons and all those who remained loyal to their mother-tongue gathered to discuss preservation of the Lithuanian spirit. They all admitted that Sunday schools, knowledge and experience these schools provided, as well as keeping regular contact with the fellow-countrymen became an important spiritual support and an integral element of cultural and human completeness. Namely these considerations led to their determination to never repudiate Lithuania and to keep coming back to it at least in their minds and souls, and when independence was restored – to come back physically,” writes Mrs. Degutienė.

The Head of Parliament thanked everybody who were doing this difficult and important work at present.

“I sincerely wish that Lithuanian men and women, regardless of their generation and experience, spoke one language, i.e. the Lithuanian language,” the Seimas Speaker adds.

## **SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS IS CONVINCED THAT ESTABLISHMENT AND EXPANSION OF LARGE LIVESTOCK HOLDINGS MUST COMPLY WITH LEGISLATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS**

Speaker of the Seimas Irena Degutienė received representatives from local authorities and communities of Mažeikiai, Kalvarija, Radviliškis, Pakruojis, Tytuvėnai and Pasvalys districts.

The Head of Parliament listened to the problems encountered by these communities and people living near large pig holdings. She inquired about the actions that could solve the problems.

According to community representatives, issuance of authorisations to expand the large pig farm complexes contravenes both, Lithuanian legislation and international conventions.

Speaker of the Seimas Irena Degutienė said that she welcomed foreign investments in Lithuania; however, she emphasised that establishment or expansion of any undertakings must comply with the effective legislation and environmental requirements.

"We must ensure that the decisions made are harmful neither to people living in these areas nor to the nature," added Mrs. Degutienė.

According to community representatives, the position of local authorities and communities is rarely taken into consideration when making decisions concerning farm expansion. Therefore, the participants of the meeting suggested amending laws and vesting local authorities with more rights and responsibility when solving these issues.

They pointed out that they were already searching for ways to solve the problem of environmental pollution and smell. Legal acts have been currently drafted with a view to stipulating an obligation for large livestock holdings to construct biogas production facilities, thus not only reducing environmental pollution, but also offering a new source of energy to local communities.

The Seimas Speaker expressed a hope that communities would keep on actively participating in the problem solving process and suggesting specific solutions to the responsible Seimas committees.

9 November

## **HISTORIC AND CULTURAL STEREOTYPES SHOULD NOT HINDER THE COMMON STRATEGIC GOALS OF LITHUANIA AND POLAND**

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Irena Degutienė received the participants of the Polish-Lithuanian Academy. This academy is the rolling project

initiated by Jagiellonian University in Krakow. The students from Krakow University and Vilnius University take part in this project.



*Seimas Speaker with students of the Academy*



The Head of Parliament stressed that the development of bilateral relations between Lithuania and Poland and strategic partnership should invoke not only already functioning institutions.

"We have to establish an informal network joining scientists, historians and academic youth, which advocates common heritage of both states and encourages closer relationship between Lithuanian and Polish communities," said Mrs. Degutienė.

According to the Seimas Speaker, Lithuanian and Polish strategic partnership is also very important from the geopolitical point of view.

"Painful history shows that as soon as bilateral relations between Lithuania and Poland became weaker, the whole Central European and Baltic region would become the stage of geopolitical exchange between the great states. We should learn these historical lessons and not repeat the same mistakes again," added the Speaker.

The Head of Parliament emphasised that Lithuanian and Polish strategic partnership should be developed, and both states should not avoid an open dialogue, regardless of certain historic and cultural stereotypes.

"The issues of national minorities must be discussed in a constructive manner without hindering strategic goals," the Seimas Speaker said.

## SEIMAS SPEAKER INTRODUCED THE NEW HEAD TO THE STAFF OF THE OFFICE OF THE SEIMAS

Speaker of the Seimas Irena Degutienė met with the employees of the Office of the Seimas and introduced their new head, **Jonas Milerius**.

The Head of Parliament wished the Office of the Seimas to open a new page of work, without negative emotions and sores, yet with determination and commitment to work honestly and fairly.

"I am pleased to see that the Office of the Seimas will finally have a leader who will effectively and carefully solve all issues and problems," said Mrs. Degutienė.

The Speaker noted that society treat the Seimas as a whole and do not group the persons working in this institution under the categories of politicians and public servants, or the position and the opposition.

"We all work here, in the Seimas. It is us who are responsible for timely fulfilment of the objectives defined for us by society as well as for concrete results," added Mrs. Degutienė.

The Head of Parliament wished a greater degree of cooperation and understanding in this responsible work.



*Seimas Secretary General Jonas Milerius, Seimas Speaker Irena Degutienė, Seimas Deputy Speaker Virginija Baltraitienė*



*Staff members of the Seimas Office*

11 November

**SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS AND PRIME MINISTER HELD  
A DISCUSSION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL  
AGREEMENT**

Speaker of the Seimas **Irena Degutienė** and Prime Minister **Andrius Kubilius** held a round table discussion on the implementation of the National Agreement. The meeting was held in the Constitution Hall of the Seimas Building I.

Seimas Speaker Irena Degutienė, Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius, representatives of organisations that signed the National Agreement and MPs attended the discussion.

The National Agreement was signed on 28 October by the Government together with its social partners – the largest organisations of trade unions, businesses and employers, and pensioners. All the participants of the agreement were firmly convinced that the implementation of this document would help solve the old problems of the state. Upon signing the agreement, the Government also committed to continue discussions on long-range reforms and adopt decisions in consultation with the social partners.



*Irena Degutienė, Andrius Kubilius, Minister for Finance Ingrida Šimonytė*



*From the left: MPs Jurgis Razma, Valdemaras Valkiūnas*

## SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS GREETED LITHUANIANS LIVING IN HOLLAND

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Irena Degutienė greeted Lithuanians living in Holland on the occasion of the general assembly of members of this community.

The Head of Parliament wished that when pronouncing “Lithuanians” in Holland, they would feel all the bright and valuable experience they gained from their homes and families, the homeland and the nation, their Lithuania.

“I sincerely request you to preserve your national memory and pass it as a value to your children and grandchildren, and spread it among the young generation of Lithuanians living

abroad. I wish you to find each other, to find your national family in Holland, which has become a second homeland for you,” Mrs. Degutienė writes in her greeting.

The Speaker encouraged members of the Lithuanian community in Holland to continue their intense activities based on national and common human values, which would unite Lithuanians from all generations and with different attitudes and which would strengthen their mutual relationships as well as their relationship with Lithuania.

The general assembly of the Lithuanian community living in Holland took place on 15 November, Sunday.

## SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS RECEIVED THE AMBASSADOR OF UKRAINE

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Irena Degutienė received Ambassador of Ukraine **Ihor Prokopchuk**.

The Head of Parliament pointed out that Lithuania continued to follow the basic foreign policy directions concerning Ukraine.

“Lithuania’s support for the integration of Ukraine into the European Union and NATO is unquestionable. It has always been and will remain a priority of Lithuania’s foreign policy,” said Mrs. Degutienė.

