



## **THE HOMELAND UNION-LITHUANIAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS**

### **DECLARATION**

#### ***WE BELIEVE IN EUROPE***

12 May 2018  
Vilnius

Since its creation, the Party of Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats has been a political movement that promotes European democratic political ideology, conservatism, and Christian democracy; it is based on the core purpose of the Sajūdis, the Reform Movement of Lithuania, which is to seek a free and independent Lithuania and its fulfilling existence as part of Europe. Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats has played a crucial role and made major efforts to ensure that Lithuania participates in tackling Europe's problems on every level: both by joining the structure of political and economic cooperation, the European Union, and by joining the Transatlantic Security Community, NATO. We believe that membership in these organisations helps Lithuania pursue its key interests – it strengthens the state's geopolitical safety and promotes faster growth of the economic and social prosperity of its people.

By joining and actively participating in the political family of the European People's Party as well as forging our political links in Europe in the context of the values of the European Union, the Homeland Union Lithuanian-Christian Democrats (hereinafter referred to as "TS-LKD") has been consistently pursuing its mission as a pro-European party. In this right-leaning community of political parties we perceive the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU), with whom we have been continually cooperating since the Sajūdis, as our closest ideological allies. With its contribution to the birth of the European Union under the leadership of first Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, Germany remains the key force for promoting European integration and ensuring the consistency of Europe's policies. Lithuania greatly values the stance of the CDU-led German government, which has helped to create and maintain European solidarity in terms of sanctions to Russia, and lauds its decision to deploy troops in Lithuania and lead the NATO enhanced forward presence battalion, thereby demonstrating determination to take its share of the Alliance's responsibility for the safety of the Baltic region. For this reason, cooperation and dialogue with the German Christian Democrats is of strategic importance to our party.

At the moment, the European Union is facing multiple challenges, and an intense discussion on the future of the EU is being carried out. Therefore, it is of crucial importance that Lithuania should actively participate in the further formation of EU strategies and the shaping of the continent's fate. We seek a consistent strategy for the development of the EU that would continue, as it has in the past decades, to envision a crucial role for the EU in ensuring the protection of Lithuania's vital interests – increasing the state's geopolitical safety and the prosperity of its people. For this reason, it is important for us that the EU remains more than a bureaucratic and economic single market or a source of financial support for its members. The European Union must be capable of renewal and, by taking the needs of the European nations into account, grow

as a strong Union of equal states that is able to implement decisions reflecting the common interests of its Member States effectively, and to overcome common challenges together.

On the other hand, there are forces working against the vital interests of Lithuania. The disruption of European unity is the Kremlin's geopolitical aim for the achievement of which it employs many resources and makes exceptional effort. The Kremlin spreads misleading, divisive, and unacceptable statements such as that Europe threatens our individuality, language, culture, history-based national pride, and the right to make independent decisions based on our unique world view and values. A divided Europe is weak and unsafe. This is why we must contribute to the strengthening of European unity in every way by helping to identify the divisive and hostility-spreading strategies, fighting hybrid threats, and consolidating the interior and exterior strength of Europe.

We are Europeans and see no contradiction between a Lithuanian and a European identity, between a nation state and a united Europe: we can only fully be Lithuanian by also being European. Since the Christianization of Lithuania, the Lithuanian identity has been inseparable from the Christian civilization of Europe, which means that by being Lithuanian we are also European. Lithuanian citizens of all ethnicities are representatives of the political and cultural heritage of Europe. The Soviet occupation has tried to tear us away from our European roots and has left many wounds in our self-awareness and identity that are slow to heal. By returning to our European roots, we discard the Soviet legacy in our identity. Moreover, attempts to contrast ethnical nationality and our European identity reduces our statehood and turns us into narrow-minded provincials. We value a citizenship-based Lithuanian identity, which defines being Lithuanian as a person's bond to the state of Lithuania through citizenship, rather than the person's ethnicity.

European integration has been and should continue to be pursued in a manner that increases the importance and sovereignty of all European states in a global context. An alternative to the European Union would mean a Lithuania that is poorer, less competitive, more vulnerable to exterior threats and influences, and excluded from the circle of free and democratic European nations.

For this reason, while admitting that the EU has problems which require deep discussion and hard decisions, we cannot stand with the political powers and voices both in Lithuania and in Europe itself that seek to weaken the EU and doubt a common European future. The rejection of a European community almost invariably coincides with a negation of the Judeo-Christian civilization values that unite Europe, namely the respect for human dignity and freedom of conscience, human rights, democracy and free society, rule of law and freedom of speech. We condemn those who seek solutions to current political challenges by rejecting deeper solidarity between European nations and instead attempt to divide them, who refuse to promote greater fidelity to the true values of European civilization and turn instead to the darkness of despotism.

