

# Lithuania's European Policy

Understanding the Role of a  
Very Small State in Europe





**”We should have listened to the Baltics on Putin”**, State of the Union address to the Parliament, September 14th, 2022

1

Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia: Critical role in European security

3

Growing influence of Baltic states on EU policies

2

Eventual distance between Baltic states and European institutions



Objective: Explain Lithuania’s voice in the EU and its challenges

## **I) Factors shaping Lithuania's european policy**

- A) Historical Background : between Independence and Resilience
- B) Geopolitical position : Strategic but Vulnerable
- C) An Institutional System subject to Challenges
- D) A necessary Economic Resurrection after Independence

## **II) Lithuania, an advocate for a stronger and more integrated EU**

- A) European Integration of Lithuania : a Success Story
- B) Security : essential condition for Lithuania's survival
- C) Diplomacy and responses to recent challenges : the need of a supra-national level

# **I) Factors shaping Lithuania's european policy**

# A) Historical Background : between Independence and Resilience



14th century

Medieval  
Sovereignty: A major  
European power

1569

Union of Lublin:  
Stability under  
the Polish-  
Lithuanian  
Commonwealth



1795 (third partition)

Russian Occupation:  
Identity suppressed  
but survived

1918

First Independence :  
Short-lived sovereignty



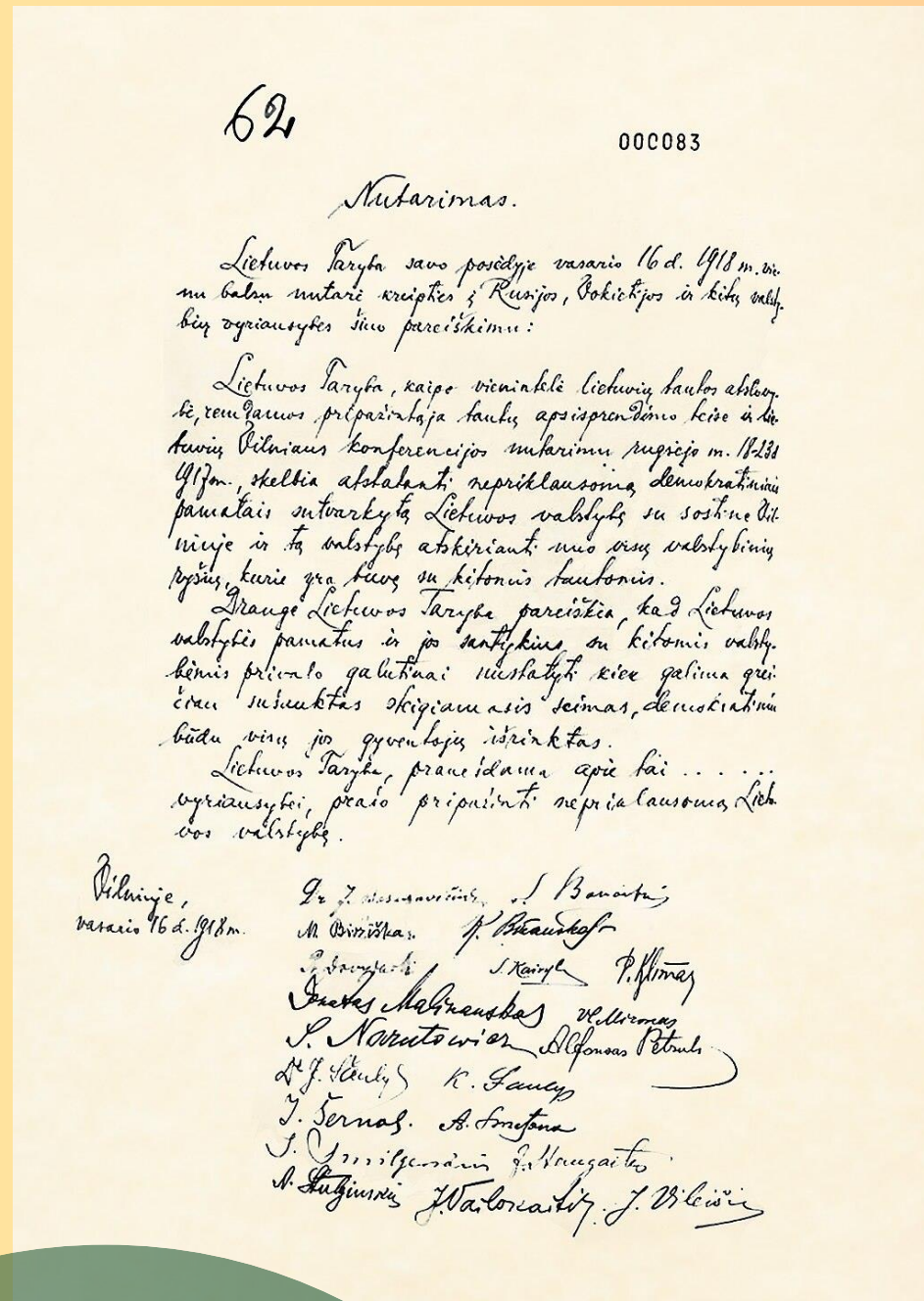
1940-1991

WWII and Soviet  
Annexation: Decades  
under the USSR



# A) Historical Background : between Independence and Resilience

Modern Independence (1990) :  
First Soviet Republic to declare  
its Independence



- 2 things to remember :
- Lithuania maintained a strong cultural identity, symbolizing resistance to foreign domination.
  - Challenges of Transition after the end of USSR : adaptation to European standards.

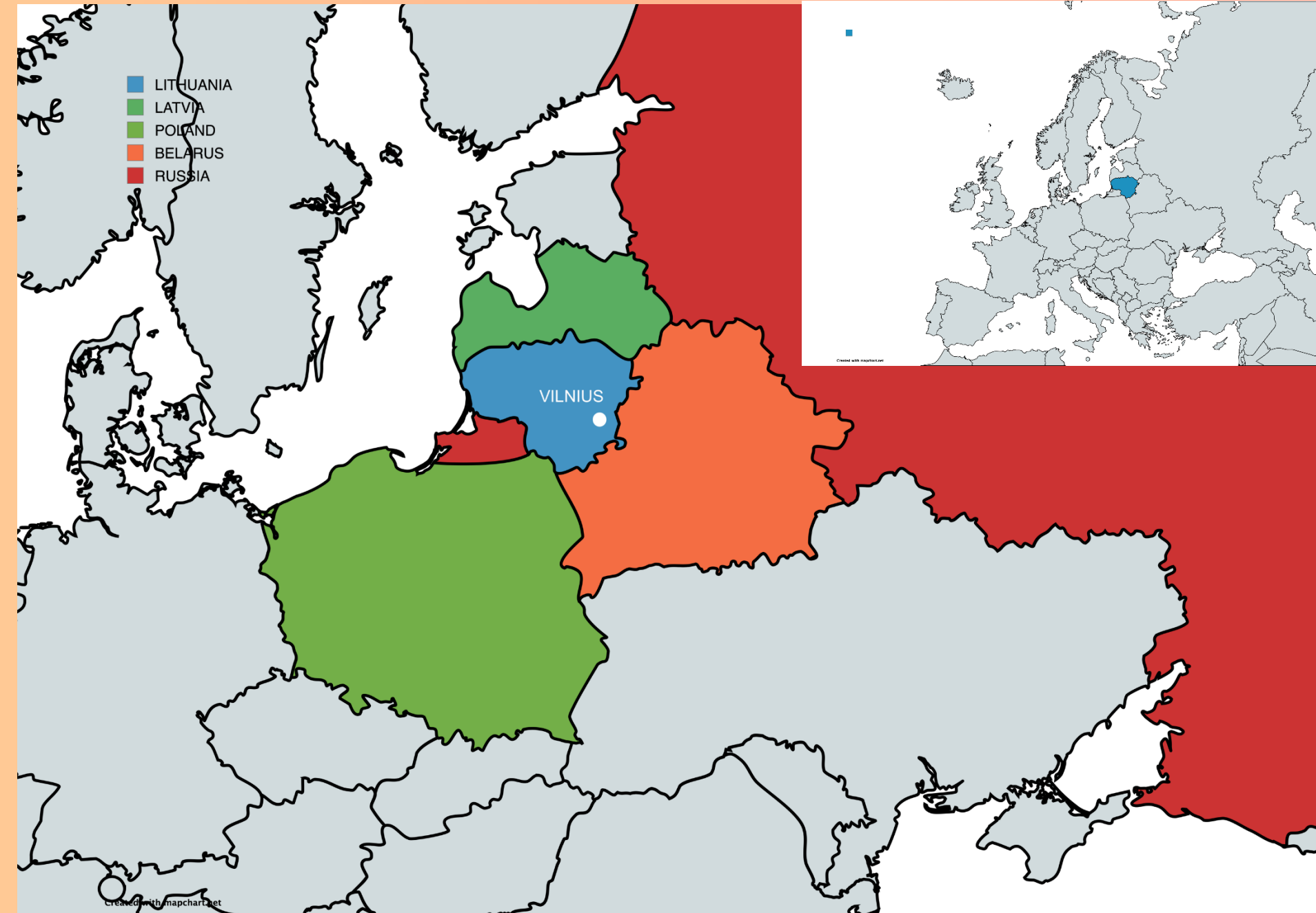
## B) Geopolitical position : Strategic but Vulnerable