According to the Seimas Speaker, cooperation between Lithuanian parliamentarians and members of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine was not particularly active during the first year of this legislative period of the Seimas.

“We must seek more intense activities and cooperation of different Lithuanian and Ukrainian interparliamentary institutions,” stressed Mrs. Degutienė. “We have to encourage cooperation between Lithuanian and Ukrainian academic youth, and develop relationship between analytic research centres and non-governmental organisations.”



*From the left: MP Julius Dautartas, Seimas Speaker Irena Degutienė*



16 November

**SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS PARTICIPATED IN THE OPENING  
EVENT OF AN EXHIBITION “WE ARE BORN LITHUANIANS”**

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Irena Degutienė attended the opening event of an exhibition entitled **“We Are Born Lithuanians”** organised by the Lithuanian World Community.

In her address to the participants, the Head of Parliament noted that we are a great nation who have accomplished tasks that were considered impossible.

“Emigrants, who were separated from the land of their parents and ancestors, have always remained Lithuanians not only in their hearts and minds, but also in their actions,” said Mrs. Degutienė. “I would like to thank all of you who contributed to the restoration of Lithuania’s independence twenty years ago. The contribution of emigrants to our independence is immeasurable.”

According to the Seimas Speaker, this exhibition conveys just a small part of the most important tasks accomplished by Lithuanians living far from their homeland.



*Seimas Speaker Irena Degutienė, President Valdas Adamkus*





17 November

## **SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS ADDRESSES ACADEMIC YOUTH: GAIN KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE WORLDWIDE AND COME BACK TO LITHUANIA TO CREATE A EUROPEAN STATE**

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Irena Degutienė greeted Lithuanian academic youth on the occasion of the International Students' Day.

In her greeting, the Head of Parliament noted that universities and institutes, academies and colleges are considered to be the most important centres of society's renewal, because they are the place for meeting of experience and youthful courage, the ability to transfer experience and knowledge and a wish to accept them.

"In all countries student communities have always remained the part of society who are the most receptive to the essence of life and at the same time the most sensitive to any injustice. When taking over the professional knowledge from their teachers, young people take over the human wisdom and values and, led by their youthful idealism, seek to follow these values here and now," writes Mrs. Degutienė in her greeting. "This determination to serve the truth, faith in the world and people are perhaps the most beautiful qualities presented to us by youth."

According to the Seimas Speaker, the clash of ideals and the reality is sometimes very painful; it makes young people search for understanding and support, and finally a dignified life in another setting, another country.

"I have therefore always repeated and will keep repeating that emigration, in particular emigration of young, talented and creative people, is not only the consequence of financial problems. It is the reflection of misunderstanding between people, unwillingness to hear and talk, in other words, a deep

erosion of the community. This is our present reality, and we cannot close our eyes to it, as we have no moral right to do it," writes Mrs. Degutienė.

The Head of Parliament stressed that such a situation could be essentially changed only by young people who are open to the world.

"But who else, if not young and responsible people, are able to overcome it? Who, if not present students, free from complexes of the past and open to the world, are destined to create a modern and bold future? Isn't it your will and power, instead of leaving Lithuania for a humanly warmer and more just world, to create such a world here, in Lithuania?" asks the Speaker of the Seimas.

Mrs. Degutienė encouraged young people to travel, study, gain knowledge, observe the world and discover the true values.

"Then come back to Lithuania with all this baggage. It is here that your spiritual roots lie and here is the land of your ancestors. Here is your greatest opportunity to create a real European state. Do not underestimate this gift of destiny, your nation and your Lithuania," the Head of Parliament addresses the students.

The letter by Speaker of the Seimas Irena Degutienė was read in a conference entitled "Lithuanian Student Community Today: To Stay or to Leave?" organised by the National Union of Student Representations of Lithuania to mark the International Students' Day.

20 November

## **SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS AND ONE OF THE DIRECTORS OF THE INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE DISCUSSED THE ROLE OF LITHUANIA IN STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY**

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Irena Degutienė received Regional Programme Director for Eurasia of the International Republican Institute Stephen Nix.

Cooperation opportunities between the Seimas and the International Republican Institute and future prospects were discussed during the meeting.

"We would like to continue cooperation with the International Republican Institute while exchanging our experience in developing parliamentary democracy," said Mrs. Degutienė.

"Lithuania has been currently presiding over the Community of Democracies and may significantly contribute to the new initiatives in this area."

According to the Seimas Speaker, parliamentary cooperation is particularly relevant in promoting democratic changes in the countries which are making their first steps towards democracy and civil liberty.

"We are ready to further various projects in Eastern countries, provided they show willingness," added Mrs. Degutienė.

23 November

**SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS MET WITH THE AMBASSADORS OF  
EU MEMBER STATES TO REVIEW THE CURRENT ISSUES OF  
LITHUANIAN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES**

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Irena Degutienė received the ambassadors of European Union (EU) Member States to Lithuania.

When greeting the representatives from EU Member States, the Head of Parliament stressed that most EU countries encountered similar problems as Lithuania.

Focusing on Lithuanian domestic and foreign policies, the Speaker noted that the Baltic Region greatly suffered from the global economic crisis and the Baltic States found themselves in a deep decline.

“Stabilisation of public finances has remained our most important task. It is an essential prerequisite for sustainable economic recovery. Therefore, we have resorted to drastic, yet inevitable measures to reduce a considerably grown budget deficit through optimisation of administration expenses and reformation of the main economic sectors. I would like to remind you that the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and other international organisations have positively evaluated these efforts exerted by Lithuania,” said Mrs. Degutienė.

The Seimas Speaker highlighted that Lithuania undertook actions to stimulate economy and sustain business viability; these actions were targeted at reducing the shortage of cash and credit resources in Lithuanian economy. According to the Head of Parliament, refusal of a fiscal stimulus should be particularly consistent, taking into account the economic situation in individual countries.

“Preservation of social stability is an important objective. Today we can clearly see the groups which face the major threat of falling under the social risk categories in the future. We have to undertake preventive measures. The growing unemployment rate in Lithuania has been the issue of great concern and will remain such next year,” said Mrs. Degutienė.

The Speaker of Seimas emphasised that it was very important to select several priority areas and mobilise all available resources for their implementation.

“Next year we are planning to start or continue the fundamental structural reforms of the education system, health care and social insurance, because these areas,



*Meeting in the Constitution Hall*

which have basically remained unchanged since the Soviet times, are a heavy financial burden on the budget. Moreover, the Seimas has developed a package of various anti-corruption measures, as we are not content with the current anti-corruption index in Lithuania," added the Head of Parliament.

Seimas Speaker Mrs. Degutienė noted that after Ignalina NPP is decommissioned, energy security of the Baltic States would become even more vulnerable, and dependency on the sole external supplier of energy resources would greatly increase.

