

## **Electoral programme of the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats for the 2024 European Parliament elections**

### **EUROPE FOR US, WE FOR EUROPE: TO GROW AND TO DEFEND!!!**

#### **I. Twenty years in the European Union - our success story**

This year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of our membership of the European Union and NATO.

As Vytautas Landsbergis once said: NATO guarantees us life, the European Union guarantees us a richer life. This is what we have enjoyed over the last 20 years: membership of the European Union and its rich Single Market has allowed us to create our own success story, which can also be likened to a miracle in Lithuania's centuries-old history.

The Strategic Declaration "We Believe in Europe", adopted at the 25th Anniversary Congress of the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (HU) on 12 May 2018, which outlined the key provisions of the HU European policy, says: "We are convinced that membership in these organisations [EU and NATO] contributes to the realisation of Lithuania's most important interests - it strengthens the country's geo-political security and promotes the accelerated growth of the Lithuanian people's economic and social well-being".

In 1999, when Lithuania was just starting its negotiations for EU membership, our economy (GDP per capita at purchasing power parity) was only 34% of the EU average. That is, by European standards, we were a poor country, recently liberated from the Soviet occupation, living far behind the average European. Now our GDP in PPP is already 90% of the EU average. That is to say, we are catching up with Europe, we are among the leading countries of the "new Europe", and we have already overtaken some "old" EU countries such as Spain, Greece and Portugal.

Not only have we caught up with Europe economically, but we have also returned to Europe in a civilisational and cultural sense: we have overcome the corruption that flourished at the beginning of independence, we have established the European principles of the rule of law, and we have learnt to take care of human rights and freedoms, and to respect democratic values. The European Union is a safe harbour of European civilisation for us, allowing us to continue to build the success of Lithuania as a whole.

All these reasons lead us to believe that, together with the European Union, we will continue to build our success safely, and that we will no longer be aiming to the average of the European Union, but to the top five of the economically leading countries.

The European Union has enabled us to grow safely and rapidly over the last 20 years. The European Union has nurtured us and defended us, helping democracy to expand beyond our borders and into our neighbourhood.

We will continue to grow, but we will also face new challenges. Both for us and for the European Union.

## **II. Challenges for Europe and our region - Challenges for sustainable peace on the European continent**

Russia's war against Ukraine is a profound geopolitical crisis for the entire European continent and the European Union as a whole. Russia's aggression has shattered the foundations of a key European paradigm: sustainable peace in Europe. Western Europe has lived with this paradigm since the end of World War II. It allowed post-war Western Europe to grow rapidly and safely. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, we and the whole of Central Europe enjoyed these opportunities. Russia has destroyed this foundation of sustainable peace for our growth.

Over the next decade, the European Union will have no greater concern than restoring sustainable peace across the European continent. This will not be achieved by any negotiated short-term ceasefire or by agreeing to peace on Putin's terms. Sustainable peace on the European continent is only possible if geopolitical transformation takes place in the broad region of Eastern Europe, including Russia and Belarus. This requires Russia to lose the war in Ukraine and the collapse of the Putin regime in the Kremlin. This would open the door to positive change in the region. We must be ready to make full use of this window of opportunity, because only this will allow us to restore sustainable peace and secure growth opportunities across the European continent, including in Lithuania.

The next decade will be the decade of overcoming Europe's geopolitical crisis, the decade of a return to sustainable peace. It will be the "Ukraine Decade", because only Ukraine's success (that is, its victory over Russia, its reconstruction and modernisation, its membership of the European Union and NATO) will help transform the wider Eastern European region. And Ukraine's victory, its reconstruction, its Euro-Atlantic integration is what the European Union and other Western powers can and must do.

Our most important task over the next decade will be for us, the representatives of Lithuania in the European Parliament, to do our utmost to ensure that the European Union effectively realises its responsibility for Ukraine's success.

Ukraine has also opened the door to the European Union to Moldova and Georgia (Sakartvelo). We will do our utmost to ensure that these countries also succeed on this integration path, and that Georgia is freed from its "oligarchic captivity". It is equally important to develop the prospects for European integration of a future democratic Belarus and to take care of the rapprochement of a democratic Armenia with the European Union.

The European Union is strong in its transformative power to help neighbouring countries move towards success. There are still two regions on the European continent: the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership, whose stability and success the European Union must ensure by opening the door to integration.

The European Union needs to grow - to expand and to strengthen. Because this is a prerequisite for us to continue to grow safely ourselves. This will be our primary concern. As the HU Declaration "We Believe in Europe" said about Lithuania's vital interest: "We seek a coherent strategy for the development of the EU which will continue, as it has done for the past decades, to envisage the EU's essential role in safeguarding Lithuania's vital interest - to enhance the geopolitical security of the country and the well-being of its

people. It is therefore important for us that the EU does not remain a bureaucratic economic single market or a source of financial support for cohesion, but that it is consistently renewed, responding to the needs of the peoples of Europe, and that it is strengthened as a Union of equal states, capable of effectively implementing tasks of common interest to its Member States and of meeting common challenges in solidarity.”

