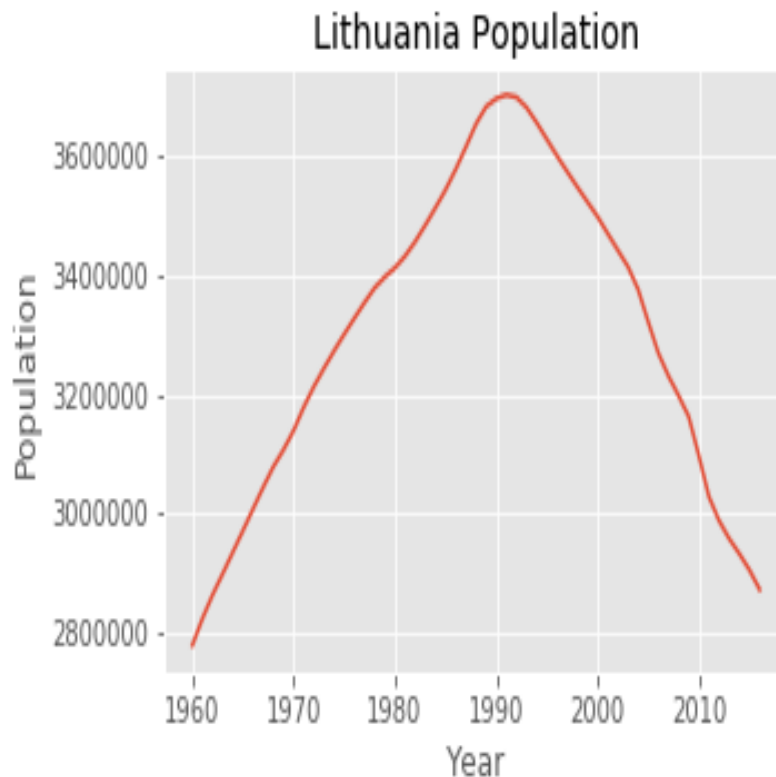


Lithuania



Lithuania ([listen](#)); Lithuanian: Lietuva [[listen](#)]), officially the Republic of Lithuania (Lithuanian: Lietuvos Respublika), is a country in the Baltic region of northern-eastern Europe. One of the three Baltic states, it is situated along the southeastern shore of the Baltic Sea, to the east of Sweden and Denmark. It is bordered by Latvia to the north, Belarus to the east and south, Poland to the south, and Kaliningrad Oblast (a Russian exclave) to the southwest. Lithuania has an estimated population of 2.8 million people as of 2017, and its capital and largest city is Vilnius. Lithuanians are a Baltic people. The official language, Lithuanian, along with Latvian, is one of only two living languages in the Baltic branch of the Indo-European language family. For centuries, the southeastern shores of the Baltic Sea were inhabited by various Baltic tribes. In the 1230s, the Lithuanian lands were united by Mindaugas, the King of Lithuania, and the first unified Lithuanian state, the Kingdom of Lithuania, was created on 6 July 1253. During the 14th century, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was the largest country in Europe; present-day Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and parts of Poland and Russia were the territories of the Grand Duchy. With the Lublin Union of 1569, Lithuania and Poland formed a voluntary two-state union, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Commonwealth lasted more than two centuries, until neighboring countries systematically dismantled it from 1772 to 1795, with the Russian Empire annexing most of Lithuania's territory. As World War I neared its end, Lithuania's Act of Independence was signed on 16 February 1918, declaring the founding of the modern Republic of Lithuania. In the midst of the Second World War, Lithuania was first occupied by the Soviet Union and then by Nazi Germany. As World War II neared its end and the Germans retreated, the Soviet Union reoccupied Lithuania. On 11 March 1990, a year before the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union, Lithuania became the first Baltic state to declare itself independent, resulting in the restoration of an independent State of Lithuania after 50 years of Soviet occupation. Lithuania is a member of the European Union, the Council of Europe, a full member of the eurozone, Schengen Agreement and NATO. It is also a member of the Nordic Investment Bank, and part of Nordic-Baltic cooperation of Northern European countries. The United Nations Human Development Index lists Lithuania as a "very high human

development" country. == Etymology == The first known record of the name of Lithuania (Lithuanian: Lietuva) is in a 9 March 1009 story of Saint Bruno recorded in the Quedlinburg Chronicle (Latin: Annales Quedlinburgenses). The Chronicle recorded a Latinized form of the name Lietuva: Litua (pronounced [litua]). Due to the lack of reliable evidence, true meaning of the name is unknown. Nowadays, scholars still debate the meaning of the word and there are a few persuasive versions. There have been several attempts to associate Lietuva with Celtic toponyms, and with Latin or Italian words, but these attempts all lack strong linguistic support. According to a widespread popular belief, the word Lietuva (Lithuania) originated from the Lithuanian words lyti (to rain) and lietus (rain). However, there is no serious scientific support for this theory. Since the word Lietuva has a suffix (-uva), the original word should have no suffix. A likely candidate is Liet■. Because many Baltic ethnonyms originated from hydronyms, linguists have searched for its origin among local hydronyms. Usually such names evolved through the following process: hydronym → toponym → ethnonym. A small river not far from Kernav■, the core area of the early Lithuanian state and a possible first capital of the would-be Grand Duchy of Lithuania, is usually credited as the source of the name. This river's original name is Lietava. As time passed, the suffix -ava could have changed into -uva, as the two are from the same suffix branch. The river flows in the lowlands and easily spills over its banks, therefore the traditional Lithuanian form liet- could be directly translated as lietis (to spill), of the root derived from the Proto-Indo-European *ley■-. It is believed that Rimgaudas (father of Mindaugas) ruled the area of Kernav■. However, the river is very small and some find it improbable that such a small and local object could have lent its name to an entire nation. On the other hand, such a fact is not unprecedented in world history. While the word's etymology continues to be debated, scientists agree that the primary origins of the ethnonym were the Lithuanian forms *L■tuv■/Lietuva, which were then used by different languages, including Slavic. It is very unlikely for the name to have derived from a Slavic language, since the Slavic -i- (■) could never be transliterated into the Lithuanian diphthong -ie-. Among other etymologies of the name of Lithuania there is Art■ras Dubonis' hypothesis, that Lietuva relates to the word *lei■iai (plural of leitis, a social group in the early Grand Duchy of Lithuania). From the middle of the 13th century, lei■iai were a distinct social group of the Lithuanian society subordinate to the Lithuanian ruler or the state itself. They were living in the Vilnius and Trakai Voivodeships manors. Possibly, already in the 14th century part of them became bajorai. Another meaning of lei■iai is used in the 14th – 16th centuries historical sources as a Lithuanians ethnonym. It is believed that occasionally all Lithuanians were called using it (except for Samogitians). Term leiši (plural of leitis), as a synonym to the Lithuanians ethnonym (beside the newer lietuvietis), to this day maintained Latvians who are speaking with a very closely related Latvian language. == History == === Prehistoric === The first people settled in the territory of Lithuania after the last glacial period in the 10th millennium BC: Kunda, Neman and Narva cultures. They were traveling hunters and did not form stable settlements. In the 8th millennium BC, the climate became much warmer, and forests developed. The inhabitants of what is now Lithuania then traveled less and engaged in local hunting, gathering and fresh-water fishing. Agriculture did not emerge until the 3rd millennium BC due to a harsh climate and terrain and a lack of suitable tools to cultivate the land. Crafts and trade also started to form at this time. Over a millennium, the Indo-Europeans, who arrived in the 3rd – 2nd millennium BC, mixed with the local population and formed various Baltic tribes. The Baltic tribes did not maintain close cultural or political contacts with the Roman Empire, but they did maintain trade contacts (see Amber Road). Tacitus, in his study Germania, described the Aesti people, inhabitants of the south-eastern Baltic Sea shores who were probably Balts, around the year 97 AD. The Western Balts differentiated and became known to outside chroniclers first. Ptolemy in the 2nd century AD knew of the Galindians and Yotvingians, and early medieval chroniclers mentioned Old Prussians, Curonians and Semigallians. The Lithuanian language is considered to be very conservative for its close connection to Indo-European roots. It is believed to have differentiated from the Latvian language, the most closely related existing language, around the 7th century. Traditional Lithuanian pagan customs and mythology, with many archaic elements, were long preserved. Rulers' bodies were cremated up until the conversion to Christianity: the descriptions of the cremation ceremonies of the grand dukes Algirdas and K■stutis have survived. From the 9th to the 11th centuries, coastal Balts were subjected to raids by the Vikings, and the kings of Denmark collected tribute at times. During the 10–11th centuries, Lithuanian territories were among the lands paying tribute to Kievan Rus', and Yaroslav the Wise was among the Ruthenian rulers who invaded Lithuania (from 1040). From the mid-12th century, it was the Lithuanians who were invading Ruthenian territories. In 1183, Polotsk and Pskov were ravaged, and even the distant and powerful Novgorod Republic was repeatedly threatened by the excursions from the emerging Lithuanian war machine toward the end of

the 12th century. From the late 12th century, an organized Lithuanian military force existed; it was used for external raids, plundering and the gathering of slaves. Such military and pecuniary activities fostered social differentiation and triggered a struggle for power in Lithuania. This initiated the formation of early statehood, from which the Grand Duchy of Lithuania developed. == Medieval == Initially inhabited by fragmented Baltic tribes, in the 1230s the Lithuanian lands were united by Mindaugas, who was crowned as King of Lithuania on 6 July 1253. After his assassination in 1263, pagan Lithuania was a target of the Christian crusades of the Teutonic Knights and the Livonian Order. Siege of Pilsnai is noted for the Lithuanians' heroic defense against the intruders. Despite the devastating century-long struggle with the Orders, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania expanded rapidly, overtaking former Slavic principalities of Kievan Rus'. On 22 September 1236, the Battle of Saulė between Samogitians and the Livonian Brothers of the Sword took place close to Šiauliai. The Livonian Brothers were smashed during it and their further conquest of the Balts lands were stopped. The battle inspired rebellions among the Curonians, Semigallians, Selonians, Oeselians, tribes previously conquered by the Sword-Brothers. Some thirty years' worth of conquests on the left bank of Daugava were lost. In 2000, the Lithuanian and Latvian parliaments declared 22 September to be the Day of Baltic Unity. According to the legend, Grand Duke Gediminas was hunting near the Vilnia River, tired after the successful hunt, he settled in for the night and dreamed of a huge Iron Wolf standing on top a hill and howling as strong and loud as a hundred wolves. Krivis (pagan priest) Lizdeika interpreted the dream that the Iron Wolf represents Vilnius Castles. Gediminas, obeying the will of gods, built the city, and gave it the name Vilnius – from the stream of the Vilnia River. In 1362 or 1363, Grand Duke Algirdas marched between lower Dnieper and Southern Bug. First, Algirdas captured remaining territories of the Principality of Chernigov – the bulk of the territory, including the capital in Bryansk, fell under Lithuanian control around 1357–1358. The Lithuanians then attacked Korshev (Korshevo), an unidentified fortress located in the upper reaches of the Bystraya Sosna River, tributary of the Don River. It is believed that Algirdas further conquered territories of the former Principality of Pereslavl'. The area belonged to Crimean ulus which was engaged in a campaign against New Sarai and could not organize effective resistance. Three Tatar beys of Podolia gathered an army to resist the invasion. Lithuanians smashed the Golden Horde forces during the Battle of Blue Waters and stopped its further expansion in the present-day Ukraine. The victory brought the city of Kiev and a large part of present-day Ukraine, including sparsely populated Podolia and Dykra, under the control of the expanding Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The duchy also gained access to the Black Sea. Algirdas left his son Vladimir in Kiev. After taking Kiev, Lithuania became a direct neighbor and rival of the Grand Duchy of Moscow. By the end of the 14th century, Lithuania was one of the largest countries in Europe and included present-day Belarus, Ukraine, and parts of Poland and Russia. The geopolitical situation between the west and the east determined the multicultural and multi-confessional character of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The ruling elite practised religious tolerance and Chancery Slavonic language was used as an auxiliary language to the Latin for official documents. In 1385, the Grand Duke Jogaila accepted Poland's offer to become its king. Jogaila embarked on gradual Christianization of Lithuania and established a personal union between Poland and Lithuania. It implied that Lithuania, the fiercely independent land, was one of the last pagan areas of Europe to adopt Christianity. After two civil wars, Vytautas the Great became the Grand Duke of Lithuania in 1392. During his reign, Lithuania reached the peak of its territorial expansion, centralization of the state began, and the Lithuanian nobility became increasingly prominent in state politics. In the great Battle of the Vorskla River in 1399, the combined forces of Tokhtamysh and Vytautas were defeated by the Mongols. Thanks to close cooperation, the armies of Lithuania and Poland achieved a great victory over the Teutonic Knights in 1410 at the Battle of Grunwald, one of the largest battles of medieval Europe. In January 1429, at the Congress of Lutsk Vytautas received the title of King of Lithuania with the backing of Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor, but the envoys who were transporting the crown were stopped by Polish magnates in autumn of 1430. Another crown was sent, but Vytautas died in the Trakai Island Castle several days before it reached Lithuania. He was buried in the Cathedral of Vilnius. After the deaths of Jogaila and Vytautas, the Lithuanian nobility attempted to break the union between Poland and Lithuania, independently selecting Grand Dukes from the Jagiellon dynasty. But, at the end of the 15th century, Lithuania was forced to seek a closer alliance with Poland when the growing power of the Grand Duchy of Moscow threatened Lithuania's Russian principalities and sparked the Muscovite–Lithuanian Wars and the Livonian War. On 8 September 1514, Battle of Orsha between Lithuanians, commanded by the Grand Hetman Konstanty Ostrogi, and Muscovites was fought. According to *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii* by Sigismund von Herberstein, the primary source for information on the battle, the much smaller army of

