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# LITHUANIAN POLITICS OF HISTORY IN 1990–2018 LEGAL SOLUTIONS

### Abstract

The following article provides an insight into Lithuanian public holidays and days of remembrance in the period 1990–2018, established on the basis of national legislative acts, including legal acts and stenographic records drafted up during the sittings of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. Both the Seimas and the president of Lithuania have made subsequent decisions on drafting the list of public holidays and days of remembrance, enabling to determine the most important dates and events that have laid the groundwork for Lithuania's historical memory. The list of public holidays displays a clear pro-state and religious tendency while that of days of remembrance seems to be marked by clear anti-Soviet sentiment, tilting towards promoting a pro-Western system of values. Before adopting the relevant legal acts, members of the Lithuanian parliament held a discussion, under which two additional holidays commemorating the Constitution of May 3, 1791 and the Mutual Pledge of the Two Nations of October 20, 1791 were officially put on the list. Also, attention should be drawn both to the relevance and consistency of the list of public holidays and days of remembrance as the document is subject to constant updates.

Endeavours to adopt legislation to commemorate the nation's historical memory appeared unsuccessful while, given the 100th anniversary of Lithuania's independence on February 16, 2018, all related efforts were forwarded to the relevant institutions; in consequence, a parliamentary committee was eventually

convened on June 20, 2017. Nonetheless, too little time has passed since then to properly evaluate the works performed by the aforementioned body and the validity of all its decisions taken so far.

**Keywords:** Lithuanian politics of history, historical memory, public holidays, days of remembrance, nation's historical memory, Commission for the National Historical Memory

## History, Memory, Politics, Culture

Lithuania lost its independence in June 1940, as a result of which its inhabitants came under ideological pressure from Nazi Germany during the Second World War and Soviet Russia for several decades thereafter. Lithuania was one of the first Soviet republics to withdraw from the Soviet Union and establish an independent democratic state, which came about in the aftermath of the events of 1989 in Poland, followed later by those that took place in other countries of the then Soviet bloc. In 1990, Lithuania underwent deep political and economic changes, referred to as political and economic transformation, as well as managed to introduce democratic freedoms and free media, all of which provided the country with a newer and deeper insight into its history. As a result of sovietisation, however, which lasted for over 50 years, a group of individual elements of Lithuania's collective memory has been severely tarnished.

In the newly-introduced democratic realities, any memory-shaping process involves the participation of collective entities, including state power institutions tasked with consolidating a certain interpretation of the common past to be disseminated among members of a given community. They are all endowed with powerful possibilities. Quoting the comprehensive definition:

“When envisaging the notion of the historical policy of memory, we mean all actions undertaken by the representatives of the state authorities that act in favour of intentional shaping of collective historical memory while exercising control over

its outcomes; in other words, it is about wielding authority with the goal of fulfilling a certain ideological and political purpose, broadly linked to giving legitimacy to that authority and the social order it is committed to back. (...) Therefore, all the aforementioned activities are jointly referred to as politics of history” (Malczewska-Pawelec, Pawelec 2011, pp. 17–18).

What is meant by **politics of history**? The term refers only to part of the history of a given country, selected out of its past events by politicians and scholars. In most cases, the former group manipulates the choice derived from the system of values represented by a given political option. Naturally, such selection tends to be made by a political group that exercises the greatest power in the country. **Politics of history** remains one of the factors behind a given society’s historical consciousness, as reflected in historical memory (*Polska polityka* 2006, pp. 2–3). Some scholars argue that this led to the emergence of a culture of remembrance while politics of history is deemed powerful enough to set new objectives: monuments, street names, public holidays, days of remembrance, as well as new decorations and distinctions (Nikžentaitis 2009, pp. 363–364). National sites of memory have an enormous impact on collective memory. According to Pierre Nora,

“sites of memory are both simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, directly accessible in a specific sensual experience and susceptible to even most abstract transformations. Indeed, they are *lieux* [places] in three senses of this word: material, symbolic and functional” (Nora 2009, p. 9).

Similar importance is attributed to days of remembrance.

Furthermore, attention should be drawn to the complex historical events of the 20th century, which cover the atrocities of the Second World War, the Holocaust, genocide and Stalinism, all of which impeded the development of historical memory in European countries (Assmann 2015, pp. 13–22). Apart of the aforementioned factors complementing the nation’s history as well as globalisation processes, there has emerged the issue of multiculturalism: The entities referred to as “culturally alien” were equally taking part in forming the history of Lithuania (Rubavičius 2015, pp. 16–32).





## Legal Acts on Public Holidays in Lithuania

Lithuania's first legislative act on public holidays was adopted on October 25, 1990 by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania. It contained only one article stating a list of ten public holidays:

- 1) 1 January – New Year's Day;
- 2) 16 February – Day of Restoration of the State of Lithuania, commemorating the event of February 16, 1918, when a group of 20 signatories proclaimed the Act of Independence of Lithuania, acknowledged by both scholars and Lithuanian society as a symbolic beginning of the restoration and legal continuity of the Lithuanian state;
- 3) 11 March – Day of Regaining Independence of Lithuania (on March 11, 1990, members of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania adopted an independence declaration referring to the reconstruction of the Lithuanian state before the Soviet annexation in 1940) (Read more: *Lietuvos Nepriklausomybės*);
- 4) Easter Sunday and Monday (according to Western tradition);
- 5) 1 May – International Labour Day;
- 6) first Sunday in May – Mother's Day;
- 7) 6 July – Statehood Day (remembering the baptism of the first king of Lithuania, Mindaugas in 1251, after it he was granted Pope Innocent IV's consent to be crowned king on July 6, 1253);
- 8) 15 August – Assumption Day;
- 9) 1 November – All Saints' Day;
- 10) 25 and 26 December – Christmas (under Act I-712 of 1990).

On April 17, 1996, Lithuania's Seimas passed an amendment to the act on changing names of several holidays, among which were:

- 3) 11 March – Day of Restoration of Independence of Lithuania;
- 7) 6 July – Anniversary of the Coronation of King Mindaugas;

- 9) 1 November – Day of All Saints and All Souls;
- 10) 25 and 26 December – Holy Christmas.

They, however, removed the following from the list:

- 8) Assumption Day (15 August), as a result of which the list of public holidays consisted of nine items (Act I-1291 of 1996).

Further amendments were adopted on July 2, 1997 when Lithuanian lawmakers deleted International Labour Day (1 May) from the official register while renaming the holidays of 1 November (All Saints' Day) and 25 and 26 December (Christmas). Pursuant to Act VIII-395 of 1997, the list included eight holidays. On July 3, 1997, the Seimas passed new legislation on national remembrance days. On June 27, 2000, at the request of the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference, backed by the Seimas Committee on Education, Culture and Science (Motion of June 12, 2000), Lithuanian MPs restored the Assumption Day of 15 August, thus adding the ninth position to the list of official holidays (under Act VIII-1761 of 2000). The amendment was adopted by 41 votes for, with 7 abstentions (Stenographic record of June 27, 2000). On May 17, 2001, Lithuanian lawmakers restored the International Labour Day (1 May), therefore adjusting the list of ten public holidays to its original version drafted back in 1990 (Act IX-328 of 2001). The amendment was passed after a sharp discussion in the Seimas on April 26, 2001 (Stenographic record of April 26, 2001). On May 2, 2001, Valdas Adamkus, who served as Lithuania's president at that time, vetoed the modification, arguing that the holiday of 1 May does not bring together the Lithuanian nation (Veto of May 2, 2001). The Seimas readopted the amendment on May 17, 2001 with 78 votes in favour, 20 against and 5 abstentions (Stenographic record of May 17, 2001), rejecting the presidential veto. Lithuania's legislation on public holidays remained in force until December 31, 2002.