We do not see the EU as a complete and static product of history, but as a project that is open to creativity, with various opportunities and possible scenarios for the future. This is why we believe that it is not abstract criticism that is needed, but concrete suggestions and visions for future development.

We seek to translate our belief in Europe into a rational contribution to the EU discussions on the future of Europe. By bearing in mind Lithuania's national interests in terms of the EU (increasing Lithuania's geopolitical safety, ensuring the Lithuanian nation's survival in its historical homeland, and ensuring a faster increase in the economic and social prosperity of the state's people) we can form our principal positions for the future of the EU.

## **What kind of Europe do we believe in and what kind of European Union do we seek?**

Integration into the West (joining both the EU and NATO) has long proven beneficial to Lithuania and has been our foremost priority for the last 28 years. It has increased Lithuania's geopolitical safety (most importantly from the threat of Russia) and has been one of the most important factors that contributed to the speedy approach of last 15 years of Lithuania's economic and social prosperity to that of European levels. In terms of the EU, it is in the national interest of Lithuania to do everything in its power to ensure that in the future the EU remains powerful enough to play this part in advancing of the interests of Lithuania.

Being a member of the European People's Party and participating in the important discussion on the future of Europe that is taking place in the EU, the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats will adhere to, and encourage Lithuania to adhere to, these main principles:

1. The natural and continuous process of consolidation in the EU that has been taking place since the signing of the Treaty of Rome, and during which a need arose to have a common, consolidated EU policy in many new fields, must continue. TS-LKD will do everything to make sure Lithuania encourages other EU Member States to contribute to the continuation of consolidation. We believe that Lithuania must try to remain part of the core of this natural consolidation along with its leaders Germany and France, because this guarantees the country's geopolitical safety. TS-LKD is also certain that in the long term, natural consolidation and the expansion of the EU into new Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership states will lead to more effective governing methods for the EU, where decisions will be made by the traditional democratic method of majority.

2. We are certain that after 1990, the greatest positive changes were achieved in those Lithuanian economic, social, and security areas in which the state had clear Western standards to reach for. For example, the EU strategy for energy, transport infrastructure, and system integration, which was devised with Lithuania's active input and which meets our economic and national safety interests, is, with the help of EU funding, currently nearing completion. For this reason, Lithuania should not fear the power of EU policy to expand into new areas such as social policy, healthcare, and education, which is where the state still experiences many issues. A well-devised expansion that adheres to the fundamental principle of subsidiarity will ensure swifter social and economic convergence of prosperity in the various Member States of the EU.

3. We are concerned that the limited financial resources of the EU impede effective EU-level action even in areas where a decision to act has been reached. Therefore, we believe Lithuania must boldly support a larger EU budget if the Member States are able to agree on areas of mutually beneficial cooperation. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the EU budget is being used effectively, which is why we will support initiatives to review the political instruments and institutions that are currently not operating effectively.

4. One of the most important aims and principles of EU activity is the convergence of EU Member States towards the highest possible level of European economic and social development. In recent years, we have noticed that cohesion is becoming slower. It is obvious that there will be no renewed acceleration of cohesion without deeper economic and social reforms in the Member States themselves. The EU provides intellectual and financial support for the implementation of such reforms, but Member States are yet to make full use of this support. Therefore, TS-LKD supports a provision in the Multiannual Financial Framework that would envision a relation between the structural support provided to a state and the state's ability to implement the reforms suggested in the annual Recommendations for EU Member States and that are essential for the particular state.

5. TS-LKD supports the policy of EU expansion as a key instrument of EU geopolitical soft power. The ongoing expansion into the Western Balkans, and the perspective of future expansion into the Eastern Partnership states that are implementing European reforms is an

essential condition for these regions to become successful and stable, and to contribute to the expansion of an area of mutual safety and stability in Europe.