Poland–Lithuania (under 30,000 men) defeated a force of 80,000 Muscovite soldiers, capturing their camp and commander. The battle destroyed a military alliance against Lithuania and Poland. Thousands of Muscovites were captured as prisoners and used as laborers in the Lithuanian manors, while Konstanty Ostrogski delivered the captured Muscovite flags to the Cathedral of Vilnius. The Livonian War was ceased for ten years with a Truce of Yam-Zapolsky signed on 15 January 1582 according to which the already Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth recovered Livonia, Polotsk and Velizh, but transferred Velikiye Luki to the Tsardom of Russia. The truce was extended for twenty years in 1600, when a diplomatic mission to Moscow led by Lew Sapieha concluded negotiations with Tsar Boris Godunov. The truce was broken when the Poles invaded Muscovy in 1605. === Modern === The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was created in 1569. As a member of the Commonwealth, Lithuania retained its institutions, including a separate army, currency, and statutory laws. Eventually Polonization affected all aspects of Lithuanian life: politics, language, culture, and national identity. From the mid-16th to the mid-17th centuries, culture, arts, and education flourished, fueled by the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation. From 1573, the Kings of Poland and Grand Dukes of Lithuania were elected by the nobility, who were granted ever increasing Golden Liberties. These liberties, especially the liberum veto, led to anarchy and the eventual dissolution of the state. The Commonwealth reached its Golden Age in the early 17th century. Its powerful parliament was dominated by nobles who were reluctant to get involved in the Thirty Years' War; this neutrality spared the country from the ravages of a political-religious conflict that devastated most of contemporary Europe. The Commonwealth held its own against Sweden, the Tsardom of Russia, and vassals of the Ottoman Empire, and even launched successful expansionist offensives against its neighbors. In several invasions during the Time of Troubles, Commonwealth troops entered Russia and managed to take Moscow and hold it from September 27, 1610 to November 4, 1612, when they were driven out after a siege. The Constitution of 3 May 1791 was adopted by the Great Sejm (parliament) of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth trying to save the state. The legislation was designed to redress the Commonwealth's political defects due to the system of Golden Liberties, also known as the "Nobles' Democracy," had conferred disproportionate rights on the nobility (szlachta) and over time had corrupted politics. The constitution sought to supplant the prevailing anarchy fostered by some of the country's magnates with a more democratic constitutional monarchy. It introduced elements of political equality between townspeople and nobility, and placed the peasants under the protection of the government, thus mitigating the worst abuses of serfdom. It banned parliamentary institutions such as the liberum veto, which had put the Sejm at the mercy of any deputy who could revoke all the legislation that had been passed by that Sejm. It was drafted in relation to a copy of the U.S. Constitution. Others have called it the world's second-oldest codified national governmental constitution after the 1787 U.S. Constitution. The 1787 U.S. Constitution was actually the first governmental constitution, introducing the clear division of the executive, legislative and judiciary powers, accordingly with the legal and philosophical values influential in the Enlightenment. During the Northern Wars (1655–1661), the Lithuanian territory and economy were devastated by the Swedish army. In the late 17th century, the king of the weakened Commonwealth, John III Sobieski, allied with Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I to deal crushing defeats to the Ottoman Empire. In 1683, the Battle of Vienna marked the final turning point in the 250-year struggle between the forces of Christian Europe and the Islamic Ottomans. For its centuries-long opposition to Muslim advances, the Commonwealth would gain the name of Antemurale Christianitatis (bulwark of Christianity). During the next 16 years, the Great Turkish War would drive the Turks permanently south of the Danube River, never again to threaten central Europe. Before it could fully recover, Lithuania was ravaged during the Great Northern War (1700–1721). The war, a plague, and a famine caused the deaths of approximately 40% of the country's population. Foreign powers, especially Russia, became dominant in the domestic politics of the Commonwealth. Numerous factions among the nobility used the Golden Liberties to prevent any reforms. Eventually, the Commonwealth was partitioned in 1772, 1792, and 1795 by the Russian Empire, Prussia, and Habsburg Austria. The largest area of Lithuanian territory became part of the Russian Empire. After unsuccessful uprisings in 1831 and 1863, the Tsarist authorities implemented a number of Russification policies. They banned the Lithuanian press, closed cultural and educational institutions, and made Lithuania part of a new administrative region called Northwestern Krai. The Russification failed owing to an extensive network of book smugglers and secret Lithuanian home schooling. After the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), when German diplomats assigned what were seen as Russian spoils of war to Turkey, the relationship between Russia and the German Empire became complicated. The Russian Empire resumed the construction of fortresses at its western

borders for defence against a potential invasion from Germany in the West. On 7 July 1879 the Russian Emperor Alexander II approved of a proposal from the Russian military leadership to build the largest "first-class" defensive structure in the entire state – the 65 km² (25 sq mi) Kaunas Fortress. Large numbers of Lithuanians went to the United States in 1867–1868 after a famine. A Lithuanian National Revival laid the foundations of the modern Lithuanian nation and independent Lithuania. == 20th and 21st centuries == World War I rapidly reached the territory of Lithuania. Germany's push to the east drove the forces of the Russian Empire to retreat. By the end of 1915, Germany occupied the entire territory of Lithuania and Courland. A new administrative entity, Ober Ost (short for Oberbefehlshaber der gesamten Deutschen Streitkräfte im Osten, which is German for "Supreme Commander of All German Forces in the East"), was established. Lithuanians lost all political rights they had gained: personal freedom was restricted, and at the beginning the Lithuanian press was banned. However, the Lithuanian intelligentsia tried to take advantage of the existing geopolitical situation and began to look for opportunities to restore Lithuania's independence. On 18–22 September 1917, the Vilnius Conference elected the Council of Lithuania. At the conference, it was decided to re-establish the state of Lithuania with its ethnographic borders and the capital of Vilnius. Antanas Smetona was elected the chairman of the Council (Jonas Basanavičius became the chairman only on 16 February 1918). Following the geopolitical situation, on 11 December 1917, the Council of Lithuania adopted a resolution announcing the restoration of an independent state of Lithuania with the capital in Vilnius and severing all ties that had ever been established with other countries and calling for the eternal union with Germany. The latter statement was rejected by some of the members of the Council, forcing Mykolas Biržiška, Steponas Kairys, Stanislovas Narutavičius and Petras Vileišis to leave the organization. As Germany was losing the war, a decision had been made to abandon this union. A resolution adopted on 16 February 1918, was recognized as the Act of Independence of Lithuania. It restored an independent state of Lithuania governed by democratic principles, with Vilnius as its capital. The Act also stated that Lithuania's relations with other countries will be established by the democratically elected Constituent Assembly of Lithuania. The state of Lithuania which had been built within the framework of the Act lasted from 1918 until 1940. In July 1918, resisting the plans of those who welcomed the annexation by Germany the Council of Lithuania elected Prince Wilhelm of Urach, Count of Württemberg, as King of Lithuania, with a regnal name of Mindaugas II. However, following the capitulation of Germany in November 1918, the idea of the monarchy was abandoned, leaving the question about the ruling system to the constituent assembly. On 11 November 1918, the first Provisional Constitution of Lithuania was written. At the same time, the army, the government, and other state institutions began to be organized. In 1919 the office of the presidency was introduced. Antanas Smetona was elected the president of the state. As the Bolsheviks were pushing for Vilnius, the government was moved to Kaunas, which had become a provisional capital. According to the Lithuanian Constitution of 1928 and 1938, the capital of the country was Vilnius. Trying to establish the statehood and draw state borders, Lithuania had to fight not only with the Bolsheviks, but also with the West Russian Volunteer Army or Bermontians and the Poles. The Bermontians were defeated in November 1919 at Radviliškis. The peace treaty with the Soviet Russia was signed on 12 July 1920 that drew a frontier which placed the Vilnius district on the Lithuanian side. The Polish–Lithuanian War was stopped with a peace treaty signed between Lithuania and Poland on 7 October 1920, in Suwałki that drew a line of demarcation, which was incomplete but indicated that the Vilnius area would be part of Lithuania. However, three days later the Poles broke the treaty as the Lucjan Żeligowski troops seized and occupied the Vilnius Region and drove out the Lithuanian forces. Lithuanians were able to stop their push deeper into the territory only on 21–22 November at Širvintos and Giedraičiai. Notwithstanding, Vilnius remained to be part of Poland becoming the cornerstone of Lithuania's foreign policy, and causing vast Lithuanians anger towards the Poles. Żeligowski proclaimed the Independence of the Republic of Central Lithuania on 12 October 1920 with Wilno as its capital. On 8 January 1922, Żeligowski organized elections to the Vilnius Sejm and passed his powers. The elections were not recognized by the League of Nations, Lithuania and boycotted by Lithuanians, most of the Jews and some Belarusians. Poles were the only major ethnic group out of which the majority of people voted. On 24 March 1922, the newly elected parliament decided to submit the area to Poland. On 15 May 1920, the first meeting of the democratically elected constituent assembly took place. The documents it adopted, i. e. the temporary (1920) and permanent (1922) constitutions of Lithuania, strove to regulate the life of the new state. Land, finance, and educational reforms started to be implemented. The currency of Lithuania, the Lithuanian litas, was introduced. The University of Lithuania was opened. All major public institutions had been established. As Lithuania began to gain