"Therefore, Lithuania welcomes the adoption of the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan, which provides for the development of an effective and totally integrated energy market with all necessary interconnections. The objectives laid down in this plan require considerable financial resources. We hope that together we will find the measures and instruments to attract necessary investments. Furthermore, Lithuania expects a regular assessment of relevant progress on the level of the European Council," said Mrs. Degutienė. "The Baltic countries have already committed to create an open and transparent Baltic energy market functioning according to the principle of the NordPool market of the Nordic countries. I am also pleased to see that the Baltic-Swedish electricity link has been included on the

priority list of European economic recovery projects. The Lithuanian-Polish-German electricity link project has also made a step forward after long discussions. Implementation of this project is one of the most important conditions for Lithuania to leave the CIS energy area and join the continental European electricity transmission system."

According to the Head of Parliament, investments in new electricity generation resources is a highly significant factor which may help reduce dependency on the import of natural gas from Russia.

"Therefore, the implementation of Visaginas Nuclear Power Plant project has remained our firm priority. We have agreed with the project partners to search for a strategic investor with experience in nuclear energy and with necessary financial resources for the implementation. A tender on the strategic investor will be called in the near future; we invite the European Union energy companies to participate," said the Speaker.

The Head of Lithuanian Parliament also expressed Lithuania's concern over the NordStream project.

"Lithuania considers this project to be environmentally harmful, which may result in very serious negative consequences for the Baltic Sea. We firmly hold the position



*Ambassadors of foreign states residing in the Republic of Lithuania*

that EU support should be primarily provided to those projects that help diversify energy supply sources and create an integrated EU energy market," said Mrs. Degutienė.

The Speaker of the Seimas noted that concerning foreign policy, Lithuania plans to pay particular attention to the relations between the EU and Russia, discussions on the new NATO strategic concept and Eastern Partnership.

"Russia has its own strategy towards the European Union. Likewise, the European Union needs to have a realistic and coherent policy towards Russia. In pursuing this goal, it is important to evaluate the relations between the EU and Russia and the progress of negotiations over the new agreement, as well as to distinguish levers to be used in the relations with Russia," said the Head of Parliament. "The most important principle to be observed by the EU is the principle of legal reciprocity. We must look for options enabling to change the situation when Russia actively participates in the EU domestic market, yet is unwilling to undertake commitments."

According to the Seimas Speaker, the new EU agreement with Russia should cover the whole range of areas for cooperation; it should be legally binding and define the limits for sectoral agreements. Mrs. Degutienė invited to search for ways to improve the EU activities in the field of regulation and prevention of trade conflicts.

When touching upon the new NATO strategic concept, the Head of Lithuanian Parliament highlighted that one of the major NATO problems was the lack of solidarity among members of the Alliance.

"NATO Member States do not feel equally secure or completely secure; Lithuania is one of these countries. Our

doubts could be dispelled by adequate policies of defence planning, exercises and development of infrastructure pursued by the Alliance," added Mrs. Degutienė.

Concerning Eastern Partnership proposed by the EU, the Speaker of the Seimas raised a question whether it was possible to stimulate EU proposed reforms in partner countries without offering membership.

"It is highly important to take account of the preparation of partner countries to transpose the EU norms and regulations. Lithuania must seek that the European Union clarifies "integration without membership" offered to partner countries so that they know what to expect after they carry out EU proposed reforms," said Mrs. Degutienė. "Therefore, we aim at active cooperation between the EU and partner countries in implementing specific projects and flagship initiatives. Furthermore, the EU must strengthen its political activity in this region and emphasise the advantages of a European economic and social model."

The Head of Parliament mentioned the objective of Lithuania to seek evaluation of crimes committed under totalitarian regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century at European Union level.

"Obviously, when creating a political, economic and moral European Union today, all members of the Community must keep to the uniform concept of history. Until major part of Western European society realises why we treat communist and fascist crimes alike, Europe will not be completely united, and we will be separated by the invisible wall," said Mrs. Degutienė. "We have to understand that without a common approach towards political justice and without paying attention to the history of part of Europe, we will not be able to discuss the creation of a harmonious, undivided, political and value-based European Union."

26 November

## **SPEAKER OF THE LITHUANIAN SEIMAS AND MARSHAL OF THE POLISH SEJM SUGGEST ANNOUNCING 2011 THE YEAR OF CZESŁAW MIŁOSZ, POET AND WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE, IN BOTH STATES**

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Irena Degutienė and Marshal of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland Bronisław Komorowski suggest announcing 2011 the Year of Czesław Miłosz in both Lithuania and Poland. The year 2011 will be the 100<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of the famous poet and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, who was born in Lithuania.

The Head of Lithuanian Parliament wrote a letter to the Marshal of the Polish Sejm, in which she approved of the initiative to commemorate Czesław Miłosz's anniversary in both countries.

In her letter, Speaker of the Seimas Mrs. Degutienė quotes the poet's speech delivered at the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony



in 1980: "It is good to be born in a small country where nature was on a human scale, where various languages and religions cohabited for centuries. I have in mind Lithuania, a country of myths and of poetry..."

The Seimas Speaker emphasised her expectation that Lithuania and Poland would meaningfully mark this date, which is relevant to both nations. According to the Head of Parliament, similar common Lithuanian-Polish initiatives

significantly contribute to the development of closer relationship between these countries.

Mrs. Degutienė also pointed out that she supported the idea to establish a network joining Lithuanian and Polish scientists, historians and academic youth, which fosters common heritage of both states and helps our societies become closer.

27 November

## **SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA IRENA DEGUTIENĖ ATTENDED THE EVENTS OF THE BALTIC ASSEMBLY**

**Speaker of the Seimas Irena Degutienė attended the opening of the 28<sup>th</sup> session of the Baltic Assembly and delivered a welcome address** (see p. 38).

**"The trio of the Baltic states have to sing in unison in the European Union and worldwide," said the Speaker of the Seimas when meeting the heads of Estonian and Latvian parliaments.**

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Irena Degutienė met with Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia **Gundars Daudze** and Speaker of the Riigikogu of the Republic of Estonia **Ene Ergma** during their visit to Vilnius.

The tripartite meeting of the heads of parliaments of the Baltic States touched upon the issues of the economic situation in their countries, energy security and the general political context.

Heads of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian parliaments mainly focused on the discussions of further activities of the Baltic Assembly and its future vision.

The Seimas Speaker noted that the Baltic Assembly carries out an important mission: it provides parliamentarians of the three Baltic States with the opportunity to discuss relevant issues and seek consensus and a common position. However,



Irena Degutienė

Ene Ergma and Gundars Daudze

according to Mrs. Degutienė, this parliamentary forum should be renewed and should more actively react towards the current relevant issues and problems.

"We must achieve that discussions in the Baltic Assembly turn into real works and actions that allow introducing a common position of the Baltic States in the European Union and worldwide," said Mrs. Degutienė. "The trio of the Baltic States have to sing in unison in the European Union and worldwide."

During the meeting, the heads of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian parliaments agreed to propose to discuss, together with chairpersons of the delegations of the three countries to the Baltic Assembly, the specific ways to reorganise this forum and seek greater understanding between the Baltic States. One of their proposals was to assign the committees on foreign affairs and on European affairs of the three parliaments to discuss and define a vision of the Baltic Assembly, as well as the models of its reform and activities.

