

Season's Greetings with All Good Wishes for the New Year!



Vilnius TV Tower – one of the highest Christmas tree in the world.
Photo: Julius Kalinauskas.

TWEETS & QUOTES



Christian Thiels @ThielsChristian · Dec 18

Transparency champion, #Lithuania becomes the 59th #ArmsTreaty ratifier! via @controlarms



Linas Linkevicius @LinkeviciusL · Dec 16

Lithuania initiated letter to #EU inst signed by 7 FM calling 2speed up visa liberalization/facilit for partners ahead of #EaP Riga Summit



Linas Linkevicius @LinkeviciusL · Dec 14

Do we need a catastrophe to change smth? #Russia mil plane near colision w Swedish civilian aircraft, again...

POLITICAL NEWS

Support for EU & Euro

Half of Lithuanians have a positive image of the EU, and only 6 percent have a negative image, the lowest among EU countries, BNS reported. While 63% of Lithuania's support adoption of euro, according to *Eurobarometer* survey conducted in November has showed. The ranks of euro opponents decreased to 31%. Moreover, 73% of Lithuanians said they are optimistic about the future of the EU, compared to the EU average of 56%.

Getting Ready for Non-Conventional Threats

[Amendment to the Statute on Use of Combat Weaponry in the National Defence System were adopted](#) 16 December. They establish mechanisms for the use of force and its limits in case of response to provocations, attacks by armed groups, armed crossing of state border, non-conventional threats. "Developments in geopolitical and security situation oblige us to immediately ensure timely and proper response of the Armed Forces to various hybrid threats", said Juozas Olekas, Minister of Defence.

New Visa Centers in 7 Countries

Lithuania to open visa centers in seven countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, China and Turkey. Visa centers cover wider territory, are better accessible, provide higher quality of services, longer working hours, the possibility to pay in local currencies and with credit cards, all services rendered in one place, have an easy early registration. Visa applicants make a special payment of EUR 20-26, depending on the country. Foreign citizens also will be able to continue to apply for Schengen visas directly to Lithuanian Embassies and Consulates in those countries. Currently, Lithuania has 16 and 13 visa centers in Russia and Ukraine respectively.

Helping Ukraine

The Government of Lithuania allocated EUR 43,700 from its reserve fund for treatment and rehabilitation of Ukrainians injured during the aggression against the country. Lithuanian Foreign Ministry allocated 30 000 EUR as an additional voluntary contribution to advance the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and 20 000 to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. All allocations were done this week. So far Lithuania's government has granted a total of nearly 1 million litas (almost 300.000 EUR) for different types of humanitarian aid to Ukraine. Lithuania's former prime minister Andrius Kubilius will become a member of an international economic monitoring group that will informally advise the Ukrainian government, 17 December BNS reported. "I have no doubt that Lithuania's experience in implementing important reforms will be of great value", Kubilius said.

ECONOMY NEWS



WE SUGGEST

to explore Vilnius Historic Centre

17 December [Vilnius Old Town](#) celebrated 20 years of being a part of the [UNESCO World Heritage](#)



Fastest Growth in Eurozone

According to *Ernst & Young's* (EY) annual Eurozone Economic Growth Forecast, [Lithuania will be the fastest growing eurozone economy next year](#). EY report says that Lithuania is expected to see growth at around 4.5%, the second fastest economy will be Latvia's with 3.4% growth.

Euro Will Boost GDP

Lithuania, a fast-growing, low-debt Baltic state of 3m people, will 1 January become the 19th member of the club <...> [With euro adoption, investors believe that economic policymaking becomes more predictable, *The Economist* wrote](#). What is more, Lithuania's banks and central bank will gain access to ECB funding in an emergency. That should reduce the government's cost of borrowing. Indeed, the central bank predicts a 0.8 percentage-point fall in the government's average interest rate after it adopts the euro. That's not all. The euro zone is Lithuania's biggest trading partner and using the single currency will boost trade further <...>All in all, the bank reckons that euro adoption will boost GDP over the long term by about 1.3%.

Meat Export to US Market

Lithuania's authorities have completed talks on meat exports with the United States. [Lithuanian meat companies will be able to start supplying their products to the US market](#) as early as in the first half of 2015.

CULTURE, TECHNOLOGY

Vilnius - Smartest City

CNN explored the ways companies are thinking smart to thrive in our digitized world, and found [Vilnius to be one of the smartest city on the world by 2025](#). Vilnius- One of Eastern Europe's most upwardly mobile hubs benefits from one of the fastest Internet connections in the world, and recently received an IBM grant as part of the *Smart Vilnius* project. This is earmarked for upgrading transport and its management, as well the development of data-based infrastructure. A new tech park for gaming, big data, and cyber security companies will press its credentials further.

Fastest Wi-Fi in the World

The Business Insider writes about the study, which found that [Lithuania offers the fastest download and upload speeds on public Wi-Fi networks](#). The study has measured and evaluated the quality of public Wi-Fi hotspots in 172 countries around the world.

European Shooting Star

The European Film Promotion (EFP) announced that [Lithuanian actress Aistė Diržiūtė, 23, has been shortlisted among the ten talented newcomer actors selected for the European Shooting Stars 2015](#). Diržiūtė plays Austė in film *The Summer of Sangailė*, which has been selected for the Sundance Film Festival's World Cinema Dramatic Competition, and will be screened as the day one.

UPCOMING EVENTS

28 Dec.	The Christmas Race , Vilnius.	18-21 Mar.	International Baltic Jewelry Exhibition Amber Trip, Vilnius
Until 11 Jan.	Christmas in the Capital , Vilnius.	7-8 May	9 th International Scientific Conference Transbaltica-2015 , Vilnius.

Disclaimer: Information based on BNS, The Economist, The Business Insider, MoD, Lithuanian National Radio and Television, Invest Lithuania, The Lithuania Tribune, Delfi.