stability, foreign countries started to recognize it. In 1921 Lithuania was admitted to the League of Nations. The first Parliament of Lithuania or Seimas was elected in October 1922. Aleksandras Stulginskis was elected as a president. One of the most important achievements of that time was the incorporation of Klaipėda Region into the territory of Lithuania in 1923 and its international recognition in 1924. The Third Seimas elected Kazys Grinius, a member of Lithuanian Popular Peasants' Union, as the country's president. However, his leadership did not last long. On 17 December 1926, a military coup d'état took place resulting in the replacement of the democratically elected government with a conservative authoritarian government led by Antanas Smetona. Augustinas Voldemaras was appointed to form a government. The so-called authoritarian phase had begun strengthening the influence of one party, the Lithuanian Nationalist Union, in the country. In 1927, the Seimas was released. A new constitution adopted in 1928, which consolidated presidential powers. Gradually the opposition parties were banned, the censorship was tightened, and the rights of national minorities were narrowed. The temporary capital Kaunas, which was nicknamed the Little Paris, and the country itself had a Western standard of living with sufficiently high salaries and low prices. At the time, qualified workers there were earning very similar real wages as workers in Germany, Italy, Switzerland and France, the country also had a surprisingly high natural increase in population of 9.7 and the industrial production of Lithuania increased by 160% from 1913 to 1940. The situation was aggravated by the global economic crisis. The purchase price of agricultural products had declined significantly. In 1935, farmers began strikes in Suvalkija and Dzūkija. In addition to economic ones, political demands were made. The government cruelly suppressed the unrest. In the spring of 1936, four peasants were sentenced to death for starting the riots. ===== 1939–1940 ===== Initially prior the World War II, Lithuania declared neutrality and its Seimas passed the neutrality laws. Though, on the eve of World War II, as the geopolitical situation in the region started to change, Lithuania was forced to accept the ultimatums of the neighboring countries. On 17 March 1938, Poland delivered an ultimatum calling for diplomatic relations. Although practically it meant Poland's "refusal" of Vilnius, Lithuania had also sought to restore relations with its neighbor, and accepted the ultimatum. On 20 March 1939, Lithuania was handed an ultimatum by Nazi Germany. A request was made to transfer the Klaipėda Region to Nazi Germany. Two days later, without seeing the way out, the Lithuanian government signed the agreement. Another large neighbor — the Soviet Union also began preparing for the occupation of the Lithuania's territory. On 7 October 1939 the Lithuanian delegation departed to Moscow where they later had to sign the Soviet–Lithuanian Mutual Assistance Treaty due to the unfavorable situation. The treaty resulted in five Soviet military bases with 20,000 troops established across Lithuania in exchange for the Lithuania's historical capital Vilnius. According to the Lithuanian Minister of National Defence Kazys Musteikis, Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Juozas Urbšys initially told that Lithuanians refuse Vilnius Region as well as the Russian garrisons, however then nervous Joseph Stalin replied that "No matter if you take Vilnius or not, the Russian garrisons will enter Lithuania anyway". He also informed Juozas Urbšys about the Soviet–German secret protocols and showed maps of the spheres of influence. Two of the military bases with thousands of Soviet soldiers were established close to Kaunas in Prienai and Gaižiūnai. Despite regaining the beloved historical capital, the Presidency and the Government remained in Kaunas. The next step made by the USSR was accusations of the abduction of the Red Army soldiers in Lithuania. Although the Lithuanian government denied such allegations, the tensions became heightened on both sides. On 14 June 1940, the USSR issued an ultimatum to Lithuania, demanding to replace the government and allow Red Army's units to enter the territory of Lithuania without any prior agreements, which would mean the occupation of the country. On 14 June 1940 just before midnight, the last meeting of the Lithuanian Government was held in the Presidential Palace, in Kaunas. During it, the Soviet's ultimatum was debated. President Antanas Smetona categorically declined to accept most of the ultimatum demands, argued for military resistance and was supported by Kazys Musteikis, Konstantinas Šakenis, Kazimieras Jokantas, however the Commander of the Armed Forces Vincas Vitkauskas, Divisional general Stasys Raštikis, Kazys Bizauskas, Antanas Merkys and most of the Lithuanian Government members decided that it would be impossible, especially due to the previously stationed Soviet soldiers, and accepted the ultimatum. On that night, the Soviet forces executed Lithuanian border guard Aleksandras Barauskas near the Byelorussian SSR border. In the morning, the Lithuanian Government resigned while the president left the country to avoid the fate of the Soviet's puppet and hoping to form the Government in exile. Soon the Red Army flooded Lithuania through the Belarus–Lithuania border with more than 200,000 soldiers and took control of the most important cities, including Kaunas where the heads of state resided. The Lithuanian Armed Forces were ordered not to resist and the Lithuanian Air Force remained on the ground. At the

time, the Lithuanian Armed Forces had 26,084 soldiers (of which 1,728 officers) and 2,031 civil servants. While the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, subordinate to the army commander, had over 62,000 members of which about 70% were farmers and agricultural workers. After the occupation, the Soviets has immediately taken brutal actions against the high-ranking officials of the state. Both targets of the ultimatum: the Minister of the Interior Kazys Skučas and the Director of the State Security Department of Lithuania Augustinas Povilaitis were transported to Moscow and later executed. Antanas Gustaitis, Kazys Bizauskas, Vytautas Petrulis, Kazimieras Jokantas, Jonas Masilionas, Antanas Tamošaitis also faced the fate of execution, while President Aleksandras Stulginskis, Juozas Urbšys, Leonas Bistras, Antanas Merkys, Pranas Dovydaitis, Petras Klimas, Donatas Malinauskas and thousands of others were deported. Stasys Raštikis, persuaded by his wife, secretly crossed the German border. After realizing it, NKVD started terror against Raštikis family. His wife was separated from their 1-year-old daughter and brutally interrogated at Kaunas Prison, his old father Bernardas Raštikis, three daughters, two brothers and sister were deported to Siberia. Soldiers, officers, senior officers and generals of the Lithuanian Army and LRU members, who were seen as a threat to the occupants, were quickly arrested, interrogated and released to the reserve, deported to the concentration camps or executed, trying to avoid this many joined the Lithuanian partisans forces. The army itself was firstly renamed to the Lithuanian People's Army, however later it was reorganized to the 29th Rifle Corps of the Soviet Union. ===== 1940–1944 ===== In Lithuania, World War II began on 15 June 1940, when the USSR occupied the territory of the country. Sovietization was started right away. New power banned opposition, its press, and organizations and also restricted ties with foreign countries. Shortly, on 17 June 1940 the puppetry People's Government of Lithuania was formed, which consistently destroyed Lithuanian society, political institutions and opened the way for the Communist Party to establish itself. In order to establish the legitimacy of the government and design the plans of Lithuania's "legal accession to the USSR", on July 1, the Seimas of Lithuania was released and the forced elections with falsified results to the People's Seimas were organized, which were won by the Lithuanian Labor People's Union and Justas Paleckis was chosen as the illegal Prime Minister and President of Lithuania. The new government obeyed the occupiers' proposal to "ask" the Soviet authorities to have Lithuania admitted to the Soviet Union. Nationalization of property and deportation of the local population was in full swing. After the occupation, the Lithuanian Diplomatic Service did not recognized the new occupants authority and started the diplomatic liberation campaign of Lithuania. In 1941, Kazys Škirpa, Leonas Prapuolenis, Juozas Ambrazevičius and their supporters, including the former Commander of the Lithuanian Army General Stasys Raštikis, whose whole family was deported to Siberia, began organizing an uprising. After realizing the repressive and brutal Soviet rule reality, in early morning of 22 June 1941 (the first day when the Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union) Lithuanians began the June Uprising, organized by the Lithuanian Activist Front, in Kaunas where its main forces were concentrated. The uprising soon expanded to Vilnius and other locations. Its main goal was not to fight with the Soviets, but to secure the city from inside (secure organizations, institutions, enterprises) and declare independence. By the evening of June 22, the Lithuanians controlled the Presidential Palace, post office, telephone and telegraph, radio station and radiophone. The control of Vilnius and most of the Lithuania's territory was also shortly taken by the rebels. Multiple Red Army divisions stationed in the Lithuania's territory, including the brutal 1st Motor Rifle Division NKVD responsible for the June deportation, and the marionette Lithuanian SSR regime commanders were forced to flee into the Latvian SSR through the Daugava river. Commander of the Red Army's 188th Rifle Division colonel Piotr Ivanov reported to the 11th Army Staff that during the retreat of his division through Kaunas "local counterrevolutionaries from the shelters purposefully and severely fired to the Red Army, the flocks suffered heavy losses of soldiers and military equipment". About 5,000 occupants were killed in Lithuania. On 23 June 1941 at 9:28 AM Tautiška giesmė, the national anthem of Lithuania, was played on the radio in Kaunas. Many people listened to the Lithuanian national anthem then with tears in their eyes. From Kaunas radio broadcasts, Lithuania learned that the rebellion was taking place in the country, the insurgents took Kaunas, the Proclamation of the Independence Restoration of Lithuania and the list of the Provisional Government of Lithuania was announced. The Provisional Government hoped that the Germans would re-establish Lithuania independence or at least allow some degree of autonomy (similar to the Slovak Republic), was seeking for the protection of the citizens and did not supported the Nazis' Holocaust policy. The meant Lithuanian Minister of National Defence Stasys Raštikis personally met with the Nazi Generals to discuss the situation and tried to plead the Jews, while the Provisional Government, together with the former President Kazys Grinius, condemned Nazis for their actions with Jews already in the beginning

of the occupation. Although, on July 17 the Reichskommissariat Ostland, German Civil Administration (Zivilverwaltung) was established. Instead of using brute force, the Civil Administration slowly removed the government's powers (for example, did not allow to print its decrees in newspapers or broadcast radio announcements) and supplanted its institutions, forcing the Provisional Government to either self-disband or to become a puppet institution. The government self-disbanded on August 5 after signing a protest for the Germans actions of suspending the Lithuanian Government powers. Members of the Provisional Government then in corpore went to the Garden of the Vytautas the Great War Museum, where they laid wreath near the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the presence of a numerous audience. Sicherheitsdienst confiscated the pictures of the wreath-laying ceremony, thinking that it could be dangerous for the German occupation policy in Lithuania. A new occupation had begun. Nationalized assets were not returned to the residents. Some of them were forced to fight for Nazi Germany or were taken to German territories as a forced laborers. Jewish people were herded into ghettos and gradually killed by shooting or sending them out to concentration camps. ===== 1944–1990 ===== After the retreat of the German armed forces, the Soviets reestablished the annexation of Lithuania in 1944. Under border changes promulgated at the Potsdam Conference of 1945, the former German Memelland, with its Baltic port Memel (Lithuanian: Klaipėda), was again transferred to Lithuania, which was now referred to as the Lithuanian SSR. Most of Memelland's German residents had fled the area in the final months of World War II. As the front was heading towards west, in July–October 1944 the USSR took over Lithuania again. The second Soviet occupation commenced. The massive deportations to Siberia were resumed and lasted until the death of Stalin in 1953. All Lithuanian national symbols were banned. People were persecuted for using them. Under the pretext of Lithuania's economic recovery, the Moscow authorities encouraged the migration of workers and other specialists to Lithuania with intention to further integrate Lithuania into the Soviet Union and develop country's industry. At the same time, Lithuanians were lured to work in the USSR by promising them all the privileges of settling in a new place. The second Soviet occupation was accompanied by the armed resistance of the Lithuanian population, which took place in 1944-1953. It sought to restore an independent state of Lithuania, to consolidate democracy by destroying communism in the country, returning national values and the freedom of religion. People from all walks of life, different age groups and education joined the resistance. The Soviets classified them as bandits, although the Soviet occupation made Lithuanian citizens to go to the forests and fight against them with a gun in their hands. Lithuanian partisan warfare is divided into three stages. The first stage started in summer 1944 and lasted until summer 1946. During this time, large partisan groups were created, but they lacked one unified organization. There were frequent military encounters with the Red Army. The second stage covered summer 1946 until the end of 1948. At that time, the organizational structure of the partisans was formed, and the size of the groups was reduced to 5-15 people living in bunkers. Partisans used the tactics of underground combat and organized unexpected attacks. The third stage lasted from 1949 to the end of 1953. At that time, the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters was founded under the leadership of Jonas Žemaitis (codename Vytautas). The number of people in a group fell to 3–5 people. Open encounters with the Red Army took place rarely; the guerillas used mostly sabotage and terror. Despite the fact that the guerrilla warfare did not achieve its goal of liberating Lithuania and that it resulted in more than 20,000 deaths, the armed resistance de facto demonstrated that Lithuania did not voluntarily join the USSR and it also legitimized the will of the people of Lithuania to be independent. Even with the suppression of partisan resistance, the Soviet government failed to stop the movement for the independence of Lithuania. The underground dissident groups were active publishing the underground press and Catholic literature. The most active participants of the movement had been Vincentas Sladkevičius, Sigitas Tamkevičius and Nijolė Sadūnaitė. In 1972, after Romas Kalanta's public self-immolation, the unrest in Kaunas lasted for several days. The Helsinki Group, which was founded in Lithuania after the international conference in Helsinki (Finland), where the post-WWII borders were acknowledged, announced a declaration for Lithuania's independence on foreign radio station. The dissident movement lifted up the spirit of the people and did not allow forgetting history and national values. The Helsinki Group informed the Western world about the situation in the Soviet Lithuania and violations of human rights. All these activities made Moscow to soften its grip. With the beginning of the increased openness and transparency in government institutions and activities (glasnost) in the Soviet Union, on June 3, 1988, the Sąjūdis was established in Lithuania. Very soon it began to seek country's independence. Vytautas Landsbergis became movement's leader. The supporters of Sąjūdis joined movement's groups all over Lithuania. On 23 August 1988 a big rally took place at the Vingis Park in Vilnius. It was