Some basic facts :

- one of the Very Small States of the EU
- Population 2.9 million (only 0.6% of total EU population, 7th smallest state in terms of population)
- Bridge between Northern and Eastern Europe

Geographically : caught in a vice

- Limited access to the sea but important and ice-free port of Klaipeda (energy independence, cf. later)
- Latvia: Close ally
- Poland: Historical partner
- Belarus: Aligned with Russia, invasion of Ukraine by Russia via Belarus.
- Russia: military threat and Kaliningrad Oblast

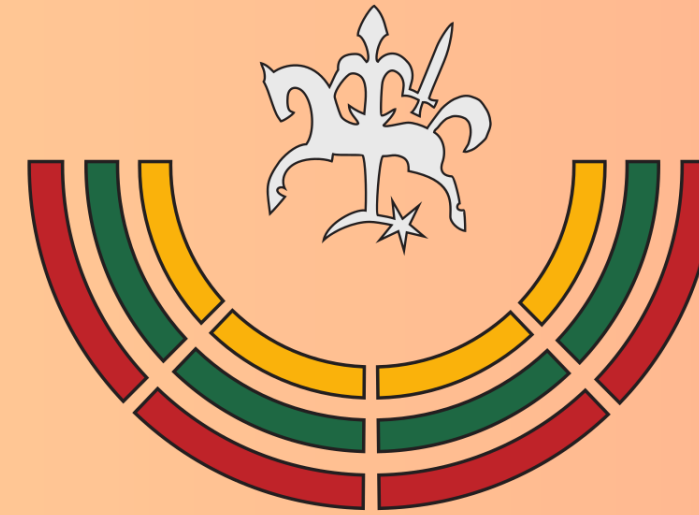


## C) An Institutional System subject to Political Challenges

- Parliamentary system with semi-presidential characteristics
- Seimas : Unicameral Parliament with coalition governance
- Coalition system, culture of compromise
- Multi-party system

### Challenges:

- Frequent government changes (18 in 35 years, must be formed within 15 days after the nomination of the PM according to art. 92C)
- Narrow majorities create instability ("fragmented Seimas" ?)

