



**SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA**

**RESOLUTION NO XIV-72  
ON THE PROGRAMME OF THE EIGHTEENTH GOVERNMENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA**

11 December 2020  
Vilnius

In pursuance of Articles 67(7) and 92(5) of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and having considered the Programme of the Eighteenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, has resolved:

**Article 1.**

To approve the programme of the eighteenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania presented by Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania Ingrida Šimonytė (as appended).

SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS

Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen

APPROVED  
by Resolution No XIV-72  
of the Seimas of the  
Republic of Lithuania  
of 11 December 2020

## **PROGRAMME OF THE EIGHTEENTH GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA**

### **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION**

1. As a result of the world-wide pandemic, climate change, globalisation, ageing population and technological advance, Lithuania and the entire world have been changing faster than ever before. However, these global changes have led not only to uncertainty and anxiety about the future but also to a greater sense of togetherness and growing trust in each other and in the state, thus offering hope for a better future.

2. This year, we have celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the restoration of Lithuania's independence. The state that we have all longed for and taken part in its rebuilding has reached its maturity. The time has come for mature political culture and mature decisions too. The time has come for securing what the Lithuanian society has always held high: openness, responsibility, equal treatment and respect for all. It is only by practising these principles daily that we will be able to strengthen people's trust in the state and its democratic system and better respond to the needs of society as a whole and of its each individual group.

3. This Government of the Republic of Lithuania is assuming office at a troubling time for both our country as well as the entire world. The COVID-19 (coronavirus infection) pandemic has caused a unique global health crisis and has led to the most painful losses - human lives. The long-term health effects of the pandemic are not yet known or studied. COVID-19 has already dealt an unprecedented blow to global economic development, and due to the renewed outbreak, we are still unable to predict potential future consequences for the economies of the world.

4. The existing circumstances call not only for swift actions. The prevailing uncertainty (we are unaware of how long the virus will last and what its extent and ultimate impact will be) necessitates us to take a fresh look at the road we have covered so far and open up a new page towards progress, grounded on knowledge, forecasts and evidence.

5. We have identified key priorities for our national progress, which will help achieve a major turning point, strengthen our country and its people and make us more resilient to a variety of potential threats, whether it be a health crisis, climate change or other undefined influences.

6. We are committed to achieve a major economic breakthrough by shifting our focus on higher economic added value than is currently the case. We will promote growth in labour productivity and foreign direct investments, we will go further in digitisation and implement the public policy for open data. We will enable friendly environment conducive to jobs and business growth. We will take active efforts in promoting the scale of research and innovation, which will, among other priorities, focus on finding solutions to globally emerging trends.

7. We will adhere to the principles of nature-friendly policy, make decisions for responsible consumption, promote public participation in the development of environmental protection activities and environmental decision making. We will strengthen Lithuania's energy independence and develop the circular economy.

8. Only a trust-based society knows that in times of difficulties it can always rely for help, and that the desire to be full-fledged members of society will not be prevented by physical or other circumstances. Only such a society can be strong.

9. The pandemic has proven that none of us have an immunity against the perils of today, but it has also shown how much we can do for each other. In the light of this, we are committed to facilitate successful fulfilment of individual potential and experience and create an environment where everyone will feel valued and important. No one should be at risk of exclusion, and no senior person should be afraid of ageing. We will work to give persons with disabilities opportunities for self-sufficiency and education and to create favourable working conditions for them. We know that a society is only as strong as its weakest link.

10. The long-term progress of our state depends on the education system and its ability to adapt to the needs of a changing environment. Together with all political forces, teachers, parents, students and society at large, we will work out and put into practice a national education agreement, the main goal of which is to ensure equal opportunities for every Lithuanian child to achieve the best education regardless of their place of residence or social background.

11. The pandemic has brought to light the shortcomings of the existing health system, while showing at the same time the direction we should take to ensure the quality and accessibility of health services for all. We are committed to create a nationwide crisis-proof healthcare system that is convenient, accessible and of high-quality for all, without discrimination however to private health care providers. We will pay much attention to mental health, focusing in the first place on prevention means and programmes so as to avoid long-term negative consequences to health. Our goal is longer life expectancy and that people can enjoy as long as possible a healthy, high-quality and full-fledged life.

12. It is important for us that people living in different parts of Lithuania have equal opportunities to participate or be involved in cultural life, and that they have access to the works created by our culture community. We are committed to reduce the cultural gap between cities and regions. We will boost international and national competitiveness of culture and the creative industries, and we will promote the development of community culture, pay special attention to

regional cultural education and advance the inter-cultural dialogue, diversity and the involvement of ethnic communities and youth in cultural processes. We will encourage people to create and consume high-quality cultural content, take care of the cultural and national heritage of our country and foster civic awareness.

13. We are committed to a sustainable and responsible financial policy. We will agree from the outset on the scope of public sector obligations as regards public services, infrastructure, defence, the green deal and economic transformation. Our public service obligations and public revenues cannot move in the opposite directions; therefore, we will discuss potential substantial tax modifications only after the consolidation of the desired model, i.e. in the process of deliberation of its funding.

14. The underlying aim for our regional policy is to provide people with a possibility of building their own way of life regardless of where they live. Well-functioning infrastructure, efficient mobility, job, education, training and entrepreneurship opportunities and access to welfare services in the regions will contribute to this end. We will give more powers to self-government and delegate more functions that are currently performed centrally. We will pay more attention to attracting additional investments to the regions.

15. Competent, responsible and professional public sector employees create great value for the entire society and play a particular role in achieving all the goals set by the state. We are committed to create a high-quality and efficient system of public administration, which will enable attracting, retaining and motivating the best professionals in the public sector and to improve the quality of public services. We believe that streamlined functions, a strategic approach to digitisation of service-oriented public sector and red tape elimination will also add to public sector credibility.

### **General principles for Government operation**

16. Government activities and goals can be implemented in a variety of ways. We believe that the method, i.e. how and under which principles the Government implements its programme, is no less important than the tasks and commitments themselves. Our Government pledges to follow these principles:

#### **Open data**

17. Lithuania has a commitment to publish public data collected and gathered by state institutions for secondary use. Unfortunately, despite investment in technical platforms and publication of datasets, this commitment has failed so far to come to full fruition.

18. We undertake to make open data a key element in Government decision-making and communication. We will seek to make it serve as the basis in judging the necessity for decisions, in proposing decision mechanisms and in measuring outcomes.

19. Where possible, the Government will make and interpret decisions based on open data. We will ensure timely and orderly communication of open data to citizens and businesses. This would enable people, businesses and scientists to respond quickly and effectively to emerging challenges and to closely participate in decision-making.

20. For the purpose of this commitment, we hope to bring together different groups in society for dialogue, as data (i.e. factual information) will always serve as a baseline for dialogue and consensus should differences arise over one or another issue. Hence, we trust that a more extensive presentation and use of data will serve as the first base and engine for a meaningful dialogue between the Government and the population.

### **Accountability**

21. People generally tend to have a negative perception of the activities of state institutions, they do not want to know their targets and doubt their results. The reports published by state institutions are too focused on processes, with little elucidation of the changes and results achieved. They are often written in a complicated language that is difficult to understand, and its data are unclear. One of the reasons for this is the undefined institutional public accountability and its principles. The development of a clear standard for public accountability and communication will help institutions to report in a comparable and understandable manner, which, we hope, will increase institutional credibility in the eyes of the public.

22. We will make the Government accountability clearer and more accessible to the public, and the involvement of society and its groups in decision-making, open communication and cooperation will add to greater public accountability of the Government.

### **Discussion- and knowledge-based decisions**

23. In today's ever-changing world it is impossible for the Government to know the answers to all the questions and predict exactly how one or another solution will work. We are committed to make knowledge-based policies and give a systematic scrutiny to legislative proposals. We will have a more active cooperation with the scientific community.

24. Understandably, in many areas, legislation is an ongoing process, and it is not always simple to involve representatives from stakeholder groups, as it happens sometimes that there is no one to represent a stakeholder group of the required wide-ranging interest.

25. We intend to gradually build a continuous and ongoing legislative and deliberative process. A regularly updated document reflecting the views of individual ministries on the current

situation in the area under their regulation, data-based assessments, problems and their solutions, and planned legislative actions would serve as its axis. Such an open document would allow society and its groups to understand what competent officials think, what actions can be expected and how the existing situation is seen. Such a document would provide an opportunity for stakeholders to engage constructively in discussions: to make suggestions, debate problems, bring them forward or have them listed and to discuss measures and their consequences.

### **Cooperation**

26. Today's problems are wide-ranging and often mean cooperation between several institutions or external organisations as the case may be. Often, cross-sectoral cooperation seems to be failing in the preparation of proposals and decision-making. We are committed to develop ways to involve as many stakeholders as possible in these processes, both internally and externally.

27. The Government will work as a single organisation not as separate institutions. Objectively speaking, we are unlikely to find at least one Government commitment or objective that could be implemented by a single ministry from start to finish, as many decisions cover several sectors, they involve the need for technological adjustment or upgrading, require responsible legal expertise, evidence-based analysis and involvement of stakeholders or the population. Cooperation-based joint work by the Government and the Parliament is of particular importance.

28. Cooperation, involvement and responsibility for the work of the entire Government are the values that we declare and uphold.

### **Reconciliation of interests**

29. The state belongs to us all. The Government implements the goals set for the state. It must reconcile interests of groups in society without giving preference to some of them over the others. We want everyone in our country to feel included, valued and having equal opportunities. Different groups in society have different concerns and needs. Seniors worry about the availability and quality of services. Young people tend to care more about their education and employment opportunities. It is important for us that the interests of all groups in society are addressed and that no one feels left behind. Human rights and dignity are values that will guide us as we work towards the expectations of every citizen and make decisions thereof. We will seek that decisions made by this Government are seen as fair in respect of each member of society.

### **Building reputation**

30. Until now, Lithuania has been shaping its image with the help of short-term measures, which were often generated behind closed doors and presented to the public as an end result. It is

not surprising therefore that it was not always easy for image makers to obtain a more positive local public sentiment towards the new nation brand or have better results in international awareness of the country. Our goal is not a fleeting impression but a long-term good reputation of the country.

31. We are committed to launch long-term policies to strengthen and enhance the country's reputation. These measures must build on actual achievements and be consistent with the long-term goals across various policies. Understanding that each of us contributes to the reputation of our country, we will involve various groups in society in the planning process. Our country's reputation largely rests on achievements in science, economy, culture and sports. It is together that we will decide what is most important for us, how we see and want to see ourselves and how we want to be seen by the world.

### **Government's open communication**

32. Our Government's communication aims to provide the public with timely, impartial, comprehensible and reliable information about the Government and its activities. Dissemination of information must be effective and consistent.

33. Reliability. We will build and maintain trust by opening data, providing the public with reliable and understandable information, also through consultation and collaboration. We are convinced that it is important for the public and other stakeholders not only to know that a decision has been made but also to understand its essence and the reasons behind it.

34. Clarity and transparency. The Government will communicate openly and transparently about its activities and decisions. Public institutions will provide information in a way that makes it easy to find and use. The Government will provide concise and accurate information in a clear, specific and comprehensible manner. We will seek to have, through information provided, a clear picture of Government activities and the goals it pursues.

35. Openness. The Government has to make difficult decisions; and we will look for ways to communicate and explain such issues to the public through an open and inclusive process. We believe that an open and frank dialogue and appropriately presented information will help the public to better understand the reasons behind the decisions.

### **Programme outline**

36. Government priorities take the form of missions, which often span across the competence of several ministries. The problems we seek to address and the objectives we want to achieve require a coordinated *in-corpore* effort by individual institutions and the Government as a whole. Although the term in office of the eighteenth Government draws to a close in 2024, the programme provides for success indicators that reach beyond this date, some of them are expected

to be delivered in a decade, others in as far as 2050, as it is the case with the green deal mission, once the work pertaining to it is launched successfully.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **MISSION: LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR ALL IN LITHUANIA**

#### **SECTION ONE**

#### **RATIONALE AND SUCCESS INDICATORS**

37. Economic, demographic and technological change and Lithuania's aspiration to become a knowledge-based, high-value generating, creative and innovative country requires investment in quality education for all. Our source of lasting competitive advantage is knowledge, which is brought to business and the public sector by excellently educated and creative people, who see the new challenges prompted by the changing world as new opportunities.

38. Not only does the deteriorating education situation in Lithuania pose challenges in the long run but it is already now creating social and economic problems that hardly lend themselves to trivial solutions. Access to the best education and fulfilment of the potential of our children is largely dependent on geographical and social opportunities. Lithuanian learners' achievements are among the lowest compared to other countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). As a result of the academic achievement gap between general education schools in cities and regions, it is much more difficult for children living in rural areas to pursue prospective education. To compare with cities where pre-school education is accessible to almost all the children, the coverage of pre-school education in rural municipalities is only 14%. The results of the 2018 International Student Assessment (PISA) show that in almost all countries (including Lithuania), 15-year-olds who have had pre-school education for more than a year tend to attain higher results compared to their peers who have not.

39. The mission of our Government in the field of education is to create education conditions where quality education for all is a practical objective and not a mere figure on paper. We will strive to ensure that every child, regardless of their place of residence, social background or special needs, has equal access to a prospective education. This will require a long-term national consensus on changes in education. We will discuss with the education community and political parties the direction in which the education system should move so that it is capable to respond to current challenges and meet the needs and individual abilities of each learner, and to ensure equal opportunities for all to seek the best education in Lithuania. Once agreed, the long-term education goals should remain intact irrespective of changes in governments or individual policy initiatives. We must ensure consistency and continuity as regards changes.

40. Our goals:

40.1. early childhood education of high quality and accessible to all;

40.2. all children, regardless of their place of residence and socio-economic background, have level playing field and access to quality education;

40.3. world-class science and studies;

40.4. education system capable to provide skills required by a modern economy and society;

40.5. sports system promoting physical activity, inclusion, and high performance.

41. 2024 success indicators:

41.1. All children living in families with needs for social services will attend pre-school education from the age of three.

41.2. The total of 1.5% of the gross domestic product (GDP) will be allocated to research and development (R&D), including 0.75% of the GDP in state appropriations (to compare with the current 0.88% for R&D that includes 0.55% for higher education and general government sector).

41.3. At least 35% of pupils will seek to acquire secondary education in vocational education establishments (26% in 2019).

41.4. At least 80% of employees will do a job corresponding to their qualification level and field (to compare with 65.1% of job corresponding to the qualification level and the same share of job corresponding to the field).

42. 2030 success indicators:

42.1. All children from the age of two will have access to pre-school education.

42.2. The proportion of pupils attaining at least PISA level 2 (out of 6) will increase to 95% (currently 86.1%); the proportion of pupils attaining PISA level 5-6 will increase to 20% (currently 11.1%).

42.3. At least one Lithuanian university will be among the first 300 of world's top universities (QS 300) in QS World University Rankings (now 423rd).

42.4. At least 50% of the population will be able to solve problems aided by technology (skills will reach at least level 1 under the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), it is now 25.5%).

## **SECTION TWO**

### **GOVERNMENT PRIORITY PROJECTS**

#### **Project: Quality early education accessible to all**

43. This project is to provide conditions for all the children to properly prepare for school. We will pay special attention to children living in families in need of social services, who do not have the opportunity to attend kindergarten due to the unfavourable social environment or lack of transportation services. We will pay more attention to early identification of a problem and search

for educational solutions, instead of focusing only on childcare. Together with municipalities, we will ensure that a novel and inclusive early education infrastructure is put in place.

44. Key initiatives:

44.1. All children will have access to kindergartens. In cooperation with municipalities, we will work to ensure that all children have access to kindergartens and that municipalities arrange for their transportation to get to pre-schools. We will withdraw financial incentives preventing sending a child to a kindergarten, we will link the child's money to attendance of a child from a family with a need for social services. We will promote the development of mobile kindergartens, family kindergartens, adjustment of infrastructure for education on the premises of rural communities, apartment buildings or office buildings in the cities and we will support other initiatives to open new kindergartens in non-conventional premises.

44.2. We will prepare for the transition to an early yet flexible education. We will provide for a possibility of two-year pre-school child education. We will adapt the environment, content and modern forms of education for younger children, while strengthening their social and cultural competencies and skills of teamwork through games. We will link pre-school, pre-primary and primary education programmes in terms of curriculum.

44.3. Greater attention to education not just childcare. Pre-school education will focus on the early identification of problems and talents and the search for educational solutions not just on childcare. We will strengthen pre-school and pre-primary teacher training and development programmes. To this end, we will work with higher education providers to enable teachers to improve their qualifications and gain higher education. We will agree that pre-school educators must have a higher pedagogical education. To this end, a reasonable transition period will be set.

44.4. System for monitoring and strengthening of pre-school education establishments. We will put in place a system for monitoring and evaluating performance of pre-school education establishments, which will allow for early identification of problems, timely intervention where needed and quality pre-school education.

44.5. Inclusion of children with special needs. From the earliest stages in education, we will strive to help children, who need a highly individualised learning plan, to have the most appropriate education possible. We will ensure easier integration of these children into the general education process in schools and society. We will help pre-school and pre-primary education providers to work with children with special needs through the optimal size of learner groups, staff preparedness to work with these children, and the recruitment of the required teaching and other staff. We will also seek to respond to the needs of talented children who often need extra attention.

**Project: Good school for all and modern education curriculum**

45. This project aims at reducing disparities in education outcomes between schools, particularly between urban and regional schools. The revised general education programmes will

aim at educating independent, creative, civic-minded and critically thinking citizens. We will strive to ensure that children with special needs can attend general education schools and that each child is noticed and individual learning needs are met as much as possible. We will agree on performance and quality education standards, offer real help to underperforming schools that fail to meet community expectations as regards outcomes. Together with the municipalities, we will revise the school network and create a new generation of schools, which will drive change in education.

#### 46. Key initiatives:

46.1. Agreement on performance and quality education standard for all schools in Lithuania. Not only will the standard provide for requirements for performance and quality education and access to non-formal education but also for the main parameters for strengthening the school network (a better teacher-pupils ratio, elimination of combined classes, number of class sets, controlled number of administrative and maintenance staff, etc.). We will review the model for the funding of general education to focus on the efficiency of the use of funds, quality education in all schools and greater autonomy of education providers. We will revise and simplify the system for school evaluation and self-assessment. We will expand mobile teams of consultants and provide real help to schools that are struggling. We will start with the lowest rated schools and turn their successful change into a permanent programme to address problems related to performance and quality education in under-performing schools. To respond to diversity in education and needs of different groups in society, we will treat equally all education providers, regardless of their activities or forms of ownership.

46.2. New generation schools - millennium high schools (gymnasiums). These high schools (gymnasiums) will aim to bridge the academic achievement gap between urban and regional schools so that every child has all the possibilities of accessing quality modern education. These schools will recruit the best performing teachers and the most talented teacher training graduates, and they will have the required modern education infrastructure (STEAM laboratories, non-formal education facilities and universal design). The already existing similar regional high schools (gymnasiums) will be strengthened and their infrastructure will be improved, and new high schools (gymnasiums) will be opened in those regions that have no such possibilities. These schools will be tasked to act as an engine and catalyst for regional change in education. All the pupils of the region will be able to use the infrastructure and extracurricular and other services available at these schools, while teachers from schools nearby and students-future teachers will have access to the mentoring centre. We will compile a financial programme for millennium high schools (gymnasiums), which will include funding for infrastructure (renovation or new construction), development of non-formal education, funding basket for teacher professional development, and consultations for principals of high schools (gymnasiums).

46.3. General curriculum attuned to 21st century challenges. In the first place, due attention must be paid to the mastery of a subject and its thorough understanding, to guidance on specific

reasoning skills across disciplines and to the development of independent thinking. Second, to address real life problems, it is imperative to seek real integration of the curriculum. This will facilitate full development of key competencies. The introduction of the revised curriculum will be purposeful and consistent, and we will draw up a clear action plan. For the school and the family to work in tandem, we will take efforts to make education curriculum changes and methodical changes understandable and acceptable to parents, and to have growing public consensus on the vector of educational development. In parallel with the curriculum, we will revise the achievement evaluation system to measure actual individual maturity and to identify learning gaps at an early stage. The basis of a curriculum is linguistic, numerical, life-science, information technology (IT), financial, cultural and civic skills. We will ensure that curricula pay sufficient attention to civic and cultural education, creativity, social and emotional competencies and health, including mental health and sex education. The scope of the financial allocation (basket) for non-formal education will enlarge so as to have 80% of children attending at least one non-formal education activity.

46.4. Inclusive education in every school. We will draw up a plan for the consistent introduction of inclusive education in Lithuanian schools. Each child will be noticed in the classroom and individual learning needs will be met as much as possible. We will support education and strengthening of potential of foreign-returned children, children with special needs and talented children. We will reduce the number of learners in the classrooms and/or increase the number of special educators (teaching assistants), particularly in the classes that have children with special needs. Separate funding will be provided for education support specialists, special educators, teaching assistants, psychologists and other specialists. Creating suitable conditions for educators to carry out inclusive education and raising their competence will be among the priorities in this field.

46.5. Strong skills in reading and mathematics. Considering the wealth of research on the importance of reading for academic success and its long-lasting benefits, we will initiate a multi-annual reading promotion programme covering early and general education, aimed at better reading outcomes as measured against international benchmarks. We will apply the same model in mathematics to achieve better outcomes.

46.6. Lithuanian education schools abroad. We will promote the establishment and strengthening of new Lithuanian non-formal education schools in different countries across the world, focusing particularly on those countries that have large Lithuanian communities. We will draw up curricula to correspond to language proficiency levels, learners' age and language skills. We will work out a reference framework for evaluation and self-assessment of the levels of language proficiency for those learning in Lithuanian education schools to link it with the system in Lithuania.

46.7. Activities of education authorities. We will streamline and strengthen the activities of authorities involved in the formulation and implementation of education policy. We will clearly define the functions and responsibilities of all the public authorities involved in the processes of

the formulation and implementation of education policy. We will work together to make the National Agency for Education (Agency) to operate as a centre of excellence for drafting and implementing evidence-based innovative education policy solutions aimed at successful teaching (learning) and quality education. We will see to it that the Agency becomes an expert institution that carries out research and analysis in national and international education, brings together best analysts and researchers and performs high-level monitoring of the education system (data collection, analysis, forecasting, impact assessment), which would serve as the basis for innovative solutions in general and higher education. To this end, we will consider changing Agency's mode of operation towards greater institutional autonomy.

46.8. Quality education in national minority schools. We will ensure that the academic outcomes in national minority schools are very good not only in the Polish, Russian, Ukrainian or Belarusian languages but also in the Lithuanian language. We will look for ways to contribute to the revision of textbooks in Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and Belarusian so as to attune them to the latest programmes and trends. We will implement a conceptual approach to bilingual or multilingual education that helps children from national minority backgrounds to integrate in the environment in which the Lithuanian language is used, and vice versa. We will ensure that children have access to objective presentation of the history of the country and the contribution of national minorities to the Lithuanian culture, history and other areas of public life. We will expand the availability of digital curriculum in foreign languages in national minority schools. We will consider the recruitment of teachers from Poland, Ukraine and Belarus to work in national minority schools in Lithuania. We will involve ethnic minority communities in the discussion on the quality education standard.

**Project: Teaching as an attractive career and teacher training  
centres of excellence**

47. We will work together with municipalities and schools to create conditions for our teachers to carry out their direct mission, i.e. to educate creative, responsible and critically thinking children in Lithuania. We see it important that the teaching career becomes attractive and that young people see the point in choosing it as their personal path. We will give school communities more autonomy and freedom to act. We will pay special attention to the training and qualification of school principals. We will strengthen teacher training centres and strive to bring the quality in teacher training in line with international standards. We will work to change the general attitude towards the teaching profession.

48. Key initiatives:

48.1. An attractive workplace for a teacher. 2024 future package for a teacher. We will change the culture of interaction with teachers and schools. This culture must be based on trust and agreement regarding the goals, also on freedom to create. This requires adequate pay, support

for the teacher in education process, greater opportunities in terms of career, development and autonomous decisions. We will reduce the petty administrative burden loaded on teachers' shoulders today. Also:

48.1.1. We will ensure a steadily growing remuneration, which will reach 130% of average wage by 2024. We will revise the principles for teacher workload and staffing. The key criterion for determining financial remuneration will be direct work with children.

48.1.2. We will provide teachers with the necessary support (teaching assistants, special educators) in education process, required for its success.

48.1.3. We will create opportunities for teacher growth through the provision of flexible conditions and funding (a basket) for professional development of each teacher. We will put more energy into the offer of national professional development programmes. We will provide opportunities for teachers to gain new competencies for teaching one more subject.

48.1.4. We will contend that a higher university education and a master's degree in the long run are prerequisites for a general education teacher. We will phase this principle in through financial incentives to teachers that gain master's degree, and in consideration of age restrictions.

48.2. World-class centres of excellence for teachers. We will ensure that Lithuania has strong teacher training and research centres in line with international standards. We will organise the activities of teacher training centres on the basis of agreements for specific performance outcomes and the related funding. We will help the teacher training centres to attract world's top teacher training universities and to cooperate with them to advance and enhance teacher training in Lithuania. We will support the preparation and implementation of dual master's degree programmes in teacher training and student mobility in teacher training with at least one semester of studies abroad; we will look for placement possibilities in foreign schools.

48.3. National education-focused research programme. We will finance a national research programme for the development of research in education. The state will commission research required in education. We will pool the potential of research centres and encourage cooperation with European, particularly Nordic, countries. We will bring together the resources of the centres of excellence in education and the Government strategic analysis centre STRATA to create a platform for data analysis and methodological resources and thus promote progress in education.

48.4. Needs-responsive national system for teachers' professional development. We will draw up and implement a teacher's professional development programme to respond to national needs, such as the revision of the curriculum and the development of digital, foreign language and modern didactics skills. For the purpose of the implementation of the programme, we will mobilise higher education establishments and accredited teacher training centres. The programme will be planned for at least three years. We will review the services provided by teacher training centres and the teacher certification system. We will expand programmes to help professionals of different fields to choose the teaching profession in different ways.

48.5. Leadership programme for school principals. We will organise an international-level programme to train school principals and improve their qualifications, particularly in leadership, emotional competencies, and change management. We will carry out mentoring programmes for school principals to enable them to draw experience from more experienced counterparts in Lithuania and abroad. We will ensure that teachers, school principals and other staff can rely for psychological, legal and other assistance on the best professionals when needed. The remuneration of school principals will be commensurate with the responsibilities that position entails. Principals will have their career planning, which will involve early consultations on the possibility to continue the career in another school or education establishment following the end of the term. We will compile a school principal reserve list.

### **Project: Leadership in digital education**

49. The aim of this project is to chart a digital course in Lithuanian education and to create a modern school, as we seek to upgrade the conventional education methods with the latest technologies. Technology-aided working and learning has become a necessity. Furthermore, we must be ready at all times, also in the event of any pandemic, to continue the education process with the least adverse effects on academic achievements. Under this project, we will implement a national programme to bridge the digital divide and strengthen the digital skills among learners and educators.

#### 50. Key initiatives:

50.1. Consolidation of the latest education technologies. We will ensure that the latest education technologies make an integral part of general education. In order to ensure level plain field across all the schools, we will provide teachers and pupils with access to high-quality digital teaching/learning content developed by the Lithuanian EduTech at any time not only during the pandemic. We will work on the possibilities of acquiring and, if necessary, adapting high-quality digital content created in other countries.

50.2. Blended learning. Blended learning will be introduced in schools as part of preparedness for emergencies (epidemics, heat waves, etc.) or in response to local challenges. We will provide for a possibility for schools to have up to 25% of remote schooling. We will use the opportunities offered by remote teaching/learning to address the lack of quality services in geographically remote or otherwise disadvantaged areas. We will bring together the best teachers and researchers and we will invest in the development and dissemination of digital content. This is expected to help using the remote general education learning content not only for schools and learners in Lithuania but also for Lithuanian education schools abroad.

50.3. A package of technological solutions for schools. We will work out and bring before school community simple and easy-to-use combinations of technological solutions (communication tools, video conferencing tools). We will urge municipalities to ensure that

teachers and pupils have access to necessary technological tools and Internet in schools and at home (particularly focusing on children growing up in families with needs for social services). To better provide schools with information and communication technologies, we will increase the share of IT allocations for the procurement of digital content creation and dissemination platforms.