On June 4, 2002, Lithuanian lawmakers passed the Labour Code, to which the official register of public holidays was transferred, under Article 162 that contained the following ten public holidays:

- 1) 1 January – New Year’s Day;
- 2) 16 February – Day of Restoration of the State of Lithuania;
- 3) 11 March – Day of Restoration of Independence of Lithuania;
- 4) Easter Sunday and Monday (according to Western tradition);
- 5) 1 May – International Labour Day;
- 6) First Sunday in May – Mother’s Day;
- 7) 6 July – Statehood Day (Anniversary of the Coronation of King Mindaugas);
- 8) 15 August – Assumption Day;
- 9) 1 November – All Saints’ Day;
- 10) 25 and 26 December – Christmas.

Public holidays are non-working days under Article 162 of Act IX-926 of 2002. The above article was amended on June 26, 2003, proposing an additional national holiday to be put on the official state list: 24 June – St. John’s Day, which is also referred to as the Day of Dew (under Act IX-1656 of 2003). The latter name has its origins in a pagan tradition, with traditional festivities taking place from 25 May to 25 June. Also referred to as *Kupolės*, owing its name to a yellow blossoming herb known as *melampyrum nemorosum*, it was celebrated by the Lithuanians who used the herbs to make wreaths to be later thrown on trees or to float on the water of rivers. The former name corresponds to the traditional Christian name day of *Jonas* [John] and *Janina* [Jane], as reflected in the plural form of the festivity, known also as Saint Jonas’ festival. As tradition goes, if a person celebrating a name day noticed a wreath on the door of their house, they were obliged to prepare supper, to which all people who had made the wreath were invited (*Kuo* 2018). On May 13, 2008, the Seimas declared Father’s Day (first Sunday in June) a new public holiday. The legislation came into effect on January 1, 2009 (under Act X-1538 of 2008). On December 9, 2010, Christmas Eve (24 December) was added to the official list of public holidays (pursuant to Act XI-1219 of 2010).

Under Lithuania’s new Labour Code, which entered into force on July 1, 2017, the following group of thirteen public holidays were included in Article 123, after they had been inherited from the previous version of the aforementioned Code (Article 123 of Act XII-2603 of 2016).

**Table 1. Public holidays by their type**

STATE	NATIONAL	RELIGIOUS	INTERNATIONAL	TRADITIONAL
1) 16 February – Day of Restoration of the State of Lithuania	1) First Sunday in May – Mother’s Day	1) Easter Sunday and Monday (according to the Western Christian tradition)	1) 1 May – International Labour Day	1) 1 January – New Year’s Day
2) 11 March – Day of Restoration of Independence of Lithuania	2) First Sunday in June – Father’s Day	2) 15 August – Assumption Day		2) 24 June – St John’s Day, also: Day of Dew
3) 6 July – Statehood Day (Anniversary of the Coronation of King Mindaugas)		3) 1 November – All Saints’ Day		
		4) 24 December – Christmas Eve		
		5) 25 and 26 December – Christmas		

Source: author’s own study based on Article 123 of Act XII-2603 of 2016.

## Legal Acts on Lithuanian Days of Remembrance



Back in 1997, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania started work on adopting a draft act on so-called days of remembrance. Generally speaking, its register involved a number of events that were deemed important for the Lithuanian state but had not yet been included in the aforementioned official list of public holidays for various reasons as Lithuanian MPs argued that the list should consist of no more than twelve or thirteen days. On July 2, 1997, Lithuanian lawmakers held the first in-depth discussion on the subject, which was characterised by distinct opinions and values expressed by representatives of divergent political forces present at that time in the Seimas (read more: Lopata 2011, pp. 45–58). In her speech, Mrs. Šiaulienė MP stated that each party disposed of its own list of public holidays that would need to be announced before the elections (Stenographic record of July 2, 1997).



The legislation containing a list of 23 days of remembrance was adopted as a result of the roll-call vote, with 36 votes in favour, 22 against and 5 abstentions (Stenographic record of July 3, 1997). Among the days of remembrance put on the official list were the following:

- 1) 1 January – Flag Day;
- 2) 13 January – Day of the Defenders of Freedom, established to commemorate the death of 14 Lithuanians, who died on January 13, 1991, protecting the Vilnius TV tower against Soviet aggression;
- 3) 4 March – St. Casimir’s Day, to commemorate Saint Casimir Jagiellon (October 3, 1458 – March 4, 1484), the patron saint of Lithuania and a son of King Casimir IV and Elizabeth of Austria, canonised in 1602;
- 4) 20 March – Earth Day;
- 5) 1 May – International Workers’ Day;
- 6) 7 May – Lithuanian Press Restoration, Language and Book Day, commemorating a tsarist ban on the print of Lithuanian-language publications, freedom of expression and the use of Polish and Lithuanian language, which to a great extent impeded further development of Lithuanian language and culture. On May 7, 1904, the ban was revoked by the tsarist authorities;
- 7) fourth Sunday in May – Partisans’ Day;
- 8) 1 June – International Children’s Care Day;
- 9) first Sunday in June – Father’s Day;
- 10) 14 June – Day of Mourning and Hope, remembering the night of June 14, 1941 when Soviet authorities started massive deportations of about 30,000 Lithuanian citizens; 132,000 Lithuanians were in total exiled by the end of 1952;
- 11) 23 June – Day to Commemorate the June Uprising, marking the uprising of June 23, 1941 that broke out against the retreating Soviet troops while German armed units entered the territory of Lithuania, and the provisional government committed to restoring pre-war state structures;
- 12) 24 June – St. John’s Day (also: Saint Jonas’ festival);
- 13) 15 July – Battle of Grunwald Day of 1410;
- 14) last Sunday in June – Maritime Day;
- 15) 23 August – Black Ribbon Day, remembering the



signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on August 23, 1939 that was believed by Lithuanian historians to have stripped the state of its independence;

16) 1 September – Day of Freedom, commemorating the Soviet withdrawal of troops from the territory of Lithuania at exactly midnight on August 31, 1993, as a result of which the country was free of Soviet armed units the following day;

17) 8 September – Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Šilinės*), Anniversary of the Coronation of Vytautas the Great and Day of Gratitude for Independence and Defence of Freedom;

18) 23 September – National Memorial Day for the Genocide of Lithuanian Jews, remembering the liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto on September 23, 1943;

19) 5 October – World Teachers' Day;

20) 25 October – Constitution Day, marking the adoption of the Constitution of Lithuania by the referendum of October 25, 1992;

Gediminas tower wrapped in the flags of Baltic states on August 24, 2014 (the 25th anniversary of the Baltic Way) in Vilnius, Lithuania.

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- 21) 2 November – All Souls’ Day – Day of Remembrance of the Dead;
- 22) 23 November – Lithuanian Armed Forces Day, remembering the decision to establish the Lithuanian armed forces, made by the state authorities on November 23, 1918;
- 23) Human Rights Day (pursuant to Act VIII-397 of 1997).