#### **Lithuania has not changed its position concerning Georgia's membership in NATO**

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Irena Degutienė met with Speaker of Georgian Parliament **David Bakradze**.

During their meeting, the Head of Lithuanian Parliament emphasised that our state would continue to support Georgia's aspiration to become a member of NATO.

"Lithuania's policy towards Georgia has remained unchanged. There may be changes in forms or methods, but I can assure you that Lithuania has supported and will support Georgia's membership in the Alliance," said Mrs. Degutienė.

During the official dinner, both heads of parliaments also discussed Georgia's relations with the European Union. According to the Seimas Speaker, the European Union should clarify "integration without membership" offered to partner countries.

"The European Union should expressly state what Georgia may expect having implemented the reforms proposed by the EU," highlighted Mrs. Degutienė.

Head of Georgian Parliament Mr. Bakradze expressed sincere gratefulness to the Seimas Speaker for Lithuania's assistance

to Georgia on its way to Euro-Atlantic security institutions and support for its efforts to achieve territorial integrity.

"We feel support not only from Lithuanian politicians, but also from the general public. Lithuania is Georgia's closest ally," added the Speaker of Georgian Parliament.

#### **Speaker of the Seimas: I wish that the tragedy Georgia faced a year ago would never repeat again**

Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Irena Degutienė and Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia David Bakradze opened a photography exhibition entitled "**Russia's Invasion of Georgia**". Speaker of the Latvian Saeima **Gundars Daudze** and Speaker of the Estonian Riigikogu **Ene Ergma** also attended the opening of the exhibition.

Speaker of the Seimas Mrs. Degutienė thanked the organisers of the exhibition for the opportunity to remember once again the aggression demonstrated in Georgia a year ago.

"These photographs depict the terrible things experienced by the Georgian nation not long ago," said Mrs. Degutienė. "Lithuania and other Baltic sisters have also suffered cruel historic moments which are brought to mind when watching the tragic depictions of Georgia's recent past."

The Speaker of the Seimas wished that no similar events would ever repeat in the future.

When delivering his speech in the opening ceremony, Speaker of Georgian Parliament Mr. Bakradze emphasised that it was a great honour for him to be in Lithuania and remember the tragedy, when Georgia once again felt solidarity from the Baltic States and their people.

"We remember thousands of Lithuanians who went to the streets to express their support for Georgia at that time. We remember Estonian youth and students who came to Georgia to help us. We are grateful to Latvia for their moral support, which is no less important," stated Mr. Bakradze.

The Head of Georgian Parliament remembered the historical slogan that inspired rebels back in 1831 and 1863: "We would like to thank you for understanding and helping Georgia. Today we are fighting for your freedom and for our freedom," expressed Mr. Bakradze. "I wish that such exhibitions were only part of history and that we would not have to organise them anymore."

*Drafted referring to the information of the Secretariat of the Seimas Speaker*



## events

### PROJECT "A DAY WITH A PARLIAMENTARIAN"

Seimas group of young parliamentarians initiated a project **"A Day with a Parliamentarian"**. From 3 November to 16 November high school and university students could register and participate in a project which consisted in the spending of one working day with an MP. Project participants were able to participate in sittings of committees, commissions and political groups, meetings with voters, conferences, seminars and perform tasks given by an MP which would help them better familiarise themselves with the nature of the work of an MP.

Members of the Group of Young Parliamentarians believe that this project will encourage talented and active young people to become civic and more interested in decisions adopted by public authorities and to more actively participate in political processes. "Increasing openness and transparency

of the Seimas are equally important. This is yet another key objective of the project "A Day with a Parliamentarian," Chairwoman of the Group of Young Parliamentarians **Agnė Bilotaitė** claims. According to the MP, larger involvement of citizens in Seimas activities and familiarisation of society with an everyday work of this institution should result in changing the one-sided, usually negative attitude towards Seimas work.

MP **Vytautas Gapšys** initiated a similar project some time ago. "I have been carrying out the project "A Day with a Seimas Member" on my own initiative for more than half a year, therefore, I am delighted at the fact that other MPs have undertaken similar activities. In my opinion, only by revealing actual work of MPs will we be able to improve general image of the Seimas," Mr. Gapšys stated.

On 4 November the Office of the President, the Seimas Committee on Education, Science and Culture and International Cultural Exchange Centre organised an international forum "For Creative Society: Linking Arts, Education and Business". The event was aimed at promoting a dialogue between the sectors of culture and art, and education and business and using the concept of creative partnerships as relations of artists with art and educational establishments.



Second from the left – Chairman of the Seimas Committee on Education, Science and Culture Valentinas Stundys

On 5 November a conference “Availability of Advanced Medical Technology in Lithuania. A New Approach” was held in the Seimas Constitution Hall. The organisers of the event were member of the Seimas Committee on Health Affairs **Dangutė Mikutienė**, and Society of Onco-hematological Patients “Blood”. During the conference patients, doctors, lawyers and politicians discussed medical, political and ethical aspects of new medicine technology and its availability.

On 5 November the Seimas Commission for Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Addiction, the Department of Drug Control under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania together with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction organised an international conference “**New Tendencies in Drug Use: Facts and Solutions**”, held in

the Seimas March 11 Hall. Tendencies in the use of drugs in Lithuania and European Union countries were reviewed, the latest scientific data on new psychoactive substances was presented, preventive trends were introduced and annual reports of Lithuania and the European Union in the sphere of drug control and monitoring of drug addiction were presented at the conference.



On the right – Chairwoman of the Commission for Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Addiction Vincė Vaidevutė Margevičienė



On 9 November on the initiative of member of the European Parliament Radvilė Morkūnaitė, a conference “**Lithuania’s Preparation for the Implementation of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy. Environment Protection**” was organised. On 30 October the European Council approved the Baltic Sea Region Strategy drawn up by the European

Commission, therefore, in 2009–2010 a cycle of conferences is to be organised concerning Lithuania’s preparation for the implementation of the Baltic Sea Region Strategy. According to the organisers, the aim of the first conference is to introduce provisions of the European Union strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in the environmental field.

11 November

## ROLE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION STRATEGY WAS DISCUSSED

The Committee on State Administration and Local Authorities held a discussion “**The Role of Local and Regional Governments in the Implementation of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region**”. On 29–30 October the European Council approved the European Union Strategy for Baltic Sea Region together with the Action Plan. The first EU macro-regional strategy is a unique instrument

to achieve deep regional integration which would create additional opportunities for regional cooperation and a new quality for the region.

The discussions arranged by the committee aim at drawing attention to the significance of the implementation of the strategy at local and regional government level,



and possibilities of using EU financial sources for the implementation of actions provided in the strategy in a more efficient way.

Dr. **Natalija Kazlauskienė**, Director of DG Regional Policy of the European Commission, delivered a main presentation "Importance of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region". **Sigitas Mitkus**, Acting Director of the European Union Department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, made a presentation on the implementation process of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in Lithuania. **Arūnas Štaras**, Vice-Minister for Transport and Communications, presented challenges and opportunities of the EU Strategy for the

Baltic Sea Region, i.e. the implementation of the priority action area of transport. **Gediminas Česonis**, Head of the Regional Development Division under the Ministry of the Interior, delivered a presentation on the relation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region with other initiatives that are already being implemented at the local level. **Arnoldas Abramavičius**, Mayor of the Zarasai District Municipality, member of the Lithuanian Delegation to the Committee of the Regions, presented the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region at the local level.