attended by approx. 250,000 people. A year later, on 23 August 1989 celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and aiming to draw the attention of the whole world to the occupation of the Baltic States, a political demonstration, the Baltic Way, was organized. The event, led by S. J. Dis, was a human chain spanning about 600 kilometers across the three Baltic capitals—Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn. The peaceful demonstration showed the desire of the people of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to break away from the USSR. ===== 1990–present ===== On 11 March 1990, the Supreme Council announced the restoration of Lithuania's independence. Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to announce its secession from the USSR. But the process was not so simple. On 20 April 1990, the USSR imposed an economic blockade by stopping to deliver supplies of raw materials (primarily oil) to Lithuania. Not only the domestic industry, but also the population started feeling the lack of fuel, essential goods, and even hot water. Although, the blockade lasted for 74 days, Lithuania did not renounce the declaration of independence. Gradually, the economic relations had been restored. But the tension had peaked again in January 1991. At that time, attempts were made to carry out a coup using the Soviet Armed Forces, the Internal Army of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the USSR Committee for State Security (KGB). Because of the bad economic situation in Lithuania, the forces in Moscow thought the coup d'état will receive a strong public support. But the situation was the opposite. People from all over Lithuania flooded to Vilnius to defend their legitimately elected Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania and independence. The coup ended with a few casualties of peaceful civilians and caused huge material loss. Not a single person who defended Lithuanian Parliament or other state institutions used a weapon, but the Soviet Army did. Soviet soldiers killed 14 people and injured hundreds. A large part of the Lithuanian population participated in the January Events. Shortly after, on February 1991 Iceland became the first country to recognize the independence of Lithuania. On 31 July 1991, Soviet paramilitaries killed seven Lithuanian border guards on the Belarusian border in what became known as the Medininkai Massacre. On 17 September 1991, Lithuania was admitted to the United Nations. On 25 October 1992, the citizens of Lithuania voted in the referendum to adopt the current constitution. On 14 February 1993, during the direct general elections, Algirdas Brazauskas became the first president after the restoration of independence of Lithuania. On 31 August 1993, the last units of the Soviet Army left the territory of Lithuania. Since 29 March 2004, Lithuania has been part of the NATO. On 1 May 2004, it became a full-fledged member of the European Union, and a member of the Schengen Agreement on 21 December 2007. == Geography == Lithuania is located in northern-eastern Europe and covers an area of 65,200 km² (25,200 sq mi). It lies between latitudes 53° and 57° N, and mostly between longitudes 21° and 27° E (part of the Curonian Spit lies west of 21°). It has around 99 kilometres (61.5 mi) of sandy coastline, only about 38 kilometres (24 mi) of which face the open Baltic Sea, less than the other two Baltic Sea countries. The rest of the coast is sheltered by the Curonian sand peninsula. Lithuania's major warm-water port, Klaipėda, lies at the narrow mouth of the Curonian Lagoon (Lithuanian: Kuršių marios), a shallow lagoon extending south to Kaliningrad. The country's main and largest river, the Nemunas River, and some of its tributaries carry international shipping. Lithuania lies at the edge of the North European Plain. Its landscape was smoothed by the glaciers of the last ice age, and is a combination of moderate lowlands and highlands. Its highest point is Aukštojas Hill at 294 metres (965 ft) in the eastern part of the country. The terrain features numerous lakes (Lake Vištytis, for example) and wetlands, and a mixed forest zone covers over 33% of the country. After a re-estimation of the boundaries of the continent of Europe in 1989, Jean-George Affholder, a scientist at the Institut Géographique National (French National Geographic Institute), determined that the geographic centre of Europe was in Lithuania, at 54°54'N 25°19'E, 26 kilometres (16 mi) north of Lithuania's capital city of Vilnius. Affholder accomplished this by calculating the centre of gravity of the geometrical figure of Europe. === Climate === Lithuania's climate, which ranges between maritime and continental, is relatively mild. Average temperatures on the coast are −2.5 °C (27.5 °F) in January and 16 °C (61 °F) in July. In Vilnius the average temperatures are −6 °C (21 °F) in January and 17 °C (63 °F) in July. During the summer, 20 °C (68 °F) is common during the day while 14 °C (57 °F) is common at night; in the past, temperatures have reached as high as 30 or 35 °C (86 or 95 °F). Some winters can be very cold. −20 °C (−4 °F) occurs almost every winter. Winter extremes are −34 °C (−29 °F) in coastal areas and −43 °C (−45 °F) in the east of Lithuania. The average annual precipitation is 800 mm (31.5 in) on the coast, 900 mm (35.4 in) in the Samogitia highlands and 600 mm (23.6 in) in the eastern part of the country. Snow occurs every year, it can snow from October to April. In some years sleet can fall in September or May. The growing season lasts 202 days in the western part of the country and 169 days in the eastern part. Severe storms are rare in the eastern part of Lithuania but common in the coastal areas. The longest records of measured

temperature in the Baltic area cover about 250 years. The data show warm periods during the latter half of the 18th century, and that the 19th century was a relatively cool period. An early 20th century warming culminated in the 1930s, followed by a smaller cooling that lasted until the 1960s. A warming trend has persisted since then. Lithuania experienced a drought in 2002, causing forest and peat bog fires. The country suffered along with the rest of Northwestern Europe during a heat wave in the summer of 2006. === Environment === After the restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1990, the Aplinkos apsaugos ■statymas (Environmental Protection Act) was adopted already in 1992. The law provided the foundations for regulating social relations in the field of environmental protection, established the basic rights and obligations of legal and natural persons in preserving the biodiversity inherent in Lithuania, ecological systems and the landscape. Lithuania agreed to cut carbon emissions by at least 20% of 1990 levels by the year 2020 and by at least 40% by the year 2030, together with all European Union members. Also, by 2020 at least 20% (27% by 2030) of country's total energy consumption should be from the renewable energy sources. Lithuania does not have high mountains and its landscape is dominated by blooming meadows, dense forests and fertile fields of cereals. However it stands out by the abundance of hillforts, which previously had castles where the ancient Lithuanians burned altars for pagan gods. Aukštojas Hill is the highest point in all of Lithuania with elevation of 294 metres (965 ft). Lithuania is a particularly watered region with more than 3000 different sizes, lengths and forms lakes. Most of them lies in northeastern Lithuania. Dr■kšiai is the largest, Tauragnas is the deepest and Asveja is the longest lake in Lithuania. Many rivers are also flowing in Lithuania, most notably the longest Nemunas. Forest has long been one of the most important natural resources in Lithuania. Forests occupy one third of the country's territory and timber-related industrial production accounts for almost 11% industrial production in the country. Lithuania has five national parks, 30 regional parks, 402 nature reserves, 668 state-protected natural heritage objects. === Biodiversity === Lithuanian ecosystems include natural and semi-natural (forests, bogs, wetlands, meadows), and anthropogenic (agrarian and urban) ecosystems. Among natural ecosystems, forests are particularly important to Lithuania, covering 33% of the country's territory. Wetlands (raised bogs, fens, transitional mires, etc.) cover 7.9% of the country, with 70% of wetlands having been lost due to drainage and peat extraction between 1960 and 1980. Changes in wetland plant communities resulted in the replacement of moss and grass communities by trees and shrubs, and fens not directly affected by land reclamation have become drier as a result of a drop in the water table. There are 29,000 rivers with a total length of 64,000 km in Lithuania, the Nemunas River basin occupying 74% of the territory of the country. Due to the construction of dams, approximately 70% of spawning sites of potential catadromous fish species have disappeared. In some cases, river and lake ecosystems continue to be impacted by anthropogenic eutrophication. Agricultural land comprises 54% of Lithuania's territory (roughly 70% of that is arable land and 30% meadows and pastures), approximately 400,000 ha of agricultural land is not farmed, and acts as an ecological niche for weeds and invasive plant species. Habitat deterioration is occurring in regions with very productive and expensive lands as crop areas are expanded. Currently, 18.9% of all plant species, including 1.87% of all known fungi species and 31% of all known species of lichens, are listed in the Lithuanian Red Data Book. The list also contains 8% of all fish species. Lithuania's dark forests are teeming with wildlife. The populations have rebounded as the hunting became more restricted and urbanization allowed replanting forests (forests already tripled in size since their lows). Currently, Lithuania has approximately 250,000 larger wild animals or 5 per each square kilometer. The most prolific large wild animal in every part of Lithuania is the roe deer, with 120,000 of them. They are followed by boars (55,000). Other ungulates are the deer (~22,000), fallow-deer (~21,000) and the largest one: moose (~7,000). Among the Lithuanian predators, foxes are the most common (~27,000). Wolves are, however, more ingrained into the mythology as there are just 800 in Lithuania. Even rarer are the lynxes (~200). The large animals mentioned above exclude the rabbit, ~200,000 of which may live in the Lithuanian forests. == Politics == === Government === Since Lithuania declared the restoration of its independence on 11 March 1990, it has maintained strong democratic traditions. It held its first independent general elections on 25 October 1992, in which 56.75% of voters supported the new constitution. There were intense debates concerning the constitution, particularly the role of the president. A separate referendum was held on 23 May 1992 to gauge public opinion on the matter, and 41% of voters supported the restoration of the President of Lithuania. Through compromise, a semi-presidential system was agreed on. The Lithuanian head of state is the president, directly elected for a five-year term and serving a maximum of two terms. The president oversees foreign affairs and national security, and is the commander-in-chief of the military. The president also appoints the prime minister and, on the latter's nomination, the rest of the cabinet,