The above list of days of remembrance may be conditionally divided into the following six categories: **1. State days of remembrance** (11 – 1); 2); 7); 10); 11); 13); 15); 16); 18); 20); 22)); **2. National days of remembrance** (4 – 3); 6); 9); 12)); **3. Religious days of remembrance** (2 – 17); 21)); **4. International days of remembrance** (4 – 5); 8); 19) 23)); **5. Professional days of remembrance** (0 – such category was included in the official agenda sometime later); **6. Non-traditional days of remembrance** (2 – 4); 14)).

In the years that followed, the list was subject to further modifications, made first by Lithuanian members of parliament and then the president, both of whom added more items to the official register. On June 25, 1998, the following days of remembrance were enlisted:

- 1) 15 June – Day of Occupation and Genocide, marking the Soviet annexation of Lithuania on June 15, 1940;
- 2) 15 August – Assumption Day;
- 3) 30 November – Day of Incorporating Lithuania Minor into Great Lithuania, remembering the incorporation of the Memel Territory (German: *Memelland*), the northeastern part of the German province of East Prussia, into the Lithuanian state on November 30, 1918 (Act VIII-815 of 1998).

Once amended, the legislation took into account 26 memorial days.

On May 16, 2000, Lithuanian lawmakers added a new date to the official list of days of remembrance – the Day of Commemoration of Partisans and Unity of the Army and Society, to be observed on the third Sunday in May (under Act VIII-1680 of 2000). However, on June 27, 2000, Assumption Day was deleted from the list of days of remembrance and included on the list of national holidays (under Act VIII-1763 of 2000). In consequence, the former register consisted of

26 days. On May 17, 2001, the remembrance day of 1 May was shifted to the list of public holidays, as a result of which the state register of days of remembrance shrank to 25 items (according to Act IX-329 of 2001). Later that year, on June 14, 2001, Lithuanian lawmakers placed Harvest Day, observed on the second Saturday in October, on the list (pursuant to Act IX-379 of 2001). On January 24, 2002, after adopting Act IX-735 of 2002, International Women's Day (8 March) was put on the list that then was increased to 27 items. On May 7, 2002, the Seimas passed Act IX-874 of 2002, listing 14 May as Civil Resistance Day in order to pay tribute to 19-year-old Romas Kalanta who set himself on fire on May 14, 1972 in Kaunas to protest against the Soviet regime in Lithuania. Two further revisions were adopted on July 5, 2002 when Lithuanian MPs listed 31 August, as the Day of Freedom and renamed 1 September as the Day of Science and Knowledge, with the official list consisting of 29 days of remembrance (Act IX-1050 of 2002). Declared on June 19, 2003, Sąjūdis Day was since then to be observed on 3 June to remember the establishment of the Sąjūdis (Reform Movement of Lithuania) movement on June 3, 1988 (Act IX-1633 of 2003). Deleted from the list of the days of remembrance under Act IX-1699 of 2003, St John's Day was put on the list of public holidays on July 14, 2003, the former of which encompassed at that time 29 items. On April 1, 2004, its number rose to 33 after the Seimas adopted Act IX-2099 of 2004, adding the following four days to the state agenda:

- 29 March – Day of Lithuania's Accession to NATO;
- 27 April – Medical Workers' Day;
- 1 May – Lithuania's Accession to the European Union;
- and 9 May – Europe Day.

Pursuant to Act IX-2442 of 2004, the following three days were also listed as days of remembrance on September 14, 2004:

- 15 May – International Day of the Family;
- 27 September – Day of Lithuania's Social Workers;
- and 1 October – International Day of Older Persons.

In consequence, the list consisted of 36 days of remembrance yet this was extended further on May 12, 2005 after two more items were added: Time of Remembrance for Those Who

Lost Their Lives during the Second World War (8 May) and International Youth Day (12 August).

Of all existing days of remembrance, two were expanded, including International Day of the Family and Day of the Constituent Assembly (15 May), as well as Black Ribbon Day and Day of the Baltic Way (23 August) (Act X-195 of 2005). The first commemorated the events of May 15, 1920 when Lithuania's Constituent Assembly adopted the resolution on recognizing the Republic of Lithuania; the latter was introduced to remember a human chain formed by two million Lithuanians, Latvians and Lithuanians across Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn to protest against the secret Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The list of days of remembrance consisted of 38 items.

On July 19, 2006, the list was filled out to 44 items that included the following:

- 15 January – Klaipėda Region Day;
- 6 April – Safe Traffic Day;
- 15 April – Day of Culture;
- 25 May – Missing Children's Day;
- 28 September – Tuskulėnai Remembrance Day, established after Soviet security services began mass shooting Lithuania's anti-Soviet resistance members and German collaborators on September 28, 1944. From 1944 to 1947, 767 people in total were executed, including 32 soldiers of Poland's Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK), whose bodies were secretly buried in the Tuskulėnai Manor in Vilnius;
- 16 October – Day of Commemoration for the Victims of the Genocide in Lithuania Minor (pursuant to Act X-797 of 2006), commemorating mass shootings of Lithuanian citizens in 1944–1949 near Königsberg while referring to the Nemmersdorf massacre perpetrated by the Soviet Army.

On September 27, 2007, the Act on Days of Remembrance was supplemented by a definition of day of remembrance, under which it was referred to as “an important day linked to facts and/or events of significant importance for shaping and legitimising the statehood of Lithuania, propagating universal values and the culture of memory and preserving living history” (under Act X-1286 of 2007). The statutory list of Lithuania's day of remembrance was later complemented by five more items, including the following:

- 11 February – World Day of the Sick;
- 7 April – World Health Day, last Sunday in April – World Day of Life;
- 17 May – World Information Society Day;
- and 10 October – Day of Self-Government, as a result of which the register was composed of 49 items (under the Act X-1286 of 2007).

A subsequent modification was adopted on January 13, 2008, under which the following dates were listed as Lithuania's days of remembrance:

- 27 March – World Theatre Day;
- 17 April – Day of Lithuanian Power Engineers;
- 3 May – Day of Europe's First Written Constitution of 1791;
- last Sunday in July – Maritime Day and Fishermen's Day;
- 23 September – National Memorial Day for the Genocide of Lithuanian Jews;
- while listing the last Saturday in October as Day of Physical Culture and Sports and 20 October as the Day of Mutual Pledge of the Two Nations (Lithuania and Poland) of 1791 (under Act X-1537 of 2008). Once revised, the list embraced in total 54 days of remembrance.

On July 22, 2009, the Seimas renamed Black Ribbon Day (23 August) as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism, and Day of the Baltic Way (pursuant to Act XI-384 of 2009). On September 24, 2009, pursuant to the Act XI-435 of 2009, a new item was listed (Day of the Construction Workers, on the second Saturday in September) while deleting one (Partisans' Day, on the fourth Sunday in May). In consequence, the register still contained 54 items. Under Act XII-309 of 2013, two more items were included on May 14, 2013, among which were:

- Balts' Unity Day (22 September)
- and International Day for Tolerance (16 November).

On October 15, 2013, Lithuania added three more days of remembrance to the statutory list:

- Day of the First Mention of Vilnius (25 January, symbolically referred to as Vilnius's Birthday), commemorating the day of January 25, 1323 when Gediminas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, sent a letter to the residents of Lübeck, Bremen and Magdeburg, in which he conveyed the first historic

mention of Vilnius and confirmed his intention to accept Christianity while inviting artisans and merchants to Vilna;

- Lithuanian National Communities' Day (21 May)
- and Lithuanian Lawyers' Day (3 December), with the list consisting of 59 items under Act XII-566 of 2013.

