

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DATE IN LITHUANIA'S HISTORY

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The 16 February is the most significant date in Lithuania's history. In 1918, an independent democratically-run modern civic state was established, together with the restoration of the statehood tradition cherished in the ancient Lithuania (1253-1795).

On 16 February 2018, we celebrated the birth of a modern Lithuania. This date is like a bridge between the old Lithuania born on 6 July 1253 and the new independent Lithuania restored on 11 March 1990. Had it not been for the 16 February, there would have been no events of 11 of March, nor the subsequent success story.

In the lead-up to the Centennial of the Restoration of the State (hereinafter – the Centennial), the past is seen not only as a reason to celebrate the important anniversary but also as an inspiration to reflect the historical significance of the past for today and the relevance of the issues of today for the past, i.e. the centennial achievements of the state and its people, and our ambitions for the next centennial which is fast approaching.

The Centennial of the new Lithuania is a success story. The main achievements are as follows: Lithuania has become a player of the European and world history, with its modern civil society aware of the importance of freedom and the responsibility that goes with it, and with new emerging vistas for action for the Lithuanian state and its people.

Building of the modern Lithuanian state in 1918 was based on the principles of the equality of all, as well as the freedom and prosperity, and this is why all freedom loving people of the country and Lithuanians living abroad, for the first time in the history of Lithuania, became the creators of their state, and later on, during the years of the occupation – the guardians of its tradition. The heroes of the restored Lithuania are thousands of those of different nationalities, religions and social groups having built and safeguarded the tradition of the Lithuanian statehood and national identity.

They include volunteers, farmers, teachers, architects and engineers, athletes, aviators, clergy of various denominations, Righteous among the Nations, freedom fighters, dissidents that challenged the Soviet regime, people that created the liberation movement Sąjūdis, and the Lithuanians living abroad that preserved the idea of statehood and fostered the Lithuanian traditions.

The hero of today is each individual living in Lithuania and each Lithuanian living abroad, who actively contributes to the building of Lithuania of the twenty-first century and knows that his daily efforts have an impact not only on the present but also on the future of the history of the Lithuanian state and the nation.

Apart from the most important symbol of the Centennial, the national flag, we have our state symbol Vytis, bridging the two Lithuanias – the old and the new.

The Centennial has revealed our capacity to draw the best from the depths of the past for the needs of the present; we are always ready to give our responsible and often times hard efforts for the bettering of our state and the people; we stand for our freedom, when this fundamental value is threatened; we have the vigour to build not only our own but also the European and world history. These things serve as the basis for us being proud of the achievements of the restored Lithuania, while inspiring us to work for the present and be hopeful about the future.