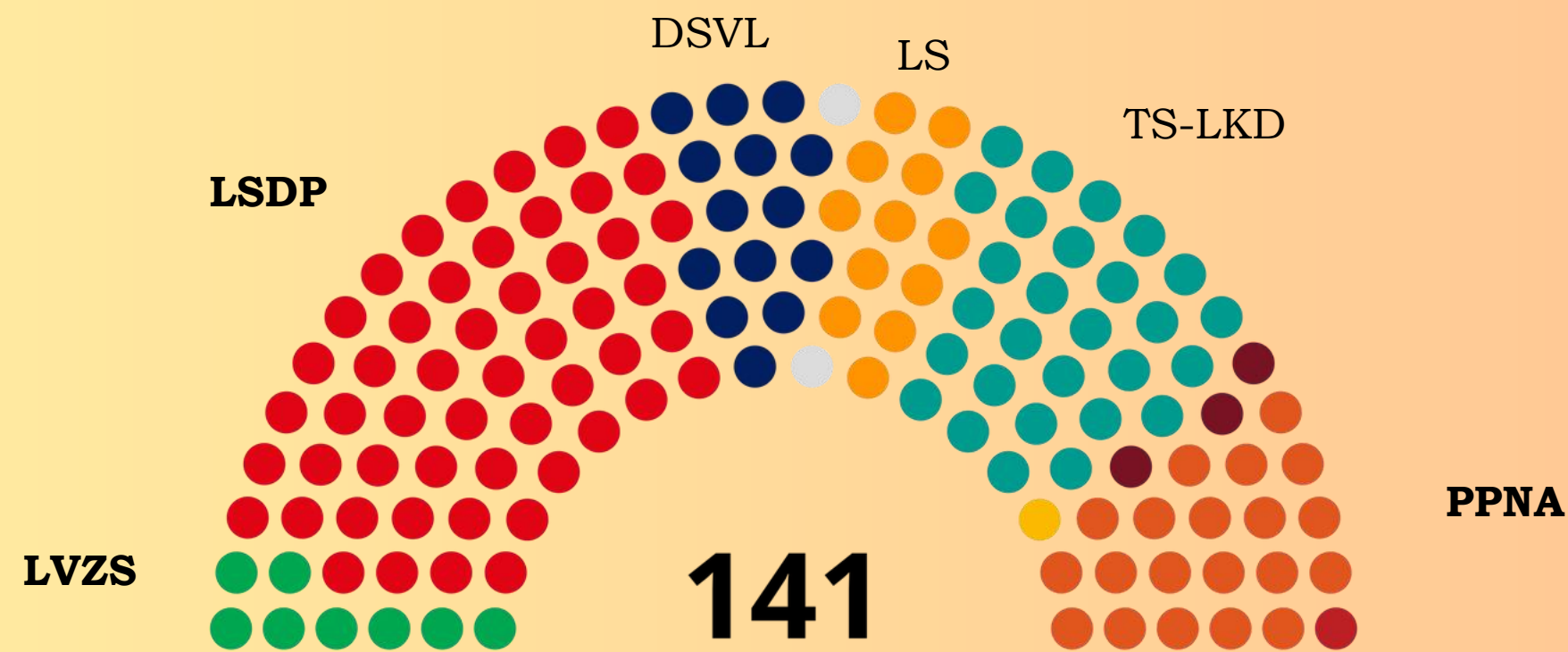


## LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS SEIMAS

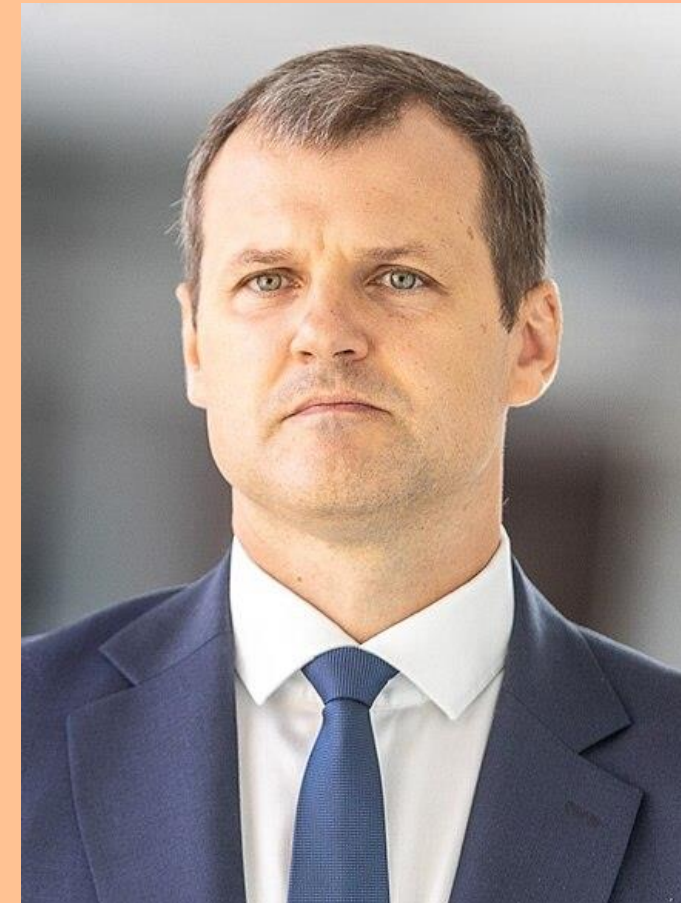




## C) An Institutional System subject to Political Challenges



Actual coalition government : LVZS (greens) + LSDP (social-democrats) + PPNA (populist) = 86 seats out of 141