On April 15, 2014, St. Florian's Day or International Firefighters' Day (4 May) was declared a new day of remembrance, thus becoming the 60th item added to the register (Act XII-827 of 2014).

On December 18, 2014, Lithuania listed 13 July as the Day of the Battle of Durbes of 1260 (as the 61st item, introduced pursuant to Act XII-1497 of 2014 to commemorate the battle fought on July 13, 1260 near Lake Durbe that ended with the victory of the Samogitians over the Teutonic Knights). On June 2, 2016, the Seimas renamed the last Sunday in April to World Day of Life and Geologists' Day (Act XII-2405 of 2016). On June 30, 2016, the Day of Agronomists (16 July) was added as the 62nd item (Act XII-2592 of 2016). On December 8, 2016, Lithuania marked 15 December as the Day of Lithuanian Courts (the 63rd item, drafted under Act XIII-81 of 2016). On December 7, 2017, the Lithuanian authorities listed 28 April as the World Day for Safety and Health at Work (the 64th item, pursuant to Act XIII-859 of 2017) and the first Sunday in July as Caretakers' Day (the 65th item, under Act XIII-860 of 2017). On December 7, 2017, 11 December was listed as Respect for Taxpayers Day (the 66th item, Act XIII-861 of 2017). On June 30, 2018, 31 October was declared the Day of Reformation (the 67th item, Act XIII-1446 of 2018).

The final version of the Lithuanian list of days of remembrance can be categorised as follows:

**State:**

- 1) 1 January – Flag Day;
- 2) 13 January – Day of the Defenders of Freedom;
- 3) 15 January – Klaipėda Region Day;
- 4) 29 March – Day of Lithuania's Accession to NATO;
- 5) 1 May – Day of Lithuania's Accession to the European Union;
- 6) 3 May – Day of the First Written Constitution of 1791 in Europe;
- 7) 14 May – Civil Resistance Day;

- 8) third Sunday in May – Day of Honoring the Partisans, the Army and the Unity of Society;
- 9) 3 June – Sąjūdis Day;
- 10) 14 June – Day of Mourning and Hope;
- 11) 15 June – Day of Occupation and Genocide;
- 12) 23 June – Day to Commemorate the June Uprising;
- 13) 13 July – Day of the Battle of Durbe of 1260;
- 14) 15 July – Battle of Grunwald Day [of 1410];
- 15–16) 23 August – European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism, and the Day of the Baltic Way;
- 17) 22 September – Balts' Unity Day;
- 18) 23 September – National Memorial Day for the Genocide of Lithuanian Jews;
- 19) 28 September – Tuskulėnai Remembrance Day;
- 20) 16 October – Day of Commemoration for the Victims of the Genocide in Lithuania Minor;
- 21) 20 October – Day of Mutual Pledge of the Two Nations (Lithuania and Poland) of 1791;
- 22) 25 October – Constitution Day;
- 23) 23 November – Lithuanian Armed Forces Day;
- 24) 30 November – Day of Incorporating Lithuania Minor into Great Lithuania.

**National:**

- 1) 4 March – St. Casimir's Day;
- 2) 7 May – Lithuanian Press Restoration, Language and Book Day;
- 3) 17 July – World Lithuanian Unity Day.

**Religious:**

- 1) 8 September – Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Šilinės*) and Anniversary of the Coronation of Vytautas the Great and Day of Gratitude for Independence and Defending Freedom;
- 2) 31 October – Day of Reformation;
- 3) 2 November – All Souls' Day – Day of Remembrance of the Dead.

**International:**

- 1) 11 February – World Day of the Sick;
- 2) 8 March – International Women's Day;
- 3) 27 March – World Theatre Day;
- 4) 7 April – World Health Day;



- 5) last Sunday in April – World Day of Life and Geologists' Day;
- 6) 28 April – World Day for Safety and Health at Work;
- 7) 8 May – Time of Remembrance for Those Who Lost Their Lives during the Second World War;
- 8) 9 May – Europe Day;
- 9) 15 May – International Day of the Family and Day of the Constituent Assembly;
- 10) 17 May – World Information Society Day;
- 11) 25 May – Missing Children's Day;
- 12) 1 June – International Children's Care Day;
- 13) 12 August – International Youth Day;
- 14) 1 October – International Day of Older Persons;
- 15) 5 October – World Teachers' Day;
- 16) 16 November – International Day for Tolerance;
- 17) 10 December – Human Rights Day.

**Professional:**

- 1) 6 April – Safe Traffic Day;
- 2) 15 April – Day of Culture;
- 3) 17 April – Day of Lithuanian Power Engineers;
- 4) 27 April – Medical Workers' Day;
- 5) 4 May – St. Florian's Day or International Firefighters' Day;
- 6) first Sunday in July – Caretakers' Day;
- 7) 16 July – Day of Agronomists;
- 8) 1 September – Day of Science and Knowledge;
- 9) second Saturday in September – Day of the Construction Workers;
- 10) 27 September – Day of Lithuania's Social Workers;
- 11) first Saturday in October – Day of Physical Culture and Sports;
- 12) second Saturday in October – Harvest Day;
- 13) 10 October – Day of Self-Government;
- 14) 3 December – Lithuanian Lawyers' Day;
- 15) 15 December – Day of Lithuanian Courts.

**Non-traditional:**

- 1) 25 January – Day of the First Mention of Vilnius;
- 2) 20 March – Earth Day;
- 3) 11 May – Respect for Taxpayers Day;
- 4) 21 May – Lithuanian National Communities' Day;
- 5) last Sunday in July – Maritime Day and Fishermen's Day.

Of all Lithuanian days of remembrance, eleven are characterized by a clear anti-Soviet (anti-Russian) attitude:

- 1) 13 January – Day of the Defenders of Freedom, commemorating the death of 14 Lithuanians, who died on January 13, 1991, protecting the Vilnius TV tower against Soviet aggression;
- 2) 29 March – Day of Lithuania’s Accession to NATO;
- 3) 8 May – Time of Remembrance for Those Who Lost Their Lives during the Second World War;
- 4) 14 May – Civil Resistance Day, remembering Romas Kalanta’s self-immolation on May 14, 1972 in Kaunas in protest against the Soviet regime in Lithuania. This incident caused fear and consternation within the structures of the KGB security agency and the Communist Party of Lithuania. Kalanta’s body was secretly buried, which sparked off a wave of mass protests and demonstrations. The mass riots were put down on May 19, 1972; in consequence, 400 people were detained;
- 5) 14 June – Day of Mourning and Hope, remembering the mass deportations of Lithuanian citizens to Siberia in 1941;
- 6) 15 June – Day of Occupation and Genocide, marking Soviet annexation of Lithuania in 1940;
- 7) 23 June – Day to Commemorate the June Uprising, established to mark the uprising of June 23, 1941 that broke out against the retreating Soviet troops, pursued by the German armed forces that entered the territory of Lithuania;
- 8) 23 August – European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism, and the Day of the Baltic Way, remembering victims of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the anniversary of a mass protest, held on August 23, 1989, against the Soviet regime, during which two million Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians joined hands to form a 600-kilometre-long human chain through the three Baltic countries;
- 9) 31 August – Day of Freedom commemorating the final withdrawal of the Soviet Army from Lithuania in 1993;
- 10) 28 September – Tuskulėnai Remembrance Day, paying tribute to 767 members of Lithuanian and Polish anti-Soviet resistance and German collaborators executed by Soviet security services on September 28, 1944;

11) 16 October – Day of Commemoration for the Victims of the Genocide in Lithuania Minor, introduced to commemorate the events of October 9, 1944 when the Soviet Army entered East Prussia, slaughtering local civilians, most of whom were of Lithuanian origin.