However, the expansion of the EU is not merely an instrument for improving the stability of Europe. TS-LKD is certain that since World War II, Russia has posed and continues to pose the greatest challenge to Europe. The illusion of a partnership with Russia, which the West still harboured even after Russia's aggression towards Georgia and the partial occupation of its territories, has been shattered by its continuing aggression towards Ukraine, a partner of the EU, and the occupation of the Crimea and parts of Ukraine's Eastern region. The current regime of the Kremlin is engaging in a policy of open confrontation with the democratic West and poses a direct military threat to the EU Member States of the EU and NATO as well as carries out further attacks of unconventional aggression. It is our belief that the strengthening of the European military power of NATO, which is mostly comprised of European states, and the transatlantic relationship with the USA for the purpose of deterring Russian aggression and ensuring the safety of Europe is no less important now than it was in the period of the Cold War. Lithuania must support the EU initiatives for a common safety policy that strengthen rather than duplicate the defence capabilities of the European part of NATO.

Both Europe and Lithuania want and seek a good relationship with Russia, but this aim will only be achieved when Russia rejects its aggressive politics, stops the occupation of neighbouring territories and the hybrid war with the West, and transforms itself into a Europe-like democratic state. The EU can help Russia achieve this transformation by surrounding it with a circle of successful democratic neighbouring states, especially the most progressive members of the Eastern Partnership (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia). For this reason, it is our belief that the policy for the Eastern Partnership is not just support for the members of the Eastern Partnership, but first and foremost a policy that encourages a democratic transformation of Russia, which the EU and our transatlantic partners could develop into a policy for an alternative, democratic, Europe-like Russia. As an alternative to a short-sighted and dangerous collaboration with the Kremlin, this long-term policy should also include the dimensions of energy, cyber, and information security, genuine support for democratic forces, and the long-term transformation of the state.

TS-LKD does not agree with the actions of the states that try to resolve the issues of their bilateral relations with members of the Eastern Partnership by threatening to block their getting closer to the EU. Being one of the leaders of the Eastern Partnership policies, Lithuania must try to ensure that its leadership is provided with the necessary political leverage as well as financial and analytical resources.

6. The tendencies in the southern neighbours of the EU – the looming geopolitical collapse of the Middle East, the demographic wave in Africa, not to mention climate change – may lead to an ever-increasing danger of an enormous flow of refugees and migrants, which would threaten the stability of the EU and its ability to function by employing European political instruments. TS-LKD has always maintained the position that the refugee issue must be tackled cooperatively, and will continue to encourage Lithuania to take its share of responsibility in resolving this issue. TS-LKD also encourages the EU to look for stable, long-term solutions to the problem: aid for resolving migration-inducing crises in the countries of origin, effective outside border security, a common policy for determining the status of refugees with strict separation between refugees and economic migrants, and a realistic integration policy for refugees and legal migrants. To help African and Middle Eastern regions achieve stability and encourage economic development, the EU must become an exporter of stability – to use its soft power with more determination and be more courageous in opening its markets for goods imported from these states. It is a much better solution to allow the import of agricultural products than the import of instability in the form of refugees or even terrorists.

7. Born from the tragic experience of two world wars, the solidarity between European nations is of fundamental value of the EU and remains the most important source of

guidance in its practical activities. Lithuania and other Central European states joined the EU only because they believe in the values of European solidarity. We, the “New Europe”, are the embodiment of these values. The EU has weathered many storms, and it is likely that many more trials and challenges are to come, both for the EU as a whole and for separate regions, especially the Baltic Sea region, which is probably the most vulnerable of all. The EU has always withstood such trials with the help of solidarity. TS-LKD is certain that Lithuania has always been and will continue to be greatly interested in the solidarity of Europe. This is why Lithuania must itself be a constant champion of the values of European solidarity. Lithuania cannot support the actions of certain states that diminish the crucial values of European solidarity. In the European Union of today, compliance with common rules is what expresses the solidarity between Member States.

8. Europe has always been strongest at times when it was principled and determined to defend and spread the fundamental values of the European civilization: freedom of conscience and speech, democracy and free society, human rights and the rule of law. During the Cold War, the active and firm stance of the free states of Europe encouraged resistance and heartened dissidents in Lithuania and other occupied nations by supporting their courage to fight totalitarian oppression. Today, when space for democracy and freedom has been shrinking for several years, the European Union must once again be resolute and unwavering and lead the defence of these values. As we celebrate Europe’s united and principled stance in the face of Russia, we must remember that a large part of humanity still lives under the oppression of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes without the most essential political and human rights. The EU is a union of European values and must not be blind to whom it cooperates, trades, and exchanges investments with. The EU must purposefully employ its instruments of soft power and influence and strive to achieve a strategic goal of widening the space for freedom and democracy worldwide.

**This is the Europe we believe in and the Europe we will strive for. We believe in Europe because we believe in Lithuania.**

*This declaration was adopted in the Congress of the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats on 12 May 2018 in Vilnius.*