50.4. National STEAM programme to reduce the digital divide. At the national level, we will implement the national STEAM programme by strengthening the digital literacy of various groups in society, particularly teachers and students, and the development of digital curriculum. One of the goals of this programme is to bring the IT language to Lithuanian learners so that it becomes their own. To enable children to develop the skills required for future success, we will mainstream the IT across the curricula, and we will make the most of technological and digital tools in education from an early age. We will agree on the baseline requirements for a teacher as regards technological literacy and English language skills. We will strengthen the development of digital literacy and computational thinking skills and introduce it at an early stage in education, i.e. for children in kindergartens.

50.5. Compensation programme for pandemic-related losses in education. Together with municipalities, we will provide individualised assistance to schools in implementing technological tools and we will organise additional assistance for underachieving children. We will create an effective compensation programme for losses in education, focusing in the first place on lockdown-affected children, and later on early school leavers. The compensation scheme for coronavirus infection-related losses in education will primarily target the most sensitive and vulnerable groups of learners.

### **Project: World-class science**

51. According to the aggregate innovation index, Lithuania ranks 20th in the European Union, and its investment in research, development and innovation (R&D&I) lags far behind other EU Member States. We will take efforts to increase R&D&I spending and we will encourage a more efficient use of funds, while concentrating resources on priority areas. We will mobilise the potential available in the country and promote cooperation by funding joint research. We will promote research and innovation, which play a key role in the transition to a circular economy and in finding solutions to environmental and climate change issues. By improving the conditions for researchers, we expect to become one of talent destinations.

52. Key initiatives:

52.1. Concentration of resources in priority areas of science and economy. We will concentrate resources in those fields of science that would ensure the accumulation, updating and transfer of knowledge necessary for the development of priority areas of the economy and the public sector. We will refine accounting for public R&D appropriations (spending). We will focus funding on priority and high-potential areas such as biotechnology, health technology, IT, the

circular economy, marine research, education and other fields that will create high knowledge-based values in business and the public sector and foster technological, social and cultural innovation.

52.2. Innovation ecosystem in research centres. We will create in research centres (Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda) an R&D infrastructure (business accelerators, support for product development and commercialisation, prototyping laboratories) to cover not only applied research but also the development, trial and testing of new materials and prototypes. In order to create an integrated and consistent system for transforming science into new products, we will build entrepreneurial capacity in science centres (technology transfer, commercialisation) and promote close cooperation between higher education, business, self-government and the non-governmental sector. We will encourage business to support the preparation and publication of internationally recognised scientific texts in high-level scientific journals and monographs.

52.3. Pooling the potential of state science. We will promote cooperation between universities and research institutes. We will fund joint research for Lithuanian universities and research institutes to combine available resources and competencies and cooperate with world leading researchers.

52.4. The most favourable conditions for researchers to carry out scientific activities. We will reduce the red tape for research projects and support breakthrough research by enabling researchers to look for new challenges and fields of research, to carry out pilot research and early stage research that may lead to a scientific breakthrough in the future. We will create conditions for attracting talented young scientists from Lithuania and abroad. We will increase funding for post-doctoral fellowships and make efforts to offer prospective fellows, at the end of the fellowship, a job equipped with the necessary resources. We will improve funding conditions for the leading world-renowned Lithuanian scientists and international research groups, and we will ensure funding for a period of at least seven years. We will strengthen incentives to study for doctoral degree.

52.5. We will strengthen the role of the humanities and social sciences. One of the main requirements for the humanities and social sciences will be to conduct research responding to the challenges of today's world. We will define and promote innovations in humanities and social sciences and strive for the integration of applied humanities and social sciences in foreign scientific circulation. We will create a national open access infrastructure for the humanities and social sciences. We will encourage business to support not only those fields of science that yield direct benefit but also those that are important for ensuring statehood, for advancing progressive thought and for strengthening the welfare state.

52.6. We will seek leadership in green deal and sustainability research. We will promote green deal and sustainability research. We will provide for its funding as well as for the funding of setting up respective groups, we will additionally support internationally conducted research in this field that has been awarded European funding. We will promote interdisciplinary green deal

research and cooperation between different research institutions, as well as colleges and vocational schools. We will draw up a programme for building scientific competencies required for green deal research. We will develop and strengthen the required research infrastructure.

### **Project: Top quality, international and accessible studies**

53. We will work to ensure that everyone willing and ready to study has access to studies regardless of the place of residence and financial circumstances of the family. Our priority will be the quality of studies at all the levels of higher education. We will clarify the mission of different types of higher education establishments and focus on international quality requirements for studies, such as internationality, student and teacher mobility, employability and active involvement of business. Our goal is to be globally competitive.

#### 54. Key initiatives:

54.1. Our priority is quality studies. We will strive to have only well-prepared and motivated young people in higher education. We will harmonise admission requirements between state-funded and non-state-funded tuition. We will review the system for evaluation of study fields, simplifying it and ensuring maximum internationality and autonomy. Higher education providers will or will not be granted possibility of offering study programmes based on the outcomes of the evaluation of studies. We will encourage the involvement of students in the main activities of universities and strengthen the internationality of studies, and we will encourage higher education providers to increase the number of study programmes in foreign languages (particularly master's degree). We will promote the mobility of students and teachers and participation in international networks. We will support the implementation of the European Universities Initiative. We will improve the admission system and consistently provide more opportunities for higher education providers to make autonomous decisions about admissions.

54.2. Clear missions of universities and colleges. We will refine the missions of universities and colleges, quality requirements, and clearly differentiate between the levels of higher education and the competencies to be acquired. Based on the outcomes of the international evaluation of study programmes and the readiness of higher education providers to deliver quality training, we will work to have groups of study programmes designed by higher education providers that are the best in respective field, thus ensuring efficient use of state appropriations. We will, in consideration of the forecasts of the future economic demand, provide incentives for higher education establishments to design and implement study programmes intended to offer competencies relevant for the priority sectors of the future economy. At the same time, we will encourage the orientation of universities towards open study programmes to help training professionals that are maximally adapted to the professional diversity of the future and ready to become employers.

54.3. Colleges will be the catalysts and drivers of change in the regions. We will encourage and support colleges as they, through their study programmes and other activities, ensure and

initiate the development of specific industries or businesses needed in the regions. Colleges will be actively involved in the planning of development of specific municipalities and regions and in strengthening of the economy. We will review the fields of study that can be pursued at college level and encourage colleges to use vocational training infrastructure and sectoral practical training centres to run short courses (ISCED level 5) together with vocational schools. We will strengthen the cooperation of colleges with universities in training professionals in specific fields.

54.4. System of studies to ensure access for all students. We will refocus the higher education accessibility policy by increasing, in the first place, support for socially disadvantaged students. We will encourage higher education providers to organise summer schools to help prepare for studies. We will ensure that young people with special needs have all the opportunities to study in higher education (universal design, help from psychologists, etc.). We will review scholarship rates and change the procedure for providing state-supported loans. We will ensure that a person who continues his studies or goes on academic leave does not have to repay the loan immediately. We will contribute to the development of high-quality social (dormitory), leisure, sports and health infrastructure for students, which would meet international standards.

### **Project: Modern, efficient and mission-oriented higher education management**

55. The management of studies and science will be based on agreements with higher education providers on quality performance in science and studies. We will provide higher education schools with more stability and more opportunities to invest in development. We will strive to ensure that academic staff are motivated and have the best possible conditions to carry out research and studies. The higher education management model will encourage study and research establishments to cooperate, jointly create a competitive study and research framework attuned to the needs of the future labour market and compete internationally.

#### 56. Key initiatives:

56.1. Linking funding and quality performance in higher education. We will judge the performance of higher education establishments on the basis of quality delivered in studies and research and on international standards. We will agree on achievable objectives and performance indicators and conclude agreements with higher education establishments for at least three years, thereby ensuring the stability of the main financial component. Up to 20% of the allocation for studies are expected to be directly linked to performance.

56.2. Improving the funding of studies. We will review the funding model for studies, link the funding of higher education studies to the level of graduates' competencies and their employment indicators. We will treat all the fields of science and studies as equally important in creating the welfare of the state, therefore we will base the planning of the number of graduates not only on the needs of the market but also on the goals for improved welfare of the state. We will set the price for studies which will correspond to the quality requirements, allow for training

of specialists of appropriate level and competence and to successfully compete in the international higher education market in attracting students and talented researchers.

56.3. Progress-conducive environment in higher education. We will encourage higher education establishments to provide opportunities for teachers, researchers and administration to regularly improve their qualifications, particularly in the fields of modern didactics, foreign languages and information technology. The salary of academic staff will be at least 150% of the national average. We will strive to ensure that academic staff are motivated and have the best possible conditions to carry out research and studies. We will require that the nomenclature of academic job titles, recruitment system and the demand for academic integrity meet international standards. Our aim is to achieve that the administrative and economic costs of higher education providers reach up to 20% of their budgets and ensure competitive salaries for non-academic staff.

### **Project: Market-responsive vocational education and training**

57. The project aims at raising the quality and prestige of vocational education and training to attract more students to acquire secondary education in vocational schools. To this end, we will pay more attention to increasing the accessibility and attractiveness of vocational training. We will seek efficient vocational school management operating in accordance with modern management standards and ensuring modern conditions for training professionals required by the market. We will carry out an apprenticeship scheme in advanced areas of the economy and in those sectors of the economy which demonstrate the greatest mismatch between the demand and supply of professional qualifications.

#### 58. Key initiatives:

58.1. We will ensure that vocational education and training matches the requirements of the labour market. We will develop a tool to update and adjust vocational training curricula, i.e. vocational training standards and modular curricula, to the evolving needs of the labour market, digitisation, the fourth industrial revolution, the development of the circular economy and the green deal. We will create incentives for enrolment in vocational training courses that tackle the shortage of skills in the market. We will seek to increase the number of young people opting to acquire secondary education in vocational schools, and we will strengthen incentives for vocational education graduates to continue to higher education. We will support local, regional and national initiatives by vocational training providers and social partners to increase the accessibility and attractiveness of vocational training. We will strengthen early career guidance in schools. We will increase the innovation and flexibility of vocational education and training by ensuring that vocational education and training courses are learner-centred and that they can provide opportunities for full-fledged contact, digital or blended learning. We will seek a match between continuing vocational training curricula and sectoral or individual needs for professional development or retraining.

58.2. Sound management of vocational schools and school assets. We will carry out a clear and quantifiable assessment of vocational schools and we will refuse superfluous assets. Saved funds will be used to increase salaries of vocational teachers, student scholarships and quality of education. We will, in consideration of the demand for relevant courses, equip vocational schools with practical training facilities and put measures in place to stimulate interest in courses that are of relevance to industry.

58.3. We will strengthen the corps of vocational teachers. We will encourage and support training of highly qualified vocational education teachers and trainers in higher education schools, companies and organisations. We will raise the prestige of the vocational teaching and training profession through increased salaries, secure social guarantees and growing professional career opportunities. We will develop a long-term strategy to ensure that all vocational education teachers have a higher education degree in the long run. We will craft and launch a system for the selection and recruitment of vocational teachers, based on the understanding that the remuneration of a highly qualified vocational teacher must not differ from the remuneration of a highly qualified professional in the relevant field. We will support the involvement of practitioners in vocational training. We will create conditions for vocational teachers to improve their digital skills and learn effective innovative teaching methods in a diverse and multicultural environment.

58.4. Building an apprenticeship culture. Based on practices of countries such as Germany, we will look for opportunities to create incentives for the private sector to invest in potential future employees by concluding apprenticeship contracts with students in vocational training. Also, with the help of sectoral practical training centres, we will strengthen practical training, which will enable trainees to have, upon the conclusion of an apprenticeship contract, real practical experience and easy integration in the production processes in a company. We will help a smooth training-to-job transition through apprenticeship placements. We will strive to mainstream the components of learning in the workplace across the vocational training courses of all levels.

### **Project: Lifelong learning for all in Lithuania**

59. Our goal is to provide access to lifelong learning for each and every citizen in Lithuania. Today, the main obstacle to learning is not only the lack of opportunities or funding but also the reticence (there is no point in learning, it is too late to do that etc). Even with perfect conditions at hand, a third of the population would still refrain from learning. Therefore, we will strive not only to create a realistic career planning system and provide more professional and self-expression opportunities for everyone, but also to change the attitude of the society and to build culture favourable to learning.

60. Key initiatives:

60.1. Lifelong career planning system. We will develop a strong national career guidance and career education system covering all levels of education, which will help learners find areas

of interest at an early age and decide on possible scenarios for their future careers. Children will know clearly what competencies they will acquire at each stage of their education, how this will help shape their professional careers and how the transition from one level of education to another will take place.

60.2. We will provide more career opportunities for all. We will join the programmes and available resources of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania, the Ministry of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania and implement the one-stop-shop principle, thereby seeking to provide the population with the skills and qualifications needed for employment and professional development. We will create conditions and encourage vocational training and higher education providers to ensure high-quality market-responsive services for qualification development or acquisition of new qualifications for adult population. We will link the order for retraining to the growth and development priorities of the economic sectors. We will provide retraining opportunities not only for people with low and medium qualifications but also for those with high qualifications that are not in demand in the labour market. We will encourage municipalities to take on the role of moderator and initiate real-life cooperation platforms between the Employment Service, higher education and vocational schools, industries and businesses, which would be able to form a real order for retraining or attracting labour force.

60.3. Strong non-formal education. We will work to reduce the gap between formal and non-formal education, as both types of education must work together to help equipping people with the 21st century skills. Therefore, we will improve the funding for non-formal education by creating opportunities to fund various forms and methods of learning. We will strive for close integration of these processes into cultural education. We will encourage universities to develop and offer modules and programmes for adult education, thus creating opportunities for lifelong learning in higher education. We will create the conditions for the diversity of quality non-formal education, particularly in regions far from the largest cities. We will also review the existing system for the assessment and recognition of competencies gained through non-formal and informal learning to make it work in practice and to promote non-formal learning.

60.4. Focus on third century universities. We will introduce grants (baskets) for seniors' development enabling everyone of pre-retirement and retirement age to use them for personal and professional development (media literacy, digital skills, foreign languages, cultural competencies, art education, etc.). We will promote volunteering in third-century universities and review the related funding.

60.5. Motivating people to learn. We will increase the importance of information about learning, also learning opportunities and their scope for those groups in society that tend to refrain from learning (elderly, lower-skilled workers, unemployed, low-income and rural population). We will ensure that the information can be easily accessed from one point of contact.

## **Project: Sports system for physical activity, inclusion and high performance**

61. We will review the sports system in Lithuania to encourage greater physical activity among younger age groups and facilitate regular physical exercising for the elderly. For high achievements in professional sports, we will focus on the implementation of the main goals and objectives of high-performance sports programmes, creating the necessary preparation conditions for athletes and their coaches. Sport will serve as a means for the promotion of social inclusion, bridging the gap between different social groups, and it will significantly contribute to economic and social cohesion and social integration. We will seek to deliver our goals guided by the principles of partnership with the sports community and transparent public governance.

### 62. Key initiatives:

62.1. Responsible, transparent and effective sports and physical activity policy. We will draw up, in cooperation with the sports community, a five-year sports development programme promoting the involvement in sports of groups of people of different ages, abilities and social backgrounds. We will thereby build a firm foundation for the development of a system for the training of high-performance athletes and the promotion of physical activity in society. To implement the necessary changes, we will improve the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Sports, strengthen the independence and autonomy of non-governmental sports organisations operating in both the fields of high-performance sports as well as physical activity, by including them in the system of goals and objectives of national relevance. We will ensure systematic continuous monitoring, while working to eliminate corruption and lack of transparency in the activities of sports organisations.

62.2. An effective and sustainable sports management structure. We will strengthen sports management competencies and organisation to contribute effectively to the development of a transparent and effective sports policy. We will review the management, priorities and criteria of the Sports Support Fund. We will provide additional funding for the national high-performance sports programme, thus creating opportunities for our athletes to successfully prepare for and compete in the most important international competitions of the highest level. We will create a sports management data system (database), which will help all legal and natural persons to follow, analyse and identify the needs, priorities and problems of national, municipal and non-governmental sports organisations and the population, and which will provide opportunities to check progress in national strategic goals and efficiency in the use of funds. The data system will include the sector information system of the register of coaches and athletes, the register of sports facilities, the register of sports clubs and other public sports organisations, the register of municipal and private sports institutions operating in the field of sport, and other information relevant for analysis and statistics.

62.3. A healthy and active society. To improve the involvement of people of all ages in physical activity and to promote life-long engagement in sports, we will seek close institutional

cooperation towards sustainable development of sports and leisure infrastructure in cities and regions. To this end, we will develop and approve criteria for public investment in sport so that sports infrastructure is evenly distributed in the regions, taking into account the specifics of sport in each region, so that public funds are used efficiently and transparently. We will promote equal distribution of qualified specialists across the cities and regions in the country. We will improve physical fitness at school and attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle by introducing, by 2025, up to three weekly physical education lessons in all general education schools. Based on the recommendations of scientists, we will update the physical education curriculum, expand the variety of activities, and ensure inclusive physical education. We will strengthen the availability and quality of non-formal physical education. We will strive to ensure that general education graduates have not only sufficient physical fitness but also awareness of a physically active lifestyle. To ensure that children continue to be taught to swim, we will develop a programme to annually provide primary school children with basic swimming and safe behaviour in and at the water skills following an approved methodology. We will seek that high-quality and sufficient physical activity of children in pre-school and primary education is provided by qualified specialists. To ensure the continuity in individual physical activity, we will promote student sports.

62.4. Nation's visibility through sports. In cooperation with the sports community, we will adopt clear and competitive criteria for the goals, activities and results of strategic sports federations to be funded from the state budget. We will pay more attention to the high-performance sports programmes of the national sports federations intended for the development of children, junior, youth and elite sports while ensuring the continuity of the athletes training system. We will work to attract young coaches and to regularly develop coaches' competencies, and we will strive to make this a priority criterion for the evaluation of the programmes of sports federations and for their funding. Together with Lithuanian educational and research institutions, business and employers' associations, we will develop and approve dual career programmes for high-performance athletes so that high-performance athletes who have completed their sports career can successfully acquire a speciality and integrate into the labour market.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **MISSION: CULTURE CHANGING THE QUALITY OF LIFE INDIVIDUALLY AND FOR THE SOCIETY AS A WHOLE**

##### **SECTION ONE**

##### **RATIONALE AND SUCCESS INDICATORS**

63. Culture, creativity and talent are Lithuania's most valuable resources that are decisive for the development of a mature free personality and civil society. Creativity is what will drive technological and AI progress in Lithuania. A secure future for the country is only possible when

building on its patrimony, cultural heritage and history. A strong civil society is a society which is respectful of its culture, self-reliant, providing obvious economic benefit, creating jobs and facilitating the most effective communication of the message about Lithuania, which is part of diplomacy and relations with the diaspora.

64. Our priority is the connection between culture and education. The culture passport and individual initiatives of municipalities or certain cultural institutions have failed so far to ensure more sustainable and solid integration of culture into the education system. There is a growing need, in the face of the pandemic, to focus more on social culture and arts and to fully empower creators. Culture is a great tool to address social challenges. It must become an integral part of life, and this can only be achieved by making culture inclusive and accessible for all. Today, it is not only that man has to seek culture, but culture must come closer to man too.

65. On heritage, we need to transform sincere concern into an efficient and wise heritage management. Public resilience to information threats, free public media raising awareness and critical attitude, and a secure online space are our concern too.

66. Innovation, sustainability and sustainable development are values without which modern cultural policy is inconceivable.

67. Culture policy in the country lacks coherence, continuity and clear consensus regarding parity between culture missions and forms. We need to represent each and every member in the field of culture, be it state, public or private, to hear them and give their voice a proper place in the culture policy. We also need to take note of new, original forms in art and creativity. We have to respect what has already been created in our country, i.e. what has greatly contributed to the level of culture we enjoy now as well as to the solid foundation for the country.

68. Governments do not make culture but enable it through decent conditions, hence we strive to:

68.1. ensure cultural diversity and quality cultural services to the entire population of the country, while reducing social and regional exclusion;

68.2. make the country's non-governmental cultural sector a full participant in the implementation of cultural policy;

68.3. ensure the implementation of a long-term cultural strategy through funding projections for national and regional programmes, institutions and organisations;

68.4. increase the diversity, quality and accessibility of digital cultural content and services;

68.5. enable cultural and creative industries to better fulfil their economic and creative potential;

68.6. increase cultural competitiveness nationally and internationally;

68.7. make measures for the protection and management of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage effective;

68.8. ensure public resilience to information threats, with full access to state-provided information resources.

69. 2024 success indicators:

69.1. A model for integrating culture and creativity into the education system has been developed and put in place.

69.2. A new model for culture and media support funds has been developed and is operational.

69.3. A system for monitoring and modelling culture and art processes has been developed and is operational nationwide.

70. 2030 success indicators:

70.1. 50% of the country's population (22.5% today) involved in cultural and creative activities.

70.2. Intellectual property-based products represent 8% in total Lithuanian exports.

70.3. The global press freedom index (international non-governmental organisation Reporters Without Borders) ranks Lithuania among the top twenty (28th today).

## **SECTION TWO GOVERNMENT PRIORITY PROJECTS**

### **Project: The importance of culture for the development of an individual, society and the state**

71. The project aims to ensure stable funding for cultural and creative activities, projects and initiatives, and to revise the models for culture and media support funds. We will offer solutions to engage people and businesses in patronage. We will evaluate the relevance of education programmes, activities and of the culture passport measures for the development of a personality and a citizen, and we will expand the offer and promote greater citizen participation and use of these services. We will develop the necessary measures to make state-owned cultural resources publicly accessible online. We will bring forward legislative proposals and adopt the required legislation as regards culture.

72. Key initiatives:

72.1. Integrating culture and creativity into the national agreement on education. Involvement of art creators in innovative formal education through creativity lessons designed to develop creativity and integrity habits in learners—future full-fledged citizens. The integration of art creators in formal education, the availability of culture dissemination tools in schools, and the preparation of adapted programmes will be particularly valuable for regions where teachers are in short supply.

72.2. Revision of the funding model for the Culture Support Fund (Culture Fund) for the purpose of the implementation of ruling No. KT187-N15/2020 of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania of 3 November 2020 on the compliance of the provisions of the laws of the Republic of Lithuania regulating funding of specific programmes, funds or institutions with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. We will enhance the continuity and dissemination of culture and art projects funded from the Culture Fund in Lithuanian regions and abroad, focusing on the monitoring and analysis of cultural and artistic projects.

72.3. Drafting of the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Cultural Policy Framework. The lack of systemic and modelled approach to the development of the legislative environment for the cultural policy has resulted in largely reactive (rather than proactive) nature of this policy. Laws governing separate cultural fields, institutional networks or institutional activities lack a clear single legal basis. This has the potential to incite competition between cultural fields as they seek statutory protection, thereby increasing fragmentation within the sector. The scattered legal environment encourages the use of statutory protection as the only effective means of securing public finances.

72.4. Tax solutions to involve citizens and businesses in cultural patronage. We will analyse possibilities for the country's population to contribute to the projects funded from the culture and media support funds through a share of their personal income tax (PIT). We will review the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Patronage to achieve its real effectiveness. We will evaluate the effectiveness of the indirect public support for culture and improve the relevant mechanisms.

72.5. Development of the culture passport. We will promote the development of the culture passport as one of the most promising means for the interaction between education and culture. Continuity in the implementation of the concept of the culture passport and simplification of administration are very important factors that help to purposefully and consistently educate the consumer of cultural services, at the same time helping institutions and service providers to design and deliver high-quality and competitive services. We will promote the involvement of the cultural, artistic, non-governmental creative sector in the application and accessibility of cultural passport services both physically and remotely.

72.6. e-culture and unrestricted access to public cultural resources. We will strengthen the creation, diversity and accessibility of digital content of cultural resources, ensuring equal access for all residents of the country. Building on technological advancement, we will offer a vast variety of digital cultural services. Cultural institutions and organisations will be encouraged to use technology to make cultural resources and educational programmes accessible and to increase their opportunities for global reach. Cultural e-services and e-products offer an opportunity for self-development, learning and personal improvement. We will seek freely accessible quality cultural content on digital platforms. Content produced by cultural institutions will be available online.

**Project: Social strengthening and full empowerment of culture and art**

73. This project aims to modify the funding models for cultural programmes and projects after the assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. With a view to addressing the stale social problems across the culture sector, we will aim to improve the remuneration system for culture and art workers by phasing in salary increase and linking it with performance results and with the development of qualifications and competencies. In pursuit of social cohesion, we will analyse fiscal incentives for culture in other countries and in Lithuania and bring forward long-term financial measures for culture and art creators, and for the NGO cultural sector. We need to create a favourable global practice-based tax environment to activate cultural and creative industries (CCIs) and to bring forward measures that increase expert evaluation and competitiveness of CCI products. To achieve accessibility, modernisation and competitiveness in culture, we will advocate the use of 2021-2027 European Union funds.

**74. Key initiatives:**

74.1. Strengthen social protection and operational continuity for institutions, individual creators and groups of creators. We will revise the current social protection scheme for art creators, which is intended to provide social guarantees for low- and irregular-income art creators, as well as for those art creators that have been subject to creativity downtime. The revised social protection scheme for art creators will, in addition to adequate social protection and better conditions for the creation and dissemination of art, contain provisions enabling art creators to keep up their creative potential at the times of pandemics or other social disruptions.

74.2. Addressing social challenges in the field of culture. When improving the remuneration system for culture and art workers, we will increase salaries evenly. We will facilitate the operation of a long-term system for professional and competence development of culture and art workers. We will strive for regular improvement of professional qualifications and development of subject-specific competencies of culture and art workers, focusing particularly on the dissemination and accessibility of culture and art services through information technology and digital format. The salary of culture and art workers will reach at least 90% of the national average by 2024, and at least 100% by 2030.

74.3. Mobilising the cultural sector to address social challenges. We will encourage art creators and institutions to implement social cohesion programmes.

74.4. Promoting the development of cultural and creative industries and NGOs. Recognising the importance of CCIs and NGOs for economic and social life, and aware of the fact that this sector has been among the worst-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, we will make every effort to preserve it and to support and stimulate its development. We will encourage the formation and growth of the existing modern and innovative cultural clusters and incubators that meet the needs of society. We will strive to make cultural clusters and incubators hubs of knowledge,

competence and innovation. We will encourage investment in creative NGOs, strengthen the role of NGOs in achieving the goals of cultural policy and cultural economy.

74.5. Strengthening competitiveness in culture. We will resort to 2021-2027 EU Structural Funds for modernisation, accessibility and competitiveness in culture. We will strive for reasonable management and use of cultural infrastructure.

### **Project: Accessible and inclusive culture**

75. The aim of the project is to reduce cultural exclusion and increase cultural accessibility through creatively engaging culture and its availability. For the purpose of the project, we will increase the involvement of groups of different ages, hobbies and needs in the cultural process through the existing and new measures. We will activate memory actualisation and intergenerational cooperation projects. Lithuanian society must remain sensitive towards the national cultural heritage, demand quality in cultural content, be resilient and civic-minded.

76. Key initiatives:

76.1. Formation (education) of a creatively engaged citizen. Realising that culture and art education is important in the development of a mature personality, we will consistently and systematically shape and implement a cultural education policy. We will strengthen cultural education activities in culture and art establishments, promote the development of new, creative, high-quality and professional cultural education services, and we will involve the education system and socially sensitive and excluded groups in their use.

76.2. Diversity that engages in cultural learning and participation. We will support those who foster ethnic culture and artistic amateur expression, promote inter-cultural dialogue, cultural diversity and the dissemination of professional art. We will develop creative, cultural and artistic activities for life-long learning, as they are important for personal fulfilment and social engagement.

76.3. Measures to eradicate cultural exclusion. By reducing cultural exclusion, we will create equal opportunities and conditions for every person in Lithuania to take interest in and fully participate in cultural life. We will ensure the availability and accessibility of culture regardless of the place of residence, social, health problems or reasons beyond control of an individual. We will ensure balanced availability and accessibility of culture for all, thus reducing cultural, social and regional exclusion.

76.4. Bringing up to date and giving meaning to historical memory. We will strengthen the commemoration and celebration of public holidays and days of remembrance that promote civic activism, patriotism and pride in the country through new forms, creative artistic actualisation, and new ways to reach people of different backgrounds.