No Lithuanian day of remembrance is linked to anti-Polish sentiments; quite the contrary: two of them refer to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Polish: *Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów*):

- 1) 3 May – Day of Europe's First Written Constitution of 1791 and
- 2) 20 October – Day of the Mutual Pledge of the Two Nations (Lithuania and Poland) of 1791.

While having an insight into the Polish-Lithuanian aspect in the politics of history, attention should be drawn to the extremely divergent Polish and Lithuanian approaches towards the historical figures of Vytautas and Jogaila (Nikžentaitis 2000, pp. 8 et seq.). These however have exerted no negative impact on Lithuania's days of remembrance.

Under Lithuanian law, these days of remembrance are all working days (Act IX-926 of 2002), as a result of which they entail no burden to the state budget yet play a major role in the state politics of history. Prior to any official adoption, each date to potentially become Lithuania's next day of remembrance is first discussed by parliament, and later voted on by its members, as exemplified by stenographic records drawn up during the sittings of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, illustrating the distinct views and opinions expressed over subsequent dates to be later put on the official statutory list.

A case in point was an in-depth debate held for a year and a half by a wide group of politicians, experts, scholars, associations and social activities, who conferred about the importance of the Constitution of May 3, 1791 for the present-day Lithuanian state and society. On January 11, 2007, Mr. Zingeris, a member of the Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs, submitted an application to list 3 May as the Day of the First Written Constitution of May 3, 1791 and 20 October as the Day of Mutual Pledge of the Two Nations of 1791.

A multi-stage discussion, which was launched as a result, exerted significant impact on Lithuania's politics of history. It combined two divergent concepts, one of which can be referred to as ethnocentric, which highlighted Lithuania's real concern over losing some elements inherent to its statehood in the Constitution of 3 May. For its part, the second concept acted in favour of the constitution's significance for Europe and its legacy for contemporary Lithuania, in that it was able to pave Vilnius's way for new opportunities in shaping foreign policy and bilateral cooperation with Poland (Read more: Lopata 2011, pp. 59–113); on May 8, 2018, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania adopted the "Declaration of 3 May" (Declaration XII-1136 of 2018).

The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania (Lithuanian Parliament). Vilnius, Lithuania. February 12, 2018.  
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In parallel with the process, on January 17, 2007, the Seimas launched a legislative procedure, the Committee on Education, Science and Culture, chaired by Mr. Domarkas, which became the fundamental body on giving opinions on the proposal put forward by Mr. Zingeris, with the Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs acting as an additional body (Lopata 2011, p. 58). On October 18, 2007, members of the Seimas considered the motion made by Mr. Zingeris. The Seimas Committee on Education, Science and Culture adopted the draft law with 3 votes for, 0 against and 11 abstentions. Such a result, however, was not decisive; eventually, the motion was adopted by a prevailing vote of the chairman of the Committee. For its part, the Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs unanimously supported the proposal; in his speech at the session of the Seimas, Mr. Zingeris stated that Lithuania should be proud of the Constitution of 3 May. Some members of parliament voiced strong criticism over the initiative. In turn, Mr. Vesela said:

“The effects that the Republic had on the Lithuanian people were devastating. If it were not for its collapse, then both the Lithuania state and its people would long since have ceased to exist. As you will understand, the entire Lithuanian elite were completely nationalised. They cared for the Lithuania that they saw as nothing more as a land of serfs, thanks to which they could call themselves masters. As the [Russian] saying goes, *как литвин так хам, как поляк – так пан* [referring to as the Poles as “lords” (*pan*) and the Lithuanians as “peasants”, “boors” (*cham*)]” (Stenographic record of October 17, 2007).

A similar approach was adopted by Mr. Klumbys:

“Dear Colleagues, Lithuania’s present-day sovereignty would not be brought into existence if the Constitution of May 3, 1791 had become binding. Like the Union of Lublin, the Constitution was one of the most important documents in the history of the Polish nation. For the Lithuanian nation and statehood, it deemed however equivalent to the victory of Polonisation while triggering the loss of Lithuanian statehood, managed by the Lithuanians themselves. (...) And the Constitution later had a direct impact on Lithuania’s future history. Also, the Constitution of May 3, 1791 was the legal basis for establishing

Poland's territorial control over the Vilna Region in 1920. The very same constitution served as a legal basis for [the Polish] Home Army and the slaughtering [of Lithuanian citizens] in the Vilna Region during the Second World War. The Home Army's operations strove for reconstructing the Republic, and by legitimising this day, we justify murdering Lithuanian citizens and Poland's annexation of the Vilna Region. (...) My suggestion is therefore to list 3 May as the Day of Tragedy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania" (Stenographic record of October 17, 2007).

Nevertheless, other parliamentarians held different opinions in that respect. Mr. Domarkas said:

"The Seimas Committee on Education, Science and Culture organised a large conference. I, however, regret that some of the MPs, who today declare their patriotic attitudes, did not decide to take part. Large-scale discussions and queries were held during the Committee's sittings, involving the participation of professors, doctors and employees of the Institute of History. The Committee decided, therefore, not to accept the motion made by Mr. Klumbys" (Stenographic record of October 17, 2007).

Nonetheless, the draft legislation put forward by Mr. Klumbys was rejected with 34 votes against, 5 in favour and 24 abstentions. In another part of the debate, Mrs. Aleknaitė-Abramikienė voiced her support for the draft legislation of listing 3 May as the day to commemorate the Constitution of 3 May, saying that Lithuanian members of parliament should learn the history of their country. Mr. Mazuronis agreed with these remarks, yet in advising his peers to take their time before the voting, claimed that "those who will vote in favour of putting 3 May on the list of days of remembrance will soon – and I have no doubt about it – feel ashamed for what they did today". Their speeches were followed by the vote, as a result of which the draft law was adopted with 51 votes for, 8 against and 10 abstentions (Stenographic record October 17, 2007) and passed to further work.

The draft law had been considered at the admission stage on May 13, 2008 as a draft amendment to the Act on Days of Remembrance (Stenographic record of May 13, 2008;

Draft Law No. XP-2007 [3\*] supplementing and amending Article 1 of the Act on Days of Remembrance). As previously, a heated discussion ensued in which the above MPs took part. Mr. Klumbys spoke about potential threats for Lithuania arising from listing 3 May as the day to commemorate the Constitution of May 3, 1791. Mr. Veselka said that Poland and Lithuania had differing interests (according to Poland's former Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski, Lithuania's attitudes towards the Polish minority resembled that of Alexander Lukashenko's towards Poles living in Belarus). He voiced sharp criticism over plans to include on the list 20 October as the Day of Mutual Pledge of the Two Nations. In his speech, Mr. Kubilius said that the Day of Constitution of 3 May is an important event both for Lithuania and Poland; he reminded the Duke Radziwiłł, who united all proponents of the Constitution of 3 May in Radziwiłł Palace in Warsaw, in an attempt to plot against the then Russian ambassador to Warsaw, who, for his part, gathered a group of opponents to the document; Mr. Kubilius stated that a running discussion takes place in the comparable atmosphere. Mr. Kubilius asked the fellow deputies to back the draft legislation. Mr. Gražulis, in his turn, noted that 3 May marked the end of the Lithuanian state as it had been known in the past. Mr. Kubilius stated that, back in 1795, Lithuanians and Poles went to fight against Tsarist Russia to preserve the Constitution of 3 May. This was followed by Mr. J. Veselka who argued that the constitution had been adopted by those Lithuanians who had neither known nor spoken the Lithuanian language. All in all, the voting resulted in a clear result, in spite of the prior discussion: 62 MPs voted in favour of passing the legislation, 3 voted against while 17 abstained (Stenographic record of May 13, 2008; Lopata 2011, pp. 59–113).