*Genovaitė Jasaitienė,  
Assistant of the Office of the Committee*

## A BOOK OF MEMORIES OF LEADER OF LITHUANIAN PARTISANS JUOZAS LUKŠA-DAUMANTAS PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH WAS PRESENTED AT THE SEIMAS

On 12 November a book of memories of leader of Lithuanian partisans Juozas Lukša-Daumantas "**Partisans**" (**Forest Brothers: The Account Of An Anti-soviet Lithuanian Freedom Fighter, 1944-1948**) published in English was presented at the Parliamentary Gallery.

MP **Vilija Aleknaitė-Abramikienė**, brother of the partisans' leader **Antanas Lukša**, translator **Laima Vincė Sruoginis** and **Jonas Ohman**, journalist, Swedish publicist well known in Lithuania, writer and producer of documentaries who has successfully translated several Lithuanian books into the Swedish language, and creator of the documentary about Juozas Lukša participated in the event.

The declaration of the Council of the Movement of the Struggle for Freedom of Lithuania of 16 February 1949 honoured the activities of the Lithuanian Freedom Fighters by establishing an organisation of armed resistance against the Soviet occupation and forming political and military management of the resistance. In the occupied Lithuania, in the times of killings and repressions there were people, the brightest representatives of the nation, who were thinking about the future of Lithuania and its citizens. Juozas Lukša-Daumantas was one of those intellectuals whose colourful personality attracted much attention from many scholars. Daumantas' book fills in the blank pages of the post-war history of fostered spirits and will to restore Lithuania's independence.



*Jonas Ohman*

*From the right: MPs Arimantas Dumčius, Arvydas Anušauskas, Algis Kašėta and Auksutė Ramanauskaitė-Skokauskienė*



On 12 November the Seimas Committee on Education, Science and Culture, the Ministry of Education and Science, National Centre for Special Needs Education and Psychology, Education Development Centre, and public entity "Vaiko Labui" ("For the Child's Sake") held an international conference

**"Early Prevention Possibilities in the Strengthening of Children's Mental Resistance and Preparation to Cope with Daily Life Problems"**, dedicated to mark the ten year anniversary of the implementation of an international early prevention programme "Zippy's Friends" in Lithuania.

On 16, 17, 19 November a conference **"Prevention of Use of Psychoactive Substances in Educational Establishments"** was organised. The Commission for Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Addiction together with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Drug Control Department at the Government of the Republic of Lithuania were the organisers of the event. At the conference representatives

of school authorities and educational subdivisions of county governor's administrations and municipalities together with scientists, representatives of the Departments of the Police and Drug Control, the Ministries of Health and Education and Science and other authorities discussed urgent issues concerning the prevention of use of alcohol, tobacco and other substance with psychoactive effect.

On 18 November the Commission for Youth and Sport Affairs organised a conference **"Lithuanian Sports: Topicalities and Prospects"**.

On 18 November a round-table discussion **"Legal Regulation of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Lithuania"** was held on the initiative of the Commission of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian World

Community. Problems of legal regulation confronted by non-governmental organisations in Lithuania and ways of creating favourable environment for their effective functioning were discussed during the event.

On 19 November a round-table discussion **"Problems of Deployment of Digital Training Technologies in Lithuanian Educational Establishments (high and general education establishments)"** was held at the Seimas Hall of the Council of Lithuania. Elder of the Seimas Liberal

and Centre Political Group, member of the Committee on Education, Science and Culture **Jonas Liesys** and the Institute of Social Communication of Vilnius Pedagogical University organised the event.

On 20 November an international conference **"Eastern Partnership Policy in Respect of Belarus. Lithuania's Role"** was held in the Constitution Hall of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. Public organisation "For Civic Society" together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuanian Development Cooperation, and

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency organised the event. Relations between Belarus and the European Union, Lithuania's role in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership Policy in Belarus, and possibilities of Belarusian participation in the EURO-NEST programme were discussed at the conference.

## **CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS: CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN THE MAKING OF DECISIONS WHICH CONCERN HIM TEACHES HOW TO BE RESPONSIBLE, ENTER INTO A DIALOGUE AND BE TOLERANT**

On 20 November the Committee on Human Rights together with the organisation Save the Children and the Children's Rights Ombudsman Institution marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

192 countries of the world. Lithuania ratified the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child on 3 July 1995.

On 20 November 1989, during its 61<sup>st</sup> plenary session, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the most significant document protecting the rights of the child and his legitimate interests – the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Today, this international document has been ratified in

Committee's Chairman **Arminas Lydeka** in his presentation "The Rights of the Child – History, the Present and the Future" noted that we can educate citizens who will respect human rights and seek solutions to conflicts through a dialogue and not through the use of guns or humiliation of others only by respecting childhood. Speaking about the significance of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Mr. Lydeka noted that it is the first international document comprising

a full and thorough spectrum of the rights of the child, which makes it a unique document: it covers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the child. The child's right of participation, which was established in the history for the first time, was also emphasised.

"The principle of child's participation is a characteristic peculiar solely to the society recognising democratic values. It is child's participation in the making of decisions which concern him that teaches him how to be responsible, enter into a dialogue and be tolerant," Arminas Lydeka stated.

A moving film by Inesa Kurklietytė "To Be Loved", which showed affection seeking children deprived of parental care, was demonstrated during the event. The director herself presented the film.

A public organisation Save the Children awarded laureates of a video competition "How We Fight Bullying" organised by Groups of Children against Violence. The best video clips made by children were demonstrated. They were peculiar for their deep understanding of the topic and surprising in the children's use of artistic expressions.

The Children's Rights Ombudsman Institution together with partners – a daily "Dialogas" and the Lithuanian Freedom Through Education Fund, Inc. awarded winners of the competition of essays and poems "My Friends' and My Duties and Responsibilities". Members of the Committee on Human Rights **Ona Valiukevičiūtė** and **Auksutė Ramanauskaitė-Skokauskienė** also took part in the assessment of children's poems and essays. The MPs shared their thoughts about the essays with the participants of the event. "I took great pleasure in reading the essays," Auksutė Ramanauskaitė-Skokauskienė said. While Ona Valiukevičiūtė admitted that she not only took great pleasure in reading pupils' ideas, but also learned much from them.

*Eglė Gibavičiūtė,  
Advisor to the Office of the Committee*



*Chairman of the Seimas Committee on Human Rights Arminas Lydeka*



*Auksutė Ramanauskaitė-Skokauskienė, Children Rights' Ombudswoman  
Rimantė Šalaševičiūtė, Ona Valiukevičiūtė*

24 November

## REGARDING THE CAIRO PROGRAMME OF ACTION AND LITHUANIA'S OBLIGATIONS

The Seimas European Information Office hosted a discussion "**The Cairo Programme of Action and Lithuania's Obligations**" organised by the Seimas Parliamentary Group for Society Development, Reproductive Health and Rights and the Seimas European Information Office.