### **Project: Balanced regional cultural policy**

77. This project aims to reduce cultural exclusion between major cities and regions through a balanced regional policy. Our cultural policy formulation and financing measures are expected to enhance and develop the activities of regional cultural councils and to consistently strengthen the funding for the balanced development, dissemination and research of culture in the regions. We need to ensure that cultural projects at regional, state and national levels receive adequate funding for the communication and presentation of the programmes in the regions. It is imperative that local communities are involved in cultural processes as closely as possible by raising awareness of the local cultural potential and involving the entire population in learning about the culture of the regions and their identities. The balanced development of regional culture will take place through dialogue and trust-based relations with local cultural communities and the non-governmental sector.

78. Key initiatives:

78.1. Measures to promote the balanced dissemination and development of culture in the regions. We will strengthen long-term programmes tailored to local cultural priorities and needs, which will closely involve local communities in shaping regional cultural identity and which will take further the regional culture and dissemination thereof. We will also invite creators that are not from regions, also non-governmental organisations, art creators' associations, unions and culture managers to participate in these programmes.

78.2. Strengthening cultural dialogue with self-government. Together with municipalities and the cultural community, we will agree on the accessibility to cultural services, network efficiency, availability of infrastructure and quality and funding models, we will promote new and support the existing regional cultural initiatives and creative expression, encourage community spirit, civic awareness and social cohesion, and involve national minorities, children, youth, people of retirement age, persons with disabilities in the cultural process.

78.3. The generating value of cultural services. Recognising the social and economic benefits of culture for society and the state, we will remove all obstacles to the accessibility of cultural, artistic, creative activities and services to all the population of the country.

78.4. Strengthening local cultural institutions. Strengthening the activities of the network of cultural centres, which represents one of the largest cultural institutions in the country. The network of Lithuanian cultural centres is particularly important and significant for the promotion and dissemination of the country's intangible cultural heritage, ethnic culture, professional and amateur art, quality leisure time for the population, also personal fulfilment through different activities and socialisation. Apart from the conventional activities typical of the cultural centres, they should also focus on new forms, means of creation and self-expression and cooperation with different cultural and art institutions. High-quality, attractive and inclusive cultural services to members of the community of all ages must become one of the main goals of these and other institutions operating in the region (libraries, museums, craft centres). To address the changes

resulting from today's challenges, we need to adjust the legislation governing the activities of cultural centres in Lithuania.

**Project: Cultural diplomacy, national image and internationality:  
Things we take pride in**

79. The aim of this project is effective and result-oriented communication of cultural achievements across the target foreign markets, which would bring greater added value for country's businesses and the entire population in terms of increased country's awareness, growing foreign direct investment and tourism and growing services sector. We will ensure the right of all the citizens of the country living in Lithuania and abroad, regardless of their ethnicity, to the dissemination of their culture and access to creation and creativity resources. Creative activities are too little involved in Lithuania's efforts to raise country's appeal internationally. Art is an effective means of transmitting democratic values and promoting tolerance and peace in the international arena.

80. Key initiatives:

80.1. We will strengthen the activities promoting the internationality of Lithuanian culture, which are implemented by the Lithuanian Culture Institute together with the Cultural Attaché of the Republic of Lithuania. We will step up the activities under the Strategy for presenting Lithuania abroad for 2020-2030.

80.2. Our diaspora is an integral part of the Lithuanian cultural diplomacy, internationality, and nation marketing. We will create conditions for Lithuanians around the world to get to know the national culture and use its resources for education and keeping up the sense of identity and spirit of togetherness.

80.3. We will strengthen inter-institutional cooperation in planning and implementing projects and initiatives that promote the internationality of our cultural activities and increase the awareness of the country. We will launch integrated projects for the presentation of our culture internationally.

80.4. We will ensure smooth implementation of international cultural commitments of national importance (Kaunas - European Capital of Culture 2022, etc.), projects of national relevance and celebration of anniversaries and prominent dates (700th anniversary of Vilnius City, 150th anniversary of the birth of M. K. Čiurlionis, etc.).

80.5. We will promote international mobility and international cooperation of culture and art creators, develop and implement targeted measures to promote international cooperation and dissemination of culture. We will open the cultural space in Lithuania to make the country an attractive destination for international cultural events and conferences.

80.6. Lithuania and multiculturalism. We will promote the importance of the culture and tangible and intangible cultural heritage of national minorities living in Lithuania and advance the

inter-cultural dialogue. We will work to ensure, through legislative means, the rights for the national minorities living in Lithuania to have equal conditions for the dissemination of culture, freedom of expression and personal fulfilment.

80.7. We will implement programmes for the search and return of Lithuanian cultural heritage. We will bring back as many Lithuanian movable cultural and historical heritage as possible, which is still abroad as a result of various historical circumstances.

### **Project: Effective heritage management**

81. The project aims to build an integrated policy for the protection and actualisation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage by improving the existing legal regulation of the cultural heritage protection, developing a results-driven cultural heritage protection management and ensuring integrated and long-term state progress in the field of cultural heritage. By improving the principles for heritage accounting and protection, we will reduce the administrative burden and ensure smooth cooperation between heritage users and state and non-governmental institutions. We will implement effective heritage management programmes that would help businesses to take on the management of heritage more boldly. We will implement the concept of the policy for cultural heritage preservation and actualisation and the 2020-2024 action plan thereof.

82. Key initiatives:

82.1. Drafting a long-term national development programme for the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. We will provide for long-term guidelines and desired outcomes for the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, while building a single policy for the integrated protection of the heritage. We will ensure the means for the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which would unite the society on the issues of preservation of cultural heritage.

82.2. Improving the management of the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. We will improve the legal framework by harmonising the legislation related to the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage and the country's international obligations. We will ensure the institutional framework for cultural heritage protection and high degree institutional performance. We will ensure effective legal regulation, optimise and streamline administration, and improve the quality of services. We will work for higher efficiency in the management of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of UNESCO.

82.3. Strengthening awareness of the value of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. We will raise awareness and understanding of the value and significance of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage and stimulate public interest in it. We will develop ethnic cultural education and ensure the training of specialists. We will step up the inclusion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the activities of various types of tourism.

82.4. Building a dialogue between the cultural heritage community and investors. We will promote the involvement of all groups in society in tangible and intangible cultural heritage preservation, dissemination, consultation of the user and the processes for increased awareness of the value of the cultural heritage and of decision-making. We will combine the interests of urban development and protection of cultural heritage, the interests of society and owners of cultural heritage, and heritage protection and environmental goals, while ensuring the sustainable development of the country.

82.5. Enhancing the system for financial and non-financial incentives. We will increase the efficiency of state and municipal funding for the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. We will encourage managers of cultural heritage to invest in the management of cultural heritage. We will work to ensure that the tangible and intangible cultural heritage generates socio-economic value.

**Project: Societal resilience to information threats, free media and safe internet**

83. The aim of the project is the formulation of development guidelines attuned to economic, technological and structural challenges, while resting on the outcomes of an independent analysis of public information policy, and to make decisions towards pluralism, independent and high-quality journalism and continuous development of media and information literacy skills. While a small market limits the ability of the media itself to address all the challenges on its own, state action would ensure that possible interventions do not jeopardise constitutional freedoms and enable the public to have a critical approach to and understanding of the information environment.

84. Key initiatives:

84.1. We will promote the independence and diversity of the media. We will carry out a comprehensive evaluation of media policy with the help of independent experts and develop guidelines for its improvement. We will pay special attention to media and information literacy in society. We will work to have a larger supply of original Lithuanian content on television and Internet platforms, in the press and on the radio.

84.2. Cyber-resilient society keen on developing its literacy skills. It is only a literate society that can stand strong against information threats, therefore, we will work to have better competencies in media and information literacy and critical thinking among the population at large and culture workers of different fields, which would promote public creativity, help to identify false or fake information and its sources in public space, develop critical judgement and neutralise the influence of harmful information.

84.3. Means of informative, cultural and educational content. To ensure the sustainability of public information of cultural and educational content, we will seek to approve long-term

guidelines for the Press, Radio and Television Support Foundation and look for other sources to secure financial stability and independence of this Foundation.

84.4. We will take account of the key indicators of the media freedom index. We will pay particular attention to maximising access to information sources and open data for journalists. We will work to reinforce journalists' protection against persecution for criticism.

84.5. Effective protection of digital copyright content. We will ensure an integrated approach to copyright protection by concentrating the efforts of the competent authorities to restrain possibilities of direct and indirect proceeds from the distribution of pirated content.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **MISSION: EMPOWERMENT OF THE MOST VULNERABLE GROUPS IN SOCIETY**

#### **SECTION ONE**

#### **RATIONALE AND SUCCESS INDICATORS**

85. Technological advancement or global emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic are radically changing people's lives, their relationships, and the ways they earn a living. Some groups in society find it much more difficult to adapt and feel included. Our task as fellow citizens is to build a sensitive society that is able to lend a helping hand when it is most needed, to provide care that responds to real needs and to help people feel an important member in society, not a 'dependant'. It is very important that social problems are tackled at their earliest possible stage so that we could address their causes rather than their consequences.

86. We will work to find new ways to help as much as possible the marginalised groups: those who have lost their jobs and income, persons with disabilities, those attending to their family members, single mothers or fathers, single pensioners and other members of society who need support today. These people will be at the focus of social policy measures. We will ensure a comprehensive assessment of each person's situation, needs, living and working environment with a view to their full-fledged involvement in society. We will create conditions for everyone, whether in short- or long-lasting social exclusion and exposed to other risks, to have access not only to financial support but, above all, to high-quality social services that will help them return to a full life in society.

87. We will work to have increasing old-age social insurance and assistance pensions. We will implement changes to achieve sustainability in the social security system, the adequacy of social benefits, the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, and the efficiency of social services.

88. We will strive for consistency and continuity in changes, increase confidence in the social security system and enhance its stability. We will carry out reforms in accordance with the

principles of social solidarity, universality, equality, non-discrimination, legitimate expectations, income guarantees and other basic principles of social security.

89. We aim to have:

89.1. no invisible people and their problems left in Lithuania, and that everyone gets help he needs;

89.2. higher old-age social insurance and social assistance pensions;

89.3. targeted and personalised social services and an adequate benefit system to stimulate return or integration into the labour market;

89.4. opportunities for parents (guardians, carers) to reconcile work and family responsibilities;

89.5. safe children in any environment of their life;

89.6. a horizontal principle of equal opportunities mainstreamed across all fields of public policies;

89.7. better opportunities for persons with disabilities to integrate into the open labour market and have access to the required social services;

89.8. society members responsive to each other's concerns and more trusting of each other.

90. 2024 success indicators:

90.1. The supplementary pension for single persons of retirement age will amount to at least 11% of average old-age pensions (with the required length of service) per month (performance indicator).

90.2. The overall at-risk-of-poverty rate will fall to 17% (currently 20.6%).

90.3. The employment rate among the population between 15 to 64 years of age will reach 72.5% (currently 70.7%).

90.4. The share of persons with disabilities who have benefited from social integration measures intended for the reduction of their social exclusion, against the total number of persons with disabilities will be 37% (currently 29%).

91. 2030 success indicators:

91.1. The overall at-risk-of-poverty rate will fall to 14% (currently 20.6%).

91.2. The employment rate among the population between 15 to 64 years of age will reach 75% (currently 70.7%).

91.3. The gender pay gap will narrow to 10% (currently 12.4%).

91.4. The share of persons with disabilities who have benefited from social integration measures intended for the reduction of their social exclusion, against the total number of persons with disabilities will be 42% (currently 29%).

## **SECTION TWO**

### **GOVERNMENT PRIORITY PROJECTS**

### **Project: Social services tailored to individual needs**

92. Although social challenges have not as yet given way in Lithuania: rapidly ageing population; persisting number of vulnerable families and children growing up in them; many of those living on the fringes of society, unable to compete successfully in the labour market and carry on independently in their daily lives - yet not all the people make use of social services as a tool to address problems. Equal access to services is not ensured, particularly in remote areas; there is no comprehensive assessment of the needs of individual municipalities for access to services, and there is a lack of innovative solutions to specific social challenges. We will work to implement a new standard of social services, focusing on those areas where the availability of help and services has been the lowest.

#### 93. Key initiatives:

93.1. Availability of services to fit individual needs. We will shift the delivery of social services from one-size-fit-all to personalised services tailored to individual needs and groups of people. We will develop a social entrepreneurship model to address long-lasting problems, thereby facilitating working conditions for persons with disabilities, the long-term unemployed and those out of prison. We will develop and introduce algorithms for social services tailored to individual needs of children and families. Together, we will build skills and capacities of case managers to successfully handle each individual family case, expand the existing services and promote synergies between different fields—social care, health and education in particular. We will continue the efforts in reforming institutional care towards the required quality assistance for every child with a disability, every adult with a disability and their family members.

93.2. Increasing the availability of social services. We will change the sharing of functions in the field of social services between municipalities and the state, assigning social care services to the function transferred by the state to the municipalities, and social assistance services to the autonomous function of municipalities. We will create additional incentives for municipalities to provide social services through non-governmental organisations, which will be provided with adequate funding. We will direct more financial resources to the development of social care services: sheltered housing, independent living homes, crisis centres, secure escorts and family social care services.

93.3. Quality standard for social services. We will introduce a quality standard for social services applicable to all social service providers. We will implement the accreditation of social care services, which will ensure quality, we will narrow the gap between regions, promote competition, and provide for a free choice in choosing a social care service provider. We will strengthen the system for the supervision of the quality of the accredited social services. We will measure the impact of social services on quality of life of their recipients.

93.4. We will expand care and nursing care services at home, increase the variety of services at home, aware of overall preference to live as autonomously and as long as possible at home.

93.5. We will finance social services on the principle of direct financing. We will promote a variety of needs-matching services and technological innovations. We will introduce an annual mandatory assessment of demand and supply of new services. We will put in place a procedure for direct financing of newly demanded services that are innovative and bring an obvious social benefit. We will review the financing of social service establishments, companies and organisations with priority on planned, measured and achieved results.

93.6. Leaving no one behind. We will ensure the provision of the required assistance to young people who have been receiving institutional social care or who grew up in socially vulnerable families for them to become independent and responsible citizens of the Republic of Lithuania, capable of building positive attachment bonds, starting their own families and raising properly their children.

### **Project: Protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and service development**

94. Persons with disabilities still happen to be among the most discriminated groups in Lithuania. Access to even most fundamental things, like education, social services and assistance and health care is often insufficient. One of the biggest problems for persons with disabilities has been access to employment and training. They are much more likely, compared to those with no disabilities, to be disadvantaged in terms of employment and income, unless adequate, personalised and timely assistance is provided. It is not the disability but the lack of access to the physical environment and services that are the reason for lower education, social exclusion, unemployment and poverty of persons with disabilities. The labour market must be open for all, assistance must be tailored to individual needs and services must be comprehensive. The disability benefits policy must be both transparent and fit for purpose.

95. Key initiatives:

95.1. A comprehensive package of social services for persons with disabilities and a personalised approach. We will fundamentally review the principles of the disability integration policy and create a package of social services to meet the special needs of persons with disabilities. We will formalise, through legislation, a personal assistant service for persons with disabilities and provide for its versatile availability and possibility to get it when needed (including children). We will introduce training programmes for specialists working with persons with disabilities (both children and adults). We will restructure and improve the system for providing technical aids. We will accredit the provision of social rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities in the community.

95.2. Help for families raising children with disabilities. We will offer comprehensive support to families with a special needs child with a disability or developmental impairment so that the family can take proper care of the child and their needs, be able to reconcile family and work more effectively, and take an active part in public life. We will create a system for the required services of early rehabilitation, transportation, respite, case management (coordination), counselling, education, social integration, nursing, day activities, day care and other services to be provided on a one-stop-shop principle. We will seek dialogue with employers on more flexible working conditions for parents, adoptive parents, guardians (carers) raising children with disabilities.

95.3. Persons with disabilities are a part of the general system of education. We will create opportunities for families raising children with disabilities to choose between special or general education schools for their offspring. We will consider introducing the position of learning assistant with a view to personalising assistance to learners with disabilities in the educational process. We will work to ensure that all children with disabilities have access to non-formal education.

95.4. The Disability and Working Capacity Assessment Office will give priority to services that focus on the empowerment of persons with disabilities. We will require that the assessment of individual condition involves not only doctors, but also a psychologist, a social worker, specialists in other areas of relevance to social development, and that its conclusion is not only about individual physical condition, but also about social needs required. We will create a reliable disability database, which will help to make necessary and reasoned decisions for the best indicators with respect to the integration of persons with disabilities.

95.5. Effective employment programmes for persons with disabilities. The integration of persons with disabilities into the open labour market will be based on the adaptation of the work environment and workplaces to the individual needs of persons with disabilities. incentives for employers and changing community and employer attitudes towards disability. We will implement a reform in the field of social enterprises by creating real incentives for employers to hire persons with disabilities, through a financial basket (for disability-related workplace accommodation, special staff training, etc.). We will think whether to leave wage subsidies for social enterprises, while considering that it should be paid for a fixed period.

95.6. Adapting building infrastructure to the needs of persons with disabilities. We will introduce the principles of uniform design in technical construction regulations and other legislation to improve the adaptability of building infrastructure to the needs of persons with disabilities. We will improve the procedure for issuing hygiene passports, provide for training in the principles of uniform design for architects and occupational therapists, and we will also provide for public consultation mechanisms regarding projects applicable to persons with disabilities at the stage of their design. We will ensure that the adapted housing and living environment is accessible

to all persons with disabilities according to their needs and we will provide measures to promote the adaptation of both physical and information environment for persons with disabilities.

### **Project: Adequacy and sustainability of social security benefits**

96. Lithuania is a socially oriented state. Every citizen has the right to social security in Lithuania. The current economic and social situation and the challenges of the pandemic show that comprehensive reforms are needed to achieve the sustainability of the social insurance system, the adequacy of social assistance benefits and the efficiency of social services. The sustainability of benefits must be ensured while striving for adequate social security benefits. At present, we do not have effective criteria and indicators for monitoring the effectiveness of social policy (particularly social assistance) in Lithuania, which could be applied at both national and municipal levels. Changes in this area must be made in a coherent and continuous manner by increasing confidence in the social security system, thus ensuring stability, implementation of social security principles, equality and non-discrimination.

#### 97. Key initiatives:

97.1. Pathways out of poverty. We will address income inequality and poverty through appropriate integrated taxation and financial measures. We will systematically increase spending on social security, mainly focusing on those who receive the lowest benefits, while ensuring the financial stability of the state.

97.2. Increasing social security benefits. We will ensure the stability and guarantees of the social security and pension system. We will improve the situation of single pensioners by replacing a widow's / widower's pensions with a single pensioner's pension, the amount of which will be at least 11% of the average monthly retirement pension (provided a person has a required working period). We will strengthen the link between the contributions paid by a person and the benefits he or she receives. We will increase social security pensions in view of the growing wages, while ensuring the financial stability of the state. We will review the structure of the general part of the social security pension to make its amount as close as possible to the minimum consumption needs.

98. More targeted pensions, benefits, and compensations. We will withdraw socially unacceptable benefits and different taxes imposed on the same types of activities, and we will clamp down on social security evasion. On the basis of monitoring data, we will update the eligibility criteria, taking into account a true individual capacity for self-sufficiency.

99. Guarantees and development of supplementary pension insurance. We will seek to ensure that private pension scheme is efficient, clearly regulated, consistent, transparent and ensures the implementation of the principle of legitimate expectations. We will increase public financial literacy, encourage supplementary voluntary pension insurance as well as the activities of occupational pension funds by establishing effective incentives.

**Project: Reconciling work and family responsibilities. Equal opportunities**

100. In recent years, special attention has been paid to parental responsibility and prevention of domestic violence. Unfortunately, families, especially those facing problems, have not received professional and comprehensive social and psychological assistance. People find it difficult to return to the labour market after parental leave because they have lost the necessary qualifications, there is a lack of pre-school childcare facilities and fewer opportunities to integrate into the labour market as early as possible. This leads to unemployment, and often the family finds itself on the brink of poverty. Application of flexible work schedule or remote work shows very slow progress. All the above problems are particularly painful for single parents.

**101. Key initiatives:**

101.1. More opportunities to return to the labour market. We will expand the network of early education institutions for children from one to three years. We will direct state investments to the construction of new kindergartens, as well as offer transportation for children living far away to their education institution. We will make steps to agree with municipalities on a wider implementation of an all-day school model and application of a more flexible kindergarten work schedule (extended day groups, more flexible working hours). We will take actions to ensure that admission procedure to municipal kindergartens gives priority to parents who have just been employed after parental leave, have started their studies or are single parents, as well as persons who have adopted or taken care of children. We will provide retraining opportunities and additional funding to family members of people with disabilities who have been attending for a long time to a family member spending all their time.

101.2. Particular focus on the employment of single parents. We will apply legal and public education measures in order to ensure that single parents have more opportunities to benefit from flexible working-time arrangements, provide them with effective state support for setting up a business, effective retraining system and other targeted employment measures, and seek dialogue with employers on more flexible working conditions for single parents. We will create more favourable conditions for the renting of housing, ensure lower cost children's afterschool activities, etc. for single-parent families with children.

101.3. Promoting work and family reconciliation. We will promote measures aimed at reducing the pressure on employees to refrain from having children. We will look for measures that encourage the creation of a family-friendly environment (opening of kindergartens in a workplace, organised transportation of children to kindergartens, more flexible work organisation, etc.).

101.4. Equal opportunities for all. We will eliminate all forms of discrimination and create equal opportunities for all social groups, promote zero tolerance policy towards all forms of violence. We will strive for equal opportunities for all, adopt measures aimed at ensuring gender

equality between women and men. We will take actions to reduce the gender pay gap by creating better opportunities for women to pursue careers and remain in the labour market.

**Project: Empowerment of social workers.  
Strengthening the protection of the rights of the child**

102. Today, social workers in different sectors are usually perceived as supervisors, performing only formal bureaucratic functions and filling in document forms, rather than as consultants or assistants. There is a serious shortage of social workers and they do not specialise. This profession is no longer prestigious due to low pay - many young people who have completed their social work studies simply do not choose to work in this field. In addition, there are particularly marked inequalities in the wages of social workers in the country's municipalities. Social workers' assistants and child protection specialists face very similar problems. The lack of social workers or child protection specialists or specific competencies in the market results in quality disparities in social services, shortage of services and staff burn-out. There is a lack of possibilities of specialising, training and placement, also of competence development.

103. Key initiatives:

103.1. Strengthening the profession of a social worker. We will define the specific nature of social work in the fields of social services, health, education, child welfare, gerontology, law enforcement, employment etc. We will introduce ethical principles for social workers and social work methods. We will promote inter-vision and supervision in strengthening social work.

103.2. Creating better working conditions. We will strive, in collaboration with the municipalities, to offer to the most disadvantaged regions in terms of social services (where demand in social workers is the greatest) additional financial incentives to attract social workers to come and stay for work, thereby ensuring that the local population has access to essential social services. We will ensure that issues concerning safety and work specifics of social workers and child protection specialists are directly discussed and agreed with municipalities and employers. The assessment of employees' needs and potential risks at work will serve as a basis for a directly effective security plan, which will include activities of police and public order officers.

103.3. Qualification improvement, wage increase and public education. We will strive for the development and continuous improvement of the best social work programmes and specialised postgraduate studies at universities and colleges, which help social workers to focus on the relevant areas of their activity. We will improve the competencies of the specialists of the child rights protection system, create effective psychological support measures for the family. We will initiate the development of programmes for the protection of child rights. We will create opportunities for continuous improvement of professional qualifications, participation in systematic and high-quality training. We will draw up and implement a stable wage increase plan for social workers and child rights protection specialists.

103.4. Effective childcare services and support. We will improve the support system for children who have left the care system or vulnerable families, promoting their socialisation, successful start of independent living, and thus prevent greater challenges in the future. We will introduce targeted, income-dependent subsidies for childcare services for working, lower-income parents and legal representatives and those raising pre-school children. We will expand the availability of assistance for children and young people who face complex behavioural problems - delinquent behaviour, aggression, risky lifestyle, addiction to alcohol or other psychoactive substances, etc.

103.5. Measures against violence and exploitation of children. We will improve mechanisms to prevent violence against children, including domestic violence, and, in the event of such violence, develop response mechanisms that allow for the timely identification of violence and the prompt provision of all necessary support that includes effective, timely and personalised assistance to a child and a family. We will encourage the application of parenting measures, strengthen the role of crisis centres and prevent bullying. We will launch education programmes and a job-search assistance service to help women who have experienced violence become economically independent. We will implement a comprehensive action plan aimed to combat all forms of sexual exploitation and violence against children with disabilities, both inside and outside institutions, and develop accessible support services for child victims, with a special focus on the most vulnerable groups of children, such as: children with disabilities, children devoid of parental care, children growing up in socially vulnerable families, children growing up and/or receiving institutional services.

103.6. Further development and strengthening of alternatives to institutional childcare. We will further develop and strengthen possibilities of providing non-institutional care; we will promote care and adoption by offering a package of services focused on carers, adoptive parents and children growing up in their families, increase the quality of work in care centres and the competencies of specialists working in them. We will change the focus of the activities of community childcare homes to ensure that they are no longer a simple institutional support services, but rather activities that take into account child's individuality and can provide specialised support. We will develop activities of guardians on duty in order to achieve truly high-quality services, ensure the preparedness of guardians to care not only for younger children, but also for adolescents, children with behavioural problems, children with disabilities, etc.

### **Project: Improving social security management**

104. Effective administration of social security benefits goes hand in hand with the improvement of system management, development of personalised and digitised services. There is a lack of an integrated approach and appropriate strategic planning in the application of social sector technologies in Lithuania; changes in the fields of social security, labour and health systems,

institutional governance, public education, information technology do not correlate with each other; the impact of new technologies on the efficiency of management and the labour market is not assessed. In the absence of proper strategic planning, monitoring and efficiency indicators, the funds allocated to social policy are not used efficiently enough. The empowerment of social partners and non-governmental organisations, the development of interinstitutional relations and cooperation, which are currently insufficient, play an important role.

105. Key initiatives:

105.1. More and better electronic services. We will develop the existing electronic services, shorten the waiting time for public services, and simplify the declaration of social security contributions. We will implement information technology solutions that have already proved their value in the market but have not as yet been used in the public sector, evaluate solutions related to learning systems, artificial intelligence, comprehensive learning and application of big data when administrating social benefits.

105.2. Better monitoring and forecasting system. We will create a system for the analysis, forecasting and monitoring of changes in the field of social policy (including a system that ensures efficient use of cash assistance).

105.3. Increasing the role of social partners in the social security system. We will further strengthen the competence and powers of the Council of the State Social Insurance Fund. We will promote social dialogue and seek agreement between the social partners on minimum rate of wage, and application of the social security system.

105.4. Focusing on the effectiveness of social assistance management. We will review the effectiveness of social assistance benefits. We will create a poverty map enabling the analysis of data at municipal level. We will establish criteria at national level for monitoring and analysing the effectiveness of social assistance at municipal level to be used for the development of policies and evaluation of best practices. We will continue to decentralise the distribution of social assistance, bringing the process of distribution closer to the communities that know their members best.

105.5. Strengthening the interinstitutional relations. We will put efforts to ensure closer cooperation between specialists, exchange of best practice, sharing of knowledge, experience and information. We will seek closer cooperation between state institutions and families based on comprehensive help rather than control. We will promote and support life-positive and life-fostering initiatives in the health care system, as well as cooperation between state institutions and non-governmental organisations that help women facing crisis pregnancies or other difficulties, and their relatives.

105.6. Strengthening cooperation with municipalities. We will assess, on the basis of the methodology established, an individual situation of each person in need of assistance, identify the desired result and measures that can ensure it, plan comprehensive application thereof and monitor the effectiveness of the proposed measures, starting with pilot projects in selected municipalities.