Also, the issue of the Day of Commemoration for the Victims of the Genocide in Lithuania Minor (16 October) gave rise to much debate. This was to mark the Soviet entry into East Prussia (October 9, 1944), to which Klaipėda Region (*Memelland*) belonged; in the spring of 1939, the region was annexed by the Third Reich after the German ultimatum to Lithuania. While entering the region, the Soviet troops had been ordered to treat mercilessly both German soldiers and civilians. Despite some formal difficulties, the motion was

approved by MPs with 51 votes for, 1 against and 3 abstentions (Stenographic record of June 15, 2006). Although prior discussions were held on July 13, 2006, the motion failed to meet *quorum*; as a result, it was reconsidered on July 19, 2006 – once the *quorum* was reached – and passed with 71 votes for, 0 against and 11 abstentions (Stenographic record of July 19, 2006).

## Legal Acts on Politics of History in Lithuania



When considering issues regarding the politics of history, scholars draw attention to the assessment of the legacy of totalitarian regimes, in which Lithuania's political parties did not express any major ideological differences, even

**Table 2. Days of remembrance by their type**

STATE	NATIONAL	RELIGIOUS	INTERNATIONAL	PROFESSIONAL	NON-TRADITIONAL
1) Flag Day (1 January)	1) St. Casimir's Day (4 March)	1) Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary ( <i>Šilinės</i> ) and Anniversary of the Coronation of Vytautas the Great and Day of Gratitude for Independence and Defending Freedom (8 September)	1) World Day of the Sick (11 February)	1) Safe Traffic Day (6 April)	1) Day of the First Mention of Vilnius (25 January)
2) Day of the Defenders of Freedom (13 January)	2) Lithuanian Press Restoration, Language and Book Day (7 May)	2) Day of Reformation (31 October)	2) International Women's Day (8 March)	2) Day of Culture (15 April)	2) Earth Day (20 March)
3) Klajpėda Region Day (15 January)	3) World Lithuanian Unity Day (17 July)	3) All Souls' Day – Day of Remembrance of the Dead (2 November)	3) World Theatre Day (27 March)	3) Day of Lithuanian Power Engineers (17 April)	3) Respect for Taxpayers Day (11 May)



STATE	NATIONAL	RELIGIOUS	INTERNATIONAL	PROFESSIONAL	NON-TRADITIONAL
4) Day of Lithuania's Accession to NATO (29 March)			4) World Health Day (7 April)	4) Medical Workers' Day (27 April)	4) Lithuanian National Communities' Day (21 May)
5) Day of Lithuania's Accession to the European Union (1 May)			5) World Day of Life and Geologists' Day (last Sunday in April)	5) St. Florian's Day or International Firefighters' Day (4 May)	5) Maritime Day and Fishermen's Day (last Sunday in July)
6) Day of Europe's First Written Constitution of 1791 (3 May)			6) World Day for Safety and Health at Work (28 April)	6) Caretakers' Day (first Sunday in July)	
7) Civil Resistance Day (14 May)			7) The Time of Remembrance for Those Who Lost Their Lives during the Second World War (8 May)	7) Day of Agronomists (16 July)	
8) Day of Commemoration of Partisans and Unity of the Army and Society (third Sunday in May)			8) Europe Day (9 May)	8) Day of Science and Knowledge (1 September)	
9) Lithuanian Lawyers' Day (3 June)			9) International Day of the Family and Day of the Constituent Assembly (15 May)	9) Day of the Construction Workers (second Saturday in September)	
10) Day of Mourning and Hope (14 June)			10) World Information Society Day (17 May)	10) Day of Lithuania's Social Workers (27 September)	
11) Day of Occupation and Genocide (15 June)			11) Missing Children's Day (25 May)	11) Day of Physical Culture and Sports (first Saturday in October)	

STATE	NATIONAL	RELIGIOUS	INTERNATIONAL	PROFESSIONAL	NON-TRADITIONAL
12) Day to Commemorate the June Uprising (23 June)			12) International Children's Care Day (1 June)	12) Harvest Day (second Saturday in October)	
13) Day of the Battle of Durbe (13 July)			13) International Youth Day (12 August)	13) Day of Self-Government (10 October)	
14) Battle of Grunwald Day (15 July)			14) International Day of Older Persons (1 October)	14) Lithuanian Lawyers' Day (3 December)	
15) European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism, and Day of the Baltic Way (23 August)			15) World Teachers' Day (5 October)	15) Day of Lithuanian Courts (15 December)	

Source: author's own study based on Act VIII-397 of 1997 (as amended).

regardless of their political affiliation. Notwithstanding that, Lithuania's political forces found it vital to adopt appropriate legal acts aimed at putting all these matters in an adequate order. And yet this emerged as an uneasy task, probably due to the involvement of many Lithuanian politicians of that time in various power structures of Soviet Lithuania (1944–1990). Therefore, on June 15, 2010 (Day of Occupation and Genocide), the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania adopted an amendment to Article 170 of Criminal Code, commemorating the anniversary of Soviet occupation of June 15, 1940 and mass deportations of Lithuanian civilians to Siberia in June 1941. It provides for criminal liability for propagating communist and Nazi ideologies, denying, publically approving or grossly belittling the scope of crimes committed against Lithuania by the USSR and Nazi Germany, or war crimes committed against Lithuania or her residents in the period 1940–1991.

Any natural or legal person convicted of committing such acts shall be liable and may receive a fine, have their liberty limited or face imprisonment for up to two years. Sixty-eight MPs were for, 5 against while 32 abstained (according to Act XI-901 of 2010 and Stenographic record of June 15, 2010).

Anti-Soviet aspects of Lithuania's politics of history were exemplified by two declarations that the Seimas adopted with reference to the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. In light of the first one, which was passed on March 12, 2009, Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas, who served as the leader of the Presidium of the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters from 1949 to 1954, an anti-Soviet armed resistance movement after the Second World War, was actually recognised as president of Lithuania. The Seimas passed the legal act with 41 votes in favour, 2 against and 5 abstentions (Declaration of March 12, 2009 and Stenographic record of March 12, 2009). Adopted on November 20, 2018, the latter Declaration honoured Adolfas Ramanauskas (codename: Vanagas), who served as the leader of the anti-Soviet Presidium of the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters from 1954 to 1957, declaring him the then supreme leader of Lithuania. Lithuanian MPs took a unanimous decision, adopting the Declaration with 91 votes for, 0 against and 7 abstentions (Declaration XIII-1651 of 2018; Stenographic record of November 20, 2018). By passing the above declarations and paying tribute to members of the anti-Soviet resistance movement, the Seimas opened a new important chapter of Lithuania's politics of history.