Member of the Seimas Parliamentary Group for Society Development, Reproductive Health and Rights Prof. **Marija Aušrinė Pavilionienė** was a moderator of the discussion. Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Lithuania **Ulrika Cronenberg-Mossberg**, Deputy Director of the Department

of General Education under the Ministry of Education and Science **Rolandas Zuoza**, Advisor to the Minister for Social Security and Labour **Jolanta Ramonienė**, Head of the Family Health Division of the Ministry of Health **Aušrutė Armonavičienė**, Research Director of the Human Rights Monitoring Institute **Jolanta Samuolytė**, and Project Manager of the Centre for Equality Advancement **Margarita Jankauskaitė** delivered speeches during the discussion.

In her introductory speech Prof. Marija Aušrinė Pavilionienė reminded that in 1994 Lithuania approved of the Programme

of Action of the Cairo International Conference, which has become moral obligations and action guidelines for 179 countries in the ensuring of equal rights in a modern society. The Professor specified key objectives of the Cairo conference, which still has five years left for its realisation, and highlighted the wide spectrum of these objectives.

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Lithuania Ulrika Cronenberg-Mossberg started the discussion with the review of the key objectives of the Cairo Programme of Action and their implementation in Sweden. In her speech the Ambassador placed the main focus on Chapter VII "Reproductive Rights and Health" of the Cairo Programme, which covers family planning, prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, youth education and gender relations. The Ambassador also talked about centres operating in Sweden which provide assistance and information to all groups of population. However, Ulrika Cronenberg-Mossberg noted that presently in Sweden it has been resolved to primarily focus on young people aged between 17 and 25. Moreover, there are efforts to improve the quality of health, work, mental and cultural aspects by including parents in training programmes.

Deputy Director of the Department of General Education under the Ministry of Education and Science Rolandas Zuoza also made a speech in the discussion. He drew everyone's attention to the fact that Lithuania is among the group of countries which follow more stringent traditions and publicly declare that they cherish conservative family traditions. Earlier the issue of sexuality had been a taboo, and it became a topic for public discussions only after the re-establishment of independence. Mr. Zuoza stated that pedagogues are not prepared to talk about subtle issues, since such subject is not included in the teacher training programme. According to him in 2007 a programme of preparation for family and sexual education was approved which aims at preparing young people for the future, marriage, providing a full concept of sexuality, forming mature interpersonal relationships and carrying out prevention of early sexual relationships and related problems ensued. Moreover, it was mentioned that recommendations for parents as to how to discuss such urgent matters in a family environment are in the process of being drafted.

Advisor to the Minister for Social Security and Labour Jolanta Ramonienė claimed that the Programme for Reducing Violence against Women, that has been implemented since 2006, performs only the function of eliminating the consequences of violence, instead of performing the function of violence prevention. The advisor to the Minister emphasised the fact that recently specialists have drawn up and presented initial draft law on defined responsibilities and violence prevention. Moreover, Mrs. Ramonienė added that another reason for the existing problems concerns the absence of real protection during the period of the crime to the beginning of criminal

proceedings. The advisor to the Minister also discussed a new model for protection as well as actions of police officers in the presence of such model and potential legal changes.

Head of the Family Health Division of the Ministry of Health Aušrutė Armonavičienė stated that although the Cairo Programme comprises a large number of spheres, each country chooses its own priorities. The health of a mother and a child is one of priority spheres for Lithuania, therefore many various programmes are underway. When comparing mortality rates of infants, women giving birth to a child and other indicators, one can see an obvious improvement, however they still remain one of the pressing issues. According to Mrs. Armonavičienė, other sensitive topics concern family planning and sexual education, since much still needs to be done in Lithuania in order to improve the situation in this sphere. The issue of abortions was also addressed and data showing that the number of abortions has dropped by as many as 2.5 times since 1997 was presented. However, there still exists a problem of family infertility, faced by approximately 10-15 per cent of families. Mrs. Armonavičienė said it was unfortunate that a number of programmes could not be fully implemented due to society's attitudes.

Research Director of the Human Rights Monitoring Institute Jolanta Samuolytė stated that there is a lack of critical attitude in the identification of loopholes and seeking to step forward. Problems relating to the failure of adopting laws on reproductive health, artificial insemination, and abortions were highlighted. Jolanta Samuolytė also mentioned that the reproductive rights of young people are not adequately safeguarded, and the programmes of sexual education are not fully implemented. The speaker said it was unfortunate that pedagogues are not adequately qualified to educate young people in this sphere, and there are no established centres for reproductive health that could ensure confidentiality and safety.

Project Manager of the Centre for Equality Advancement Margarita Jankauskaitė said that in 1995 Lithuania ratified a Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in 1998 a Law on Equal Opportunities was adopted (the first such law in Central and Eastern Europe), and in 1999 the Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsman began its work. According to Margarita Jankauskaitė, Lithuania had been fighting for democratic values for a decade, however, eventually the mood has radically changed and, having moved one step forward, Lithuania changed to an opposite direction. The representative of the Centre for Equality Advancement highlighted that Lithuanian has not adopted a law on violence against a person yet, and the only way to protect oneself from a perpetrator is to bring charges against him.

*Seimas European Information Office*



## SEIMAS COMMISSION FOR YOUTH AND SPORT AFFAIRS DISCUSSED PREPARATION FOR THE EUROPEAN MEN BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP 2011 WITH EXPERTS FROM THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

On 24 November the Seimas Commission for Youth and Sport Affairs met with Chairman of the Standing Committee of the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches **Paulo Gomes**, and members of this committee **John de Quidt** and **Marie-Francoise Glatz**. Representatives of the Department of Physical Education and Sports under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Police Department and the Lithuanian Basketball Federation also took part in the meeting.

The preparation of authorities of the Republic of Lithuania in the ensuring of public order and safety during the European Men Basketball Championship 2011, the cooperation of the Department of Physical Education and Sports with the Standing Committee, actions of the Police Department

and other authorities as well as the improvement of legal regulation were discussed during the meeting.

"Lithuanian services will ensure public order and safety during the European Men Basketball Championship. It will be the best organised championship. I hope that Lithuanian authorities will pay adequate attention to the organisation of such an important event for Lithuania. I believe that this will be not only the best organised championship, but it will also be a successful one for Lithuania, and the Lithuanian national men basketball team will become European champions," Chairman of the Commission for Youth and Sport Affairs **Žilvinas Šilgalis** noted.

*Rasa Ramonaitė  
Adviser to the Office of Commissions*

## COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS STRESSES MEDIA'S PREVENTIVE ROLE IN PROMOTING A VIOLENCE-FREE BEHAVIOUR IN SOCIETY

On 25 November an International Day against Violence against Women is marked. The Committee on Human Rights held a round-table discussion dedicated to review the implementation of the National Strategy for Reducing Violence against Women. Domestic violence, as violence committed on the basis of gender, remains one of the pressing issues in Lithuania in terms of human rights. One in every four calls made to patrol officer is related to violence in a family. In 2008 police subdivisions investigated 12 506 statements regarding violence in a family, out of which 8 066 statements concerned violence against women.