**CHAPTER V**  
**MISSION: LONG AND FULL LIFE OF A HEALTHY PERSON**

**SECTION ONE**  
**RATIONALE AND SUCCESS INDICATORS**

106. The goal of the health care system is to improve and strengthen the health of the population, diagnose and treat diseases in time, and ensure that people lead healthy life as long as possible. Over the last decade, the average life expectancy in Lithuania has increased by more than four years, but we are still lagging behind the average of the European Union Member States. However, marked differences are particularly noticeable in health and life expectancy of men and women, people living in rural and urban areas as well as different socio-economic groups. We have an objective which goes beyond the extended life expectancy if a person spends those extra years suffering from illness. Unfortunately, the healthy life expectancy in Lithuania does not change very much and continues at 57 years which is seven years less than the average of the European Union Member States. Large differences in health between men and women, different social groups and regions, compared to other Member States of the European Union, reflect major problems in health and social system. An important indicator of the efficiency of the health system is how the people themselves assess their health condition. Only 58% of the Lithuanian adult population consider themselves to be in good health, and even 93% over 65 years of age consider themselves to be only in satisfactory or poor health condition. It is the worst indicator in the European Union.

107. Lithuania is one of the countries with the fastest ageing population in the European Union and in the group of member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, characterised by steadily deteriorating demographic indicators. It is difficult to bring about rapid changes in health sector, however, a breakthrough is still possible. Considering the poor indicators, we will have to ensure not only the implementation of changes but also their pace. We are willing and determined to create a health care system able to reduce all social and health related inequalities that undoubtedly pose threat to quality of life and the stability of the country. To restore the demographic growth of the population, we will pay attention to the health and education of the population and promote technologies that ensure positive changes in demographic indicators.

108. The short-term priority of the Government will undoubtedly be effective management of the COVID-19-induced situation until vaccination in the country reaches the recommended level. To this end, a separate tactical action plan aimed at increasing the resilience of the public and the health care system to the challenges of the pandemic has been developed, which includes steps towards recovery enabling the relaxation of restrictions and renewal of proper control of new

cases and measures for the future when return to normal lifestyle will become possible due to population immunity.

109. We aim to ensure that:

109.1. the health care system is focused on a person - a patient, an employee, and not on buildings, investments or purchase of expensive equipment;

109.2. quality services are provided to all residents of Lithuania, regardless of their place of residence, social or economic situation;

109.3. every group of society and a member thereof takes care of personal and public health, takes every effort to prevent diseases;

109.4. health system is ready to respond to emerging threats and crises and face the challenges of the future;

109.5. system of management, financing and supervision of the health system is the basis, not the obstacle, to ensuring a long, high-quality and dignified human life.

110. 2024 success indicators:

110.1. average life expectancy is 77 years (currently 76 years);

110.2. difference in life expectancy between men and women is 8 years (currently 9.8 years);

110.3. healthy life expectancy is 60.5 years (currently 58.1 years);

110.4. adults who rate their health as good and very good is 64% (currently 58%).

111. 2030 success indicators:

111.1. average life expectancy is 81 years (currently 76 years);

111.2. life expectancy difference for men and women is 5.2 years (currently 9.8 years);

111.3. healthy life expectancy is 64 years (currently 58.1 years);

111.4. share of adults who rate their health as good and very good is 70% (currently 58%).

## **SECTION TWO**

### **PRIORITY PROJECTS OF THE GOVERNMENT**

#### **Project: Enhancing public health**

112. Enhancing public health is not only a way to prevent diseases, but also means to foster health through innovative public health technologies seeking to ensure that every member of society takes responsibility for their own health and health of a social group close to them. In order to prolong a healthy life expectancy, we must not only set up an effective system of public and personal health care services, but also create conditions for each group in society and a member thereof to seek for personal and public health in a responsible and independent manner and prevent emerging diseases. Prevention must be a priority, as tackling the consequences always brings much higher costs for the state and society.

113. Key initiatives:

113.1. Healthy diet, physical activity, work, study and leisure time, sex education, prevention of stress and use of psychotropic substances are six areas which require action by our country in order to ensure the health of its citizens and reduce potential illnesses and diseases. Public health education must start from an early age, by ensuring broader implementation training programs on personal hygiene skills, health and healthy lifestyle in educational institutions, and create conditions for children to grow up healthy. It must reach the whole society through the public health offices actively working in municipalities, especially in communities, ensuring support to such activities, including support in the form of social advertisements and other initiatives. We will create and establish active leisure spaces for the citizens taking into account of their age and needs and encourage the search for possibilities to devote certain time of the day to active leisure and stress relief activities.

113.2. Focus on mental health and decline in suicide rate. The importance of mental health is indisputable in the modern world, especially in the context of the current health crisis. Lithuania stands out on account of high suicide rate and poor mental health indicators. We will address the issues by applying methods based on science and best practice, not by stigmatising. We will base our decisions not only on medical but also on preventive measures, early diagnosis, as well as take actions to increase psychological and emotional literacy of the population, promote public awareness and mutual assistance. We will develop adequate high-quality health and social services at the community level accessible throughout all the territory of Lithuania, which will fill the gaps between the primary chain (mental health centres) and hospitals. We will organise the provision of services and proactively offer them to children, adults and families in crises and severe psychosocial difficulties. We will pay particular attention to identifying human rights violations in the field of mental health care.

113.3. Elimination of poverty, economic and social inequality, large disparities between regions, leading to large health-related disparities. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights enshrines the human right not only to accessible and high-quality health care services, but also to the right to be free from factors affecting health such as limitations on access to health information, discrimination, violence and poverty. Inequality and social poverty deprive people of the opportunity and motivation to live a healthy life, thus we will strive to help people improve their own health, apply preventive measures taking into account factors affecting health as a whole. People are responsible for their physical and emotional health, but we will not stand on the side-lines and take care of the members of our society by providing effective, modern and accessible opportunities.

### **Project: Improving quality of personal health care services**

114. High-quality personal health care services that are equally effective and accessible to all patient groups throughout the country, modern, efficient, reliable and accessible public health

system are the key to a long, healthy, full and fruitful life. To achieve a breakthrough, we must ensure that a culture of respect for the human being (health care worker and patient) takes root in the health care system. Changes in the fields of quality assurance and improvement will be systematically planned, implemented and measured by objective indicators which will serve as basis when allocating resources to ensure the necessary changes. To this end partnership and cooperation between health policy makers, service providers, health care professionals and citizens, patient organisations, and other public policy sectors must be ensured. Communication should not be marked by division and demonstration of diverging interests but should be based on professional dialogue and aim to find solutions that are the most appropriate for the entire health care system. Payment for health care services must be linked to their quality and results achieved, regardless of the subordination of the health care institution and form of ownership, thus creating incentives for medical institutions to continuously improve the quality of services provided.

#### 115. Key initiatives:

115.1. Safe services are such health care services for which an effective quality assurance and undesirable incidents analysis system has been developed. This would include prevention, response, analysis and learning, as well as guarantees that the damage suffered is adequately compensated. To achieve these goals, the principles of quality management would be applied and science-based evidence and constantly updated international and national diagnostic and treatment methodologies, algorithms and recommendations based on good practice would be followed. Attention must focus on new technologies, which is particularly important in the face of the crisis caused by COVID-19. Old, conventional methods do not work and do not ensure appropriate response to new global and local challenges. The quality of work would be measured and controlled according to the model developed, taking into account the opinion of patients.

115.2. Effective services are personalised services that are most effective in achieving health promotion goals and minimising the number of deaths which may be prevented by applying health care related measures. Such services are provided using the latest technologies designed for disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment, monitoring and nursing, telemedicine, and ensuring the most effective, modern, pathology-oriented, individualised examination and treatment rather than the cheapest ones. At the same time, it is important to look to the future, encourage donation, and make efficient use of available expensive medical equipment. Specific indicators are used to measure the quality of health care services, and the payment for services is linked to their quality and efficiency, regardless of the form of ownership or subordination of the health care institution, thus creating incentives for medical institutions to improve the quality of services.

115.3. Accessible services are services that are accessible taking into account geographical, communication, organisational and economic factors. To improve access to services, it is necessary to reduce bureaucratic barriers for doctors and patients, and to eliminate obsolete and redundant regulation. We will improve the availability and financing of primary health care services, review the functions of the family doctor and his or her team, entrust other units with the

provision of preventive and social services that are not related to personal health care, expand the functions of pharmaceutical specialists. We will promote and expand the network of family doctors, quality specialised outpatient care, day surgery and day hospital services throughout the country. We will improve the availability and choice of emergency medical services and reimbursable medicines, by ensuring the health care and well-being of patients, reducing bureaucratic barriers, and ensuring the availability of the best, most innovative and effective treatment, and tools to patients.

115.4. Patient-centred services are services that are tailored to the individual patient and his or her needs, enabling the health specialist to harness his or her knowledge, experience and skills working in a network of health care facilities that meets current and future needs. We will ensure non-duplication of functions, integration of health and social services, equal availability of services throughout the territory of Lithuania. To bring about the changes, we will address most of the health problems at an early stage of the disease, as close as possible to the place of residence, by using and strengthening prevention programmes. We will facilitate green corridors, reduce the number of less effective inpatient services for active treatment, replace them with more effective outpatient and day hospital services, and increase the availability of reimbursable medicines.

### **Project: Health system resilience against threats and preparedness for future challenges**

116. The health system must be prepared to respond to emerging threats and crises, face future challenges, respond quickly to changes and manage them effectively by flexibly adapting to new realities, and ensuring that during the transformation period appropriate and continuous activities aimed to protect health and life of people well be preserved.

117. Key initiatives:

117.1. Preparedness of the system to face threats and crises. The health system must be ready to respond quickly and effectively to emerging threats, crises, pandemics and other potential disasters (such as the accident at the Belarusian nuclear power plant), both in terms of the availability of infrastructure and the competencies of specialists. The adequacy of civil protection measures, a well-accumulated and accessible reserve of measures, clear and adequate compensatory measures, public education, and developed competencies of health professionals are the main measures we will apply to be prepared for possible disasters. The state must be able to respond in a timely and effective manner to both local and global challenges.

117.2. Preparedness of the system to face future challenges. The ageing of the population, climate change, increasing antibiotic resistance, false information flows are just some of the future challenges that the system must prepare for today. As part of the preparation, we will create a health system open to changes and innovation, integrate health and social services, develop information technologies, use AI, social advertising, NGO initiatives, cooperate with the media, various social groups, develop good practices and raise the prestige of the medical occupations.

**Project: A competent and adequately paid health professional**

118. Health professionals and their well-being are fundamental to the success of the health system. We must ensure the sufficiency in the number of medical staff and the required competencies, provide for their qualification improvement, set an adequate rate of salary and ensure positive emotional climate. All health care professionals must receive exceptional attention and care enabling them to provide safe, dignity-oriented and quality services in a timely manner. The health system must function in such a way as not to hinder but rather create the best possible working conditions for our health professionals keeping various bureaucratic redundant requirements and terms to a minimum. It is essential to ensure a fair and motivating remuneration system, adequate working conditions and workload that meet the expectations of both current employees of the system and future specialists. The involvement of our citizens who are successful in practical and scientific work abroad would also contribute to positive and progressive changes.

119. Key initiatives:

119.1. Enough medical staff to provide quality health care services across Lithuania. We will properly identify, plan and meet the need for health professionals (sufficient number of nurses, family doctors, medical specialists, rehabilitation specialists and other specialists in the health care system), measure and reduce workload, bureaucracy, ensure that medical services are available throughout the country. We will promote the mobility of medical staff, improve remote consultations, which will ensure equal access to services throughout the country.

119.2. Highly qualified health care professionals. We will review the system for qualification acquisition and medical practice licensing, promote and strengthen self-government by transferring licensing, certification, control and qualification improvement functions to it, introduce targeted funding (baskets) for qualification improvement, develop managerial competencies and emotional literacy, and promote international cooperation.

119.3. Motivating remuneration system and a positive emotional climate in the health system. We will link the motivating salaries for doctors, nurses and other health professionals with the current average salary in the country, set a 'floor' salary, manage workload, take actions to improve the emotional climate and organisational culture, take efforts to ensure psychological assistance to health professionals and put into practice 'no-fault damage', 'error culture' models.

**Project: Effective health system management and financing**

120. Only effective management and financing system can ensure the implementation of the necessary changes. Applicable legal requirements, information systems and funding must help, not hinder the development of the system.

121. Key initiatives:

121.1. Health sector financing model based on objective costs. We will create a system that enables the calculation of objective prices of personal health care services, consistently use the methodology of service fees, collect all information on the costs incurred, determine the cost of health care taking into account of the assessment of the costs of health insurance and other funds (reimbursed outside the Compulsory Health Insurance Fund). We will encourage the citizens to get involved into the development and improvement of the health system by increasing the transparency and openness of the system. We will evaluate and improve compulsory health insurance, the tax system applied to the health care sector, align the administration system with the system for state budget composition and execution, look for new financing sources, methods and forms for compulsory health insurance fund and other health care fields.

121.2. Functionality and integrity of e-systems. We will ensure that all e-systems of the health sector work effectively and have interfaces with other public e-systems. We will use information technologies to facilitate the work of medical staff, inform patients and reduce bureaucracy. We will apply no paper policy and implement new information technology solutions that increase operational efficiency (e.g. mobile applications) and open access to depersonalised data.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **MISSION: HIGH VALUE-ADDED ECONOMY**

#### **SECTION ONE**

#### **RATIONALE AND SUCCESS INDICATORS**

122. Lithuania sees the 21st century as an age of new opportunities. It can become an age of our new ideas, creativity, openness and prosperity. Respect for private property, freedom of initiative and openness to innovations are the foundations of any free society and successful economy. Lithuania can and must become a country with a high standard of living, where innovative products with high added value and world-famous services are created.

123. Countries with a high standard of living share important common features: first, their economies are based on the export of innovative, technology-oriented sectors of the economy; secondly, these countries create favourable regulatory, tax conditions for private initiative and entrepreneurship; thirdly, such countries ensure easy access to capital resources for businesses both start-ups and re-starts.

124. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the innovation ecosystem of the state promotes the technological renewal of Lithuanian companies and their reorientation to the production and export of innovative goods and services. We will take steps to ensure that legal regulation and tax system of the state promotes entrepreneurship and citizen involvement. We will ensure consistent deregulation and improvement of the business climate, including simpler business administration,

modern migration policy, active labour market policy, continued digitalisation of public services and open data policy, and cost-effective public procurement. Finally, to increase Lithuania's economic potential, we will increase the capacity of Lithuanian economic diplomacy and improve access of Lithuanian companies to various capital resources.

125. We aim to ensure that:

125.1. Lithuania becomes a high added value economy;

125.2. Lithuania can compete in this field with the leading European countries with economic innovation.

125.3. business climate in Lithuania embraces entrepreneurship and foreign direct investment;

125.4. a sustainable, digital transport system able to meet future economic needs is up and running;

125.5. Lithuania has a strong energy infrastructure.

126. 2024 success indicators:

126.1. Lithuania ranks 35<sup>th</sup> out of 40 in the Global Innovation Index;

126.2. Lithuania's labour productivity reaches at least 85% of the European Union average (75% of the European Union average in 2017);

126.3. the share of high-tech value products in the total production in Lithuania is at least 7% (in 2017 it accounted for 3.6 %).

127. 2030 success indicators:

127.1. Lithuania ranks 20<sup>th</sup> out of 40 in the Global Innovation Index;

127.2. Public and private sector investment in research and development is 2% of GDP.

## **SECTION TWO PRIORITY PROJECTS OF THE GOVERNMENT**

### **Project: Vibrant innovation ecosystem**

128. Economic transformation and escape from the middle-income trap are not possible without technological renewal in all sectors of the economy and innovation-friendly climate that encourages scientific and business cooperation and allows to compete globally. Such an innovation-friendly climate, innovation ecosystem will be achieved primarily through clearly defined priorities, innovation-friendly institutional changes, necessary regulatory changes and a set of financial incentives.

129. Key initiatives:

129.1. Attuning the network of state institutions to innovation reform and innovations. We will ensure a breakthrough in the field of innovations, research and development (R&D), complete the innovation reform, streamline the network of state institutions regulating this sector through

improved performance of the Ministry of Economy and Innovation. We will establish an Innovation Agency entrusted with the functions and support measures that are important to innovation policy.

129.2. Ensuring steady growth in investment in R&D, particularly as regards private efforts. With a view to creating a competitive and high value-added economy, we will take steps to ensure that both the state and business invest more ambitiously in research and development. We will create real incentives for businesses to invest in research so that private sector investments finally reach at least the European Union average. We will ensure that the investments of the European Union, the state and businesses are used for the implementation of transparent and sustainable projects by applying clear criteria.

129.3. Refining priorities for smart specialisation. In order to restructure the Lithuanian economy, we will ensure targeted and concentrated assistance to the areas of smart specialisation following the revision of their priorities. We will select economic sectors to benefit from special sector development and financing programmes with a sector development strategy, specialised financial instruments, sector-tailored legal regulation, researcher training programmes and other measures relevant to the development of the sector.

129.4. Developing Industry 4.0 platform. To promote the technological renewal of industry in Lithuania, we will increase the participation of state institutions and organisations in the activities of the Industry 4.0 national platform. By expanding the Industry 4.0 platform, we will, together with business and research communities, develop insights into economic transformation, at the same time increasing the inclusiveness of the platform.

129.5. National digital strategy. We will ensure access to high-quality Internet for balanced social and economic development of the country. We will aim for a smooth transition to one of the most important changes in the digital economy and society in the next decade: the introduction of fifth generation mobile communications (5G).

### **Project: Universal entrepreneurship**

130. Economic transformation will be sustainable and long-lasting when noticeable and accessible to all sections of society. We will ensure that public investment and regulatory changes that facilitate business start-ups and administration reach different sections of society in terms of age, size of business and geography. We will modernise employment policy, starting with the centralisation of responsibility for its development and implementation.

131. Key initiatives:

131.1. Ensuring centralised and effective employment policy. We will improve national employment and retraining systems by concentrating all resources and transferring the responsibility for the development and implementation of the common employment strategy to the Employment Service. Later, we will initiate a review of the activities and processes of the

Employment Service to ensure that its objectives are achievable and its services effective. We will effectively involve the population in the labour market, promote the creation of competitive jobs, particularly in the regions. We will give priority to promoting the employment of the long-term unemployed, young people, women, the elderly, people living in certain regions, the disabled, people belonging to certain social groups, and reducing the unemployment rate.

131.2. Developing social dialogue and corporate social responsibility. We will continue to promote social partnership and increase involvement in trade unions and associations. We will consult social partners before making decisions. We will promote collective bargaining by transferring part of employment regulation from the laws to collective agreements at national, individual (sectoral) and company level, as well as take steps to ensure average wage increase. We will promote corporate social responsibility, support initiatives of socially responsible business.

131.3. Improving monitoring and management of the labour market. We will improve monitoring of the labour market, respond flexibly to labour market needs and implement effective employment programmes. We will review the rules of administration of regional development support, we will clarify the implementation mechanisms of the European Union support for effective employment programmes.

131.4. Investment in the regions. We will direct state support to promising Lithuanian economic centres, develop a separate, specialised growth plan for each of them and implement a regional development policy based on economic growth. We will work closely with municipality and attract additional investment in the regions by ensuring necessary regulatory changes. We will promote youth entrepreneurship initiatives in the regions, involve young people in social activities, and give priority to re-migration. We will promote community activities in the regions as well as implementation of business and social projects that create jobs in the region.

131.5. Silver economy. We will create tools for employment, civic participation, healthy ageing, tourism, entrepreneurship and learning of the elderly. In collaboration with the higher education institutions and the private sector, we will develop social innovations and make effort to ensure that older people have the opportunity to work and earn money as long as they want and can, and that working conditions are more flexible and responsive to their individual needs. We will prepare a silver generation start-up package for (training, business incubator infrastructure, experience-sharing programmes and state guarantees for business loans) for older people who want to engage in self-employed activities.

131.6. Strong micro-business. In promoting entrepreneurship, we will use the term ‘micro-business’. Micro-business is a company with maximum 10 employees and the annual turnover of less than EUR 2 million. We will also consider tax incentives (including moratorium on fines, reduced corporate tax rate) and radical reduction of the regulatory burden.

131.7. Labour relations that do not hinder entrepreneurship and reduce shadow economy. Aware of the fact that economic entities are prone to changes in the new economy, we will review legislation governing labour relations to ensure that it does not put obstacles to the development

of micro-business, young businesses and silver economy. We will increase the opportunity to apply flexible forms of work, including flexible forms of work in state institutions. We will improve measures to combat illegal and undeclared work, including specific measures to prevent illegal work, assess the ratio of the number of inspections revealing cases of illegal work to the total number of illegal work related inspections carried out, promote civic-mindedness of the society when paying taxes, social security contributions and ensuring transparency.

### **Project: Deregulation and better business climate**

132. Despite the role of states in modern economy, maximum freedom for business to operate is a key guarantor for economic transformation and further growth. To improve the competitiveness of the Lithuanian economy both in the region and worldwide, we will simplify the rules for business regulation and employee attraction, and, where possible, transfer regulatory functions from the state to municipalities or private business. To improve investor confidence in public authorities, we will make steps to ensure greater transparency in decision-making and to involve stakeholders and associations in decision-making in a timely manner.

133. Key initiatives:

133.1. Easier business administration. We will make the business supervision system more efficient by eliminating over-regulation and duplicative requirements for businesses. We will consolidate business supervisory authorities. We will facilitate starting and running a new business (lower authorised capital limit, tax-related measures, strengthened rights of minority shareholders, and improved corporate restructuring / bankruptcy procedures). We will set new goals for relevant national authorities (particularly the National Land Service under the Ministry of Agriculture, the State Territorial Planning and Construction Inspectorate under the Ministry of Environment, the Department of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture, and the National Public Health Centre under the Ministry of Health) so that they work for the benefit of the public without stifling private initiatives needed by society.

133.2. Migration policy attuned to the spirit of the age. We will simplify migration procedures for emigrants to return and talents to come or stay in Lithuania after their studies. We will appoint a state institution responsible for the attraction and integration of highly skilled Lithuanian-origin and foreign professionals. We will create a simple migration system attractive for highly skilled professionals (which will include one-stop-shop, simplified procedure for the issue of the European Union Blue Card and for the renewal of permits to reside in Lithuania and simplified, non-discriminatory opportunities for foreign students to integrate in Lithuania).

133.3. Transparent and cost-effective public procurement. We will improve public procurement procedures, thus promoting more transparent business competition for public contracts and greater opportunities for civil servants to make public procurement decisions based on cost-effectiveness rather than formal criteria.

133.4. Real-time economy. We will take steps to achieve maximum digitisation of public services provided to the people and business. We will strengthen institutional competencies necessary for the implementation of the e-state and e-resident vision. We will continue and strengthen the formation of digital policy and the development of the digital market (by including new areas of public administration and private sector: validation of the information model of construction, digitisation of individual construction procedures, implementation of functions combining public scientific and regulatory advice, digitisation of notary services, incentives to deliver innovative financial services, etc.). We will ensure the security of data collected by the state and initiate the launching of the idea of Digital Embassy.

133.5. Open data provide new opportunities for business and people. We will resolutely continue and implement the open data policy by opening up centralised data processed by the Lithuanian public sector, ensuring that access to them is not limited by any precondition and granted from a single point in a convenient manner following the one-stop-shop principle. Open data policy enables the citizens to monitor public governance, use of public funds, also decision-making and implementation. The more open the state is, the greater is the public trust; and publicity is one of the most important anti-corruption factors.

### **Project: Strong economic diplomacy**

134. The internal market of the European Union is one of the most important pillars of the Lithuanian economy. 59% of goods and 68% of services are exported to the Member States of the European Union. Lithuania is among the five countries leading the implementation of the internal market rules. Therefore, the efficient functioning of the European goods, services and digital market, its development and removal of barriers are the exclusive interest of the Lithuanian economy. In order to increase the volume of Lithuanian exports in both the traditional as well as the markets that yet unknown to our businesses, we will help Lithuanian businesses to expand worldwide by strengthening Lithuanian economic diplomacy, together with Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania. We will prepare a clear Lithuania's economic image plan for international audience, collaborate with the existing institutions, and establish the necessary new representative offices to implement it.

135. Key initiatives:

135.1. Mobilising a group of like-minded people to strengthen the European Union's internal market and remove barriers. Together with the Nordic countries, Germany and other Member States of the European Union, we will make efforts to remove barriers in the internal market, especially in the areas of transport, services and digitalisation.

135.2. Lithuanian economic potential publicity programme. In cooperation with businesses and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we will develop an international long-term Lithuanian

economic potential publicity programme to help represent Lithuanian business in international markets.

135.3. Effective Lithuanian economic diplomacy. We will strengthen the capacity of Lithuanian economic diplomacy in the global markets that are most relevant and strategically as well as geopolitically important for Lithuanian business.

135.4. Plan on business relocation to Lithuania. We will draw up a plan on business relocation to Lithuania (primarily from neighbouring countries, such as Belarus) including changes in regulatory and taxation framework which will increase Lithuania's competitiveness in the region. We will actively communicate and cooperate with high value-added business organisations in Belarus and other relevant countries in order to move their business to Lithuania.

### **Project: Easier access to capital resources**

136. Like in euro area, in Lithuania too business largely relies on banks for funding, but due to the recent pressures businesses in Lithuania is finding it difficult to attract funds. As a result of the stringent risk control requirements, banks tend to refrain from riskier investments in companies with great potential for growth or in small companies. This complicates the development of business and reduces the economic growth potential in Lithuania. To fix the situation in terms of the availability of capital resources, we will set up a fund of financial instruments for different industry branches.

137. Key initiatives:

137.1. Lithuanian Strategic Investment Fund. We will set up a fund to mobilise public and private sector financial resources and promote investment in priority areas identified by the state. The Fund would be financed from the Government (public budget, Road Administration and state-owned enterprises in energy and transport), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB). These investments would be directed towards national priority projects, transformation of traditional industry (under Industry 4.0) and financing of small and medium-sized business. The above-mentioned small and medium-sized enterprises would receive financial incentives (from EUR 5000). Such mechanism would ensure access to loans, leasing, and export insurance for small and medium-sized businesses.

137.2. Financial instruments for start-ups. We will improve the development of the ecosystem for Lithuanian start-ups by setting up a fund of financial instruments with an investment strategy aimed at enhancing the start-up ecosystem in line with the trends in smart specialisation. We will launch an international level technology start-up accelerator to attract early-stagers not only from Lithuania but from other countries in the region too for the services of acceleration and incubation.

137.3. State guarantee scheme for small and medium-sized enterprises. To facilitate small businesses development investment in times of economic downturn, we will provide small businesses and start-ups with state guarantees modelled on the UK Enterprise Investment Scheme. Furthermore, in the absence of a well-developed local stock exchange in Lithuania, the development of medium-sized enterprises requires good conditions for investing in local private companies. As investments in private companies are risky, we will ensure the availability of the state guarantees modelled on the UK Enterprise Investment Scheme to increase investment and reduce risks.

**Project: Optimal system for state-owned enterprises and public governance**

138. Following the OECD recommendations for the strengthening of the governance of state-owned and municipally-owned enterprises (SOEs and MOEs), which, in their opinion, is still below the standards of other OECD member states, we will apply the highest standards of quality and transparency to the governance of SOEs and MOEs. We will see how much it costs for the state and what the benefits are to own each enterprise. We will involve competent experts in the governance of the enterprises, while continuing to depoliticise SOEs. To achieve progress, we will introduce innovations in the governance and ensure that all the stakeholders are involved in decision-making.

139. Key initiatives:

139.1. Taking stock of SOEs and MOEs. We will ensure that state resources are not wasted as the state and municipalities invest, either directly or indirectly (acting through the controlled enterprises), in competitive markets. We will take stock of the legal forms of legal entities run by the state and we will abandon the ones that involve the state and municipalities in the competition with private business in the industries where state participation is not necessary. The state will participate in economic activities only in the case of market failure, and its actions in the respective situation will be proportionate, i.e. it will choose a method with the least distortive effect on competition.

139.2. More SOEs listed on the stock exchange. Of the 49 state-owned enterprises (SOEs), only five are currently listed on the stock exchange, but the largest part of their shares is not actively traded. We will provide for a possibility of investing in Lithuania's strategic regulated companies thereby ensuring that the Lithuanian pension funds and insurance companies' funds are invested in Lithuania rather than abroad.

139.3. Continuing to depoliticise SOEs. We will continue to streamline the activities of SOEs by depoliticising their governance and we will ensure that SOEs follow commercial principles.