**Remigijus Zemaitaitis**, Dawn of Nemunas (PPNA, soft euroscepticism) as part of the current coalition



**Gintautas Paluckas**, current PM (Social Democratic Party of Lithuania, LSDP)

## **D) A necessary Economic Resurrection after the Independence**

- GDP per capita is 86% of the EU average, expected to grow by 2.2% in 2024
  - Over 60% of Lithuania's trade is with EU countries (exports + imports, 3-4% more than EU average)
  - Unemployment stands at 6.9% (EU average 6.1%)
- Important economic effects after joining the EU (growth of 8% in 2007 just before the subprime crisis)

## **II) Lithuania, an advocate for a stronger and more integrated EU**

# A) European Integration of Lithuania : a Success Story



**1995:** EU Membership Application Submitted

**1999:** Start of EU Accession Negotiations

**2003:** Referendum: 91,9% Support for EU Membership (highest rate after Slovakia)

**2004:** Official EU Membership (May 1, 2004)

**2007:** Schengen Area Entry

**2015:** Adoption of the Euro

Low euroscepticism, even in the European Parliament :

## Résultats des élections européennes de 2024 en Lituanie, par groupe

En nombre de sièges.

■ Verts/ALE ■ S&D ■ RE ■ PPE ■ CRE ■ NI ■ Divers

2024

11



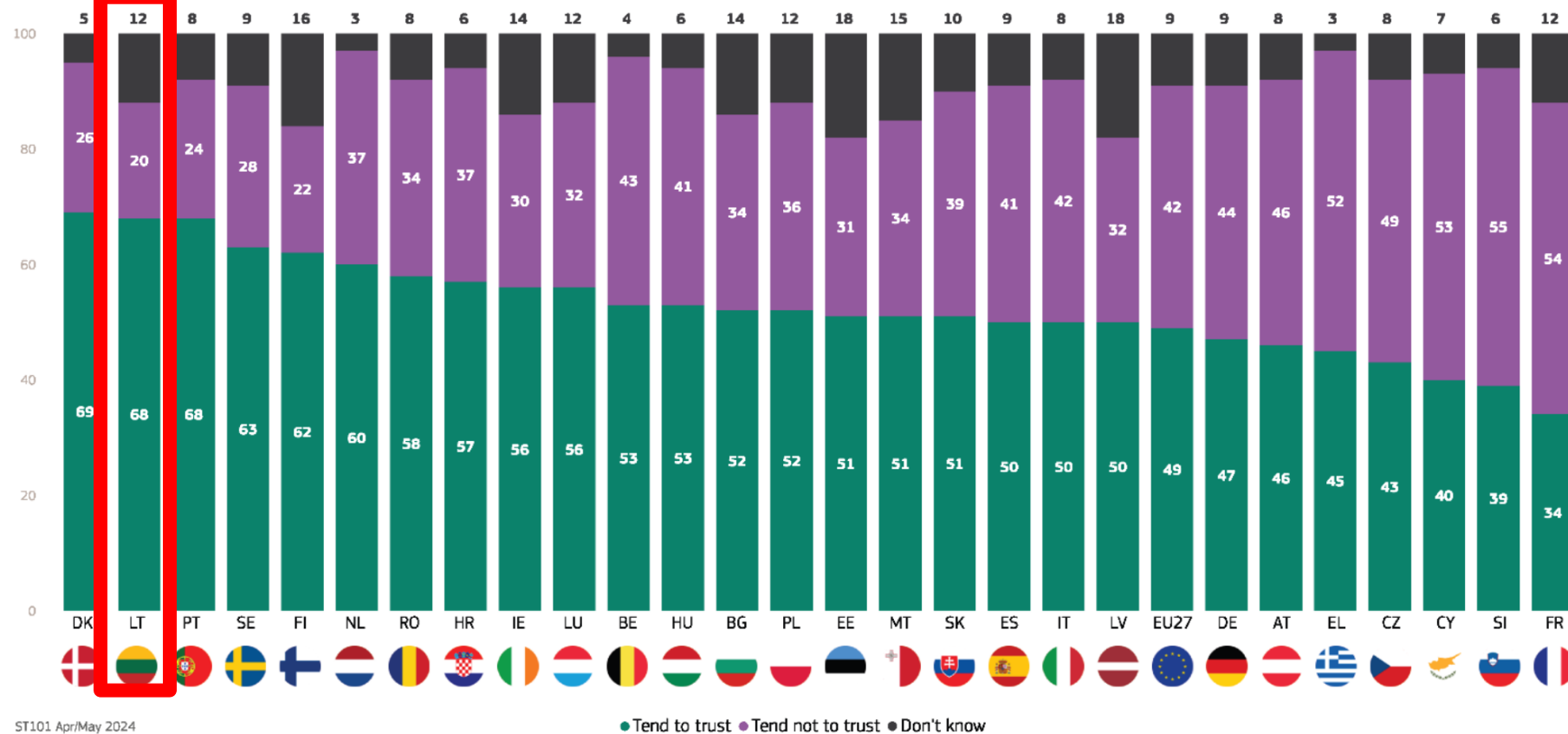
# A) European Integration of Lithuania : a Success Story