as well as a number of other top civil servants and the judges for all courts. The current Lithuanian head of state, Dalia Grybauskaitė was elected on 17 May 2009, becoming the first female president in the country's history, and the second female head of state in the Baltic States after Latvia elected their first female political leader in 1999. Dalia Grybauskaitė was re-elected for a second term in 2014. The judges of the Constitutional Court (Konstitucinis Teismas) serve nine-year terms. They are appointed by the President, the Chairman of the Seimas, and the Chairman of the Supreme Court, each of whom appoint three judges. The unicameral Lithuanian parliament, the Seimas, has 141 members who are elected to four-year terms. 71 of the members of its members are elected in single member constituencies, and the others in a nationwide vote by proportional representation. A party must receive at least 5% of the national vote to be eligible for any of the 70 national seats in the Seimas. == Political parties and elections == Lithuania exhibits a fragmented multi-party system, with a number of small parties in which coalition governments are common. Ordinary elections to the Seimas take place on the second Sunday of October every four years. To be eligible for election, candidates must be at least 25 years old on the election day, not under allegiance to a foreign state and permanently reside in Lithuania. Persons serving or due to serve a sentence imposed by the court 65 days before the election are not eligible. Also, judges, citizens performing military service, and servicemen of professional military service and officials of statutory institutions and establishments may not stand for election. Lithuanian Peasant and Greens Union won the Lithuanian parliamentary election in 2016 and gained 54 of 141 seats in the parliament. The President of Lithuania is the head of state of the country, elected to a five-year term in a majority vote. Elections take place on the last Sunday no more than two months before the end of current presidential term. To be eligible for election, candidates must be at least 40 years old on the election day and reside in Lithuania for at least three years, in addition to satisfying the eligibility criteria for a member of the parliament. Same President may serve for not more than two terms. Dalia Grybauskaitė has won two recent consecutive elections as an independent candidate. Each municipality in Lithuania is governed by a municipal council and a mayor, who is a member of the municipal council. The number of members, elected on a four-year term, in each municipal council depends on the size of the municipality and varies from 15 (in municipalities with fewer than 5,000 residents) to 51 (in municipalities with more than 500,000 residents). 1,524 municipal council members were elected in 2015. Members of the council, with the exception of the mayor, are elected using proportional representation. Starting with 2015, the mayor is elected directly by the majority of residents of the municipality. Social Democratic Party of Lithuania won most of the positions in the 2015 elections (372 municipal councils seats and 16 mayors). As of 2014, the number of seats in the European Parliament allocated to Lithuania was 11. Ordinary elections take place on a Sunday on the same day as in other EU countries. The vote is open to all citizens of Lithuania, as well as citizens of other EU countries that permanently reside in Lithuania, who are at least 18 years old on the election day. To be eligible for election, candidates must be at least 21 years old on the election day, citizen of Lithuania or citizen of another EU country permanently residing in Lithuania. Candidates are not allowed to stand for election in more than one country. Persons serving or due to serve a sentence imposed by the court 65 days before the election are not eligible. Also, judges, citizens performing military service, and servicemen of professional military service and officials of statutory institutions and establishments may not stand for election. Seven political parties representatives gained seats in the 2014 elections. == Law == The Casimir Code (Lithuanian: Kazimiero teisynas) from 1468 is considered to be the first codified law of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Third variant of the Statute was in force in the territory of Lithuania until 1840 when it got replaced by the Russian laws. However, under the rule of the Russian Empire, there were three separate civil law systems in force in Lithuania: in Suvalkija the Napoleonic Code was still applied, whereas the German law was in force in Klaipėda Region. Lawyer Mykolas Römeris works were particularly important during the interwar period, who was the first lector and one of the most prominent authors of interwar Lithuanian constitutional law and has successfully represented Lithuania at the Permanent Court of International Justice regarding the Klaipėda Directorate. After regaining of independence in 1990, the largely modified Soviet legal codes were in force for about a decade. The modern Constitution of Lithuania was adopted on 25 October 1992. In 2001 the Civil Code of Lithuania was passed in Seimas. It was succeeded by the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code in 2003. The approach to the criminal law is inquisitorial, as opposed to adversarial; it is generally characterised by an insistence on formality and rationalisation, as opposed to practicality and informality. Normative legal act enters into force on the next day after its publication in the Teisės aktų registras, unless it has a later entry into force date. The European Union law is an integral part of the Lithuanian legal system since 1 May 2004. == Administrative divisions == The

current system of administrative division was established in 1994 and modified in 2000 to meet the requirements of the European Union. The country's 10 counties (Lithuanian: singular – apskritis, plural – apskritys) are subdivided into 60 municipalities (Lithuanian: singular – savivaldybė, plural – savivaldybės), and further divided into 500 elderships (Lithuanian: singular – seniūnija, plural – seniūnijos). Municipalities have been the most important unit of administration in Lithuania since the system of county governorship (apskritis viršininkas) was dissolved in 2010. Some municipalities are historically called "district municipalities" (often shortened to "district"), while others are called "city municipalities" (sometimes shortened to "city"). Each has its own elected government. The election of municipality councils originally occurred every three years, but now takes place every four years. The council appoints elders to govern the elderships. Mayors have been directly elected since 2015; prior to that, they were appointed by the council. Elderships, numbering over 500, are the smallest administrative units and do not play a role in national politics. They provide necessary local public services—for example, registering births and deaths in rural areas. They are most active in the social sector, identifying needy individuals or families and organizing and distributing welfare and other forms of relief. Some citizens feel that elderships have no real power and receive too little attention, and that they could otherwise become a source of local initiative for addressing rural problems.

=== Foreign relations === Lithuania became a member of the United Nations on 18 September 1991, and is a signatory to a number of its organizations and other international agreements. It is also a member of the European Union, the Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as NATO and its adjunct North Atlantic Coordinating Council. Lithuania gained membership in the World Trade Organization on 31 May 2001, and currently seeks membership in the OECD and other Western organizations. Lithuania has established diplomatic relations with 149 countries. In 2011, Lithuania hosted the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Ministerial Council Meeting. During the second half of 2013, Lithuania assumed the role of the presidency of the European Union. Lithuania is also active in developing cooperation among northern European countries. It has been a member of the Baltic Council since its establishment in 1993. The Baltic Council, located in Tallinn, is a permanent organisation of international cooperation that operates through the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers. Lithuania also cooperates with Nordic and the two other Baltic countries through the NB8 format. A similar format, NB6, unites Nordic and Baltic members of EU. NB6's focus is to discuss and agree on positions before presenting them to the Council of the European Union and at the meetings of EU foreign affairs ministers. The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) was established in Copenhagen in 1992 as an informal regional political forum. Its main aim is to promote integration and to close contacts between the region's countries. The members of CBSS are Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Russia, and the European Commission. Its observer states are Belarus, France, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine. The Nordic Council of Ministers and Lithuania engage in political cooperation to attain mutual goals and to determine new trends and possibilities for joint cooperation. The Council's information office aims to disseminate Nordic concepts and to demonstrate and promote Nordic cooperation. Lithuania, together with the five Nordic countries and the two other Baltic countries, is a member of the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) and cooperates in its NORDPLUS programme, which is committed to education. The Baltic Development Forum (BDF) is an independent nonprofit organization that unites large companies, cities, business associations and institutions in the Baltic Sea region. In 2010 the BDF's 12th summit was held in Vilnius. Lithuania maintains greatly warm mutual relations with Georgia and strongly supports its European Union and NATO aspirations. During the Russo-Georgian War in 2008, when the Russian troops were occupying the territory of Georgia and approaching towards the Georgian capital Tbilisi, President Valdas Adamkus, together with the Polish and Ukrainian presidents, went to Tbilisi by answering to the Georgians request of the international assistance. Shortly, Lithuanians and the Lithuanian Catholic Church also began collecting financial support for the war victims. In 2013, Lithuania was elected to the United Nations Security Council for a two-year term, becoming the first Baltic country elected to this post. During its membership, Lithuania actively supported Ukraine and often condemned Russia for the military intervention in Ukraine, immediately earning vast Ukrainians esteem. As the War in Donbass progressed, President Dalia Grybauskaitė has compared the Russian President Vladimir Putin to Josef Stalin and to Adolf Hitler, she has also called Russia a “terrorist state”.

=== Military === The Lithuanian Armed Forces is the name for the unified armed forces of Lithuanian Land Force, Lithuanian Air Force, Lithuanian Naval Force, Lithuanian Special Operations Force and other units: Logistics Command, Training and Doctrine Command, Headquarters Battalion, Military Police. Directly subordinated to the

Chief of Defence are the Special Operations Forces and Military Police. The Reserve Forces are under command of the Lithuanian National Defence Volunteer Forces. The Lithuanian Armed Forces consist of some 15,000 active personnel, which may be supported by reserve forces. Compulsory conscription ended in 2008 but was reintroduced in 2015. The Lithuanian Armed Forces currently have deployed personnel on international missions in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Mali and Somalia. In March 2004, Lithuania became a full member of the NATO. Since then, fighter jets of NATO members are deployed in Zokniai airport and provide safety for the Baltic airspace. Since the summer of 2005 Lithuania has been part of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF), leading a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the town of Chaghcharan in the province of Ghor. The PRT includes personnel from Denmark, Iceland and USA. There are also special operation forces units in Afghanistan, placed in Kandahar Province. Since joining international operations in 1994, Lithuania has lost two soldiers: 1st Lt. Normundas Valteris fell in Bosnia, as his patrol vehicle drove over a mine. Sgt. Arūnas Jarmalavičius was fatally wounded during an attack on the camp of his Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan. The Lithuanian National Defence Policy aims to guarantee the preservation of the independence and sovereignty of the state, the integrity of its land, territorial waters and airspace, and its constitutional order. Its main strategic goals are to defend the country's interests, and to maintain and expand the capabilities of its armed forces so they may contribute to and participate in the missions of NATO and European Union member states. The defense ministry is responsible for combat forces, search and rescue, and intelligence operations. The 5,000 border guards fall under the Interior Ministry's supervision and are responsible for border protection, passport and customs duties, and share responsibility with the navy for smuggling and drug trafficking interdiction. A special security department handles VIP protection and communications security. In 2015 National Cyber Security Centre of Lithuania was created. Paramilitary organisation Lithuanian Riflemen's Union acts as civilian self-defence institution. According to NATO, in 2017 Lithuania allocated 1.77% of its GDP to the national defense. For a long time Lithuania lagged behind NATO allies in terms of defense spending, but in recent years it has begun to rapidly increase the funding. In 2018 Lithuania intends to allocate 2.06% of its GDP to the defense sector and reach the required funding standard for NATO.

== Law enforcement and crime == Lithuania, after breaking the Soviet Union had difficult crime situation, however the Lithuanian law enforcement agencies eliminated most of these criminals over the years, making Lithuania a reasonably safe country. Crime in Lithuania has been declining rapidly. Law enforcement in Lithuania is primarily the responsibility of local Lietuvos policija (Lithuanian Police) commissariats. They are supplemented by the Lietuvos policijos antiteroristinių operacijų rinktinė Aras (Anti-Terrorist Operations Team of the Lithuanian Police Aras), Lietuvos kriminalinės policijos biuras (Lithuanian Criminal Police Bureau), Lietuvos policijos kriminalistinių tyrimų centras (Lithuanian Police Forensic Research Center) and Lietuvos kelių policijos tarnyba (Lithuanian Road Police Service). In 2017, there were 63,846 crimes registered in Lithuania. Of them, thefts took large part of it with 19,630 cases (13.2% less than in 2016). While 2,835 crimes were very hard and hard (crimes that may result in more than 6 years imprisonment), which is 14.5% less than in 2016. Totally, 129 homicides or attempts of it occurred (19.9% less than in 2016), while the serious bodily injuries were registered 178 times (17.6% less than in 2016). Another problematic crime contraband cases also decreased by 27.2% from 2016 numbers. Meanwhile, crimes in electronic data and information technology security fields noticeably increased by 26.6%. In the 2013 Special Eurobarometer, 29% Lithuanians said that corruption affects their daily lives (EU average 26%). Moreover, 95% of Lithuanians regard corruption as widespread in their country (EU average 76%), and 88% agree that bribery and the use of connections is often the easiest way of obtaining certain public services (EU average 73%). Though, according to local branch of Transparency International, corruption levels have been decreasing over the past decade. In 2017, 24,769 men committed crimes, while only 2,969 women did the same. On the other side, 44,023 people were crime victims, almost half of them (21,523) were women. Most of the crimes occurred in the largest cities. Capital punishment was suspended in Lithuania in 1996. On 21 December 1998, Seimas eliminated it. Lithuania has the highest amount of prisoners in the EU. According to scientist Gintautas Sakalauskas, this is not because of a high criminality rate in the country, but due to the Lithuania's high repression level and the lack of trust in convicted, who are frequently sentenced to a jail imprisonment.