139.4. Introducing innovations in public governance. To have a modern and well-running public governance, we will set up a Public Governance Innovation Centre, which will make a part

of the Government Strategic Analysis Centre (STRATA) and bring together the already existing initiatives: GovTech laboratory, public policy innovation laboratory Policy Lab and the programme Create Lithuania. We will invite Lithuanian and foreign experts in behavioural economics, design, big data analysis, consumer behaviour, project management and other relevant fields to join us in framing and putting in practice future-oriented innovative changes in the public sector on a national and regional scale.

139.5. Open and trust-based decision-making. To achieve a higher quality of democracy, we will cooperate with business, maximally involving it in decision-making processes, and we will open data on the rationale behind decisions. We will open and make publicly available the stance of civil servants on all issues discussed in the groups of the European Union and the Organisation for European Co-operation and Development. We will optimise the draft legislation information system so as to have a transparent base for tracking draft legislation.

### **Project: Future transport system**

140. We will work towards a sustainable, digital and future-oriented transport system. We will strengthen the competitiveness of the Lithuanian transport sector. We will base our investment decisions on public data.

141. Key initiatives:

141.1. Transparent investment decisions based on publicly available data. Our decisions on the transport infrastructure development will be based on publicly available cost / benefit analysis and other data. By opening the data of the transport system, we will make efforts to provide the possibility for every citizen of the Republic of Lithuania to follow the process of investment decision making at governmental and municipal levels, thereby ensuring that the road infrastructure management is transparent and trusted by the public.

141.2. Developing sustainable transport system. We will expand the infrastructure networks of electrified railway, high-speed vehicle charging stations, bicycle and pedestrian paths and / or tracks, develop public-private transport interoperability and sustainable mobility systems, improve mobility conditions and mobility demand management, and reduce transport noise pollution.

141.3. We will ensure a balanced development of the transport network. We will connect the transport infrastructure into a unified network that integrates different modes of transport at the national level. In cooperation with municipalities, we will strengthen the internal transport system of the country by increasing connectivity between cities, reducing the remoteness of rural and small and medium-sized cities, transport flows in cities, upgrading railway infrastructure and increasing its attractiveness for passenger and freight transport. In order to increase passenger and freight flows, we will improve Lithuania's international connections with the European Union and third countries by road, rail, air, sea and inland waterway transport.

141.4. Lithuania's accessibility by air in strategic directions. We will create a long-term and sustainable flight promotion model that ensures air transport to target markets that are important for the development of the Lithuanian economy.

141.5. Digitisation of the transport sector. To strengthen the competitiveness of the Lithuanian transport sector, we will draw up and implement, in collaboration with the social partners, an action plan for the digitisation of the Lithuanian transport sector, including financial instruments for e-transport development. We will take regional leadership in promoting joint digitisation projects with neighbouring countries to develop an integrated transport ecosystem of the future.

141.6. We will introduce automated and smart traffic management systems ensuring safer, more efficient and sustainable transport. By applying various information and communication technologies to all modes of passenger and freight transport, we will apply measures to improve traffic safety by implementing the state traffic safety programme Vision Zero. We will integrate the existing technologies, while promoting the creation of new services in the transport sector, ensuring the creation of new jobs and the development of the sector. We will promote an intensive process of transport digitisation to improve traffic flows and the interoperability of transport modes and services by adapting to geographical and structural changes in logistics.

141.7. We will ensure access to high quality digital communications. We will introduce new, advanced, ultra-high-bandwidth networks as a foundation for building digital economy and society. We will ensure the earliest possible introduction of the new generation mobile communication (5G) technology and smooth development of the existing electronic communications. We will provide access to high-speed Internet for the population and businesses in remote areas.

141.8. Smooth implementation of public transport projects. We will take steps to ensure rapid implementation of the international railway project Rail Baltica, further development of the road connection Via Baltica, airports and seaports by increasing their operational capacity and Lithuania's competitiveness.

### **Project: Stronger energy infrastructure**

142. The synchronisation of the power grids with the continental European networks will require appropriate investment in networks and in other necessary infrastructure. These investments must also be fully geared to pursuing the green deal.

143. Key initiatives:

143.1. Larger-scale local electricity generation. To increase local electricity generation, we will first focus on power generation from renewable energy sources - wind and solar. We will develop solutions to allow the accumulation of excess green electricity when the capacity of power plants generating electricity from these sources will exceed the instantaneous consumption. To

achieve this goal, we will mobilise production and service companies operating in this field in Lithuania. We will promote the research and development required for the energy sector, as well as the creation of new technological companies and energy start-ups, thus expanding production and creating new jobs. During the transition period, we will strive to make better use of the available high-efficiency gas power generation capacity.

143.2. Modern balancing capacity. We will accelerate and install modern flexible balancing and storage capacities in the transmission network necessary for the electricity system. We will install new flexible electricity generation and / or storage capacities of at least 200 MW to balance renewable energy power plants by 2024. Given the increasing energy generation capacity from electricity prosumers connected to the distribution network and the growing demand for electricity for grid-charged electric vehicles, we will take steps to ensure that system balancing is partly performed in the distribution network.

143.3. Preserving and developing emergency and power reserves. In order to ensure that the energy system meets adequacy requirements and is able to function in isolated mode, we will preserve the existing power plants and ensure the installation of new 2 x 200 MW reserve capacities necessary for the energy system, including the capacities necessary for the instantaneous reserve.

143.4. Integrating the Lithuanian natural gas market into regional markets. We will complete the implementation of the Gas interconnection Poland - Lithuania (GIPL) project and thereby connect the Polish and the Baltic gas markets. In cooperation with state-controlled companies operating in this sector, we will reduce subsidies to the liquefied natural gas (LNG) sector.

### **Project: Increasing the added value and competitiveness of agriculture and food industry**

144. We will take steps to introduce the latest technologies, innovations, new risk management tools, build competencies in the sector and accelerate digitisation, increase the added value and competitiveness of farms, thus contributing to the achievement of the main goal of providing the society with quality food and raw materials for high value-added products, and exploiting bioeconomy opportunities. We will increase the competitiveness of farms with growth potential by fairly distributing direct payments, providing access to financial resources, and promoting the cooperation thereof.

145. Key initiatives:

145.1. Increasing competitiveness. We will strengthen the competitiveness of the agricultural sector by ensuring sustainable growth in productivity and labour efficiency. We will support the development and dissemination of advanced technologies, digital and other smart business management solutions (precision agriculture, robotisation, artificial intelligence, etc.), knowledge and innovation that will enable the transition to more sustainable production and

processing of agricultural products. We will promote the production of higher value-added products by exploiting the opportunities provided by the bioeconomy and investing the funds of the European Union and the state.

145.2. Ensuring farm viability and greater resilience. We will distribute direct payments in a more targeted and efficient way, provide access to financial resources, promote new forms of cooperation and consultation, and create conditions necessary to ensure the viability of farms, particularly those with lower income but greater development potential.

145.3. Risk management. We will increase the sector resilience to crises and emergencies by applying targeted risk management measures. We will develop new forms of risk management. We will enable farms to obtain up-to-date knowledge to help manage farm risks.

145.4. Export promotion. We will support the export of processed and high value-added healthy, safe products of high quality through economic diplomacy and other means. We will help companies to adapt to export needs by using the European Union and state funds. We will take steps to ensure that products made in Lithuania are perceived as quality, exclusive and sustainable products.

145.5. Modern forms of cooperation. We will promote clusters and support their activities. To strengthen the bargaining power of farmers in the value chain, we will support various forms of collaboration between farmers, promote cooperation and clustering in producer groups, closer cooperation between consumers and producers, particularly through short supply chains.

145.6. Modernisation of agriculture by introducing the latest scientific and technological innovations. We will support projects for the development and deployment of innovations, dissemination of research results and their commercialisation. We will modernise the agricultural knowledge and innovation system by enhancing its quality, ensure access to the knowledge platform that meets the expectations of farmers and adapts to current events (especially the challenges posed by climate change).

## **CHAPTER VII**

### **MISSION: LITHUANIA'S GREEN DEAL**

#### **SECTION ONE**

#### **RATIONALE AND SUCCESS INDICATORS**

146. On its path towards the fourth decade of independence, Lithuania will create a clear plan on how to stop living on a credit to be repaid by future generations. By 2024, the Government will have laid the foundations for economic change in the country and in the daily lives of people in order to ensure that our children and future generations have the same opportunities, natural resources, clean and rich nature as we do today.

147. The European Union's leadership in fighting climate change offers opportunities for Lithuania too. We are committed to be at the forefront of the European green deal and support the most ambitious climate change targets of the European Union. Lithuania will prove this leadership through the activities of its Government, agreements with the public, business and municipalities.

148. The green deal will help to ensure the national security and independence of our country in terms energy and raw materials, high quality of life and restore the balance of nature.

149. We aim to ensure that:

149.1. economy of Lithuania gradually becomes climate-neutral and circular;

149.2. our cities and towns become centres of quality life;

149.3. our homes and businesses use only green energy and heat;

149.4. Lithuania's natural diversity is protected against threats from climate change and human activities;

149.5. food for the population is local, organic and its production is environment-friendly;

149.6. environment protection is a priority for every citizen and company.

150. 2024 success indicators:

150.1. Lithuanian forests cover 35% of the territory of the country (currently 33.7%);

150.2. Lithuania's protected areas cover 20% (currently 17.64%), a quarter of them belong to strictly protected areas;

150.3. agreement with the public and business sector on sectoral agendas for the implementation of the National Climate Change Management Strategy is reached;

150.4. Lithuania's secondary raw material recycling (circularity) index is of EU average.

151. 2030 success indicators:

151.1. Lithuania has its first climate-neutral and waste-free city;

151.2. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Lithuania reduced by 30% compared to 2005;

151.3. waste disposed of in landfills account for no more than 5% (currently 24.73%);

151.4. 30% of the country's territory belongs to protected areas (currently 17.63%), one third of which is subject to strict protection requirements.

152. 2050 success indicators:

152.1. Lithuania becomes a climate-neutral country;

152.2. the whole economy of Lithuania becomes circular.

## **SECTION TWO**

### **PRIORITY PROJECTS OF THE GOVERNMENT**

#### **Project: Circular and climate-neutral economy**

153. Only a rapid transition to circular and climate-neutral economy will ensure long-term competitiveness of Lithuania and the required competencies developed at a sufficiently rapid pace.

Current sectoral policy and tax system are not compatible with each other, do not reflect the real environmental impact of economic activities and do not promote the return on environmental innovation.

154. Efforts must be made to achieve a more consistent integration of climate neutrality and circular economy related priorities into all sectoral measures of the policy in order to send a clear signal to markets to innovate in the field of green deal and invest in it. Long-term tripartite national sectoral agreements on higher pollution taxes, state subsidies and green innovation policy, close cooperation between science, business and public authorities will ensure our smooth transition to climate-neutral and circular economy, by increasing the competitiveness of companies and compliance with the highest international sustainability standards, decoupling economic growth of the country from the use of natural resources.

155. Key initiatives:

155.1. Green tax reform. We will abolish all tax exemptions for fossil fuels and completely abandon the use of coal and oil products in the heat sector by 2024. We will redirect sectoral tax policy towards environmental objectives, extend producer responsibility and ensure that the polluter pays principle is applied to reflect the true cost of natural resources. The funds saved and additional money paid by the taxpayers will be used to strengthen the green wave and reduce the tax burden on the most vulnerable.

155.2. The Lithuanian economy becomes circular. We will create, by 2024, 10 thousand new jobs and ensure that the secondary raw material use index of the country reaches the European Union average by promoting waste recycling and use of secondary raw materials, transforming production and service business models. We will promote cross-sectoral cooperation between applied science and business associations in developing innovative circular production and services. We will create an efficient market for secondary raw materials and stimulate demand for products and services made from them. We will effectively reduce the dependence of Lithuanian producers on the import of raw materials, shorten the supply chains and increase the resilience of Lithuanian business to global crises. We will address the packaging waste crisis as a matter of priority.

155.3. Climate-neutral economy by 2050. We will take steps to ensure that by 2030 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Lithuania are reduced by 30% compared to 2005. We will stabilise GHG emissions even in the sectors in which they have increased so far, namely the transport and agriculture sectors, by 2025. We will, in cooperation with business and society, develop by the end of 2022 sectoral agendas on reducing dependence on fossil fuels, identify the key steps for change, as well as support and market impact measures. We will give legal effect to the deadlines for the phase-out of fossil fuels in individual sectors. We will strive to ensure that ambitious climate policy does not result in loss of competitiveness of the Lithuanian economy, therefore we will support and actively participate in the development of the European Union carbon border adjustment mechanism, by ensuring that same environmental taxes are applied to

both imported and intra-EU products. By ensuring 10 year-long investments into climate-friendly technologies, we will create more than 20 000 jobs and acquire the competencies necessary for the long-term competitiveness of the country.

155.4. Climate-neutral Government from 2024, climate-neutral public sector from 2027. The public sector must set an example of responsible *modus operandi*. We will significantly expand the scope of green procurement in order to ensure that from 2023 onwards green procurement would become the dominant type of public procurement. From 2023 we will oblige state institutions to use only green electricity and heat, clean transport, and purchase goods, works and services only by organising green procurement.

155.5. GHG reduction in large industrial enterprises. We will change polluting industrial processes and raw materials in the main industrial enterprises of the country by applying regulatory measures and innovation financing instruments. We will support programmes on employee skills and reorientation that encourage the transition to climate-friendly technologies. We will provide opportunities for businesses to become energy prosumers by employing renewable energy sources. We will support projects on technological improvements of industry aimed at an economically and socially balanced result. We will promote the use of hydrogen in industrial processes and / or production of fertilizers. We will promote the use of secondary and environmentally friendly raw materials in industrial enterprises.

155.6. We will reduce the energy intensity of the Lithuanian economy by 40% by the year 2030. We will promote structural changes in the economy focused on the creation of high value-added businesses and the development of the service sector. We will support projects on modernisation and digitisation of industry, promote process innovations by reducing energy consumption.

### **Project: Sustainable and accessible cities**

156. Only 4% of the territory of Lithuania is urbanised, but these happen to be the main zones of life quality, pollution, movement and consumption. Through innovative changes in urban planning, architecture and utilities, also through modern construction, we will make our cities sustainable centres of quality living.

157. Key initiatives:

157.1. The first climate-neutral and waste-free Lithuanian city by 2030. We will reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint of urban areas by a third by 2030. We will develop, in collaboration with the municipalities, guidelines for sustainable cities to improve the quality of the living environment, increase green areas, promote sustainable mobility, responsible and sustainable consumption, reduce waste, air, water, noise pollution and climate impact. We will give priority to the development of compact cities and the redevelopment of brownfields rather than to the urban sprawl. We will achieve this by applying tax measures, expanding the powers of municipalities

and setting priorities for infrastructure development. We will create a city environment index thus encouraging the municipalities to compete in the field of green deal and share good practice.

157.2. We will ensure clean air in the cities. We will halve air pollution that is harmful to people's health in Lithuanian cities and towns by 2030. We will support municipal and public initiatives to measure and improve air quality in urban areas: establishment of low-emission zones in city and town centres, implementation of clean heating solutions, concentration of new industrial zones in the periphery when planning them, and application of stricter pollution standards to industrial facilities located in city and town centres. We will promote links between residential areas and non-motorised transport infrastructure by green corridors thus forming a network of green connections. We will create regional and inter-institutional mechanisms for air, water, odour and noise pollution control.

157.3. Human being-centred sustainable mobility and public transport. We will develop a national strategy for sustainable mobility, which will become an agreement between cities and the Government on investment in infrastructure and sustainable mobility fund. We will use a significant part of the funds of the Road Maintenance and Development Programme to finance the measures included in the sustainable mobility plans. We will encourage people to leave their cars at home by ensuring more space on the streets to cyclists and pedestrians, expanding intermodality and ensuring road safety for all modes of transport. All public transport, taxi and ride-hailing service providers of the cities will use only renewable energy by 2027. We will promote electric mobility by creating a uniform, user-friendly and easily accessible charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. We will launch advanced information and communication technology transport systems thus creating safer, more efficient and cleaner passenger and freight transport. We will ensure connections between towns and regional centres by developing a public transport and railway network and access to it. We will design bridges, squares, large intersections, tunnels, ports, stations, rest areas taking into account the circular, sustainability, aesthetic and architectural criteria.

157.4. We will enable the self-government to create population-friendly cities and towns. We will help the municipalities to plan strategic urban development zones, infrastructure corridors, public spaces, locations for public buildings and green infrastructure to meet the needs of society. We will urgently and clearly regulate the development of real estate on leased state land. We will take steps to ensure that the land use policy is transferred to the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, and the functions of the National Land Service under the Ministry of Agriculture - to self-government. We will transfer the state land located in the city territories to the municipalities on a trust basis. Residents will become the owners of their place of residence, we will transfer to them more ownership and rights to solve the issues of green spaces, children's playgrounds and parking spaces. City and transport infrastructure will be planned in an integrated way, by including all sustainable means of transport and following the principles of universal design.

157.5. Renovation rate: 1 000 renovated blocks of flats per year. We will renew our cities and towns by implementing the New European Bauhaus initiative. We will create financial and regulatory incentives for renovation of public buildings and quarters, heritage management and restoration. We will initiate the preparation of a catalogue of best architectural solutions and environmental management practices. We will ensure effective advice on the preparation and implementation of investment plans and the responsibility of project promoters in terms of guarantees. As from 2030, at least 15% of all contract work will be related to the reconstruction of existing buildings.

157.6. We will replace the viscous bureaucracy in the construction sector with innovation and digitalisation. We will develop a construction code that sets out clear and consistent rules for the construction, design and exploitation of buildings. As of 2024 all public buildings will be constructed by using at least 50% of organic and wood construction materials, the use of secondary raw materials will increase, and the generation of construction waste will decline. We will improve the legal framework for building information modelling (BIM) processes to be used for construction process, buildings or infrastructure. We will prepare a scoring system by evaluating the activities undertaken by the administrators of blocks of flats. We will create a digital platform dedicated for the maintenance of blocks of flats enabling the residents to vote online. We will develop legal prerequisites and tools for modelling and digitisation of construction process and life cycle of buildings. We will guarantee fair compensation for property expropriated on grounds of public interest.

### **Project: Green energy**

158. As the fight against climate change becomes one of the most important priorities in the world and in Lithuania, there has been a growing need to ensure the supply of energy, the production and consumption of which would result in the lowest possible carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere. This will have a wide-ranging impact on electricity production, transport, industry, households and residential heating, thus rapid growth of electricity production from renewable energy sources should become one of the key objectives of the state. Changes will require new technological solutions. We must become not only the users, but also the developers thereof. Innovations in the energy sector will contribute to the growing export potential of industry. The transformation of the energy sector will be systematic and closely monitored in order to maintain the regional competitiveness of electricity price and protect consumers, industry and public finances.

159. Key initiatives:

159.1. We will expand the generation of green electricity. We will take steps to ensure that 30% of the electricity consumed in the country is produced by using renewable energy sources by 2025 (and respectively 50% by 2030). Considering the conditions of synchronisation of the

transmission network with the continental Europe networks and the requirements for the safe and reliable operation of the system, we will accelerate the development of solar and wind power plants. It is planned that a network of up to 1.2 GW of installed wind power plants and 1 GW of solar power plants will be operational as of 2025. We will carry out research to decide on the installation of high-capacity wind power plants in the Lithuanian marine waters after 2025.

159.2. We will encourage the development of prosumers. We will take steps to ensure that by 2030 every third household in Lithuania produces and accumulates electricity for its own needs, thus contributing to the achievement of national green energy goals. We will encourage the residents to install solar power plants at home, invest in solar power parks in remote areas, and form communities of prosumers. To avoid a less rapid increase in the load on the distribution network, we will encourage as many electric car owners as possible to install solar power plants. We will improve the regulatory framework and conditions for prosumers to ensure the availability of investment support, lower investment risks, more flexible conditions for storing and selling the energy produced and participate in the implementation of innovative business models.

159.3. We will improve the electricity distribution network. As the number of owners of electric vehicles and prosumers increases and electricity flows in the distribution network change, we will modernise the electricity distribution network, and encourage electricity consumers to use electricity in such a way that its consumption is as even as possible during the day. We will pay a lot of attention to increasing electricity storage and balancing capacity in the distribution network. We will develop smart two-way accounting technologies, use flexible payment tariffs for electricity.

159.4. We will lay the foundations for hydrogen energy. Taking into account the provisions of the hydrogen energy strategy approved by the EU, we will take steps to ensure the implementation of pilot projects on the production of hydrogen from water in Lithuania, that would contribute to the balancing of surplus electricity from renewable energy sources. We will mobilise science and production related institutions to find solutions to reduce the disparities in the production of electricity from renewable energy sources by using hydrogen to generate the required amount of electricity. We will take steps to ensure that by 2024 we are fully prepared to adapt the existing natural gas network infrastructure to the transportation of natural gas and blend of hydrogen.

159.5. We will introduce an open data model. We will instruct the Lithuanian Energy Agency to set up a database of production, supply and consumption of the Lithuanian energy market, ensuring open access for all market participants. It will provide a summary of production, consumption and climate change-related indicators, allow to model the impact of regulatory policy, behaviour of consumers, suppliers and producers, and also enable the introduction of new business models and promotion of the digitisation of the energy sector.

159.6. We will ensure the monitoring of energy prices. We will create an energy regulation system that will encourage the application and introduction of innovations in industry and

households, motivate consumers to change consumption scenarios, thus ensuring lower loads on the network and its management. Such steps will prevent over-investment in electricity grid upgrades, and thus keep electricity prices low.

### **Project: Protection and sustainable use of natural capital**

160. The sustainable use of natural capital is important both for the growing economy of the country and health and quality of life of the population. When steering the economy towards the green deal, it is important to protect biodiversity and use the available natural resources responsibly. Recently, it has become particularly clear that public expectations regarding the protection of natural capital differ from its actual use; this must be addressed by creating harm reduction and prevention mechanisms as well as protecting the most sensitive and valuable ecosystems.

161. To ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, we must value and conserve the resources of ecosystems such as soil, clean air, water and biodiversity. To reduce GHG emissions, we will pay special attention to the expansion and restoration of carbon-rich ecosystems (forests and wetlands), develop the network of protected areas, and take care of the condition of water bodies.

162. Key initiatives:

162.1. The area of protected territories will increase by up to 20%, a quarter of them will be strictly protected. We must pay special attention to areas of high nature value. By improving the Natura 2000 network, we will ensure effective protection of natural habitats and endangered species living in them. We will expand protected areas in the Baltic Sea and ensure their real protection. We will review the management of the protected area system to make it more efficient, more responsive to the needs of nature and local communities. Successful protection is only possible with the involvement of local communities and landowners; thus, we will create schemes that allow everyone to contribute to nature protection.

162.2. Increasing the forest area that is protected and efficiently used. In 2021 we will prepare a national agreement on the protection and use of forests. We will promote forestry guided by the protection of natural values by steadily reducing the scale of economic activity-driven deforestation in protected areas. We will take care of the protection of very old forests. We will create conditions for the purchase for the benefit of the state of forest plots from private owners, for whom forestry restrictions in protected areas will be unacceptable. We will increase the efficiency of the State Forest Service. We will ensure stable supply of wood to the market to meet the needs of the bioeconomy. We will double the added value of Lithuanian wood and biomass, by encouraging the development of value chains and innovations. We will promote the creation of maximum added value of biomass in the heat, construction and bioeconomy sectors by applying regulatory mechanisms.

162.3. Restoring carbon-rich ecosystems (forests and wetlands) and ensuring sustainable use. Increased afforestation of the country and restored wetlands can have important upward economic effects and positive effects on the climate. We will increase woodlands by 35%. We will complete the land reform by addressing the issue of reserve forest ownership. We will develop an action plan for the restoration of drained, unusable and damaged wetlands. We will ban the exploitation of new natural marshes.

162.4. We will increase the number of clean water bodies up to 90%. Only 53% of surface water bodies in Lithuania are in good condition. We will ensure that all residents of cities and towns (with more than 2 000 inhabitants) have access to drinking water supply and wastewater services. We will encourage households with individual water supply and wastewater treatment facilities to connect to centralised systems and encourage water companies to increase operational efficiency. We will encourage the collection of rainwater in local infiltration wells or ponds. By strengthening environmental control, we will ensure that the wastewater discharged is treated in line with the set standards. We will regulate the use of mineral fertilizers, as well as adjust the periods of mineral and organic fertilizer application. We will pay more attention to solving the problems of pollution in the Baltic Sea.

162.5. Targeted protection. We need to know exactly what, where and how we protect. This requires effective biodiversity monitoring system, clear legislation and effective control system. We will pay a lot of attention to the regulation of hunting and fishing. We will introduce electronic hunting sheets accessible to control authorities in real time. We will improve the environmental impact assessment process. We will encourage the dismantling of orphan or municipal dams to restore fish migration corridors and natural riverbeds.

162.6. Animal welfare and protection guaranteed. All dogs and cats kept in Lithuanian households will be marked by 2024. We will transfer the issues of animal welfare to the competence of the Ministry of Environment. We will ensure the development and approval of the necessary national animal welfare and protection strategies and programmes which will serve as basis for improving animal welfare legislation and ensuring its implementation.

### **Project: Sustainable agricultural, aquaculture and food production systems**

163. Ever growing agricultural production has a negative impact on climate change, biodiversity, quality of water, air, and soil. Efforts to develop sustainable, environmentally friendly and economically and socially balanced farming have been insufficient. To make change happen, we will adjust the regulatory and financial incentive framework to promote more sustainable use of resources and address environmental challenges. The development of organic farming will depend not only on the applied support system but also on the changing needs of consumers. To reduce climate change, we will promote the introduction of technologies that reduce GHG

emissions and increase the carbon sequestration potential of soils. The pooling of research, expert knowledge and skills will play a key role in the implementation of the initiative.

164. Key initiatives:

164.1. Management of soil quality. The excess of unabsorbed nutrients by the plants pollutes air, soil and water, also adversely contributing to the climate change. We will take steps to reduce the amount of nutrients lost, restore the humus layer of the soil and reduce erosion. We will focus on balanced fertilisation and sustainable nutrient management practice applied in farms, thus reducing the use of synthetic mineral fertilisers. We will create a system to monitor the quality of soil.

164.2. Sustainable livestock farming and aquaculture. We will make effort to reduce the impact of animal product production on the environment and climate, encourage the transition to more sustainable livestock farming, by providing opportunities for wider use of innovative feed additives and feed or alternative feed materials based on Lithuanian resources. The achievement of the welfare and biosecurity of farm animals will ensure better animal health and food quality, as well as reduce the need for veterinary preparations. A higher level of animal welfare will be facilitated. We will support the initiatives of farms to reduce methane emissions in livestock farming and take steps to double the amount of recycled manure. We will expand the production of energy from renewable sources. Aquaculture will become the main source of fish supply. Commercial fishing will be banned while preserving national heritage and tourism activities, involving the community of coastal areas in resource management and conservation processes. Fish farming, sea and coastal fishing issues will be transferred to the Ministry of Environment.

164.3. Sustainable crop production. The development of integrated pest management system will become a key tool in reducing the use of chemical pesticides. We will encourage the use of scientifically based safe alternative methods to protect crops from pests and diseases.

164.4. We will double the area of organic farming. Organic farming ensures a healthy diet and helps to preserve biodiversity. We will promote the use of organic products, inform the consumers about the benefits of organic products to health and environment, and the production chain of a product (product sustainability). We will support organic farms.

164.5. Contribution of agriculture to climate change mitigation and adaptation of the sector. Plots where no-ploughing technologies will be applied are expected to expand by 1.5 times in 2024, and almost by 3 times in 2030. At least 4% (10% in 2030) of agricultural land will be used to diversify the landscape by 2024. In order to reduce GHG emissions, we will promote the following technologies: no-ploughing tillage, direct sowing, crop rotation, growing crops that absorb more GHGs and intermediate crops that store excess nitrogen from the soil, sustainable use of mineral fertilizers and their replacement by less polluting alternatives. We will encourage the planting and maintenance of perennial meadows as well as conversion of arable peatlands to wetlands, meadows or forests.