QA11.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?  
 (OUR COUNTRY) could better face the future outside the EU (%)



		EU27	AT	MT	PT	BG	ES	IE	LT	BE	HU	FR	IT	NL	SK	DK	HR	RO	SE	PL	FI	CZ	DE	LU	EE	EL	LV	SI	CY
Total 'Agree'	Apr/May 2024	30	41	26	24	35	23	20	19	34	32	31	42	15	24	11	41	39	21	47	13	32	20	20	21	27	21	37	35
	Δ Oct/Nov 2023	▲2	▲7	▲6	▲6	▲5	▲5	▲4	▲4	▲3	▲3	▲2	▲2	▲2	▲2	▲1	▲1	▲1	▲1	=	=	▼1	▼1	▼1	▼2	▼2	▼3	▼4	▼7
Total 'Disagree'	Apr/May 2024	63	50	68	70	46	71	73	76	63	62	57	51	83	66	87	51	55	78	45	82	61	73	74	69	66	68	58	59
	Δ Oct/Nov 2023	▼1	▼6	▼7	▼5	▼8	▼4	▼5	▼1	▼2	▼3	▼3	▼1	▼2	▼3	▼1	▼1	▲3	=	▼1	▲1	▲1	▲2	=	▲4	=	▲3	▲3	▲8
Don't know	Apr/May 2024	7	9	6	6	19	6	7	5	3	6	12	7	2	10	2	8	6	1	8	5	7	7	6	10	7	11	5	6
	Δ Oct/Nov 2023	▼1	▼1	▲1	▼1	▲3	▼1	▲1	▼3	▼1	=	▲1	▼1	=	▲1	=	=	▼4	▼1	▲1	▼1	=	▼1	▲1	▼2	▲2	=	▲1	▼1

QA6.10. How much trust do you have in certain institutions? For each of the following institutions, do you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it? :-The European Union (%)



Same phenomenon for the attitude towards the common currency :

Eurobarometer 2013 (before the accession to Eurozone) : 40% of the Lithuanian population in favor, while 49% opposed it