Representatives of authorities implementing the National Strategy for Reducing Violence against Women and non-governmental organisations working in this field participated in the discussion. A draft Law on the Protection against Domestic Violence, which is currently being drafted by an inter-institutional working group, was presented.

Chairman of the Committee on Human Rights **Arminas Lydeka** noted that violence against women in both, public and private life violates and restricts women's possibilities of enjoying human rights and fundamental freedoms, and is one of the main obstacles in the path of gender equality.

"The state should undertake to prevent such violence, protect victims, provide legal assistance and relevant services, and punish perpetrators. The state must increase the understanding of the problem, foresee effective legal protection mechanisms and preventive measures in all possible ways," Mrs. Lydeka said. The Committee's Chairman also highlighted the media's role in promoting a violence-free behaviour in society.

Chief Specialist of the Gender Equality Division under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour **Kęstutis Zaura** presented guidelines of the draft Law on Protection against Domestic Violence. The law aims at encouraging people to live in peace and ensuring that no case of domestic violence is left unpunished.

Representatives of non-governmental organisations **Lilija Vasiliauskienė** and **Vilana Pilinkaitė-Sotirovič** were wondering why the working group did not use the work experience and competence of non-governmental organisations when preparing the draft law. Director of the Vilnius Home for Women **Lilija Vasiliauskienė** stressed that Lithuania is the only country in the European Union that does not have a clearly defined legal provision establishing

that any violence committed in a family is a crime. Representative of the Centre for Equality Advancement Vilana Pilinkaitės-Sotirovič claimed that the failure to move to public prosecution in the case of domestic violence is evident only in Lithuania. All the other European Union countries in all cases regard violence committed in public space as a public interest, therefore, charges are brought against even in the absence of the statement submitted by a victim.

After the discussion the committee resolved to address the ministers for Justice and the Interior, as well as the Prosecutor

General with a request to, taking into consideration the practices of other European Union Member States, submit to the committee an analysis as to the regulation of the above issues in other countries, and to consider a possibility of applying public prosecution in all cases of domestic violence. Moreover, it was resolved to address the Journalists Union and propose in the public space promoting fight against violence committed against women and discuss causes of such violence.

*Eglė Gibavičiūtė,  
Advisor to the Office of the Committee*

On 26–27 November an annual conference of Experts Meeting in Education Networking EMINENT 2009 was held in the Seimas. The organisers of the event were the following: the Seimas Committee on Education, Science and Culture, the Seimas Committee of the Development of Information Society, the Department of Information Technologies and Telecommunications of the Office of the Seimas, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Centre for Information Technologies and Communication and the European Schoolnet Organisation. International projects that are implemented or intended by the European Schoolnet and designed to uphold information and communication

technologies in education were discussed at the conference. Potential innovations, challenges and future trends in education in the application of the latest technologies were covered. During the conference, plenary sittings and seminars were held, and an exhibition presenting the most interesting technology projects designed for schools was open.

*The European Schoolnet was established ten years ago. It unites 31 Ministries of Education and Science in Europe or institutions that it has authorised.*



*Chairman of the Committee on Education,  
Science and Culture Valentinas Stundys*

27 November

## DISCUSSION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND PREPARATION FOR THE COPENHAGEN CONFERENCE

A round-table discussion “**Climate Change – from Kyoto to Copenhagen**” of the Seimas European Club was held at the Seimas European Information Office.

Participants of the discussion were the following: President of the Seimas European Club **Petras Auštrevičius**, Minister for Foreign Affairs **Vytautas Ušackas**, Advisor to the Minister for Environment **Laura Dzelzytė**, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark **Laurids Mikaelsen**, Ambassador of the United Kingdom **Simon John Butt**, Ambassador of Japan **Mijoko Akashi**, representative of the Political and Economic Section of the US Embassy JAV **Timothy Patrick O'Connor**, Minister Counsellor of the Polish Embassy, Deputy Ambassador of the Mission **Ewa Anna Figel**.

In his introductory speech President of the Seimas European Club Petras Auštrevičius stressed the significance of a comprehensive agreement on climate change which is to enter into force as of 2013. According to the President of the Seimas European Club, seeking to better present the situation of climate change in the world, persons representing various regions of the world and presenting positions and strategies of different states on the issue of climate change have been invited to this discussion.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Vytautas Ušackas began the discussion by highlighting the fact that climate change is merely a regional problem, since it requires global solutions, the results of which will not be instantly seen and easily achieved. This problem takes priority not only in the agenda of the foreign policy but also in the interior affairs. Although it is not likely that a legally binding agreement will be achieved in the Copenhagen summit to be held next month, the Minister assured that the fight against climate change will continue until a common agreement is reached. Mr. Ušackas also pointed out that Lithuania supports European Union's objective to reduce the amount of emissions by 30 per cent and is ready to contribute fully to the improvement of the climate situation.

Advisor to the Minister for Environment Laura Dzelzytė in her speech stressed Lithuania's achievements in the fight against climate change. In 1997 Lithuania signed the Kyoto Protocol and ratified it in 1998; Lithuania adopted a Strategy for the Convention on Climate Change which defines the ways Lithuania will seek objectives in the fight against climate change. Moreover, a National Committee on Climate Change was formed; a Law on Financial Instruments for Climate Change Management was adopted this year which defines objectives identified in the Kyoto Agreement and ways to achieve them. The European

Union holds the position of increasing obligations under the Climate Protection Programme, which, according to Laura Dzelzytė, raises financial aspects, particularly in the time of the crisis. Currently discussions are underway as to financial support provided by more developed countries to climate programmes, which would ease the burden among countries. The representative of the Ministry of Environment announced that Lithuania has reduced green house gases by more than 50 per cent, although, it was requested to reduce them only by 8 per cent according to the agreement.

Laura Dzelzytė stressed that there are several ways for countries to fulfil their obligations according to the Kyoto Agreement, namely: to invest in technologies and thus reduce pollution, to invest in companies of third countries and reduce pollution there or to trade in assigned amount units (which is most topical for Lithuania). The representative of the Ministry of Environment highlighted that it is particularly urgent that the surplus of allowances is not written off in Copenhagen, and selling these allowances would allow Lithuania investing in other climate protection programmes.

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark Laurids Mikaelsen gave Danish example in his speech. The level of water is rising in this country as a result of climate change, which raises concern for all municipalities, as it increases a risk of moving residents of certain settlements elsewhere. Therefore, a preparation of action plan is underway which each municipality must present to the government. According to the Ambassador, such is our future, which is an outcome of mistakes that we made in the past.

The Ambassador also said that Denmark was invited to host a summit in Copenhagen because of a particularly important role it has recently assumed in the United Nations and a group of seven countries that it has formed which tackles climate issues and contributes to the worldwide discussion on such an urgent matter. Thus, in the Copenhagen Summit it is necessary to draft a plan that would help slow down climate change as much as possible. It is particularly important to ensure that all countries strictly adhere to future obligations and set objectives.