== Economy == Lithuania has open and mixed economy that is classified as high-income economy by the World Bank. According to data from 2016, the three largest sectors in Lithuanian economy are – services (68.3% of GDP), industry (28.5%) and agriculture (3.3%). World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report ranks Lithuania 41st (of 137 ranked countries). Lithuania joined NATO in 2004,

EU in 2004 and Schengen in 2007. On Jan 1 of 2015, euro became the national currency replacing litas at the rate of EUR 1.00 = LTL 3.45280. Agricultural products and food made 18.3%, chemical products and plastics - 17.8%, machinery and appliances - 15.8%, mineral products - 14.7%, wood and furniture - 12.5% of exports. According to data from 2016, more than half of all Lithuanian exports go to 7 countries including Russia (14%), Latvia (9,9%), Poland (9,1%), Germany (7,7%), Estonia (5,3%), Sweden (4,8%) and United Kingdom (4,3%). Export generated 74 percent of Lithuania's GDP in 2016. Lithuanian GDP experienced very high real growth rates for decade up to 2009, peaking at 11.1% in 2007. As a result, the country was often termed as a Baltic Tiger. However, 2009, due to Global financial crisis marked experienced a drastic decline – GDP contracted by 14.9% and unemployment rate reached 17.8% in 2010. After the decline of 2009, Lithuanian annual economic growth has been much slower compared to pre-2009 years. According to IMF, financial conditions are conducive to growth and financial soundness indicators remain strong. The public debt ratio in 2016 fell to 40 percent of GDP, to compare with 42.7 in 2015 (before global finance crisis - 15 percent of GDP in 2008). On average, more than 95% of all foreign direct investment in Lithuania comes from European Union countries. Sweden is historically the largest investor with 20% – 30% of all FDI in Lithuania. FDI into Lithuania spiked in 2017, reaching its highest ever recorded number of greenfield investment projects. The US was the leading source country in 2017, 24.59% of total FDI. Next up are Germany and the UK, each representing 11.48% of total project numbers. In the period between 2004 and 2016, one out of five Lithuanians left the country, mostly because of poor financial situation or better career opportunities abroad. Long term emigration and economy growth has resulted in noticeable shortages on the labor market and growth in salaries being larger than growth in labor efficiency. Unemployment rate in 2017 was 8.1%. As of 2016, Lithuanian median adult wealth was \$10,915. As of 2017, average gross (pre-tax) salary in Lithuania is 838,7 euros translating to 659 euros net (after tax) while average pre-tax pension is 288 euros. Average wage adjusted for purchasing power parity, is around 1912 USD per month, one of the lowest in EU. Although, cost of living in the country also is sufficiently less with the price level for household final consumption expenditure (HFCE) - 63, being 39% lower than EU average - 102 in 2016. Lithuania has a flat tax rate rather than a progressive scheme. According to Eurostat, the personal income tax (15%) and corporate tax (15%) rates in Lithuania are among the lowest in the EU. The country has the lowest implicit rate of tax on capital (9.8%) in the EU. Corporate tax rate in Lithuania is 15% and 5% for small businesses. 7 Free Economic Zones are operating in Lithuania. Information technology production is growing in the country, reaching 1.9 billion euros in 2016. In 2017 only, 35 FinTech companies came to Lithuania - a result of Lithuanian government and Bank of Lithuania simplified procedures for obtaining licences for the activities of e-money and payment institutions. === Companies === Biggest companies in Lithuania in 2016, by revenue: === Agriculture === Agriculture in Lithuania dates to the Neolithic period, about 3,000 to 1,000 BC. It has been one of Lithuania's most important occupations for many centuries. Lithuania's accession to the European Union in 2004 ushered in a new agricultural era. The EU pursues a very high standard of food safety and purity. In 1999, the Seimas (parliament) of Lithuania adopted a Law on Product Safety, and in 2000 it adopted a Law on Food. The reform of the agricultural market has been carried out on the basis of these two laws. In 2016, agricultural production was made for 2.29 billion euros in Lithuania. Cereal crops occupied the largest part of it (5709,7 tons), other significant types were sugar beets (933,9 tons), rapeseed (392,5 tons) and potatoes (340,2 tons). Products for 4385,2 million euros were exported from Lithuania to the foreign markets, of which products for 3165,2 million euros were Lithuanian origin. Export of agricultural and food products accounted for 19.4% of all exports of goods from the country. Organic farming is constantly becoming more popular in Lithuania. The status of organic growers and producers in the country is granted by the public body Ekoagros. In 2016, there were 2539 such farms that occupied 225541,78 hectares. Of these, 43,13% were cereals, 31,22% were perennial grasses, 13,9% were leguminous crops and 11,75% were others. === Science and technology === Foundation of the University of Vilnius in 1579 was a major factor of establishing local scientist community in Lithuania and making connections with other universities and scientists of Europe. Lithuanian *bajoras* and Grand Duchy of Lithuania artillery expert Kazimieras Simonavičius is a pioneer of rocketry, who has published *Artis Magnae Artilleriae* in 1650 that for over two centuries was used in Europe as a basic artillery manual and contains a large chapter on caliber, construction, production and properties of rockets (for military and civil purposes), including multistage rockets, batteries of rockets, and rockets with delta wing stabilizers. During the Interwar period humanitarian and social scientists emerged such as Vosylius Sezemanas, Levas Karsavinas, Mykolas Römeris. Due to the World Wars, Lithuanian science and scientists suffered heavily from the occupants, however some of them reached a

world-class achievements in their lifetime. Most notably, Antanas Gustaitis, Vytautas Graižas, Marija Gimbutas, Birutė Galdikas, A. J. Klior, Algirdas Julius Greimas, Algirdas Antanas Avižienis. Jonas Kubilius, long-term rector of the University of Vilnius is known for works in Probabilistic number theory, Kubilius model, Theorem of Kubilius and Turán–Kubilius inequality bear his name. Jonas Kubilius successfully resisted attempts to Russify the University of Vilnius. Nowadays, the country is among moderate innovators group in the International Innovation Index. and in the European Innovation Scoreboard ranked 15th among EU countries. Lasers and biotechnology are flagship fields of the Lithuanian science and high tech industry. Lithuanian "Šviesos konversija" (Light Conversion) has developed a femtosecond laser system that has 80% marketshare worldwide, and is used in DNA research, ophthalmological surgeries, nanotech industry and science. Vilnius University Laser Research Center has developed one of the most powerful femtosecond lasers in the world dedicated primarily to oncological diseases. In 1963, Vytautas Straižys and his coworkers created Vilnius photometric system that is used in astronomy. Noninvasive intracranial pressure and blood flow measuring devices were developed by KTU scientist A. Ragauskas. K. Pyragas contributed to Control of chaos with his way of delayed feedback control - Pyragas method. Virginijus Šikšnys is known for his discoveries in CRISPR field. Lithuania has launched three satellites to the cosmos: LitSat-1, Lituanica SAT-1 and LituanicaSAT-2. Lithuanian Museum of Ethnocosmology and Molėtai Astronomical Observatory is located in Kulionys. 15 R&D institutions are members of Lithuanian Space Association; Lithuania is a cooperating state with European Space Agency. Rimantas Stankevičius is the only ethnically Lithuanian astronaut. Lithuania in 2018 became Associated Member State of CERN. Most advanced scientific research in Lithuania is being conducted at the Life Sciences Center, Center For Physical Sciences and Technology. As of 2016 calculations, yearly growth of Lithuania's biotech and life science sector was 22% over the past 5 years. 16 academic institutions, 15 R&D centres (science parks and innovation valleys) and more than 370 manufacturers operate in the Lithuanian life science and biotech industry. In 2008 the Valley development programme was started aiming to upgrade Lithuanian scientific research infrastructure and encourage business and science cooperation. Five R&D Valleys were launched - Jūrinis (maritime technologies), Nemunas (agro, bioenergy, forestry), Saulėtekis (laser and light, semiconductor), Santara (biotechnology, medicine), Santaka (sustainable chemistry and pharmacy). Lithuanian Innovation Center is created to provide support for innovations and research institutions. == Tourism == Statistics of 2016 showed that 1.49 million tourists from foreign countries visited Lithuania and spent at least one night in the country. The largest number of tourists came from Germany (174,8 thousand), Belarus (171,9 thousand), Russia (150,6 thousand), Poland (148,4 thousand), Latvia (134,4 thousand), Ukraine (84,0 thousand), and the UK (58,2 thousand). The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to country GDP was EUR 2,005.5mn, 5.3% of GDP in 2016, and is forecast to rise by 7.3% in 2017, and to rise by 4.2% pa to EUR 3,243.5mn, 6.7% of GDP in 2027. Domestic tourism has been on the rise as well. Currently there are up to 1000 places of attraction in Lithuania. Most tourists visit the big cities—Vilnius, Klaipėda, and Kaunas, seaside resorts, such as Neringa, Palanga, and Spa towns - Druskininkai, Birštonas. == Infrastructure == == Communication == Lithuania has a well developed communications infrastructure. The country has 2,8 million citizens and 5 million SIM cards. The largest mobile network covers 85% of Lithuania's territory. Usage of fixed phone lines has been rapidly decreasing due to rapid expansion of mobile-cellular services. In 2017, Lithuania was top 30 in the world by average mobile broadband speeds and top 20 by average fixed broadband speeds. Lithuania was also top 7 in 2017 in the List of countries by 4G LTE penetration. In 2016, Lithuania was ranked 17th in United Nations' e-participation index. There are four TIER III datacenters in Lithuania. Lithuania is 44th globally ranked country on data center density according to Cloudscene. Long-term project (2005-2013) - Development of Rural Areas Broadband Network (RAIN) was started with the objective to provide residents, state and municipal authorities and businesses with fibre-optic broadband access in rural areas. RAIN infrastructure allows 51 communications operators to provide network services to their clients. The project was funded by the European Union and the Lithuanian government. 72% of Lithuanian households have access to internet, a number which in 2017 was among EU's lowest and in 2016 ranked 97th by CIA World Factbook. Number of households with internet access is expected to increase and reach 77% by 2021. Almost 50% of Lithuanians had smartphones in 2016, a number that is expected to increase to 65% by 2022. Lithuania has the highest FTTH (Fiber to the home) penetration rate in Europe (36.8% in September 2016) according to FTTH Council Europe. == Transport == Lithuania received its first railway connection in the middle of the 19th century, when the Warsaw – Saint Petersburg Railway was constructed. It included a stretch from Daugavpils via Vilnius

and Kaunas to Virbalis. The first and only still operating tunnel was completed in 1860. Lithuanian Railways' main network consists of 1,762 km (1,095 mi) of 1,520 mm (4 ft 11.8 in) Russian gauge railway of which 122 km (76 mi) are electrified. This railway network is incompatible with European standard gauge and requires train switching. However, Lithuanian railway network also has 115 km (71 mi) of standard gauge lines. More than half of all inland freight transported in Lithuania is carried by rail. The Trans-European standard gauge Rail Baltica railway, linking Helsinki–Tallinn–Riga–Kaunas–Warsaw and continuing on to Berlin is under construction. In 2017, Lietuvos Geležinkeliai, a company that operates most railway lines in Lithuania, received almost maximum possible EU penalty for breaching EU's antitrust laws and restricting competition.

Transportation is the 3rd largest sector in Lithuanian economy. Lithuanian transport companies drew attention in 2016 and 2017 with huge and record-breaking orders of trucks. Almost 90% of commercial truck traffic in Lithuania is international transports, the highest of any EU country. Lithuania has an extensive network of motorways. WEF grades Lithuanian roads at 4,7 / 7,0 and Lithuanian road authority (LAKD) at 6,5 / 10,0. The Port of Klaipėda is the only commercial cargo port in Lithuania. In 2011 45.5 million tons of cargo were handled (including Būtingis oil terminal figures) Port of Klaipėda is outside of EU's 20 largest ports, but it is the 8th largest port in the Baltic Sea region with ongoing expansion plans. Vilnius International Airport is the largest airport in Lithuania, but not among EU's 100 largest airports. It served 3.8 million passengers in 2016. Other international airports include Kaunas International Airport, Palanga International Airport and Šiauliai International Airport. Kaunas International Airport is also a small commercial cargo airport which started regular commercial cargo traffic in 2011.

=== Water supply and sanitation === Lithuania has one of the largest fresh water supplies, compared with other countries in Europe. Lithuania and Denmark are the only countries in Europe, which are fully equipped with fresh groundwater. Lithuanians consumes about 0.5 million cubic meters of water per day, which is only 12-14 percent of all explored fresh groundwater resources. Water quality in the country is very high and is determined by the fact that drinking water comes from deep layers that are protected from pollution on the surface of the earth. Drilling depth usually reaches 30-50 meters, but in Klaipėda Region it even reaches 250 meters. Consequently, Lithuania is one of very few European countries where groundwater is used for centralized water supply. With a large underground fresh water reserves, Lithuania exports mineral-rich water to other countries. Approved mineral water quantity is about 2.7 million cubic meters per year, while production is only 4-5 percent of all mineral water resources. Vilnius is the only Baltic capital that uses centralized water supplying from deep water springs, which are protected from pollution and has no nitrates or nitrites that are harmful to the human body. Water is cleaned without chemicals in Lithuania. About 20% of the consumed water in the state is a non-filtered very high quality water.