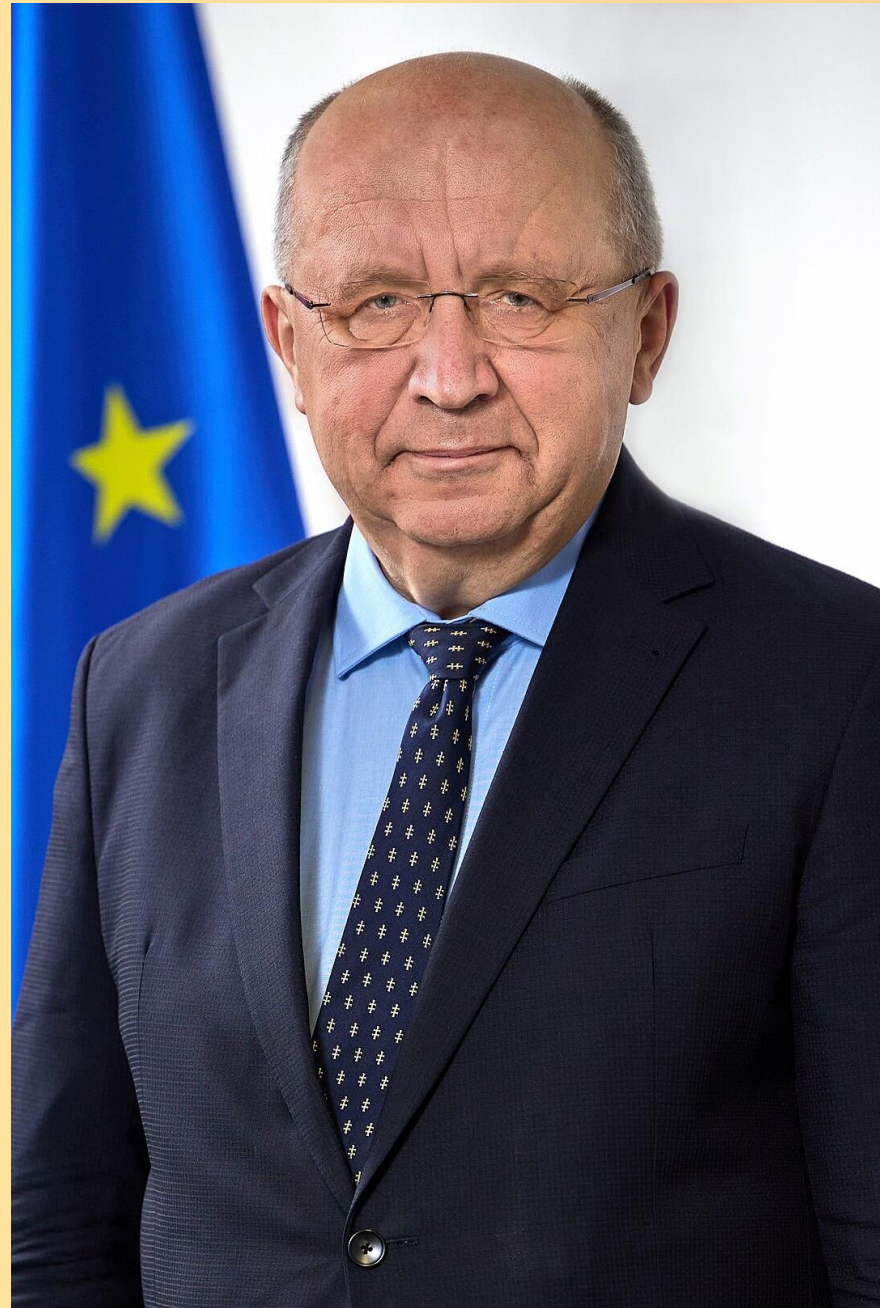
Eurobarometer 2024 : 78% in favor (like the Eurozone average), 16% against it (average 15% in Eurozone)

## B) Security : essential condition for Lithuania's survival

- NATO Membership (2004) : the target of 2% of national GDP for Defense
- Lithuanian response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine
- Support for Ukraine: Financial and humanitarian aid
- Energy Independence: *Independence*, First EU country to cut off Russian gas (2022)
- Regional Cooperation: Strong Baltic partnerships



## **B) Security : essential condition for Lithuania's survival**



**Andrius Kubilius**, *Commissioner responsible for defense and space (former Lithuanian prime minister)*



**Kaja Kallas**, *Vice President and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (former Estonian prime minister)*

# C) Diplomacy and responses to recent challenges : the need of a supra-national level





# C) Diplomacy and responses to recent challenges : the need of a supra-national level

The case of the Taiwanese representative office in Vilnius (2021)



## C) Diplomacy and responses to recent challenges : the need of a supra-national level

- Need of a supranational response to recent events
- Several regional organisations for cooperation :
  - Nordic-Baltic Cooperation (1992)
  - Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS, 1992):  
Regional cooperation
- Baltic way : symbol of unity



# Conclusion



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