Ambassador of the United Kingdom Simon John Butt said that the Copenhagen Conference is a great opportunity to demonstrate political will, aspirations, a clear strategy and obligations in the implementation of global actions. It is not an easy task to solve these issues, in particular in the time of the global crisis. National governments are concerned with budgets, developing countries expect more developed

countries to assume larger financial burden, while certain major players are not willing to agree to the reduction of emissions. Thus, according to the representative of the United Kingdom, many problems will arise in Copenhagen when seeking to adopt a coming agreement.

Japanese Ambassador Mijoko Akashi pointed out that the issue of climate change is particularly important for Japan, because the high density of population living on islands and a large number of natural disasters. The Ambassador reminded that after the war Japan's economy was growing very fast which increased air pollution. Mijoko Akashi emphasised that Japan is determined to reduce emissions by 25 per cent by the year 2020 in comparison to 1990. In order to achieve this objective, Japan plans to introduce the mechanism of trading in emissions within the country, allow using renewable energy free of charge, consider introducing a tax on global warming and develop innovative technologies. Japan is prepared to provide larger financial and technical support and continues preparing the creation of energy efficient, innovative and environmentally friendly technologies.

Representative of the Political and Economic Section of the US Embassy Timothy Patrick O'Connor stated that under the presidency of Barack Obama the USA decided to reduce the amount of emitted gases, and invested over

USD 8 billion, however, he admitted that this is not enough. The representative of the Embassy also pointed out that President of the United States of America Barack Obama invites the G-20 countries to work harder in this sphere. US representative Timothy Patrick O'Connor agreed to the opinion that developing countries should receive financial assistance from more prosperous countries and assume smaller obligations.

Minister Counsellor of the Polish Embassy, Deputy Ambassador of the Mission Ewa Anna Figel claimed that Poland aims at adopting the kind of position that would demonstrate the understanding of concerns of each country. Poland, reacting to climate change, applies various measures, such as the reduction of emissions or the application of environmentally friendly technologies. According to the Polish representative, each country can make a great difference in the solution of climate change, while the most complicated issues can be solved only by listening to each other.

MPs, representatives of embassies in Lithuania, ministries, non-governmental organisations, science bodies and the media took part in the discussion. Many viewers followed the discussion online in Lithuania and abroad.

*Seimas European Information Office*





# at the Seimas gallery

## EXHIBITIONS

### EXHIBITION PRESENTING THE CITY OF TELŠIAI, ITS ART AND ARTISTS

On 10 November, an exhibition presenting the city of Telšiai, its art and artists **"Telšiai is..."** was opened at the Seimas Gallery. The initiator of the exhibition is MP **Valentinas Bukauskas**.

*Telšiai exists* because of its professional attitude towards the cultural heritage and modern art. There is a vision of the city, and there are artists, who are members of the Lithuanian Artists' Association, the International Art Medal Federation (FIDEM), lecturers and students of Telšiai Faculty of Arts of Vilnius Academy of Art, who embody this vision in works of art. And there is the main "director" of the creative result of the present – the city architect and laureate of the Lithuanian national culture and art prize of 1994, Associate Professor **Algirdas Žebrauskas**.

*Telšiai is the centre of Lithuanian medal artists.* Comprehending the historical change of traditions, artists try to anchor their innovations and continuity by implementing artistic and creative projects. One of these projects is the organisation of the camp of medal artists, which has been organised by a Samogitian Museum "Alka" and Telšiai Faculty of Arts for the last 25 years. The camp has been contributing to the artistic vitality of the city of Telšiai as well as to the spread of the art of medals, which is a significant art genre for us, across Lithuania.

The collection of medals of the museum Žemaičių "Alka", creative camps in Telšiai, republic-wide triennials and triennials of the Baltic States, FIDEM exhibitions and congresses are the sources supplying the continuous



MPs Bronius Bradauskas, Valentinas Bukauskas and (on the right) Bronius Pauža



*Advisers to the Deputy Speaker of the Seimas Rūta Elijošaitytė and Reda Daniškevičiūtė and MP Remigijus Ačas are observing the exhibition*

cycle of the art of medals. The medal is a peculiar object of art where the memorial, historic and artistic values merge together. Medals are peculiar small monuments designed for commemoration, marking, memorialising and representation.

*Telšiai has old and deep traditions in art education.* The beginning was in 1931 when the Minister of Education and Science passed an order to establish the State Secondary School specialising in wood processing in Telšiai. At present, the Art Faculty of Telšiai is considered to be the heart of medal art as well as the whole metal art of Lithuania and the centre of jewellery innovations. The works and events of graduates and professors of the faculty of Telšiai, which is an integral part of Vilnius Academy of Arts, have been constantly reminding about the faculty for 10 years. The fact that it is a part of Vilnius Academy of Arts stimulated the diversity of study programmes of the faculty, developed communication among the divisions of the academy as well as creative activities of students and professors of jewellery and smithery, tricot and clothing design programmes.

Over the last years, the programmes and courses of Jewellery and Smithery, Tricot and Clothing Design, Product Design, Furniture Design and Restoration and Applied Sculpture have emerged. The realisation of exhibitions, conferences, projects and final theses in public areas has become an integral part of studies. The boundaries of artistic and creative interests have been expanding and the significance of the faculty for the cultural life of the city and region of Telšiai has been growing.

Ideas of young artists and designers of projects, when creating one-of-a-kind furniture and smithery articles, reveal new aspects in jewellery plastics and demonstrate a harmony between visual inspirations and practical skills.

The concept of the exhibition is to demonstrate the cohesion of art and the city, when a work of art represents the cultural history of the city, and the city heritage, history of the region as well as its famous personalities are reflected in works of art.

*Algimanta Dargienė,  
Vice Dean of Telšiai Faculty of Arts of Vilnius Academy of Arts*





## EXHIBITION TO MARK THE DAY OF THE LITHUANIAN POST

On November 16, an exhibition of personal collections of mail stamps of members of the Lithuanian Union of Philatelists was opened at the Seimas Gallery. The exhibition was aimed at marking the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Restoration of Independence of Lithuania and the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Lithuanian Union of Philatelists. The exhibition was presented by Minister of Transport and Communications **Eligijus Masiulis**, who handed certificates of appreciation to members of the Lithuanian Union of Philatelists.

*At the microphone – Seimas Member,  
Minister for Transport and Communication  
Eligijus Masiulis*



*Head of the Economic and Social Information Unit under the Parliamentary Research Department of the Seimas Office Albinas Visockas takes interest in the collection of stamps*

## PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION “RUSSIA’S INVASION OF GEORGIA”

On 27 November, preceding the opening of the 27<sup>th</sup> Baltic Assembly session, the Seimas Gallery presented a photography exhibition “**Russia’s Invasion of Georgia**”. Photographs of the news agency IPN captured the events in Georgia in August 2008: the invasion of the Russian army, the support of

European states and international organisations when trying to resolve the military conflict and the current situation in Georgia. Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania **Irena Degutienė** and Chairman of Parliament of Georgia **David Bakradze** presented the exhibition (see p. 59).