Europe for us, we for Europe: to grow and to defend!

### **III. Why for us?**

Why vote for us in the forthcoming European elections?

Because we have the experience and the energy, and because our voice is heard by our colleagues in the European Parliament, by the leadership of the European Union, by the global community of experts, and by the capitals of the Western countries. Because our work and ideas for the transformation of our region and the restoration of sustainable peace on the European continent are known, recognised and valued by the international community. Because we are able to bring together broad international coalitions of like-minded politicians and experts to implement our ideas: On the very first day of the war against Ukraine, we initiated the establishment of United for Ukraine (U4U), an international coalition of parliamentarians and experts, which today includes more than 400 parliamentarians and 200 experts from more than 30 countries; and, in a similar vein, we have established the Friends of European Russia Forum, which is working together with the democratic opposition in Russia to ensure that the European Union pursues a long term strategy to transform post-Putin Russia into a normal, non-violent country.

It is also worth voting for us because in the European Parliament we work in the largest political group of the European People's Party (EPP), of which Rasa Juknevičienė is currently the Vice-President responsible for foreign and security policy. This allows us to have a greater influence on the decisions of the European Parliament and on the dissemination of ideas that are important for Lithuania. The current (and probably future) President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, is also a member of this political group, as are many influential members of the European Commission, which opens the door for us to informally coordinate decisions that are important for Lithuania, the region and the European Union as a whole. We are delighted that Ursula von der Leyen is holding firmly in her hands the banner of solidarity and leadership in support of Ukraine. We hope that our words, ideas and activities will also contribute to such leadership.

We are part of the strongest political community in the European Union, which makes us stronger. The European political community makes us stronger, and our ideas and activities contribute to making our European community stronger too.

We grow together with the European Community and we defend and protect our security together. This is our Union for Europe, for the European civilisation and for the success of our homeland.

#### **IV. What will we strive for?**

Our top priority is development, growth, and transformation in our neighbourhood

- The European Union is facing a geopolitical crisis. Russia's aggressive war in Ukraine has brought many casualties, destruction and disasters. However, it is worth remembering that this Community grows and strengthens only in crises. As Jean Monet said back in 1957: Europe will be forged in crises, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises. It is therefore not unexpected that the European Union's response to this geopolitical crisis is also the EU, which is geopolitically growing, united and becoming stronger. A geopolitically strong EU is one that is able, above all, to assume the EU's "strategic responsibility" for its neighbourhood, for the sustainability of its democracy, for its economic and social growth and stability. This is the only path to sustainable peace on the European continent. The European Union can only realise its strategic responsibility for its neighbourhood by returning to ambitious enlargement.

- On the European continent, a clear divide has emerged between the autocratic, totalitarian regimes of the East and the democratic camp of European states - including Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia. We therefore advocate the final reunification of the continent by admitting to the EU all the countries that meet the usual criteria for membership.

- An ambitious enlargement strategy is the EU's main instrument of geopolitical influence in the neighbourhood. It is regrettable that its importance has been "forgotten" over the last 20 years. Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia have been left in a "grey security zone", without integration into the European Union or NATO. This was one of the reasons that prompted Putin to launch aggression against Ukraine.

- That is why, also after the 2024 elections, our main geopolitical objective in the European Parliament will be the membership of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia (TRIO) in the European Union until 2030. Lithuania, which will hold the second presidency of the Council of the EU in 2027, will have an important role to play in realising this goal. Every effort should be made now to ensure that the negotiations on TRIO's membership of the EU can be successfully concluded during the Lithuanian Presidency.

- It will take a lot of effort to bring the priority of ambitious enlargement out of its current stagnation and to protect it from the drag of EU institutional reforms, as the search for a consensus on such reforms may take a long time.

- That is why we will propose to the European Parliament to support a two-stage process for the EU's ambitious enlargement. The first phase is the rapid integration of the Trio countries (together with the Western Balkans) into the EU's Single Market, on the basis of the "everything but institutions" model proposed by the then President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, back in 2002. In this case, after the first stage of enlargement, Ukraine would already have the same European status as Norway today, and as Sweden or Finland had before their full membership of the EU. The pace of institution building will not hinder the realisation of such a first phase of enlargement.

- After the successful completion of the first stage of enlargement in the next few years, when it will become clear that the stagnation of EU enlargement has been definitively overcome, it will not be difficult to achieve the final goal of full membership of Ukraine in

the European Union, by which time the problem of reforming the EU's institutions will have been solved.

