

Remarks by President Donald Tusk after his meeting with President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė

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We just had, with President Grybauskaitė, a very good meeting, in preparation of next week's informal European Council.

We discussed in particular the future budget of the EU, a topic which of course your President knows very well.

The future budget of the EU will be a particular challenge to negotiate this time, in the context of Brexit. Not only because the UK's departure will lead to a financing gap. But also because the UK referendum has made us realise even more, the need to strengthen our efforts on key challenges. By which I mean migration, defence, and the freedom of movement, especially the mobility of young people. And these new priorities will require additional money.

Of course the main reason for my trip to Vilnius is tomorrow's celebrations of the hundred years of the restoration of Lithuanian independence. Being here today is, for me – as the President of the European Council, but also as a Pole, as a historian and, first and foremost, as your friend – particularly important. It is no coincidence that when I became Prime Minister of Poland, I decided to pay my first foreign visit to Vilnius.

Today, Lithuania stands tall, as dignified and determined as the white Vytis on your country's great coat of arms. It is a symbol of stable growth and political predictability. But in the decades following the Declaration of the 16th of February 1918, your history was turbulent. And for a long time you have had to rely, almost entirely, on yourselves. This is why no-one can lecture Lithuanians about the difference between declaring independence and winning and keeping it.

Independence in today's world means having your own voice at the table, where countries face common challenges and threats together. So today, the best guarantee of Lithuania's independence is its participation in international organisations: the United Nations, NATO, and of course the European Union. In fact, only by being united can European nations be sovereign and free of dependency on the great superpowers. Lithuania understands this all too well, and that is why it has always played an active, and constructive, role. Your

national motto could also be the motto of the whole European community: "Let unity flourish", *Vienybė težydi*.

Thank you. *Ačiū*

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