Nevertheless, the most positive solution remained overshadowed by a series of controversial decisions and mistakes made by Lithuanian lawmakers. On September 12, 2000, following a brief and superficial discussion, the Seimas approved a declaration recognising the Act of June 23, 1941 on the Restoration of Lithuanian Independence as a Lithuanian legal act; 48 MPs voted in favour, 0 against while 3 abstained from voting (Stenographic record of September 12, 2000). Granting the aforementioned declaration legal status of the present-day Lithuanian state caused uproar among members of the Jewish community. They voiced their deep concern over the Seimas's decision, claiming that June 23, 1941 marked in Lithuania the beginning of acts of robbery, violence and anti-Jewish pogroms (BNS communiqué of September 13,

2000). On September 19, 2000, internal and external protests led to the Seimas's hasty decision to adopt two further legal documents on the issue. The first one was a resolution condemning all acts of violence and the slaughtering of civilians on June 23, 1941, referring to them as crimes against humanity yet stating that "neither disobedience nor uprising against the [Soviet] occupier can be condemned" (Draft Law P-2883 of 2000). As a result of the heated discussion, the Seimas passed the resolution unanimously, with 49 votes for, 1 against and 2 abstentions (Stenographic record of September 19, 2000). The latter legal act, as a documented resolution, stated the following on the September 12, 2000 Resolution:

[...] given the contradictions between considering the law, providing supplements, interpreting its text and content and introducing further amendments, the Seimas determined that the legislative procedure remains incomplete while the law itself – once discussed – remains at the admission stage (Resolution of September 19, 2000).

Following a vigorous debate, in which the speaker of the Seimas, Mr. Landbergis, played a key role, the officially recorded statute was passed with 52 votes for, 0 against and 3 abstentions. Shortly afterward, Mr. Landsbergis addressed his fellow parliamentarians, saying: "[...] we passed the law and we know that it has not yet been adopted" (Stenographic record of September 19, 2000). Once introduced, the above decisions resulted in confusion.

Under the controversial decree signed by Lithuanian President Rolandas Paksas on February 16, 2004, General Povilas Plechavičius, Commander of the Lithuanian Territorial Defense Force (Lithuanian: *Lietuvos Vietinė Rinktinė*) was posthumously awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of the Cross of Vytis while Colonel Oskaras Urbonas, who served as a chief of staff the Lithuanian Territorial Defense Force, was posthumously honoured as a Grand Commander of the Order of the Cross of Vytis. Also, two volunteers of the formation – Antanas Ambrazavičius and Albinas Artičkonis – were decorated with the Medal of the Order of the Cross of Vytis (under Presidential Decree No. 365 of 2004). Paksas's decision was viewed as controversial, mainly due to

activities performed by the above forces; in February 1944, the Lithuanian Territorial Defence Force under the command of General Povilas Plechavičius, as a military formation established and armed by the German occupation authorities, followed their orders, conducting pacification of several Polish villages in the Vilna Region where they fought fierce battles against the Polish Home Army (Volkonovski 1996, pp. 184–197).

Also, concerns were raised over motions submitted by the Commission for evaluating the Home Army's activities in Lithuania. To this end, on July 14, 1993, the Lithuanian government convened a joint Lithuanian-Polish committee that consisted of 12 historians and lawyers, of which 7 were Lithuanian and 5 Polish (Regulation 525p of 1993). On August 17, 1993, the Government of Lithuania provided the Commission with an appointment of two prosecutors (Regulation 600p of 1993). Later, the Lithuanian side changed its members, some of whom were withdrawn and substituted with their peers (Regulation 688p of 1993). The Commission's works turned out to be challenging as both Poland and Lithuania prepared distinct draft proposals while having no intention to compromise. Nevertheless, Lithuania's final conclusions were critical, as these prevented the Home Army Veteran Association from being officially registered in Lithuania; from 1990 to 2003, the organization had made several failed attempts to submit registration documents to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania. After Lithuania's accession to the European Union, its domestic legislation was subject to significant modifications, as a result of which Home Army Veteran Association (*Klub Weteranów Armii Krajowej*) was officially registered in August 2004. Another positive element was the Declaration of Reconciliation between the Home Army Veteran Association and the Lithuanian Territorial Defence Force, signed in the Presidential Palace on September 2, 2004, in the presence of President Valdas Adamkus, Lithuanian ministers and members of diplomatic corps. This positively affected the attitude of Lithuanian society to the operations of the Home Army in the Vilna Region.

All aforementioned issues and controversies suggested the need to arrange some aspects of Lithuania's politics of history at the institutional level. To this end, a group of

Lithuanian MPs (including V. Stundys, A. Dumčius, J. Olekas, G. Songaila, V. Bogušis, V. Žiemelis, V. Mazuronis, Č. Juršėnas, V. Baltraitienė, V. Gedvilas, and A. Kašėta) registered on June 29, 2012 in the Seimas a bill titled “Politics of History of the Nation”. The 14-article document, which, however, lacked articles 6 and 7, introduced and defined terms such as memorial year, site of memory, historical memory of the nation, object of historical memory of the nation, state mourning and public holiday. Initially, the lawmakers defined day of remembrance as a “day to commemorate facts and/or events of significant importance for shaping and legitimising the statehood of Lithuania, upholding humanistic values of the nation and values of the culture of memory among professional and social groups while preserving living history” (Draft Law XIP-4631 of 2012).

The memorial year was defined as follows: “The memorial year is aimed at commemorating and consolidating Lithuanian statehood, other historical events or cultural phenomena, anniversaries of important historical figures and works dedicated to Lithuania, science and culture”. For its part, site of memory is defined as a site linked to “events, facts or personalities of particular importance for the development and consolidation of Lithuanian statehood, events and facts of Lithuanian history and cultures, as defined in other legal acts that regulate the heritage of historical memory”. The authors of the bill specified the “nation’s historical memory” as “a *milieu* for social remembrance, encompassing the system of events that are deemed important for the nation’s past and contemporary history, acting in accordance with traditions, customs, culture, law and development of the country”. The object of the nation’s historical memory was referred to as “a memorable date, place, and historical events as stipulated by the following law or any procedure established herein”; “State mourning – a day or a few days of mourning declared by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania due to a state-wide loss”; “Public holiday – a day of special importance for creating (restoring) the Lithuanian state or other days referred to as significant”. As stated by those who drafted the law, its main purpose consisted of forming, shaping and implementing principles of state policy aimed at emphasising the legacy of Lithuania’s historical memory (Draft Law XIP-4631 of 2012).

The Road of Freedom  
Memorial Wall  
(The Baltic Way).  
Vilnius, Lithuania.  
November 21, 2017.  
© Woody Alec

In subsequent articles, lawmakers grouped Lithuanian public holidays under the following categories: state (3); religious (5); traditional/international (5). A similar distinction was applied in reference to days of remembrance that were divided into respective categories, including those related to creating and consolidating the Lithuanian statehood (27); promoting humanistic values of the nation (13); and professional and social groups (19). In June 2012, the list of days of remembrance consisted of 59 items (pursuant to Draft Law XIP-4631 of 2012). Pursuant to Article 3 point 4, state and local government institutions were obliged to organise holiday programmes and festivities to commemorate public holidays and days of remembrances included within the first group.





Article 5 presented rules for establishing days of remembrance. Under point 4 of the said Article, citizens and legal entities could voluntarily participate in all events held to commemorate a memorial year and days of remembrance, yet legal sanctions were to be imposed on those who do not conform to the law in force.