- As Ukraine rapidly integrates into the European Union, it will be up to us in the European Parliament, as well as to Lithuania, to prove and set an example to Central Europe that there is no need to be afraid of competition with Ukrainian business and its agricultural sector. This fear of Central Europe could become a major obstacle to Ukraine's integration into the Single Market, and we must not allow it to prevail.

- Supporting the future integration of democratic Belarus into the EU will also be an important priority in our work in the European Parliament - we will continue to encourage both the democratic Belarusian opposition and the EU leadership to draft and publish the future Association Agreement between the EU and democratic Belarus in the near future, and we will work to open up the EU's European perspectives to democratic Armenia;

- We will continue to persuade the political communities of the European Union and the democratic West that the success of Ukraine is the key geopolitical factor that will lead to the transformation of the entire Eastern area of the European continent, including Belarus and Russia. Ukraine's victory, Ukraine's reconstruction, Ukraine's membership of the EU (initially integration into the Single Market) by 2030; its invitation to join NATO in the near future, and its membership of the Alliance itself, are actions to which all the West, and therefore the European Union, can and must contribute, because this is the path to the geopolitical transformation of the broad Eastern region, and thus to a sustainable peace on the continent of Europe, and that is something that is necessary not only for Ukraine, but also for the whole of Europe;

- The European Parliament is the place where politicians from many countries work and interact, and it is also the most important place to build broad multilateral political coalitions around ideas that are important to us and that we can generate ourselves. This is what we have seen with the creation of an effective United for Ukraine network of parliamentarians and experts. We will continue to expand its activities and grow its relevance, especially in the run-up to the important US Presidential elections.

- Through the development of such coalitions, and by working both in the European Union and in the US, we will seek to influence the development of NATO so that Ukraine and Georgia will soon be invited to become NATO members, and so that the strengthening of the security of NATO's eastern wing will be a constant concern for NATO.

- We will work for the EU to recognise that the institutional set-up of the United Nations is outdated and no longer in line with the reality of today's world, whereby Russia, and possibly communist China, can veto actions in the UN Security Council aimed at curbing their own aggression. We will therefore continue to do everything possible to ensure that Russia, and its current actors, are held accountable in international judicial institutions for the systematic terror against Ukraine.

- We are convinced that geopolitical transformation in Eastern Europe is a key condition for sustainable peace on the European continent. The laws of history tell us that democracies are not at war with each other. In the European Parliament, we will continue to articulate important EU-Western policy ideas that will help the democratic transformation of Russia and Belarus: the West must not be afraid of the collapse of the

Putin regime and must develop the instruments to help such a transformation to happen. The success of Ukraine is what the West can build to influence the transformation in Russia and Belarus, which will be implemented by the citizens of Belarus and Russia themselves. We will continue to propose that the European Union endorse the framework for relations with a future democratic Russia that we have drawn up and publish it without delay, because this is an effective way of convincing ordinary Russians that, after the collapse of Putin's regime, there will be ample opportunities for them to build a normal European life in a democratic Russia. We will continue to develop cooperation networks of Western experts and like-minded Russian democratic opposition in order to help the European Union realise our ideas.

### **We will take an active part in the formulation of the EU's geopolitical positions towards the rest of the world**

- We will continue to ensure that the EU's geopolitical partnership with the US remains relevant: we will unhesitatingly uphold the unrivalled role of the US in strengthening and preserving the geopolitical security of the European continent, while at the same time striving to make the case for a consistently stronger EU role in geopolitical security in the Indo-Pacific region (relations with Taiwan, Australia, India);
- We will push for a unified EU strategy towards China: “less China in Europe; less Europe in China; more Europe around China”. A prerequisite for this to happen is that Germany and France also implement the EU's strategy towards China, rather than big business strategies in China; There must be no separatist 16+ formats in the EU's relations with China;
- the EU must remain the flagbearer for human rights and democratic development not only in its immediate neighbourhood but also in the wider world: China, Iran, the Middle East, the African continent. This also requires a multi-fold increase in the funding of the EU's main instrument in this field, the European Endowment for Democracy.
- It is important for Lithuania and other EU Member States that the European Union develops mutually beneficial trade relations with other markets. This applies to Latin America and other regions of the world. Africa and Central Asia must not be left to the influence of Russia and China. The supply of critical raw materials (lithium in Chile, titanium in Kazakhstan) requires special attention. We must ensure that the EU is prepared to respond effectively to any economic coercion, such as that which China has carried out against Lithuania.
- We will consistently advocate that the European Union needs a European Defence Union and not an “EU strategic autonomy”. The EU must take responsibility for ensuring that the strengthening of the European dimension of NATO is not just a matter for individual NATO members, but for the EU's overall policy. This requires consideration of the creation of an European Commission member for Defence; the financing of common defence expenditure through the Multiannual Financial Framework; a radical increase in the funding of the Peace Facility and an increase in the capacity of the European military industry, as Russia's aggression against Ukraine has made it clear that the European military industry is not even capable of producing sufficient artillery shells at present. Equally important is the need to step up investment in military mobility infrastructure in

the EU Member States bordering Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. It is therefore essential to complete the strategic Rail Baltic project in the nearest future, which is of particular importance as a geopolitical project and not just as an economic project.