=== Energy === Systematic diversification of energy imports and resources is Lithuania's key energy strategy. Long term aims were defined in National Energy Independence strategy in 2012 by Lietuvos Seimas. It was estimated that strategic energy independence initiatives will cost 6.3–7.8 billion Eur in total and provide annual savings of 0.9-1.1 billion EUR. After the decommissioning of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, Lithuania turned from electricity exporter to electricity importer. Unit No. 1 was closed in December 2004, as a condition of Lithuania's entry into the European Union; Unit No. 2 was closed down on 31 December 2009. Proposals have been made to construct a new – Visaginas Nuclear Power Plant in Lithuania. However, a non-binding referendum held in October 2012 clouded the prospects for the Visaginas project, as 63% of voters said no to a new nuclear power plant. The country's main primary source of electrical power is Elektrėnai Power Plant. Other primary sources of Lithuania's electrical power are Kruonis Pumped Storage Plant and Kaunas Hydroelectric Power Plant. Kruonis Pumped Storage Plant is the only in the Baltic states power plant to be used for regulation of the power system's operation with generating capacity of 900 MW for at least 12 hours. As of 2015, 66% of electrical power was imported.

Lithuania–Sweden submarine electricity interconnection NordBalt and Lithuania–Poland electricity interconnection LitPol Link were launched at the end of 2015. In order to break down Gazprom's monopoly in natural gas market of Lithuania, first large scale LNG import terminal (Klaipėda LNG FSRU) in the Baltic region was built in port of Klaipėda in 2014. The Klaipėda LNG terminal was called Independence, thus emphasising the aim to diversify energy market of Lithuania. Norwegian company Statoil will be supplying 540 million cubic meters of natural gas annually from 2015 until 2020. The terminal is able to meet the Lithuania's demand 100 percent, and Latvia's and Estonia's national demand 90 percent in the future. Gas Interconnection Poland–Lithuania (GIPL), also known as Lithuania–Poland pipeline, is a proposed natural gas pipeline interconnection between Lithuania and Poland that is expected to be finished by 2019. In 2016, 20,8% of electricity consumed in Lithuania

came from renewable sources. == Demographics == Since the Neolithic period the native inhabitants of the Lithuanian territory have not been replaced by any other ethnic group, so there is a high probability that the inhabitants of present-day Lithuania have preserved the genetic composition of their forebears relatively undisturbed by the major demographic movements, although without being actually isolated from them. The Lithuanian population appears to be relatively homogeneous, without apparent genetic differences among ethnic subgroups. A 2004 analysis of MtDNA in the Lithuanian population revealed that Lithuanians are close to the Slavic and Finno-Ugric speaking populations of Northern and Eastern Europe. Y-chromosome SNP haplogroup analysis showed Lithuanians to be closest to Latvians and Estonians. According to 2014 estimates, the age structure of the population was as follows: 0–14 years, 13.5% (male 243,001/female 230,674); 15–64 years: 69.5% (male 1,200,196/female 1,235,300); 65 years and over: 16.8% (male 207,222/female 389,345). The median age was 41.2 years (male: 38.5, female: 43.7). Lithuania has a sub-replacement fertility rate: the total fertility rate (TFR) in Lithuania is 1.59 children born/woman (2015 estimates). As of 2014, 29% of births were to unmarried women. The age at first marriage in 2013 was 27 years for women and 29.3 years for men. === Ethnic groups === Ethnic Lithuanians make up about five-sixths of the country's population and Lithuania has the most homogeneous population in the Baltic States. In 2015, the population of Lithuania stands at 2,921,262, 86.7% of whom are ethnic Lithuanians who speak Lithuanian, which is the official language of the country. Several sizeable minorities exist, such as Poles (5.6%), Russians (4.8%), Belarusians (1.3%) and Ukrainians (0.7%). Poles in Lithuania are the largest minority, concentrated in southeast Lithuania (the Vilnius region). Russians in Lithuania are the second largest minority, concentrated mostly in two cities. They constitute sizeable minorities in Vilnius (12%) and Klaipėda (19.6%), and a majority in the town of Visaginas (52%). About 3,000 Roma live in Lithuania, mostly in Vilnius, Kaunas and Panevėžys; their organizations are supported by the National Minority and Emigration Department. For centuries a small Tatar community has flourished in Lithuania. The official language is Lithuanian, other languages, such as Polish, Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian, are spoken in the larger cities, and several municipalities such as Šalčininkai District Municipality, Vilnius District Municipality and Visaginas Municipality. Yiddish is spoken by members of the tiny remaining Jewish community in Lithuania. According to the Lithuanian population census of 2011, about 85% of the country's population speak Lithuanian as their native language, 7.2% are native speakers of Russian and 5.3% of Polish. About 44% of Lithuanian citizens speak Russian as a foreign language, 21% - English, 9% - Polish, 9% - German. Most Lithuanian schools teach English as the first foreign language, but students may also study German, or, in some schools, French or Russian. Schools where Russian or Polish are the primary languages of education exist in the areas populated by these minorities. Minority schools are public, where the education is free (taxpayer-funded). === Urbanization === There has been a steady movement of population to the cities since the 1990s, encouraged by the planning of regional centres, such as Alytus, Marijampolė, Utena, Plungė, and Mažeikiai. By the early 21st century, about two-thirds of the total population lived in urban areas. As of 2015, 66.5% of the total population lives in urban areas. The largest city is Vilnius, followed by Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, and Panevėžys. === Functional urban areas === Functional urban areas in Lithuania: The fDI of the Financial Times in their research Cities and Regions of the Future 2018/19 ranked Vilnius 4th in the mid-sized European cities category and Vilnius county was ranked 10th in the small European regions category. === Health === Lithuania provides free state-funded healthcare to all citizens and registered long-term residents. Private healthcare is also available in the country. In 2003–2012, the network of hospitals was restructured, as part of wider healthcare service reforms. It started in 2003–2005 with the expansion of ambulatory services and primary care. As of 2015 Lithuanian life expectancy at birth was 73.4 (67.4 years for males and 78.8 for females) and the infant mortality rate was 6.2 per 1,000 births. The annual population growth rate increased by 0.3% in 2007. At 33.5 people per 100,000 in 2012, Lithuania has seen a dramatic rise in suicides in the post-Soviet years, and now records the highest in Europe (cases in rural areas are five times more frequent than in cities) and fourth highest age-standardized suicide rate in the world, according to WHO. According to experts, this number was largely influenced by the Soviets authority because mostly Christian country's inhabitants previously considered it as a severe sin and were afraid to take their lives. By 2000 the vast majority of Lithuanian health care institutions were non-profit-making enterprises and a private sector developed, providing mostly outpatient services which are paid for out-of-pocket. The Ministry of Health also runs a few health care facilities and is involved in the running of the two major Lithuanian teaching hospitals. It is responsible for the State Public Health Centre which manages the public health network including ten county public health centres with their local branches. The ten counties run county hospitals and specialised health care

facilities. There is now Compulsory Health Insurance for Lithuanian residents. There are 5 Territorial Health Insurance Funds, covering Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai and Panevėžys. Contributions for people who are economically active are 9% of income. Emergency medical services are provided free of charge to all residents. Access to hospital treatment is normally by referral by a General Practitioner. Lithuania also has one of the lowest health care prices in Europe. === Religion === As per the 2011 census, 77.2% of Lithuanians belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. The Church has been the majority denomination since the Christianisation of Lithuania at the end of the 14th century. The Reformation initiated by Abraomas Kulvietis did not impact Lithuania to a great extent as seen in Estonia or Latvia as generally only local Germans in the Klaipėda/Memel area turned Protestant, while Lithuanians and Poles remained Catholic, and Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians—Eastern Orthodox. Some priests actively led the resistance against the Communist regime (symbolised by the Hill of Crosses). 4.1% are Eastern Orthodox, mainly among the Russian minority. This group is distinguishable into the Eastern Orthodox Church and Old Believers. Protestants are 0.8%, of which 0.6% are Lutheran and 0.2% are Reformed. According to Losch (1932), the Lutherans were 3.3% of the total population; they were mainly Germans in the Memel territory (now Klaipėda). There was also a tiny Reformed community (0.5%), which still persists. Protestantism has declined with the removal of the German population, and today it is mainly represented by ethnic Lithuanians throughout the northern and western parts of the country, as well as in large urban areas. Believers and clergy suffered greatly during the Soviet occupation, with many killed, tortured or deported to Siberia. Newly arriving evangelical churches have established missions in Lithuania since 1990. Lithuanian Tatars maintained Islam as their religion. 6.1% of Lithuanians have no religion. Lithuania was historically home to a significant Jewish community and was an important center of Jewish scholarship and culture from the 18th century until the eve of World War II. Prior to the war, the Jewish population, outside of the Vilnius region (which was then in Poland), numbered about 160,000. In September 1939, tens of thousands of Polish Jews became Lithuanian subjects when the Soviets transferred the Vilnius region (of the former Polish state) to Lithuania and additional Jewish refugees arrived in Lithuania during the period prior to June 1941. Of the approximately 220,000 Jews who lived in the Republic of Lithuania in June 1941, almost all were entirely annihilated during the Holocaust. The community numbered about 4,000 at the end of 2009. Romuva religion has gained popularity over the years. It is the contemporary continuation of the traditional ethnic religion of the Baltic peoples, reviving the ancient religious practices of the Lithuanians before their Christianization in 1387. Romuva claims to continue living Baltic pagan traditions, which survived in folklore and customs. Romuva is a polytheistic pagan faith, which asserts the sanctity of nature and has elements of ancestor worship. Practising the Romuva faith is seen by many adherents as a form of cultural pride, along with celebrating traditional forms of art, retelling Baltic folklore, practising traditional holidays, playing traditional Baltic music, singing traditional dainas or hymns and songs as well as ecological activism and stewarding sacred places. According to the 2001 census, there were 1,270 people of Baltic faith in Lithuania. That number jumped to 5,118 in the 2011 census. Inija Trinkienė is the current Krivė (high priest) of the community since 2015, being the first known woman Krivė in the long pagan history. Oak was considered as a divine tree, their groves were kept as sacred places with burning altars and were usually associated with the chief god Perkūnas (thunder god) by Lithuanians in the ancient times. Stelmužė Oak is the most significant oak, being at least 1,500 years old. Nowadays, Lithuanians are still planting oaks or other trees on special occasions. Linden of the then 16-year-old Olympic Champion Rūta Meilutytė was planted in 2012, and is located in the Laisvės alėja. According to the most recent Eurobarometer Poll in 2010, 47% of Lithuanian citizens responded that "they believe there is a God", 37% answered that "they believe there is some sort of spirit or life force", and 12% said that "they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, god, or life force". === Education === The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania proposes national educational policies and goals. These are sent to the Seimas for ratification. Laws govern long-term educational strategy along with general laws on standards for higher education, vocational training, law and science, adult education, and special education. County administrators, municipal administrators, and school founders (including non-governmental organizations, religious organizations, and individuals) are responsible for implementing these policies. By constitutional mandate, ten years of formal enrollment in an educational institution is mandatory, ending at age 16.5.4% of GDP was spent for education in 2016. Primary and secondary schools receive funding from the state via their municipal or county administrations. The Constitution of Lithuania guarantees tuition-free attendance at public institutions of higher education for students deemed 'good'. School attendance rates are above EU average and school leave is less common than EU average. However,