164.6. Sustainable food production systems. We will promote the production and consumption of safe, healthy, sustainable food products and take steps to reduce the environmental footprint of their production. We will make effort to ensure that producers agricultural production, food processing companies take concrete actions in the field of sustainability, create circular business models, use environmentally friendly packaging (harmless, reusable, recyclable and innovative packaging that helps to reduce food waste) and reduce waste. We will promote regional or local food systems based on the principle of shorter food chains. We will increase the visibility and consumption sustainable products produced by applying the quality systems, including in the public sector, where green procurement will become dominant. We will reduce food losses and food waste, food wastage throughout the whole food supply chain, and promote food waste recycling. We will strengthen the fight against fraud and food counterfeiting, which jeopardise the sustainability of food systems.

### **Project: Society as a partner in the green deal related transformation**

165. The Lithuanian green deal is not a political commitment but rather a commitment of the entire Lithuanian society. Change is only possible if society, science and business have a clear vision, motivation and tools to implement it. Therefore, the task of the Government is to provide all the conditions to enable the involvement of society, science and business in the global transformation.

166. In order to enable the social partners to contribute to effective problem solving, we will open up data on key environmental areas, expand the scope of environmental policy impact assessment and increase the level of detail thereof, share views and discuss the issues related to the effectiveness of measures applied in terms of environment protection and improvement thereof.

167. We will propose the most diverse and effective forms possible to help involve the population in decision-making process. We will collaborate with the society to identify and eliminate problems that hinder effective environment protection.

168. We will promote behavioural changes of society in pursuit of circular and climate-neutral economy.

169. Key initiatives:

169.1. We will build partnerships for change. We will take steps to ensure sustainable implementation of environmental goals by establishing consultative mechanisms involving various interest groups at all political levels. We will create opportunities for the involvement of the public and associated structures in making decisions on solutions to the problems. We will agree on the necessary deadlines for abandoning the use of polluting technologies in individual sectors, identify the support and market mechanisms necessary for transformation. All these steps

will allow to create a clear long-term perspective for making timely decisions of businesses and residents and for planning investments.

169.2. Environmental policy based on indicators. The Environmental Protection Agency (hereinafter referred to as the Agency) will become an independent centre of expertise for impact assessment of planned and implemented environmental policy. By 2023 we will enable solutions based on environmental data by using the system developed by the Agency which allows to assess policy impact according to GHG emissions and other environmental indicators that can be measured. Such assessment will be mandatory for all new or amended legislation and investment policy tools. In addition, the effectiveness of environmental strategies and individual policy tools will be regularly assessed and publicised; steps will be made to increase their effectiveness.

169.3. Prioritisation of green investment. We will make effort to ensure that public funds are used only for environmentally friendly investments that meet the objectives of the green deal. We will place environmental efficiency among the main criteria in setting investment priorities. We will promote green initiatives aimed at tackling specific environmental or pollution problems.

169.4. Open and digitalised Ministry of Environment. In 2024, all services, information, monitoring, registers and processes of the institutions under the Ministry of Environment will be take the digital form. We will increase the trust and awareness of the public and professionals by opening multi-layered data, cadastres, permit information, pollution indicators in real time. This will allow to monitor the status of environment and changes thereof as well as make informed decisions to reduce the impact on the environment.

169.5. Citizen-oriented environment protection. We will provide residents and public organisations with an opportunity to perform some of the functions of state environment protection control and expand the powers of freelance inspectors. We will increase the involvement of external experts in control and audit procedures applied to environment protection and construction related processes. We will reduce and streamline the administrative burden for institutions controlling the construction, wildlife, population and economic sectors by consolidating the number of required permits and documents. The activities of the controlling institutions will be reoriented as follows: the process - towards the evaluation of the result, the identification of effects - towards prevention and counselling. We will complete the consolidation of controlling bodies by ensuring adequate material resources and motivation of officials. The functions related to the issuance of environmental permits and control will be performed by using a one-stop shop system to be introduced in 2023. We will ensure a smooth solution to future environmental crises by improving the competencies of the Environmental Protection Department as well as increasing its flexibility when seeking advice from experts working in different fields.

169.6. Environment protection-related awareness-raising activities. In cooperation with non-governmental organisations, educational and scientific institutions, we will develop a sustainable and informed approach of the public towards sustainable development and consumption. We will develop and support education and training programmes focused on raising

environmental awareness and promoting sustainable consumption. We will raise public awareness of product sustainability to prevent the spread of misleading information that can influence consumption decisions. In view of data, we will promote education on progress made in circular economy.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **MISSION: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF LITHUANIAN REGIONS**

#### **SECTION ONE**

#### **RATIONALE AND SUCCESS INDICATORS**

170. The development of Lithuanian regions is marked by great disparities. In the region with the capital city, the share of GDP per capita is almost 112% of the EU average, while in other regions of the country this figure ranges from 41 to 77% of the EU average. Such large disparities lead to huge economic and social exclusion, which is only increasing due to a lack of proper attention from the state. Some regions are economically prosperous, attractive to residents and investors, others remain marginalised, lack higher investment, and quality public services.

171. Regional policy to date has been more declarative. We are ready to implement a different regional policy in Lithuania, based on the consistent reduction of economic and social disparities between regions. We will empower municipalities by delegating more of the functions currently performed in a centralised manner and by offering the tools that ensure responsible financial independence of municipalities. We will give more attention to attracting investment to the regions, creating jobs, by empowering regional development councils and local communities to seek for the best solutions for their country.

172. It is not possible to ensure sustainable regional development without addressing disparities in public services, infrastructure and other areas. For this purpose, we will combine the measures planned with changes in the fields of education, health, culture, infrastructure and economic activity.

173. We aim to ensure that:

173.1. people living away from big cities have equal access to quality public services, education, work and right to lead a life in dignity;

173.2. economic and social exclusion of regions is reduced;

173.3. regional municipalities are more financially independent and free in allocating state budget funds to strengthen their region;

173.4. every municipality is motivated to make its region more attractive to investors and residents;

173.5. regions offer more jobs and quality public services;

173.6. local communities are involved in decision-making.

174. 2024 success indicators:

174.1. National Regional Development Programme including an effective and specialised economic growth plan for each region is prepared in cooperation with the representatives of the regions;

174.2. the share of EU structural funds redistributed through regional development councils amounts to 30%;

174.3. clear criteria to be applied when allocating state budget funds for municipal investment projects are approved.

175. 2030 success indicators:

175.1. the share of GDP in the regions of the country, except for the Vilnius region, reaches 75% of the EU average (currently 48.5%);

175.2. the average deviation of GDP per capita in the regions, compared to the country's GDP per capita, is 19.8% (currently 28.3%);

175.3. In number of regions with an average gross wage of more than 85% of the average wage in the Vilnius region is 6 (currently 2).

## **SECTION TWO**

### **PRIORITY PROJECTS OF THE GOVERNMENT**

#### **Project: Decentralisation of the regional policy**

176. Lithuania is one of the most centralised countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). We lag significantly behind the OECD average in terms of municipal revenue and expenditure. Municipal revenues in Lithuania make up on average 24% of state revenue, while the average of OECD countries is 32% and expenditure - 23% (OECD average is 32%).

177. Municipal investments in Lithuania make up 33% of total public investment, the OECD average is 47%.

178. According to the current allocation of functions between the state and municipalities, similar or identical activities are carried out at both levels, which co-operate to a limited extent. In order to achieve the sustainable development of the country's regions and meet the needs of the local population, it is necessary to give regions and municipalities more power to act independently, make decisions on investment development, expand and improve public services, quality of life and attractiveness of the area.

179. Key initiatives:

179.1. Strengthening regional development councils. In order to achieve balanced development of the regions and ensure equal opportunities, we will strengthen regional development councils by giving them more powers, strengthening their administrative capacity,

ensuring further involvement of the social partners involved in regional development councils on an equal footing rather than in an advisory capacity. Regional development councils would be assisted by experts from the centres of excellence established in the regions, who would carry out regional research, prepare forecasts and provide consultations.

179.2. Individual economic growth plan for each region. We will direct the state support to economic centres of Lithuania, by drawing up a separate, specialised growth plan for each of them and implementing a regional development policy based on economic growth. We will closely cooperate with municipalities and public enterprise Invest Lithuania, attract additional investments to the regions by making the necessary changes in legal regulation.

179.3. Empowering local communities and active participation in decision-making. Sustainable regional development requires greater involvement and active participation of local communities. We will seek to strengthen the competencies of local action groups, increase the transparency of their activities, ensure more opportunities to implement larger-scale projects, and provide social, cultural and sports services in their residential areas.

179.4. Increasing the availability of public services in the regions and improving quality thereof. We will create equal access to quality public services for the residents of all regions. We will promote the consolidation of the activities of institutions providing public services and cooperation between municipalities. We will expand electronic, mobile services, as well as social services at home. We will encourage the transfer of part of the public services provided to non-governmental organisations, and initiate innovative, more efficient models of public service provision. We will take steps to ensure greater transparency by encouraging the use of open data publicly available in municipalities.

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **MISSION: RESTORED CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM**

#### **SECTION ONE**

#### **RATIONALE AND SUCCESS INDICATORS**

184. As one of the most important social legal values, justice is an essential condition for the rule of law, while an independent, efficient, and effective judicial system is part of it. Justice can only be achieved by striking a balance between all the interests.

185. Current problems in the field of justice and law enforcement lead to public distrust in the institutions operating in those areas. The profusion of legislation and its hasty adoption without involving the public in the process preclude ensuring quality legislation. The current vague and excessive regulation complicates application of law and creates preconditions for corruption and inefficient work. Absence of a clear vision for penal institutions hinders long-term decision-making and seeking change in the field of enforcement of sentences. Excessive workload of courts

and judicial processes make it difficult for individuals to exercise their right to justice as one of the essential pillars of civil society.

186. Therefore, in accordance with the principles of legitimacy, respect for human rights and freedoms, openness, and efficiency, this Government will seek, in the first place, to restore public trust in the judicial system. We will seek to ensure quality lawmaking, assess the need for existing and planned legal regulation, and involve the public in the legislative process to ensure the openness and transparency of the legislative process. A clear vision for penal institutions will allow focusing on the resocialisation of convicts and the problem of recidivism. While seeking high-quality judicial work, we will continue to review legal regulation by removing non-judicial functions of courts, expanding pre-trial dispute resolution, and promoting mediation. We have to ensure that the judicial system responds to the needs of society and the principles of a democratic state.

187. We seek the following:

187.1. that public trust in the judicial system is restored;

187.2. that lawmaking is high quality and open to the public;

187.3. that smooth online service is not an exception but common practice;

187.4. that a clear vision for penal institutions ensures the proper procedure for enforcement of sentences and achievement of objectives;

187.5. that regulating the workload of courts enhances the efficiency and quality of the judicial system;

187.6. that public authorities are open to the public, and transparency of work is ensured;

187.7. that the state-guaranteed legal aid system is restructured and functions effectively.

188. 2024 success indicators:

188.1. The trust of the country's population in courts will increase: at least 45% of citizens will trust Lithuania's courts (35% of citizens trusted courts in 2019, based on a survey conducted by the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania).

188.2. Due to the harmonisation of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania and changes in the system of execution of sentences, the number of persons serving a custodial sentence will decrease to 150 persons per 100 000 population (currently 216 persons per 100 000 population).

188.3. The proportion of the population who believe that a bribe helps solving problems will fall to 40% (currently 61%). Lithuania will score 70 points in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (currently 60 points).

188.4. All constitutional laws will be drafted and adopted by the Seimas.

189. 2030 success indicators:

189.1. Recidivism of those having served a custodial sentence will be reduced to 40% (currently 62%).

189.2. All cases pending in Lithuania's courts will be moved to electronic space.

189.3. As a result of changes to ensure efficiency, the average workload of secondary legal aid lawyers in civil and administrative cases will be reduced to 6 cases per month (currently 12 cases per month), and in criminal cases, to 17 cases per month (currently 27 cases per month).

## **SECTION TWO GOVERNMENT PRIORITY PROJECTS**

### **Project: High quality and planned lawmaking**

190. With a view to ensuring quality lawmaking and improving the existing legal framework, it is important to focus not on quantity but on quality. We have to respect the principles of the proportionality of the assessment of the envisaged legal regulation, legislative professionalism, and interinstitutional cooperation. We must consult the public and individual stakeholders when making decisions relevant to them. We have to ensure the rule of law and respect for human rights and freedoms in lawmaking.

191. Key initiatives:

191.1. Regulatory impact assessment is one of the key conditions for ensuring quality lawmaking. New legislation or amendments have to be based on real impact assessment, not a formal one. Lawmaking has to respect the principles of proportionality of assessment of the planned legal regulation, legislative professionalism, and interinstitutional cooperation. We will focus on quality, not quantity. We will pay particular attention to the planning of priority legislative initiatives, thus removing legal loopholes and contradictory legislation.

191.2. Inclusive public consultation is yet another essential condition for quality lawmaking. Draft legislation and its impact assessment have to be presented to the public at the earliest possible stage, involving in the advisory and consultation procedures as many members of the public, the non-governmental sector, stakeholders, and especially groups likely to be most affected by the regulation, as possible. We will detail the role of lobbying in the public consultation process. We will avoid legislative urgency when public consultation suffers as a result.

191.3. Ex-post evaluation of the impact of existing legislation. Evaluation of the application and functioning of the applicable legal framework must be planned and consistent. This assessment will be an essential precondition for improving existing regulation and identifying emerging challenges.

191.4. Towards debureaucratisation and deregulation. We will eliminate excessive regulation and bureaucratic procedures, both by reviewing the previously adopted pieces of legislation and by adopting new ones. We will seek clear separation of institutional functions so as not to duplicate work and thus ensure efficiency, clear definition of the institutional responsibilities, as well as creation and optimisation of common processes.

191.5. Ensuring the rule of law in lawmaking. We will pay special attention to the implementation of the rulings of the Constitutional Court, and to the observance of the official constitutional doctrine in lawmaking. The advanced case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the European Union, as well as the standards recommended by the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and other international organisations of Western geopolitical orientation will be used as legislative guidelines. We will promptly implement the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights and eliminate systemic shortcomings in legal regulation creating preconditions for international courts to establish human rights violations at the national level. We will ensure that legal acts of the European Union and international treaties ratified by the Republic of Lithuania are properly implemented.

191.6. Respect for individual rights and freedoms is a legislative priority. We will ensure that individual rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution, legal acts of the European Union, international treaties of the Republic of Lithuania, laws of the Republic of Lithuania, and other legal acts are properly implemented. We will seek respect for the principle of the presumption of innocence and other rights of the suspected, accused, and convicted persons, as well as proper implementation of personal data protection.

191.7. Appropriate regulation of political rights. In accordance with the official constitutional doctrine, we will draft a constitutional law on referendum, improve the draft constitutional law on the approval, entry into force, and implementation of the electoral code, and initiate drafting of other constitutional laws. We will seek to reduce the age limit for candidates to the Seimas. We will ensure that all people, including those with disabilities, such as motor or vision for example, can properly exercise their political rights. In cooperation with experts and having assessed technical possibilities, we will initiate legal acts to enable implementation of pilot online voting in municipal council elections and/or in elections to the Seimas in the World Lithuanians single-member constituency.

191.8. Addressing multiple citizenship. We will ensure proper preparation for the referendum on the amendment of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania with a view to legalising multiple citizenship, which could take place alongside the 2024 election of the President of the Republic of Lithuania. We will seek that amendments to the Constitution are approved in the referendum with a view to making it possible to preserve the citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania while holding citizenship of other states for the family, migration, and other reasons, but without prejudice to the interests of national security.

### **Project: A new generation of penal institutions**

192. The reformed system of penal institutions has to ensure that imprisonment conditions meet standards, that the number of complaints from convicts is reduced, and that the problem of reimprisonment is addressed. It is important to ensure that the purpose of sentencing is

implemented in practice, and not formally, and to improve the preparation of convicts to return to society. With a view to balancing the system of sentences, and criminal and administrative effects, an ex-post evaluation of the relevant legislation is needed.

193. Key initiatives:

193.1. A clear vision of penal institutions. Together with experts, we will develop a clear vision and a plan for seeking the vision of penal institutions. We need to identify, as to what the structure and decisions of our penal institutions should look like in the long run. Making use of best practices and models from other countries, as well as with the help of experts in the field, we will assess not only the current but also the planned need for buildings and officers based on the actual and projected number of persons serving prison sentences, and will develop a plan for reorganisation of penal institutions.

193.2. Orientation to resocialisation and behaviour correction programmes. We will ensure that the purpose of the laws of the Republic of Lithuania on the execution of sentences, which is to establish such a procedure for the execution of sentences that persons having served their sentence pursue their goals in life in lawful ways and means, is implemented in practice and not formally. We will expand the network of open and semi-open prisons. We will review and improve programmes for resocialisation and work with convicts, which will ensure proper preparation of convicts for their return to society and help address the problem of reimprisonment.

193.3. Modernisation and expansion of the probation system. Probation services should focus not on formal control and supervision, but on work with convicts. We will reinforce the performance, functions, and staff of the Lithuanian Probation Service. To achieve successful resocialisation, it is necessary to involve non-governmental organisations, communities, psychologists, mediators, and other professionals. The conditional release system needs to be improved by setting criteria and procedures that are as clear as possible.

193.4. A 21<sup>st</sup> century attitude towards the officials and staff of penal institutions. We will ensure that officials and staff of penal institutions have methodological support, professional training opportunities, information on risk assessment and management, and opportunities to improve their motivation, develop values, and strengthen internal communication. In cooperation with experts in the field, we will review the principles and content of management and supervision of penal institutions, and will regulate the status of officials and staff of penal institutions in accordance with the best practices of the Member States of the European Union.

193.5. Ensuring proper conditions in penal institutions. In line with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the recommendations of the Council of Europe, we will ensure that imprisonment conditions of sentenced persons do not threaten human dignity, and that great attention is paid to a good atmosphere and maintaining of humane interpersonal relations. We will seek increased occupation of persons serving imprisonment sentences, thus preparing them for life after they serve their sentence. We will provide institutions with modern technologies, thus ensuring security and order, and greater efficiency in the work of officials. We will pay special

attention to readiness of penal institutions to meet challenges of the pandemic, and will strive to ensure the safety of officials, staff, convicts, and the public, as well as implementation of the rights of convicts.

193.6. Ex-post evaluation of the Criminal Code. We will carry out an ex-post evaluation of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania, the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Republic of Lithuania, and other related laws with a view to balancing the system of sentences and administrative penalties, and the criminal and administrative impact. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, we will consider the need for decriminalisation of certain categories of criminal offenses, such as possession of small quantities of psychoactive substances without the purpose of distribution.

### **Project: Open and efficient courts are a step towards faster justice**

194. Efficient judiciary and enhanced quality of work would create preconditions for growing public trust in courts. We need to agree clearly, as to what functions could be delegated to other institutions, which would speed up legal proceedings and allow courts to focus on their core functions. These changes will allow courts to deal with cases more quickly and efficiently, which in turn will speed up the administration of justice and encourage individuals to defend their rights. We must create all the necessary conditions to ensure that cases are dealt with efficiently and quickly, without compromising the quality of judgements that are taken.

195. Key initiatives:

195.1. Opening up the work of courts to the public. Having assessed the legal regulatory and technical possibilities, together with the National Courts Administration, the Judicial Council, and personal data protection specialists, we will introduce an opportunity to watch public court hearings remotely. We will expand public access to case law.

195.2. The even and rational workloads of courts. We will continue the review of legal regulation by abandoning non-judicial functions of courts, streamlining the judicial process, and expanding and promoting pre-trial dispute resolution, which, in turn, will significantly reduce the workload of courts, and increase the quality, efficiency, and speed of judicial work. In line with the recommendations of the National Audit Office and having assessed the risks of corruption and staff capacity, we will seek to increase the number of judges hearing cases in certain areas. However, this objective will be pursued while bearing in mind that the diminished workload of courts cannot be achieved by restricting the right of individuals to an effective judicial remedy.

195.3. Common system of mediation services. We will expand the application and accessibility of the mediation institution in the examination of certain categories of criminal cases. We will create a common system of mediation services. We will pay special attention to the protection of the rights of victims and vulnerable people.

195.4. Judicial work in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In cooperation with the National Courts Administration and the Judicial Council, we will strive to ensure the smooth operation of courts in electronic space. We will seek to ensure that as many proceedings as possible are transferred to electronic space, and that teleworking does not become a challenge in judicial proceedings. Having assessed the readiness and technical equipment of the judicial system, we will ensure opportunities for all parties to the proceedings to participate in remote court hearings. Teleworking and provision of smooth e-services to individuals has to be not an exception but turn into common practice.

### **Project: Intolerance of corruption. Openness of the system**

196. Public openness of systems and institutions would increase public trust therein. We will seek leadership of the Ministry of Justice in strengthening interdepartmental cooperation at the highest level, enhancing transparency, and implementing the value, ethical, and moral standards with a view to restoring public trust in justice.

197. Key initiatives:

197.1. Increasing the legal and anti-corruption awareness. We will seek to include legal education in the general curricula. We will promote non-formal education and public initiatives, including information on the protection of human rights, anti-corruption, and the promotion of legal literacy and citizenship. In schools, we will implement anti-corruption education programmes based on the best practices from other countries and recommendations of international organisations.

197.2. Anti-corruption assessment of legal regulation. Anti-corruption assessment of the existing and drafted legislation needs to be implemented in a consistent and comprehensive manner. Management of threats posed by nepotism and conflicts of interest will be regulated by providing for the distribution of functions and responsibilities. We will promote and implement initiatives aimed at reducing tolerance for corruption.

197.3. Reducing corruption in the law enforcement and judicial system. We will take measures to increase transparency and openness, and to reduce corruption of the law enforcement and judicial system; we will initiate assessment of legal acts regulating the work of courts and law enforcement institutions from the anti-corruption point of view, and will draft proposals for the improvement thereof.

197.4. Rational regulation of pre-trial investigation processes. We will ensure that at least part of the pre-trial investigation actions is recorded by audio and/or video means. We will encourage providing remote access to the pre-trial investigation material and transferring part of the actions online. We will seek interoperability and automation of the pre-trial and judicial processes in electronic space.

197.5. Regulatory openness. The regulation of the fees for bailiffs, notaries and registers will be based on planning, transparency, and objectively justified costs. We will ensure that all the fees and their structure are as transparent and comprehensible to the public as possible. We will ensure that the work of bailiffs becomes easy to understand through technology and online environment, and access to ongoing transactions with the debtor's money becomes simpler and accessible remotely.

### **Project: Quality legal assistance**

198. The key problems with state-guaranteed legal aid – inadequately high workload of legal aid lawyers and underpayment for legal services – determine the quality of the aid provided. It is necessary to consider the need to differentiate remuneration for the services provided in accordance with the complexity and nature of the cases, as well as to establish clearer conditions for the provision of secondary legal aid, which would ensure the efficiency and quality of legal aid. We must ensure that everyone receives high-quality legal aid, which would help ensure that individuals' right to justice is properly exercised.

199. Key initiatives:

199.1. Improving the quality of state-guaranteed legal aid. We will seek to tackle the fundamental problems arising in the implementation of the service's activities: to reduce the workload of lawyers providing state-guaranteed legal aid, and to ensure proportional remuneration for the provided legal services and transparency of the payment procedure. We will ensure that conditions for state-guaranteed legal aid are clear and easy to understand. We will create and implement a mechanism for monitoring effectiveness of state-guaranteed legal aid.

199.2. Ensuring decent places for work. We will seek that lawyers' workplaces provided by the State Guaranteed Legal Aid Service meet the requirements for lawyers' workplaces and do not breach confidentiality, the fundamental principle of lawyers' activity.

## **CHAPTER X**

### **MISSION: A PUBLIC SECTOR THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF SOCIETY**

#### **SECTION ONE**

#### **RATIONALE AND SUCCESS INDICATORS**

200. Rapid technological development, the growing need for modern and accessible public services for citizens and businesses, the need to address the increasingly complex challenges and crises in a professional manner, and the inert functioning of the public sector call for fundamental reassessment and overhaul of the public sector ecosystem – services, institutions, processes, and people. The size of the public sector, as well as the gap between citizens' expectations and the

value created by the public sector for taxpayers' money is constantly growing. Recent challenges and crises have opened the sores of the civil service: there is a lack of professional managers and civil servants capable of preparing quality solutions, the civil service has run down, and its prestige has diminished. Therefore, one of the top priorities for the public sector is to implement a comprehensive public administration reform with a view to enhancing professionalism, flexibility, and innovation and technology implementation, as well as strengthening accountability, decision-making, and complex challenge-response capacity in the public sector.

201. We seek the following:

201.1. that public administration institutions are flexible, accountable, people- and results-oriented;

201.2. that public and administrative services are quality and easily accessible to all;

201.3. that the civil service is open to innovation, professional, and able to take decisive decisions in a timely manner.

202. 2024 success indicators:

202.1. The number of modernised e-services will increase from 39.5% to 80%, and the number of institutions providing e-services will grow from 55.3% to 75%.

202.2. We will rise from the 24<sup>th</sup> position to the top ten in the open data maturity ranking.

202.3. Institutionalised centralised management of the executive corps.

202.4. Public trust in the Government will reach 35 % (currently 28%).

203. 2030 success indicators:

203.1. There will be up to 40% of people who trust other people more than they do not trust them.

203.2. Lithuania will rise from number 14 to the top ten European countries in the Digital Economy and Society Index.

203.3. Lithuania will rise from number 20 to the top ten in the Civil Service Effectiveness Index.

## **SECTION TWO GOVERNMENT PRIORITY PROJECTS**

### **Project: Modern and efficient institutions**

204. The aim will be to create a more modern and more accessible public sector by further opening of data, promoting transparency in the operation of institutions, enhancing accountability, setting quality standards for public services, further digitising of public services and making them more accessible, and providing greater opportunities for innovation. In addition, the aim will be to review and agree with municipalities and the non-governmental sector, as to what kind of public services and to what extent the non-governmental and/or private sector can provide.

205. Key initiatives:

205.1. Optimal network of institutions, and promotion of innovation. We will increase the transparency and accountability of institutions, reduce duplication of functions, digitise public services, and introduce innovations. We will draft a law on public administration, establishing entities implementing public administration functions, and regulating the institutional structure of public administration, as well as the responsibility and accountability of entities. We will promote implementation of innovations in the public sector: we will create public sector innovation laboratories and an innovation financing mechanism, and we will create conditions for the implementation of innovations (for example, on the basis of pilot initiatives).

205.2. Agreement on the scope of basic public services and quality standards. To date, there is no common understanding of the concept of public service, and there is a lack of consensus, as to what kind of basic public services should be provided by the public sector, and what quality standards for those services should be in place. We will review the network and content of services (health, education, social, cultural, etc.); we will agree with non-governmental organisations and the private sector and will establish, as to what kind of public services should be provided exclusively by public institutions, and when it would be useful to involve other service providers as well (for example, non-governmental organisations and the private sector). We will ensure greater and closer cooperation with non-governmental organisations and businesses. We will strengthen independence of institutions performing supervisory and control functions by transferring part of their functions to independent (non-governmental) entities, such as experts and non-governmental organisations. We will agree, as to how many such bodies are needed, and what services they have to provide.

**Project: e-Government 360°**

206. We will seek to make the e-Government Gateway a more user-friendly platform; we will seek development of e-services in courts, notaries, health, customs systems, and other areas, as well as their accessibility to foreigners. We will make effort to implement e-voting system in elections. We will strengthen the capacity of the Information Society Development Committee (ISDC) to lead implementation of the digital agenda and development of digital skills of civil servants.

207. Key initiatives:

207.1. User-friendly, real-time e-service platform. We will transform E-Government Gateway to a business- and citizen-friendly platform, which will offer residents and businesses real-time responses to their inquiries, automatically generate certificates, and make services convenient and clear. We will instruct the responsible authorities to review the entire process while developing e-services, and to provide innovative customisation in accordance with the user needs, abilities, and age groups. We will involve users in the development of e-services. We will pay

special attention to user interfaces to make the use of the systems intuitive. We will evaluate the maturity level of e-services.

207.2. Development of e-services. We will expand the range of e-services in areas such as judicial or notarial services, health services, digitisation of customs functions, e-administration of building permits, logistics services, etc. We will encourage residents to use e-services by shortening the service time of e-services. Where necessary, public e-services will also be available to foreigners. To this end, we will implement an EU-wide recognised personal identification system and data exchange capabilities using a common EU infrastructure and standards (CEF Building Blocks).