In light of Article 8, subsequent dates, events or places are to be put on the list of objects by a joint decision of the parliament, president, government and the National Council of Historical Memory. In Articles 9–11, attention was drawn to the power of attorney held by the Seimas, the president and the government while determining a list of objects of the nation's historical memory. Article 12 specified mechanisms for establishing the National Council of Historical Memory, composed of the Chancellor of the Seimas, Chancellor of the President's Office, Chancellor of the Government, Chancellor of the Ministry of Culture, Chancellor of the Ministry of Education and Science, Chairperson of the Lithuania National Commission for UNESCO, Head of the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre, Senior Archivist of Lithuania, Director General of the Lithuanian national radio and television, head of the Lithuanian local self-government association, four representatives of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, three representatives of the Club of the Signatories of the Act of Independence, two persons indicated by the Lithuanian Association for Writers and two representatives of Lithuanian youth organization. The Chancellor of the Seimas was to be appointed president of the Council whose two vice-presidents were to be named by the Council itself. The institution was first and foremost tasked with creating, initiating and coordinating all activities aimed at shaping principles and developing the nation's historical policy, upheld by the proper policy of the state, its institutions, educational and scientific facilities, local self-governments and social organisations (Draft Law XIP-4631 of 2012).

In the cover letter, an 11-person group of members of the Lithuanian parliament who submitted the bill affirmed the importance of the nation's historical policy and its impact on citizens' loyalty, the extent to which they identify themselves with the state, along with the degree of their patriotism. As argued by their authors, the purpose of



the bill was to establish tools for defining priorities and implementing Lithuania's historical politics of memory (Cover Letter for the Draft Law XIP-4631 of 2012).

The bill was negatively assessed in a letter sent by the Legal Department of the Seimas, whose authors pointed out the inconsistency of many concepts with their definitions. The main criticism towards the bill concerned Article 5 point 4 that stipulated legal sanctions imposed on all citizens and legal entities that will not participate in celebrations to commemorate a memorial year and days of remembrances because such restrictions were not specified by the lawmakers. For its part, the legal department advised the authors of the bill to seek an opinion of the Government of Lithuania and to remove the aforementioned defects (Application of July 11, 2012).

On September 5, 2012, the same group of Lithuanian lawmakers registered the second draft of the bill on the nation's historical memory. With amended numbering and supplemented with articles 6 and 7, the 12-article document did not differ much from its previous version – it introduced and defined terms such as memorial year, site of memory, the nation's historical memory, object of the nation's historical memory, state mourning and public holiday. Notwithstanding that, no modifications were introduced to Article 5 point 4 that stipulated the compulsory participation in commemoration ceremonies of a memorial year and days of remembrance while imposing sanctions against those who did not take part in the aforementioned celebrations. After further revisions, two persons delegated by the Lithuanian Union of Political Prisoners and Deportees and two representatives of the Sąjūdis Association joined the National Council of Historical Memory (Draft Law XIP-4631 [2] of 2012).

The Lithuanian government adopted a resolution on the bill; although its opinion was positive, the final proposal submitted by the government recommended a number of amendments and clarifications to be adopted, including those on Article 5 point 4 (Resolution 563 of 2013). Similar objections were raised by the Legal Department of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania (Application of September 14, 2012).

On February 27, 2014, the parliament's Education and Science Committee registered the third draft law titled "Nation's historical memory". The draft was still subject to some modifications that included deleting a provision on sanctions imposed under Article 5 point 4 on all natural persons and legal entities that do not participate in celebrations to commemorate a memorial year or days of remembrance, adjusting the lists of public holidays and days of remembrance accordingly to their individual categories while introducing term limits for members of the Council as well as providing for several minor additions. The Act was to enter into force on July 1, 2014 while the Act on Days of Remembrance VIII-397, as amended, was to cease to apply (Act VIII-397 of 1997) (Draft Law XIP 4631 [3] of 2014). Although the aforementioned draft law was placed on the orders of the session of the Seimas of the Republic in Lithuania in the autumn of 2015 (under the Resolution XII-1937 of 2015), it has not been adopted since then.

On June 13, 2017, the Seimas presented the third version of the resolution on establishing the National Council of Historical Memory to be composed of 9 members of parliament. The resolution was passed by acclamation (Stenographic record of June 13, 2017). As a result of the voting on June 20, 2017, the resolution was passed with 57 votes for, 0 against and 4 abstentions (Stenographic record of June 20, 2017), thus giving a green light for establishing the Commission for the National Historical Memory; once enlarged, it composed of 11 members of the Lithuanian parliament – A. Anušauskas; A. Gumuliauskas; J. Imbrasas; E. Jovaiša; V. Juozapaitis; R. Juška; J. Narkevič; I. Šiaulienė; Stasys Tumėnas; P. Urbšys; E. Zingeris – who represented all political parties in the Seimas (Resolution XIII-484 of 2017). On October 12, 2017, the Seimas adopted a resolution on the Regulations of the Commission for the National Historical Memory, whose main objective was specified as follows:

"The aim of the Commission is to coordinate the state policy with regard to preserving and reflecting the historical memory of the state, which is to take place in accordance with the competence to approve and coordinate activities carried out by institutions that are responsible for preserving historical memory. To this end,

the Commission seeks to take into account both the current stage and significance of the historical memory of the Lithuanian state, which occurs with regard to priority directions of safeguarding historical memory while raising citizens' awareness of its importance" (Resolution XIII-682 of 2017).

The Commission is the only parliamentary committee among many to be endowed with such broad powers regarding Lithuania's historical memory. The body will be tasked with initiating and shaping state policy within the scope of promoting the nation's historical memory. Its competences provide for putting forward proposals to establish new public holidays and days of remembrances, coordinating projects and programmes related to state anniversary celebrations and any other events of particular importance for the Lithuanian statehood (under Resolution XIII-682 of 2017).



## Conclusions

From 1990 to 2017, Lithuanian lawmakers adopted bills and other legal acts that introduced public holidays and days of remembrance. The register of public holidays and days of remembrance enables to determine the most important dates and events that have laid the groundwork for Lithuania's historical memory. The list of public holidays follows a clear pro-state and religious tendency while that of memorial days is marked by clear anti-Soviet sentiment, focusing instead on promoting a pro-Western system of values. However, members of the Lithuanian parliament held a heated discussion before adopting relevant legal acts, under which two additional holidays commemorating the Constitution of May 3, 1791 and the Mutual Pledge of the Two Nations of October 20, 1791 were put on the list. Also, attention should be drawn both to the relevance and consistency of the list of public holidays and memorial days as the document is subject to constant updates. No Lithuanian day of remembrance can be referred to as anti-Polish; nonetheless, conclusions drawn by the Commission for the assessment of the Home Army's activities in Lithuania negatively affected Lithuanian historical policy. They were, however, mitigated to a certain extent after

veterans of Poland's Home Army and Lithuania's Territorial Defence Force signed a declaration of reconciliation on September 2, 2004.

Endeavours to adopt the legislation to commemorate the nation's historical memory appeared unsuccessful while, given the 100th anniversary of Lithuania's independence on February 16, 2018, all related efforts were forwarded to institutions, as a result of which a parliamentary committee eventually managed to be established on June 20, 2017. However, too little time has passed since then to accurately evaluate the operation of the aforementioned Committee and validity of all decisions taken so far.

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