- We will continue to put effective protection of external borders against illegal and instrumentalised migration at the heart of tackling migration crises and problems. This must not only be a matter for the EU countries with external borders in the bloc, but for the EU as a whole, and therefore the EU as a whole must also provide the necessary funding for the protection of its external borders. Such protection must also make use of new technologies and the necessary border infrastructure in order to prevent such illegal migration. We will be consistent in our efforts to finally move towards a unified EU-wide implementation of these provisions. We will work to adapt the EU legal framework so that Member States can act in a coordinated manner in the event of an influx of irregular migrants.

- Strengthening the security of Lithuania and the EU as a whole has been and remains one of our top priorities. One particularly important area is the fight against hybrid threats, disinformation and the influence of authoritarian countries in politics and economics. Solutions must be found at the European level to address these issues, by strengthening cyber-security capabilities, by creating the necessary mechanisms to combat instrumentalised migration, by ensuring smooth and close cooperation between security and intelligence institutions, by limiting the investment of authoritarian countries in strategic infrastructure, and by reducing energy dependence.

- Disinformation is a particularly important driver of Russian influence in Europe. The EU has already taken important steps, but more needs to be done. In addition to limiting propaganda channels and the spread of disinformation on social networks, it is important to strengthen the resilience of societies to lies. That is why we are focusing on history in the fight against disinformation spread by the Kremlin. The war against Ukraine is based on Russia's attempts to rewrite history by spreading lies about the Second World War, the history of the peoples of the Eastern Europe, and by glorifying the Soviet Union and Stalinist regimes. This is what we in the EP are fighting against by working on issues of historical memory and by ensuring that, across Europe, the crimes of the Soviet Union and Russia are unequivocally condemned, and that the citizens of the EU countries have a strong basis of historical knowledge and a growing resistance to Kremlin propaganda.

### **What will we seek in EU economic policy?**

- The Single Market has so far been the main source of European growth. The competitiveness of the Single Market is an essential condition for our continued growth. We believe that the EU must learn to build on success and invest in it. We are lagging behind China and the US in these opportunities.

- The accession of Ukraine and Moldova to the EU will make Lithuania a financial donor, but the extension of the EU's Single Market to Ukraine and Moldova will open up new European markets for investment and trade. Ukraine's membership of the EU's Single Market will match our growth over the next 20 years - Ukraine could grow from 36% of the EU average today to 90% of the EU average. Those who invest now stand to gain. Lithuanian business will have huge opportunities not only in the reconstruction of

Ukraine, but also in investing in the fast-growing economies of Ukraine and Moldova - and we need to prepare for this now.

- The Green Deal and renewable energy are the future for Europe as a whole. The EU must work to tackle climate change through the Green Deal. Lithuania, like every other EU country, must be given specific, realistic environmental targets and indicators. Green Deal targets can and must be compatible with economic growth. It is necessary and possible to achieve a balance between the goals of sustainable industry, renewable energy, productive agriculture and the restoration of nature and environmental protection. Lithuania has the potential to become a leading EU country in the development of renewable energy and in the production of “green” hydrogen. Active participation in the preparation of EU documents relevant to this policy is already needed. A radical reduction in oil and gas consumption will have a huge geopolitical impact on countries whose entire economy is based on the export of energy raw materials. Many countries with these types of economies (including Russia) are autocracies. The EU Green Deal will bring the end of autocracy in Russia closer, as it will lead to fundamental structural changes in the structure of Russia's economy, and thus in its political structure. We will therefore support the Green Deal not only for ecological or economic reasons, but also for geopolitical reasons.

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We are Lithuanians, we are Lithuanian citizens and we are Europeans. And we are proud of it. Since independence, since the founding of the Homeland Union more than 30 years ago, our main concern has been the success of Lithuania and the success of its people. And from the very beginning it was clear to us that we could only build such success by being members of the European Union and NATO. We remain committed to the fundamental idea of Lithuania's success. In order to continue to grow securely, we also need a successful, growing European Union that is able to defend itself. We believe in such a Europe and we are determined to work consistently and resolutely for it in the European Parliament - so that we can continue to grow and to defend together with Europe!