207.3. Digitisation Centre of Excellence. We will strengthen the capacity of the ISDC to take the lead in implementing the digital agenda. The ISDC will act as a think tank staffed by top managers and experts (analysts, data and systems architects). In pursuit of public sector digital innovation, the ISDC will act as a digital innovation laboratory, bringing together the public sector and academia to develop innovative digital solutions, provide services, and modernise information systems. We will open public data, consolidate national information resources, and modernise information systems. We will strive for the appointment of Chief Digital Officers in every ministry, municipality, and other state institutions and companies.

207.4. Digital skills in the civil service. We will revive the Digital Academy initiative, involve universities and business organisations, and strengthen the digital skills of civil servants in the fields of IT and data analysis. IT skills will become mandatory when applying for a position in the civil service.

### **Project: Strong and responsible leaders are the face of the civil service**

208. The state does not manage reliable information about the corps of heads of institutions, who are expected to provide a strategic approach and high value to society. The chaotic and scattered information does not allow drawing reasonable conclusions about the capabilities of this corps, and a general opinion is gradually formed about the insufficient leadership and management competencies of superiors. Therefore, a centrally strengthened corps of heads of institutions will be a strategic direction, and heads with the best results will be motivated to stay in the civil service. To this end, a proper environment will be developed: a capable institution responsible for the management of the executive corps will be designated, and conditions will be provided for superiors to manage human resources in a flexible and modern manner. In addition, we will establish authority for monitoring changes in the entire public administration and enhancing the maturity level in human resource management.

209. Key initiatives:

209.1. Civil Service Management Centre of Excellence. We will establish clear responsibility for shaping human resources policy of the advanced civil service. On the basis of

the Civil Service Department, we will establish a Civil Service Management Centre of Excellence. We will establish responsibility for strengthening the executive corps, managing talent in the civil service, strengthening training of civil servants, monitoring and raising the level of maturity of human resource management in the civil service, and monitoring changes in the civil service. We will develop specific tools to implement this responsibility. We will introduce a system for evaluating efficiency of the civil service based on clear international or national indicators. We will pay more attention to improvement of the motivation system and competitive salaries as preconditions to increase attractiveness of the civil service.

209.2. Institutionalisation of the centrally managed executive corps. Following examples of practices of the advanced EU Member States or countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), we will develop and implement a model for the centralised career management of the heads of public institutions, including statutory bodies. The model will cover such essential aspects of career management as selection and recruitment, assessment and motivation, retention, and development of competencies in line with best practices. We will strengthen competences of heads in the areas of human resource management, high internal and external culture of state and municipal institutions, value systems, strategic planning and its modernisation, and strategic goals.

209.3. Simplifying civil service regulation. We will remove detailed regulation of the civil service by laws and Government resolutions, and we will create conditions for heads of institutions to manage their staff flexibly and to achieve institutional goals in the most efficient way.

209.4. More flexibility in managing professionals. We will review and give more freedom and flexibility to manage professionals: we will decentralise selection, simplify recruitment, and create better conditions for project work and mobility of civil servants. We will set clear criteria for dismissal and career-making and reinstate a probationary period in the civil service.

209.5. Factual assessment of civil servant performance. At present, performance results of civil servants are assessed nominally. We will implement modern civil servant assessment systems (for example, 360° assessment, which would allow an objective and comprehensive evaluation of managers and employees).

## **CHAPTER XI**

### **MISSION: SOUND FINANCIAL POLICY**

#### **SECTION ONE**

#### **RATIONALE AND SUCCESS INDICATORS**

210. When formulating a sound financial policy, it is important to take into account changes taking place not only in our country, but also in the world. Central banks have been pursuing stimulus policies recently, and this trend is likely to continue in the near term.

Furthermore, technological opportunities are opening up, and there is a growing international consensus on the need to transform the economy and implement the Green Deal. This determines our potential to adopt new technologies, borrow, and receive financial support to implement change.

211. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to economic downturns and a lack of public finances to manage the consequences in many countries, including Lithuania. The resulting budget deficit will have a long-term impact on the level of government debt, while structural changes within the country affect the planning of public expenditure and the tax system. An aging society determines the need to allocate an ever-increasing share of government expenditure to social security pensions, nursing, and health services. In addition, the formation over the long run of the particularly marked income inequality and the poverty levels of individual groups have polarised society and undermined trust. As a result, solutions to this problem cannot be limited to benefit policies.

212. Over the long run, a flawed practice has developed in Lithuania: many solutions of great importance to society, the scope of which will only grow (for example, integrated nursing at home), are financed as projects from the EU funds. As a result, neither meeting of the full demand is ensured, nor sustainable alternatives are planned for the time when funds run out. Many areas of the public sector are heavily dependent on EU support, and assets are being created while there are no sustainable national resources to maintain them.

213. It is therefore important to agree that the EU and other funds of support are used for projects that will produce concrete results (will create infrastructure, tools, competencies), but they cannot be used to maintain permanent functions. To this end, we must ensure a steady and sustainable flow of tax and non-tax revenue. Hence, the approach to tax policy cannot be separated from the approach to the scope of public services.

214. We seek the following:

214.1. that the tax system is predictable and aligned with the need for public spending, while the changes discussed contribute to a more socially just taxation by prioritising less growth-damaging taxes;

214.2. that the formation of the state budget is clearly linked to the strategic goals of the state;

214.3. that tax administration is more customer-friendly, while more efficient use of data ensures a higher level of service and control;

214.4. that access to finance for innovation and development by small and medium-sized enterprises is equal to the EU average.

215. 2024 success indicators:

215.1. Based on the assessment of the National Audit Office of the Republic of Lithuania, the budgetary governance maturity level is 3 (currently 1).

215.2. Based on the assessment of the European Central Bank, the growth of financing opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is 4% (currently 12%. Access to financing is the biggest problem for SMEs; this indicator would go down to 8%).

216. 2030 success indicators:

216.1. The value added tax (VAT) gap is 10% (currently 25%).

216.2. The income-inequality measure S80/S20 is 5 (currently 6.4).

## **SECTION TWO GOVERNMENT PRIORITY PROJECTS**

### **Project: Towards a fairer and more growth-friendly tax system**

217. One of the main shortcomings of Lithuania's tax system is its frequent changes; furthermore, tax reforms have often taken place without a holistic approach to public finances nor the need to ensure sustainable financing of public services. Therefore, changes to the tax system will only be considered once the scope of public sector commitments has been agreed in public services, infrastructure, defence, the Green Deal, economic transformation, and other fields, with a view to ensuring sustainable financing of the agreed model. We consider this an essential principle for changing the tax system. Another structural problem is that income inequality in Lithuania is one of the highest in the EU; therefore, it is obvious that measures taken so far have been not enough to get closer to the average of the EU Member States. Hence, in addition to improving public services and benefit systems, the impact of possible changes in the taxation of personal income in reducing income inequality will be assessed.

218. Key initiatives:

218.1. A stable and predictable tax system. We will avoid undiscussed changes to the tax system, and we will adhere to the principle that such changes are notified to interested parties in advance, so that they have time to prepare properly for the application of the changed legal norms.

218.2. A cost-benefit analysis of tax deductions has been performed. Tax costs incurred through the loss of revenue due to various deductions must be assessed in terms of costs and benefits in the same way as budget expenditure. Therefore, we will assess in detail the expediency and impact of tax deductions, and we will review tax deductions and special conditions distorting tax fairness, creating tax arbitrage, and encouraging informal economy. In addition, we will ensure fiscal transparency as well as clear and publicly available monitoring of existing deductions, which will help assess the impact and benefit of deductions on society, businesses, and the state budget.

218.3. A plan to move over to the family (household) as an income taxpayer in the long term. Such a principle would allow a more targeted use of income tax for social policy purposes, ensuring that income taxation takes into account not only the amount of income but also the dependents of taxpayers.

218.4. The priority direction of change is taxes that are less harmful to the growing economy. We will assess possibilities to change the corporate tax by waiving taxation of reinvested earnings. In addition, we will seek to reduce the dependence of budgets on indirect taxes such as VAT and excise duties. In terms of tax revenue structure, Lithuania relies too heavily on indirect taxes, and is not even able to collect a significant part of them. The least harmful sources of tax revenue for the economy, such as property taxes and environmental taxes, are still among the lowest in Lithuania; therefore, we will give priority precisely to those.

### **Project: Strategic goal-oriented government financial planning**

219. Lithuania's strategic planning system was introduced in 2000; however, there is still a lack of clear links between strategic planning and the budgeting system. It is therefore particularly important to link spending to specific national strategic objectives and planned changes. The COVID-19 situation and the costs of mitigating the effects of the pandemic have led to a significant increase in the general government deficit not only in 2020, but it is also estimated for 2021. For the medium term, different scenarios estimate government debt-to-GDP ratio approaching the 60% sustainability limit provided for in the Lithuanian and EU legislation. Rising debt may cause risks in the long term, as it provides less fiscal space to respond to both long, short, and medium-term challenges, and leads to higher debt service costs, and, consequently, reduced access to finance. These challenges call for a realistic action plan not only in the medium but also in the long term.

220. Key initiatives:

220.1. Budgeting is linked to the strategic goals of the state. We will complete the reform of the budget system with the aim of creating a reliable and efficient medium-term budgeting and programme management system that is clearly linked to the updated national strategic planning system integrating strategic, regional, and territorial planning processes.

220.2. A review of public investment principles. Taking into account remarks of the National Audit Office stating that the public investment programme does not reflect all public investments nor gives detailed information about the projects included in the programme, while their inclusion in the programme does not ensure successful implementation within the planned deadlines, we will review public investment principles. We will seek to change the procedure for planning for and reporting on all public investments (including those provided for in the public investment programme), and to integrate strategic and investment planning and reporting processes. We will ensure that public investment programme projects become an integral part of budget programmes.

220.3. Enhancing the financial independence of municipalities. Taking into account aspirations of municipalities to enhance financial independence, we will look for additional sources of financing (a review of taxes collected in municipal budgets, application of financial

instruments, establishment of a loan and guarantee fund, etc.) to implement municipal functions and finance investment projects.

220.4. We will develop a government debt management strategy while seeking to return to optimal government debt levels in the long term.

### **Project: Improving business conditions and increasing transparency**

221. To ensure more adequately funded public services, the informal economy needs to be reduced. Therefore, it is also important to use political influence to accelerate reduction of the informal economy; not only conditions for business taxation and tax administration need to be improved, but also financial literacy increased, and awareness of the impact of tax revenues on the availability and quality of public services raised, thereby reducing tax evasion and strengthening the tax culture. Due to the current uncertainty and lack of competition, the country's commercial banks often do not undertake financing long-term or risky projects, which results in a lack of financing for young and innovative enterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises, and long-term projects. We propose to agree on the establishment of the National Development Fund.

222. Key initiatives:

222.1. Development of measures to reduce informal economy. We will develop a plan of measures to reduce informal economy covering three key areas: promoting formalisation, prevention and awareness-raising, and more targeted administration and effective control. We will pay more attention to the facilitation of small business administration by distinguishing measures that can have the greatest impact, such as a builder's ID card, an e-platform and e-transactions for registration of car owners (managers), digitisation of paper books used by market sales workers, and measures to reduce the informal market for car parts.

222.2. Direction: digitisation of operations of the State Tax Inspectorate (STI) with a view to using information available to national authorities, required for the targeted control of taxpayers, in an effective manner on a one-stop-shop basis, thereby ensuring standardisation, uniformity, and quality of services provided by the STI. The growing transparency of the system would enhance competitiveness of Lithuania's tax system.

222.3. Improving tax administration and taxation of small and medium-sized enterprises. We will make efforts to eliminate differences in tax administration where responsible public authorities administer taxes on essentially the same activities (such as self-employment) in different ways, thereby creating tensions and difficulties for taxpayers. Institutional interest cannot take precedence over the interest in providing the best service to taxpayers. We will consider extending the practice of the reverse charge VAT not only to construction works but also to other services (goods) where they are provided by small businesses, creating real opportunities for small businesses to pay VAT based on the cash register principle (upon receipt of payment), and applying reduced interest rates and simplified tax deferral measures to small businesses for late

payment of the declared tax. We will seek minimising as much as possible the amount of taxes payable in advance. Following Lithuania's accession to the euro area, and the cost of borrowing standing at record-low rates, the state does not have to shift its cash flow management costs to businesses, especially the small and medium-sized ones, which have worse borrowing conditions than the state.

222.4. The National Development Fund (NDF). We will carry out a feasibility study on the establishment of the National Development Fund, assessing a possibility to merge the existing national development agencies (VIPA, INVEGA and ŽŪPGF), or to establish the NDF on the basis of one of them. It is important that the NDF is politically independent, managed in accordance with the highest standards and has sufficient financial capital and resources to run strategic projects on its own, i.e. without the support of commercial banks. The NDF would be an appropriate tool to finance long-term investments that would lead to the transformation of the economic model; this fund could increase access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises, thus making a better use of the growth potential of the country's economy.

### **Project: Financial market development**

223. Small and medium-sized enterprises face challenges in getting access to financing both in Lithuania and in the euro area as a whole. According to estimates, the lack of bank financing in the euro area amounted to approx. EUR 400 billion in 2019. To realise the potential for growth and jobs, opportunities need to be explored to give businesses access to greater number and more diverse sources of financing.

224. Key initiatives:

224.1. Development of an initiative to create a single capital market of the Baltic states while expanding business financing opportunities through new instruments. We will play an active role in developing measures to create the EU's single market for capital. Together with the other Baltic states, and with the support of the European Union institutions, we will strengthen cooperation while developing the single capital market and creating new financial instruments that will help small and medium-sized enterprises to ensure access to the required investments for business development.

224.2. Green finance is on the agenda. In consideration of the draft action plan for sustainable green finance and the feasibility study for the establishment of the Green Finance Institute in Lithuania, we will decide on further measures for the development of green finance in Lithuania. The aim of the changes is to provide more opportunities for Lithuania's authorities to create a sustainable investment-friendly ecosystem, promote development of sustainable instruments, involve society in the implementation of sustainable development goals, and help attract investment in sustainable products.

224.3. Development of the financial technology industry. We will promote the quantitative and qualitative development of the financial technology industry in Lithuania, while ensuring a favourable legal environment for companies in this sector. We will pay close attention to the objective of attracting foreign direct investment; to this end, we will build Lithuania's reputation as a financial technology centre in target foreign markets. We will focus on increasing the supply of capital to financial technology companies at each stage of their development. Effective supervision of financial technology companies, safeguarding national security interests, and management of the risks related to money laundering, consumer protection, cyber security, and other risks of the sector will be important principles, and we will ensure adherence to those principles in the pursuit of industrial development. We will continue cooperation between national authorities and market participants in Lithuania in developing the financial technology ecosystem.

224.4. Developing financial literacy. Given that people's financial literacy skills are formed relatively early on, and that increasingly younger people make important financial decisions, we will pay close attention to developing children's financial literacy. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, we will integrate the contents of financial literacy education into the curricula of a number of subjects. While implementing the solutions, we will follow the OECD recommendations in setting clear outcomes of the programme, adapting the contents of financial literacy education in accordance with the age groups of children, and providing the necessary methodological support for teachers. We will also follow best practices of other countries, such as the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, the Nordics, etc.

## **CHAPTER XII**

### **MISSION: STRONG AND SAFE LITHUANIA**

#### **SECTION ONE**

##### **RATIONALE AND SUCCESS INDICATORS**

225. In Lithuania's defence policy, endeavours in pursuance of greater collective defence commitments and capabilities for Lithuania and the region as well as modernisation and development of the Lithuanian Armed Forces will be continued. To implement the objectives, it will be needed to ensure that parliamentary parties implement the agreement on defence policy and consistently increase defence funding, so that it reaches at least 2.5% of GDP by 2030.

226. In response to the current challenges to national security, it is necessary to move over to a qualitatively new approach to ensure national security: the principle of global security must be implemented. It is based on the active participation and preparedness of the state and its citizens, alongside the armed forces, both for armed defence and non-military threats. A model of global security based on the involvement of national authorities and society has to combine the actions

of the military and civilian national authorities, private sector, and society in building resilience, preparedness, and coordinated response to the threats arising for Lithuania.

227. Strategic documents of the national security and defence policy have to reflect the challenges of the changing security environment and anchor the principle of global security. The updated National Security Strategy will be a framework document integrating the elements of security policy in a number of areas into a coherent whole. With a view to creating an effective model of global security, we will encourage greater involvement of experts, academia, and civil society in discussions in this regard.

228. Collective security guarantees, modern armed forces, resilience and global preparedness of the state and society, as well as effectively functioning public security institutions are the basis for building a welfare state.

229. The commissioning of the unsafe nuclear power plant in Belarus as well as its unsustainable financing model are bringing Lithuania under increased pressure in terms of both physical and economic security. With a view to further strengthening energy independence, it is necessary to accelerate synchronisation of our electricity system with the grid of Continental Europe, and start consistent desynchronisation from the Soviet IPS/UPS system immediately, while taking necessary decisions on the development of national infrastructure.

230. We have to continue the safe decommissioning of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, and to prepare for and start implementing the most important part of it – dismantling of nuclear reactors.

231. 2024 success indicators:

231.1. Consolidation of cybersecurity functions has been implemented; 5G communication infrastructure is being developed with the participation of only those manufacturers that meet national security criteria.

231.2. The number of people in the organised reserve is at least 30 000 (currently 19 000).

231.3. At least 80% of the population feel safe; trust in the state does not decline (currently 82%).

231.4. A common and effective crisis and emergency management system is in place.

232. 2030 success indicators:

232.1. Financing for defence amounting to at least 2.5% of GDP has been ensured.

232.2. All units of the Lithuanian Armed Forces meet the established requirements for readiness levels, and an organised reserve of at least 60 000 has been formed.

232.3. At least 85% of citizens feel safe and trust the state.

## **SECTION TWO**

### **GOVERNMENT PRIORITY PROJECTS**

**Project: Strong collective defence commitments that provide credible deterrence and defence**

233. A strong and united North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) that is ready to defend its members is an essential guarantor of Lithuania's security. In response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the Alliance has taken important steps in strengthening the collective defence commitments in the region through practical measures. We have to make every effort to continue those measures in meeting the defence needs of Lithuania and the region. In close cooperation with key allies, in particular the United States (US), as well as strategic allies and partners in Europe, we need to ensure sustainability of the Euro-Atlantic relationship, and contribute to the development of EU defence initiatives that complement NATO. At the same time, Lithuania has to remain a reliable and active participant in strengthening international security and supporting the development of Euro-Atlantic values.

234. Key initiatives:

234.1. Consolidating strategic partnership with the US in the field of defence. Over the next 4 years, Lithuania has to become a strong and reliable buttress for the US security and defence in NATO's Northeastern Flank. We will seek an agreement with the US on the permanent deployment of a battalion-size unit of the US forces and a long-range air defence system in Lithuania. This is a strategic interest of the state; therefore, we will continue strengthening by political and practical means the status of the US as the main guarantor of security and defence for Lithuania and the Alliance.

234.2. Strengthening NATO's deterrence and defence efforts in the region. We will seek to enhance the effectiveness and integration of NATO's forward presence into the country's defence as well as the most realistic joint defence planning of the Alliance, we will strengthen the host country's national capabilities and NATO's ability to provide the required logistical support for rapid reinforcement, we will support the development of NATO's high readiness reinforcement capabilities, we will organise regular collective defence exercises, and we will seek smooth transition from a NATO air policing mission in peacetime to air defence in times of crisis or war.

234.3. Strengthening bilateral defence relations. We will strengthen bilateral cooperation with key defence partners in Europe. We will pay special attention to strengthening structured political defence cooperation with Poland, and to deepening practical cooperation and partnership with the Nordic and Baltic countries. We will further strengthen our partnership with Germany with a view to ensuring NATO's forward presence in Lithuania in the long term, and we will coordinate a common international position. The United Kingdom will remain among the key defence partners; therefore, we will closely coordinate positions within NATO as well as on regional matters, and we will focus on developing practical initiatives such as the Joint Expeditionary Force.

234.4. Pursuing additional security measures through the EU. We will take an active part in shaping and implementation of the EU's common security and defence policy and support initiatives that are complementary to NATO and open to the participation of transatlantic partners. We will seek that Lithuania makes use of the opportunities for cooperation and financing offered by EU defence initiatives in strategically important areas, such as military mobility, combating hybrid threats, cybersecurity and disinformation, and promoting defence innovations.

234.5. Continuing participation in international operations. We will continue to participate in international operations and missions led by NATO, the USA, the EU, and the United Nations, and we will conduct a national training operation in Ukraine.

234.6. Supporting the associated Eastern partners. We will actively support NATO's open-door policy, the aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia for NATO and EU membership, and the ongoing democracy-building processes in the Eastern Partnership countries. We will be active EU and NATO policymakers with regard to the Eastern Partnership; we will strengthen bilateral defence cooperation, thereby assisting transformation of the armed forces of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova, and increasing resilience to hybrid and cyber threats. As circumstances change, we will seek to review bilateral defence contacts and cooperation objectives with Belarus.

### **Project: Strong and modern Lithuanian Armed Forces**

235. In consideration of the geopolitical situation and the commitments made, we must further increase capabilities of the Lithuanian Armed Forces. Only a fully manned, supplied with modern equipment, armaments, and technology, having the necessary resources, and well-trained armed forces will be able to ensure a proper defence response. We will continue development of the armed forces, while maintaining the balance between staffing and equipment, modernisation, infrastructure development needs, and maintenance costs. While increasing capabilities, we will pay special attention to the ability of the Lithuanian Armed Forces to perform territorial defence functions, and we will strengthen the defence of the ground forces, special operations forces, and air.

236. Key initiatives:

236.1. Staffing the units of the armed forces. We will continue implementation of the mixed model of manning of the armed forces: military units will continue to be formed from professional military service troops, military volunteers, and permanent compulsory initial military service soldiers, by establishing certain proportions and seeking to ensure that military units maintain the required level of readiness and capacity to perform the tasks set to them. We will seek that professional armed forces consist of at least 14 000 troops by 2024. We will initiate the necessary structural changes with a view to creating better conditions for women's service in the armed forces.

236.2. Increasing the number of conscripts. A consistent transition to the universal (male and female) and general conscription is an aspiration; however, practical fulfilment of this goal requires a broad political consensus, proper military preparation, and funding, and with an adequate transition period established. Under this precondition, the number of conscripts will be gradually increased, and an alternative military service mechanism will be established.

236.3. Establishing a sufficient reserve. We will consistently increase the organised military reserve, with a view to having a reserve of 60 000 troops in 2030.

236.4. Continuing modernisation of the armed forces. We will continue development of the new quality Lithuanian Armed Forces, introduction of new military equipment (infantry fighting vehicles, self-propelled artillery, medium-range air defence systems, universal helicopters, etc.), building of rapid response, reinforcement and logistic capabilities, and provision of individual weapons and personal protective equipment. We will ensure that public procurement meets priority defence needs, and we will pay special attention to the transparency of procurement.

236.5. Improving military infrastructure. We will ensure that military infrastructure projects are implemented smoothly, and in a timely and transparent manner, and we will seek to improve the service and combat training conditions for the Lithuanian and Allied troops, as well as to prepare or adapt the host country's infrastructure to facilitate the arrival of Allies. While developing military infrastructure, the aim will be to ensure energy efficiency, assessing possibilities to use energy from renewable sources. While developing civilian transport infrastructure, one of the priorities will be improvement and adaptation of infrastructure necessary for military purposes in line with military requirements.

236.6. Improving conditions for military service, and social benefits for troops and their families. We will improve practical service conditions for troops serving in professional military service (e.g., matters related to regulation of rent and travel allowances, social benefits for troops and their families). We will consider expanding health package, so that more troops can benefit from assistance in the event of a health problem. We will initiate a discussion on a lifelong learning programme for troops, and improvement of the motivational package for troops who have served in the Lithuanian Armed Forces for more than 20 years.

236.7. Taking care of retired soldiers. We will create a programme for the integration of retired soldiers into the labour market and an incentive system to make use of the competencies acquired by soldiers in the areas of global security policy. We will initiate legalisation of the concept of a 'veteran soldier' of the Lithuanian Armed Forces. We will reform the system of state pensions and other benefits for troops with a view to increasing their real income.

### **Project: Coordinated response of public authorities to national security threats**

237. Changes in the security environment in recent years that have highlighted the urgency of the military threat, as well as the rising non-military threats, pose a growing challenge: the state

has to be prepared to respond to various threats, and ensure the continuity of vital functions in all circumstances. This requires a clearly managed and well-coordinated threat assessment, prevention, and response mechanism involving all public authorities. It is crucial to ensure that preparedness to respond to threats becomes an integral part of the institutional activities through planning of actions, allocation of resources, and organisation of training.

238. Key initiatives:

238.1. Enhancing cyber security. We will strengthen national cyber security capabilities and cyber protection of national information resources and critical infrastructure, and we will consolidate cyber security functions. In the next 5 years, we will seek to ensure that technologies and equipment from unreliable manufacturers are not used in public institutions and in sectors important for national security, including 5G infrastructure. To achieve these objectives, we will strengthen synergies between the cyber security and digital agendas, private-public partnerships, and international cooperation. We will also further develop multilateral projects initiated by Lithuania, while paying special attention to the Lithuanian-US joint initiative to establish and enable a Regional Cyber Defence Centre in Kaunas.

238.2. Implementing a targeted mobilisation policy. We will seek to ensure that civilian institutions and economic entities ensuring vital functions of the state are properly prepared for mobilisation.

238.3. Ensuring accumulation of state reserves. We will review the state reserve policy with a view to ensuring that the accumulated reserves meet the needs of the state, and that when in higher need of specific resources, the state has an efficient way to obtain them.

238.4. Strengthening practical capacities of public authorities for crisis management and preparation for mobilisation. Crisis management and mobilisation exercises will be organised at national level on a regular basis to test the decision-making and rapid response capabilities of public authorities. We will strengthen involvement of national authorities in the planning of and participation in similar international exercises (NATO, EU).

238.5. Implementing a targeted policy to combat disinformation. We will pool the efforts of responsible authorities in enhancing psychological resilience of citizens and in reducing dissemination of hostile and manipulative information inciting ethnic discord and hatred, while combating Russia's policy of historical revisionism, and carrying out the internal and external strategic communication. We will strengthen coordination of this policy implementation at the Government level, we will enhance cooperation with the media and representatives of the private sector, and we will participate in international initiatives with allies and partners.

238.6. Strengthening strategic intelligence. We will continue development of the intelligence and counter-intelligence capabilities (human resources and technical tools) to identify and assess threats, dangers, and risks to national security in a timely and accurate manner.

238.7. Ensuring effective response measures and training. An effective crisis and emergency management system will allow for more effective forecasting and identification of

threats and risks that may lead to emergencies or crises, planning and implementation of risk mitigation measures, mitigation of adverse effects and control of responses, and timely evaluation of effectiveness of measures. The necessary emergency and crisis management preparedness measures will be implemented in a targeted manner to ensure the required emergency assistance to people, and to reduce risks to life, health, and property; the necessary training will be organised in accordance with the updated realistic and comprehensible threat response plans, and the state reserve system will be improved. We will ensure community awareness-raising on emergency and crisis management, response, and elimination, as well as on citizens' behaviour and actions in the event of a specific crisis or emergency.

**Project: Citizens' resilience and active engagement in strengthening national security**

239. Citizens who are resilient to all kinds of threats, aware of their responsibilities and role in ensuring security and defence, and determined to contribute, are among the essential preconditions for deterrence. With a view to fully mobilising and preparing the society, comprehensive activities have to be pursued, such as civic and patriotic education, development of critical thinking, and provision of practical information. To this end, we will not only pool the efforts and resources of a number of institutions, but we will also encourage involvement of non-governmental organisations and associations, while paying special attention to the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union.

240. Key initiatives:

240.1. Continuing integration of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union into the state defence. We will seek to maximise the potential of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union in developing active citizenship, patriotism, and the will to defend oneself, strengthening resilience to modern threats, and ensuring organised participation in armed defence and unarmed civil resistance. We will allocate the necessary resources to support the aims set by the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, and we will create better conditions to strengthen this organisation. We will also seek that in the event needed to ensure national security, combat riflemen and military volunteers who meet the requirements, have a possibility to keep automatic firearms at home for the purposes of the service of a rifleman or a volunteer soldier.

240.2. Developing and implementing a modern policy concept of preparedness for civil resistance. It will not only cover citizens' preparedness for armed and unarmed resistance, but it will also contain guidelines for society's resilience to modern threats. We will ensure proper coordination at the Government level and the necessary funding for the implementation of this policy, and we will clearly define responsibilities of separate authorities, as well as the roles of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union and other non-governmental organisations and associations.

240.3. Strengthening civic and patriotic education in general education curricula. In the updated general education curricula, we will introduce stronger elements of national security and

defence education integrated into the subject content, while assessing a possibility of introducing compulsory education in this regard. We will promote and support innovative educational methods as well as cooperation on citizenship education among educational institutions, non-formal education agencies, and non-governmental organisations. We will encourage schools and teachers to cooperate with the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union and to establish groups of young riflemen.

240.4. Increasing private sector involvement. We will initiate a regular dialogue with representatives of the private sector to exchange information on emerging security challenges, discuss best practices, and coordinate actions.

240.5. Promoting defence innovation and research. We will seek that defence spending enhances Lithuania's competitiveness, while promoting development of defence industry, scientific research, and innovation in the field of defence. We will seek implementation of innovative technologies and solutions in the field of national security and defence; therefore, we will increase support for Lithuania's defence industry and research as well as scientific and academic activities. We will encourage Lithuania's defence industry companies to get involved in the ongoing national and international procurement.

### **Project: Strengthening energy security**

241. Despite the changes that have been achieved since the Restoration of Independence in the fields of oil and natural gas, the electricity system remains managed by Russia. Electricity is becoming a key area of energy, and inability to take over its management is posing a growing threat to national security. With a view to further strengthening of energy independence, it is necessary to accelerate synchronisation of our electricity system with the grid of Continental Europe, and to start consistent desynchronisation from the Soviet IPS/UPS system immediately. The unsafe nuclear power plant in Belarus, which is under construction near Lithuania and its capital Vilnius, has put Lithuania to a serious test. We will have to withstand the pressure, and not only prevent entering the electricity it produces into our electricity market, but also minimise its entering into our energy system as far as possible.

242. Key initiatives:

242.1. Faster synchronisation of the electricity system with the West. With a view of synchronisation of our electricity system with the grid of Continental Europe as quickly as possible, we will fulfil all the required technical conditions for connection to the grid of Continental Europe, and will prepare for the operation of our electricity system in isolated mode. We will draft a project for the accelerated synchronisation (earlier than 2025) with the grid of Continental Europe. We will mobilise the required effort to install the 200 MW power storage capacity to increase the instantaneous electricity reserve as early as in 2021. We will complete the infrastructure for emergency connection to Poland's electricity system in synchronous mode. We

will accelerate construction of the Vilnius-Neris electricity transmission line, which is necessary for the reliability of electricity supply in Vilnius, and other works necessary for synchronisation.

242.2. Absolute blockade of the nuclear power plant in Belarus, and the ambition of blockade at the EU level. We will take the position that the nuclear power plant in Belarus cannot be operated because it is unsafe, and we will not buy electricity from Belarus.

242.3. Consistent reduction of electricity throughput from Belarus to Lithuania. We will implement the legal requirement to reduce electricity throughput from Belarus to Lithuania. We will assess the consequences of the provisions of the Electricity Systems Parallel Operation Agreement signed by the electricity transmission system operators of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, and Belarus on 7 February 2001 (BRELL agreement) for the consistent desynchronisation of the electricity system from the Soviet IPS/UPS system. While implementing the legal provisions on not allowing entering of the electricity from Belarus, we will ensure that it does not enter Lithuania's market either directly or indirectly, that our consumers do not pay for it, and that Lithuania's electricity throughput costs from Belarus to Lithuania are not calculated as part of the total Baltic throughput costs in trade with third countries.

242.4. Safe decommissioning of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant. We will prepare for and start implementing the most important part of the decommissioning – dismantling of nuclear reactors.

### **Project: Effective public safety**

243. We consider protection of interests of the population and the state to be a key priority of the Government's activities. There are a number of issues to be addressed in this area, with regard to the provision of work equipment and security measures for officials and public authorities responsible for ensuring public security, which determine not only security of the population but also security of officials themselves. Some of the processes and functions ensuring security have been distanced from the population, which can have negative consequences for public security, and can create an atmosphere of impunity for people who tend to violate the law, as well as the rights and freedoms of others.

244. Key initiatives:

244.1. A protected society. We will aim activities of national authorities ensuring public security at enhancing a sense of security of the population and proper protection of the state interests. National authorities, as well as authorities ensuring public security, serve the people; therefore, we will improve accessibility of law enforcement activities and services provided, and will guarantee high-quality and efficient results of law enforcement institutions, which will be assessed in consideration of the change in the Lithuanian population's sense of security.

244.2. Prevention of crimes and violations of law, and quality performance. With a view to ensuring public security and meeting public expectations in a more efficient manner, we will

pay close attention and will give priority to prevention of criminal acts and other violations of the law, as well as closer cooperation between law enforcement authorities and the public in various mutual activities aimed at preventing violations of the law and eliminating favourable conditions in that respect, and not only reacting and investigating violations of the law post factum. We will also seek significant improvement of the quality and efficiency of pre-trial investigations and raise the importance of investigation results for public security and liability for damage caused by violations of the law.

244.3. Performance improvement and coordination. We will coordinate the efforts of national authorities, especially law enforcement agencies, to combat violations of the law, and we will pay more attention to solving the long-standing problems of the performance of law enforcement institutions and statutory officials. We will ensure better interaction and cooperation between national authorities, and we will seek their mobilisation on the prevention of threats, and, if necessary, their joint work to eliminate the threats. Statutory national authorities, legally assigned to the national armed forces, will be properly prepared to perform the assigned national defence functions, to ensure interaction with the Lithuanian Armed Forces while implementing planned national defence measures and strengthening the capacity of statutory officers to carry out armed national defence and other military training measures, and to participate in prevention and elimination of potential hybrid threats.

244.4. Improving security measures and working conditions. We will seek that officials ensuring the security, health, and lives of the population are safe, and carry out the functions assigned to them effectively. We will offer the required attention and funding, ensure and implement the prescribed standards and requirements, provide the necessary means for the motivation of officials, and ensure proper working conditions and remuneration based on the performance results. We will ensure that law enforcement institutions and officials are provided with the necessary means and professional tools to perform their functions directly leading to greater security of the population and protection of the interests of the state. We will respond to the legitimate expectations of officials and ensure the required social benefits.

244.5. Professional training and professional development of officials. We will strengthen the system of professional training and professional development of officials and centralise entities responsible for the training of officials with a view to improving efficiency of the administration of available resources. It is necessary to plan the need for staff in a rational manner, and to train officers based on the established needs and relevance, as well as taking into account the issues of ensuring public security.

244.6. Performance modernisation. We will strengthen security of the state and performance efficiency of national authorities ensuring public security through the introduction of modern technical and scientific solutions. We will seek to implement advanced scientific and technical measures that help ensure security of our country and population, as well as protection of the interests of the state. We will ensure that the EU's external border is monitored and protected

only by modern technical means and through strengthening the ongoing criminal intelligence, and that the data obtained from infringement investigations are used to analyse and address gaps in public security. We will pay special attention to strengthening analytical capacity of national authorities ensuring security, and we will seek rational and coordinated use of analytical resources and their results, thus enhancing efficiency of all national authorities, and improving migration processes and performance of national authorities; in addition, we will effectively protect public finances and other interests of the state.

**Project: An effective crisis and emergency management system**

245. During the last year and a half, the crisis and emergency management system operating in Lithuania has been tested several times. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a special challenge. We have been convinced that changes are needed to avoid errors and inefficiencies. The commissioning of the nuclear power plant in Belarus only reinforces the need for an extremely well-coordinated and well-functioning system.

246. Key initiatives:

246.1. Developing an effective system. We will implement a common crisis and emergency management system, and the state's preparedness for crises, emergencies, and nuclear or other potential disasters will be more coordinated and effective. We will establish a national emergency and crisis management centre that will monitor and analyse situations 24 hours a day, make assessments, and forecast events with the help of specialists and experts in all relevant fields with a view to responding in a timely manner and eliminating potential threats. Decisions on crisis and emergency management measures, elimination of after-effects, and harm reduction will be faster, and based on expert and specialist assessment. National authorities and agencies will be encouraged to cooperate and prepare for crisis management, and coordination of elimination of after-effects will be improved. Reorganisation of the crisis and emergency system will result in the capacity to respond to threats immediately, when the need for a rapid response would make traditional methods of cooperation and coordination ineffective.

246.2. Effective response measures and training. An effective crisis and emergency management system will allow for more effective forecasting and identification of threats and risks potentially leading to emergencies or crises, planning and implementation of risk mitigation measures, mitigation of adverse effects, control of responses, and timely evaluation of effectiveness of measures. The requisite preparedness measures for emergency and crisis management will be implemented in a targeted manner to ensure the required emergency assistance to people, and to reduce risks to life, health, and property; the necessary training will be organised in accordance with the updated realistic and comprehensible threat response plans, and the national reserve system will be improved. We will ensure community awareness-raising on

emergency and crisis management, response, and elimination, as well as on citizens' behaviour and actions in the event of a specific crisis or emergency.

246.3. Assessment and improvement of health emergency. In view of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the current emergency, and its management problems and effects, we will establish, maintain, and develop a system for monitoring of public health risk factors and threats, for providing public health expertise, making rapid transmission of health information and response to public health threats, and ensuring prevention of health emergencies, as well as mitigation and elimination of their consequences, and we will improve the preparedness and performance of Lithuania's national health system in cases of crises and emergencies.

## **CHAPTER XIII**

### **MISSION: GROWING INFLUENCE OF LITHUANIA**

#### **SECTION ONE**

#### **RATIONALE AND SUCCESS INDICATORS**

247. During the thirty years of Lithuania's independence, foreign policy has covered many areas. Following assessment of the work of the former Governments in the field of foreign policy, we intend to propose changes where they are necessary. In other areas, we will be guided by an attitude not to repair what has not been damaged. Therefore, we have distinguished four projects as the main directions of foreign policy change; and we are presenting yet another one as a prerequisite for implementation of the other directions.

248. The foreign policy part of the Government's Programme responds to the dynamic challenges facing Lithuania in the areas where our country's contribution to world events is important. It should be emphasised that Lithuania's foreign policy has been formed on the basis of consensus for three decades, and that should not change, as that is required by the geopolitical reality. However, consensus needs not mean resignation, apathy, nor isolation. On the contrary, urged by political and geopolitical realities, we will see challenges and propose ways to respond to them, while realising that a broader political consensus is needed to meet them.

249. We will shape Lithuania's foreign policy based on the following principles: freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of international law, and multilateral decision-making. Our foreign policy is inconceivable without participation in global or regional structures; it has to be not only defensive but also proactive; this policy has to be shaped not only by direct interest but also be based on the principle of strengthening of our role on the international stage.

250. 2024 success indicators:

250.1. Lithuania is an important actor of change in expanding the area of freedom and democracy in our region and beyond.

250.2. More powerful voice of Lithuania in making strategic decisions of the European Union.

250.3. Maintaining and strengthening a sustainable transatlantic link.

250.4. Targeted development of Lithuania's soft power.

250.5. Revitalisation of performance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while creating an efficient and smart diplomatic service that is adapted to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **SECTION TWO GOVERNMENT PRIORITY PROJECTS**

### **Project: Lithuania is a centre of freedom and democracy development**

251. Restoration and consolidation of Lithuania's statehood was facilitated by the historical commitment of Western democracies to the principles of freedom, democracy, human rights, and international law during the Cold War. Keeping these values at the centre of Western politics, and further development of the free and indivisible Europe is a necessary condition for Lithuania's security and prosperity. Lithuania has always declared and fulfilled its commitment to these values; however, now time has come to turn the agenda of freedom and democracy into one of the main constitutive principles of Lithuania's foreign policy.

252. The last decade has shown that democracy, the rule of law, and human rights are not something to be taken for granted. Expectations that the European Union's Eastern neighbours will consistently move closer to the principles of the European Union have not materialised. Even the European Union itself is facing a test of democracy: the debate on possible violations of the rule of law has received a particularly sharp criticism from those Member States that feel that this rule can be applied to them.

253. Key initiatives:

253.1. Support for freedom fighters around the world. Lithuania stands in solidarity and, to the best of its ability, seeks to help everyone defending their rights and freedoms – from fighters for a free Belarus to people and states around the world defending their fundamental rights, regardless of their geographical location. Lithuania also has a historical obligation to be a voice in the international arena for the people who are persecuted, suffer from genocide, and are deprived of their rights – from dissidents of authoritarian regimes to those who are persecuted for freedom of religion and conscience. To this end, Lithuania will create a special financial instrument to support those fighting for freedom. We will consistently support and initiate development and strengthening of instruments for sanctions against perpetrators of genocide, persecution, and human rights violations at the European Union level and in other international formats.

253.2. Free Belarus. Lithuania's assistance to civil society and a democratic Belarus has to remain strong, and to provide a wider range of instruments to accelerate new free, democratic, and

legitimate elections in Belarus, while in turn opening up opportunities for this neighbour of Lithuania to make use of the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital within the European Union as well. We will support targeted and economic sanctions against the undemocratic regime in Belarus. We will seek to satisfy the reasonable desire of the citizens of Belarus and Lithuania to live without fear of a new Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Belarus that does not meet the nuclear safety criteria.

253.3. Freedom and democracy agenda in the European Union. Lithuania has to contribute to ensuring that the area of the fundamental values of the European Union – democracy, the rule of law, and human rights – does not shrink, but rather expands both beyond the European Union and within it, while drawing on the democratic Community mechanisms to address emerging issues in this area.

253.4. Eastern Partnership 2.0. The Eastern Partnership Initiative has begun while jointly working with the Nordic countries. Today, the Nordic countries need to be brought back to greater involvement in the matters of Eastern Partnership, as well as to the defence of the European Union's values. We have to build broader coalitions of like-minded democracies and transatlantic or international alliances to help Belarusians in their fight for freedom and democracy, to consolidate prospects for the membership of Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine of the European Union by the next Presidency of the Republic of Lithuania of the Council of the European Union in 2027, and to help development of the area of democracy and freedom in other countries and regions.

253.5. Principled stance in the face of Russia's aggression. We will support targeted and economic sanctions against Russia's regime; and not only will we support the efforts of Moldova, Georgia, Ukraine, and other countries in the region to become members of the European Union and NATO, but we will also assist them in reclaiming the territories occupied and annexed by Russia.

253.6. Development cooperation. It is necessary to increase targeted support for the development of democracy and freedom in the European Union's neighbourhood and beyond, while aiming to move as close as possible to the level of financial support for development cooperation in line with international obligations, and thereby restoring Lithuania's international development cooperation potential. We will seek to ensure that the European Union's bilateral agreements on trade and cooperation include clauses on democracy, respect for human rights, and intolerance to genocide. Development cooperation has to become a priority area of the national foreign policy strategy, ensuring an effective foreign policy of Lithuania that is based on values, fulfilment of international obligations, and economic interests, and that has clear geographic and thematic priorities. We will seek to increase Lithuania's bilateral development assistance, which would ensure the full involvement of Lithuania's authorities, businesses, and non-governmental organisations in the implementation of programmes and projects funded by international donors, especially those funded by the European Union.

**Project: To strengthen Europe means to grow stronger in Europe**

254. Membership of the European Union is a fundamental political choice of Lithuania, expressing our belonging to the value community of the West. It is extremely important for Lithuania that the European Union can ensure its interests in the international arena effectively by defending democracy, international law, and human rights both in its neighbourhood and beyond. Lithuania's stability and security in a broad sense depend on the European Union's unity and ability to respond effectively to internal and external challenges. A united, strategic, and effective European foreign policy is a prerequisite for maintaining and strengthening the regional influence of Lithuania and the global influence of the European Union.

255. The European Union as a format for defending or representing Lithuania's interests is effective insofar as the agenda we propose and the issues we raise receive support from other European Union Member States. Too often it happens that Lithuania's position is relevant only to a small number of the European Union Member States. For our part, we often see problems of other states not as common challenges to the Union that unites us, but as issues beyond our control and concern. However, to be heard, we have to hear others. Lithuania needs a more comprehensive agenda to be able to take an active position and participate in processes relevant to other Member States. For this reason, we will seek to be more active in shaping the political agenda of the European Union, while aiming to raise issues that are relevant not only to the Republic of Lithuania but also to the Community as a whole.

256. We cannot ignore the threat that the European Union, unable to cope with the increasing international competition and changing global demographics, may find itself on the margins of global development and under the influence of other powers, which would undermine its potential for economic growth and innovation, and its influence on the international stage. To regain its position in global competition and maintain initiative together with the United States in the fields of world trade, security, spread of democracy, and protection of human rights, Europe needs better functional capabilities and opportunities for focused strategic action, and Lithuania will fully support this development.

257. Key initiatives:

257.1. Orientation towards the core of the European Union. We have to devote special attention to the capitals at the centre of the European Union, Berlin and Paris. We need to intensify cooperation with Germany's interests in our region and in the development of the European Union's Eastern policy. We will seek that relations with Germany are based on understanding and listening to mutual interests, which will ensure a stronger and more united European Union foreign policy in the East. Following Brexit, the importance of the states at the core of Europe has grown even more. Effectiveness of the European Union depends on the core's ability to find a compromise between the North and the South, as well as other emerging poles. In the absence of

a compromise or a search for it, a 'multi-speed' model of the European Union may reappear on the political agenda in the long run. Lithuania's strategic geopolitical interest has been and will remain to stay at the core of the countries building the European Union.

257.2. Development of bilateral relations. The path to an effective policy is based on cooperation with the capitals of other Member States of the European Union. We need to develop active bilateral diplomacy in the European Union, gain competence, and have our position, for example, on the current challenges arising to the countries of Southern Europe. Therefore, we have to expand the diplomatic and consular representation of the Republic of Lithuania in all Member States of the European Union, as well as in the regions of those countries, where the potential of Lithuania's foreign policy has not been tapped so far. It is necessary to promote and develop active bilateral relations with the political, academic, business, and other non-governmental groups of the Member States of the European Union, the goals of which correspond to the priorities of Lithuania's foreign policy.

257.3. A real strategic partnership with the Baltic states. We will intensify cooperation with Latvia and Estonia while seeking solidarity and unified political action of the Baltic states on Eastern and security policy issues, as well as in the formats of the European Union. To achieve the common goals of geopolitical and energy security, we will seek to establish an effective and close strategic partnership with Latvia as the closest nation to Lithuania, by proposing establishment of a Lithuanian-Latvian Parliamentary Assembly, as well as taking other measures to raise relations between our countries to a new political level.

257.4. Enlargement of the European Union. We have to seek that enlargement of the European Union is brought back to the real political agenda of the Union. Countries that have fulfilled the criteria for membership of the European Union have to be given an opportunity to start accession negotiations.

257.5. A more efficient Europe. Only through concerted efforts to handle challenges and opportunities of climate change, digital policy and AI, will we achieve more. Thus, we are convinced that stronger integration in these areas is relevant to the interests of our state in the EU.

257.6. Economic transformation. Important investments of the European Union, and especially the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, should enable Lithuania to make a breakthrough in green and digital transformation as well as innovation policy, while creating a completely new and future-oriented economic model. These investments have to create the greatest possible added value, and help Lithuania implement the long-needed structural reforms in the fields of education, health care, and social policy. As we feel the solidarity of the European Union helping create prosperity in our country, we have to show solidarity to other EU Member States as well, and actively contribute to common goals and initiatives.

257.7. Involvement in the European institutions. We have to pursue an active and strategic policy to help citizens of the Republic of Lithuania pursue careers in EU institutions and other international and European organisations that meet the interests of Lithuania's politics.

### **Project: Lithuania's defence frontline**

258. Lithuania's foreign policy seeks to strengthen Lithuania's international position and to consolidate its independence as well as the security and well-being of its citizens; hence, concern for security is one of the main goals of foreign policy.

259. Our regional security situation remains tense, and is gradually deteriorating: Russia continues to engage in hybrid warfare in Ukraine and expands its influence in the South Caucasus and the Middle East, and its interference in Belarus's statehood should not be ruled out either.

260. Alongside the above familiar threats, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of Western democracies and the need to strengthen other aspects of national security.

261. While recognising and acknowledging the growing global economic and political role of China, and while pursuing peaceful and mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation that is based on the international law, we cannot ignore demonstration of its growing military and political aggression. The growing and systematic scale of human rights violations is of legitimate concern.

262. While being aware of these trends and while welcoming the growing funding of the national defence budget, it is also appropriate to systematically and proportionately strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to contribute actively to ensuring national security.

263. Key initiatives:

263.1. Development of transatlantic relations. With a view to intensifying transatlantic relations and developing cooperation with the interests of the United States, we have to step up relations with the US administration and the Congress at the level of the Government and the Seimas. We have to ensure that a regular high-level political dialogue is established with the United States on the key areas of Lithuania's foreign, security, and energy policy. We will seek that regular parliamentary visits to the United States are made to present the interests of our country. We will strengthen representation of the key state institutions at the Embassy of Lithuania to the United States. We have to seek to expand US investment in Lithuania's military, energy, and economic security. We will help develop horizontal links at the levels of businesses, non-governmental and political organisations, and think tanks.

263.2. An effective strategic partnership with Poland. We will seek to activate the strategic partnership with Poland in the context of Eastern policy and wider geopolitical and energy security.

263.3. Closer cooperation with the United Kingdom. We will seek to strengthen bilateral cooperation with the United Kingdom in the areas of security, Eastern policy, economic and technological cooperation, and concern for the Lithuanian diaspora. We will pay close attention to the U-NB8 (UK, Baltic, and Nordic) cooperation format.

263.4. Strategic diversification. Strategic diversification is key: we have to get into new markets that would reduce our dependence on limited sources of supply in autocratic countries and open up new opportunities for Lithuania's exporters in the most advanced democratic world

markets. There is a particular need for closer relations with East Asian countries, where Lithuania has not as yet used the full cooperation potential; accordingly, a strategic expansion of the network of diplomatic missions is needed.

263.5. Economic diplomacy. Effective economic diplomacy primarily serves to create well-being for Lithuania's people; therefore, it is necessary to keep strengthening economic diplomacy. We will coordinate actions in this area with the interests of Lithuania's businesses, and will focus on all the markets that could be opened up to the innovative, digital, and high added value Lithuanian businesses. We will seek to develop international cooperation in science, technology, and innovation in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and Innovation, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and other agencies and business associated structures. It is necessary to ensure that Lithuania's representatives have proper competencies to represent Lithuania's economic interests. We will seek active involvement of the Lithuanian diaspora in the search for foreign investment, attraction of foreign tourists, and export growth. We will set specific tasks for Lithuania's diplomatic missions in the field of economic diplomacy, and we will appoint Ambassadors at Large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to represent Lithuania's economic interests in those countries and regions where there are no Lithuanian missions present.

263.6. New directions of foreign policy specialisation. Creating economic opportunities in digital economy and artificial intelligence, and the fields of cybersecurity and resistance to disinformation have to become the focus of Lithuania's diplomacy in the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), and other international and bilateral formats.

263.7. Focus on economic security and the strategic energy and transportation projects. We will devote special attention to the strategic infrastructure projects, such as the synchronisation of electricity networks, Via Baltica, Rail Baltica, and the economic and energy security of Lithuania.

263.8. Crisis management capacity building. The COVID-19 pandemic and the likelihood of other crises of a similar nature in a globally integrated world, continuing threats of terrorism, and the effects of climate change call for constant crisis management. We will create a crisis management structure operating 24 hours a day, which will constantly monitor the situation in the region and the world, respond to events, generate the first crisis communication message, take care of assistance to Lithuania's citizens, and effectively cooperate with relevant structures.

### **Project: Lithuania's soft power is a multiplier of political power**

264. Lithuania has ambitions to punch above its weight in the international arena – that requires power multipliers. It can achieve much more by harnessing its soft power, which must be developed and nurtured in a targeted manner. The components of Lithuania's soft power are the narrative of Lithuania's history, Lithuania as a space of freedom and ideas, a laboratory for

building a free democratic society, Lithuania as a state of clean nature and green technologies, and diaspora and global Lithuania as partners and support in the world. We will strive to do more in the areas of Lithuania's strategic brand and its implementation, and we will coordinate the dissemination of Lithuania's culture, science, and knowledge in the world more effectively.

265. Key initiatives:

265.1. Telling Lithuania's story. Lithuania has a story that is important to tell: the story of victory against tyranny, freedom fighters, and exile, as well as the painful story of the Holocaust. Lithuania's story often becomes an object of hybrid attacks, when, by making use of debates that are common in the West, hostile forces shape a sordid narrative that has no real basis. We will seek to strengthen academic research and the existing efforts to resist hostile narratives through coordinated strategic efforts to study historical truth openly and critically, and to form and create the historical narrative of Lithuania on its basis. In addition, we will seek assessment of the crimes of totalitarian regimes.

265.2. Lithuania as a space of freedom: that is also embedded in our historical DNA. Russian dissidents, fighters for a democratic Belarus (the only free Belarusian university in exile, EHU, is operating here), and, we believe, other people who love freedom, such as Asian democrats defending their rights, can discover a possibility of a free life in Lithuania, and can serve Lithuania by their presence. We will seek to help and welcome those who are politically persecuted.

265.3. Lithuania is a laboratory for Europe's ideas. The rapid, bold, and cardinal changes of the last three decades, when we had to build a democratic state, the law, a market economy, and an open modern society, and to integrate into the European Union and NATO, have proved Lithuania's transformative potential. Recently, Lithuania has successfully implemented new ideas, having created an experimental ecosystem in the field of fintech, which has attracted investment, talents, innovative ideas, and international attention to Lithuania. This initiative should serve as a model for programming innovation and testing new ideas in many areas of public policy. We will position ourselves as Europe's laboratory of ideas to test the most advanced public policy ideas and innovations on a small national scale.

265.4. A state of clean nature and green technology. We will turn to the green agenda; Lithuania will become a country committed to the European Green Deal, while shaping green policy and climate diplomacy in a targeted manner.

265.5. Emigration and Global Lithuania: following the example of Ireland and other countries in their cooperation with the diaspora, we will establish the Returning Lithuania Agency, which together with the returning citizens and businesses would seek to attract to the country new investments, technologies, experience, contacts, and creativity.

**Project: To restore respect and prestige of the diplomatic service**

266. Compared to other areas of public administration, diplomatic service has always been considered one of the most prestigious areas of the civil service. Diplomatic service has become

uncompetitive in terms of pay and workload, especially compared to the private sector, although employment requirements are among the highest in the public sector. Interest in competitions for diplomatic service has declined significantly. Political appointments that have abounded over the past 30 years have turned the system from meritocratic into more political one. Therefore, in the hope of an efficient service capable of responding to the complex challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we need to help it become one.

267. We envisage an ambitious programme to reform diplomatic service, which is based on the following principles: depoliticisation and professionalism, attraction of the highest competencies, efficient and accountable operation, and creation of attractive and competitive working conditions.

268. Key initiatives:

268.1. Depoliticisation and professionalism. We will abolish the possibility for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to grant diplomatic ranks to persons who have entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs without a competition. Ranks will be awarded only by a decision of an attestation commission. It is necessary to depoliticise the attestation commission. Diplomats' assessments on the basis of specific KPIs have to be clear, specific, principled, and transparent, as has the selection to the positions of diplomatic representatives (ambassadors), which must be organised on a competitive basis, and not on the basis of political or personal loyalty.

268.2. Attractive and competitive working conditions. We will create a competitive and motivating procedure to pursue a career in and receive remuneration for the diplomatic service, based on concrete achievements in implementing the key priorities of Lithuania's foreign policy.

268.3. Competence and openness. We will foster openness and closer cooperation with universities, and the academic and analytical community, engaging it to reflect on emerging challenges and to formulate the long-term strategic foreign policy decisions. We will create conditions for experienced diplomats to share their knowledge and expertise with the younger generation of diplomats, and to apply their experience in other state institutions, where a foreign policy component is important.

268.4. Flexible and dynamic institutional structure. We will delegate more functions to mobile teams/task forces, which we will set up whenever necessary for a set period of time, and which will be led by Ambassadors at Large. We will digitise consular services to the maximum, thus improving the provision of services and assistance to the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania abroad.

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