PISA report from 2010 found that Lithuanian results in math, science and reading were below OECD average. PISA report from 2015 reconfirmed these findings. The World Bank designates the literacy rate of Lithuanian persons aged 15 years and older as 100% and, according to Eurostat Lithuania leads among other countries of EU by people with secondary education (93.3%). Based on OECD data, Lithuania is among the top 4 countries in the world by postsecondary (tertiary) education attainment. As of 2016, 54,9% of the population aged 25 to 34, and 30,7% of the population aged 55 to 64 had completed tertiary education. The share of tertiary-educated 25-64 year-olds in STEM (Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields in Lithuania were above the OECD average (29% and 26% respectively), similarly to business, administration and law (25% and 23% respectively). Modern Lithuanian education system has multiple structural problems. Insufficient funding and quality issues are the most prevalent. Lithuanian teacher salaries are lowest in entire EU. Low teacher salaries was the primary reason behind national teacher strikes in 2014, 2015, and 2016. Salaries in the higher education sector are also low. Many Lithuanian professors supplement their income by having a second job. In an attempt to reduce costs and adapt to sharply decreasing number of high-school students, Lithuanian parliament decided to reduce the number of universities in Lithuania. In early 2018, Lithuanian Sports University was merged into Lithuanian University of Health Sciences. Around the same time, two other universities – Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences and Aleksandras Stulginskis University were merged into Vytautas Magnus University. Many Lithuanian academics, as well as minister of education, students, researchers, and university administrations fought against the mergers. As with other Baltic nations, in particular Latvia, the large volume of higher education graduates within the country, coupled with the high rate of spoken second languages is contributing to an education brain drain. As of 2008, there were 15 public universities in Lithuania, 6 private institutions, 16 public colleges, and 11 private colleges. Vilnius University is one of the oldest universities in Northern Europe and the largest university in Lithuania. Kaunas University of Technology is the largest technical university in the Baltic States and the 2nd largest university in Lithuania. Other universities include Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, Vytautas Magnus University, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education, Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, The General Jonas Zemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, Klaipėda University, Lithuanian Veterinary Academy, Lithuanian University of Agriculture, Šiauliai University, Vilnius Academy of Art, and LCC International University.

== Culture ==

=== Lithuanian language ===

The Lithuanian language (lietuvių kalba) is the official state language of Lithuania and is recognized as one of the official languages of the European Union. There are about 2.96 million native Lithuanian speakers in Lithuania and about 0.2 million abroad. Lithuanian is a Baltic language, closely related to Latvian, although they are not mutually intelligible. It is written in an adapted version of the Roman script. Lithuanian is believed to be the linguistically most conservative living Indo-European tongue, retaining many features of Proto Indo-European. Lithuanian language studies are important for comparative linguistics and for reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European language. Lithuanian was studied by linguists such as Franz Bopp, Louis Hjelmslev, Ferdinand de Saussure, Winfred P. Lehmann, Vladimir Toporov and others. In the modern times, the Lithuanian language is divided into two dialects: Aukštaitian dialect and Samogitian dialect. The pronunciation of words varies in both dialects. The Samogitian dialect also has many completely different words and is even considered as a separate language by some linguists. The groundwork for written Lithuanian was laid in 16th and 17th centuries by Lithuanian noblemen and scholars, who promoted Lithuanian language, created dictionaries and published books – Mikalojus Daukša, Stanislovas Rapolionis, Abraomas Kulvietis, Jonas Bretkėnas, Martynas Mažvydas, Konstantinas Sirvydas, Simonas Vaišnoras-Varniškis. The first grammar book of the Lithuanian language *Grammatica Litvanica* was published in Latin in 1653 by Danielius Kleinas. Jonas Jablonskis works and activities are especially important for the Lithuanian literature moving from the use of dialects to a standard Lithuanian language. The linguistic material which he collected was published in the 20 volumes of *Academic Dictionary of Lithuanian* and is still being used in research and in editing of texts and books. He also introduced the letter **Š** into Lithuanian writing.

=== Literature ===

There is a great deal of Lithuanian literature written in Latin, the main scholarly language of the Middle Ages. The edicts of the Lithuanian King Mindaugas is the prime example of the literature of this kind. The Letters of Gediminas are another crucial heritage of the Lithuanian Latin writings. 17th century Lithuanian scholars also wrote in Latin - Kazimieras Kojelavičius-Vijūkas, Žygimantas Liauksminas are known for their Latin writings in theology, rhetorics. Albertas Kojalavičius-Vijūkas wrote first printed Lithuanian history *Historia Lithuaniae*. Lithuanian literary works in the Lithuanian language started being first

published in the 16th century. In 1547 Martynas Mažvydas compiled and published the first printed Lithuanian book *Katekizmo prasti žodžiai* (The Simple Words of Catechism), which marks the beginning of literature, printed in Lithuanian. He was followed by Mikalojus Daukša with *Katechizmas*. In the 16th and 17th centuries, as in the whole Christian Europe, Lithuanian literature was primarily religious. The evolution of the old (14th–18th century) Lithuanian literature ends with Kristijonas Donelaitis, one of the most prominent authors of the Age of Enlightenment. Donelaitis' poem *Metai* (The Seasons) is a landmark of the Lithuanian fiction literature, written in hexameter. With a mix of Classicism, Sentimentalism and Romanticism, the Lithuanian literature of the first half of the 19th century is represented by Maironis, Antanas Baranuskas, Simonas Daukantas and Simonas Stanevičius. During the Tsarist annexation of Lithuania in the 19th century, the Lithuanian press ban was implemented, which led to the formation of the *Knygnešiai* (Book smugglers) movement. This movement is thought to be the very reason the Lithuanian language and literature survived until today. 20th-century Lithuanian literature is represented by Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas, Antanas Vienuolis, Bernardas Brazdžionis, Antanas Škėma, Balys Sruoga, Vytautas Mačernis and Justinas Marcinkevičius.

=== Architecture === Several famous Lithuania-related architects are notable for their achievements in the field of architecture. Johann Christoph Glaubitz, Marcin Knackfus, Laurynas Gucevičius and Karol Podczyński were instrumental in introducing Baroque and neoclassical architectural movements to the Lithuanian architecture during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Vilnius is considered as a capital of the Eastern Europe Baroque. Vilnius Old Town that is full of astonishing Baroque churches and other buildings is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Lithuania is also known for numerous castles. About twenty castles exist in Lithuania. Some castles had to be rebuilt or survive partially. Many Lithuanian nobles' historic palaces and manor houses have remained till the nowadays and were reconstructed. Lithuanian village life has existed since the days of Vytautas the Great. Zervynos and Kapiniškis are two of many ethnographic villages in Lithuania. Rumšiškis is an open space museum where old ethnographic architecture is preserved. During the interwar period, countless Art Deco, Lithuanian National Romanticism architectural style buildings were constructed in the Lithuania's temporary capital Kaunas. Its architecture is regarded as one of the finest examples of the European Art Deco and have received the European Heritage Label.

=== Pagan mythology === Lithuanians were the last European pagans, practicing the Indo-European origin polytheistic religion that was the official cause for the Lithuanian Crusade campaigns. This ancient religion rituals, beliefs were still widely practiced after the Christianization of Lithuania and have survived even till the nowadays. For example, Užgavėnės is a pagan origin festival that was adapted to the Christianity, which takes place during the seventh week before Easter (Ash Wednesday). During it, Lithuanians dances around bonfire and burns Morė, believing that it will help bring spring faster. In the 13th and 14th centuries Grand Dukes and warriors were practicing the Pagan faith as an official religion. It was largely affected by the war mythology and žyniai or kriviai (priests) caste existed. In the 15th century Lithuanian nobles and higher society layers were Christianized, however peasants continued the old traditions and worshiped the agro-cultural deities. Hypatian Codex around 1252, documenting the baptizing of Mindaugas insists that the royal baptizing was feign and Mindaugas would continue present offerings to his old gods: to the chief Nunadievis and Teliavelis and Diviriks and to the God of Hares and to Medeina. Šventaragis' Valley - close to current Vilnius Cathedral was a sacred place with the Temple of Perkūnas and eternal flame, where cremation of Lithuanian rulers took place. Oak forests were considered holy, and aesthetically pleasing or unique places of nature were selected as places of worshipping - alkas. To this day, names from nature or mythology are popular in Lithuania. Dievas was the supreme deity, however many other gods were also connected with nature elements. For example, goddess of the morning Aušrinė, the god of the seas and storms Bangoraiš, the foster of the Holy Fire Gabija, goddess of Fate and pregnant women Laima, Mėnuo (the Moon, a son of Dievas), the Thunder, the main god Perkūnas, the Sun Goddess Saulė, goddess of the Evening Star Vakarinė, god of the wind and master of Dausos (paradise) Vėjopatis, goddess and the deified soil Žemyna, žvaigždės (stars). Žaltys (grass snake) was considered as a sacred animal of the sun goddess Saulė, a guardian of the home and a symbol of fertility. People used to keep it as a pet by the stove or other special area of the house and fed with milk, believing that it would bring good harvest and wealth. Killing žaltys was said to bring great misfortunes upon the household. Demonic creatures in the Lithuanian mythology included the evil spirit Baubas, goddess of death Giltinė, Ragana (an old-looking female or witch), Slogutis (means pain, misery or nightmare), devil trickster Pinigukas, a scary forest spirit that appears as a phosphorescent skeleton Žiburinis. Velnias was the protector of the treasures hidden in the soil, was taking care of the poor and was punishing rogue people, offenders,

grabbers and drunkards. === Arts and museums === Pranciškus Smuglevičius, Jan Rustem, Juozapas Oleškevičius and Kanutas Ruseckas are the most prominent Lithuanian painters of the 18th and 19th centuries. The Lithuanian Art Museum was founded in 1933 and is the largest museum of art conservation and display in Lithuania. Among other important museums are the Palanga Amber Museum, where amber pieces comprise a major part of the collection, National Gallery of Art, presenting collection of Lithuanian art of the 20th and 21st Century, National Museum of Lithuania presenting Lithuanian archaeology, history and ethnic culture. Perhaps the most renowned figure in Lithuania's art community was the composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911), an internationally renowned musician. The 2420 Čiurlionis asteroid, identified in 1975, honors his achievements. The M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum, as well as the only military museum in Lithuania, Vytautas the Great War Museum, are located in Kaunas. Other notable artists includes Jonas Mekas, Jurgis Mačiūnas, Petras Kalpokas, Antanas Žmuidzinavičius, Jonas Šileika, Justinas Vienožinskis, Kajetonas Skliūrius, Adomas Varnas, Petras Rimša, Juozas Zikaras, Vytautas Kairiūkštis, Vincas Grybas, Stasys Ušinskas, Bronius Pundzius, Liudas Truikys, Robertas Antinis, Antanas Gudaitis, Antanas Samuolis, Jonas Mikūnas, Antanas Žukauskas, Viktoras Vizgirda, Rimantas Dichavičius, Elvyra Katalina Kriaučiūnaitė, Šarūnas Sauka, Juozas Statkevičius. === Theatre === Lithuania has some very famous theatre directors well known in the country and abroad. One of them is Oskaras Koršunovas. He was awarded more than forty times with special prizes. Possibly most prestigious award is Swedish Commander Grand Cross: Order of the Polar Star. Today's the most famous theatres in Lithuania are in Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda ir Panevėžys. It is Lithuanian National Drama Theatre, Keistuolių teatras (Theatre of Freaks) in Vilnius, Kaunas National Drama Theatre, Theatre of Oskaras Koršunovas, Klaipėda Drama Theatre, Theatre of Gytis Ivanauskas, Miltinis Drama Theatre in Panevėžys, The Doll's Theatre, Russian Drama Theatre and others. There are some very popular theatre festivals like Sirenos (Sirens), TheATRIUM, Nerk į teatrą (Dive into the Theatre) and others. The figures dominating in Lithuanian theatre world are Adolfas Vežerskis, the general director of Lithuanian National Drama National Drama Theatre, also directors like Eimuntas Nekrošius, Jonas Vaitkus, Cezaris Graužinis, Rimas Tuminas, number of talented actors like Rimantas Bagdzevičius, Vytautas Rumšas, Saulius Balandis, Marius Jampolskis, Rimantė Valiukaitė and many others. === Music === Lithuanian folk music belongs to Baltic music branch which is connected with neolithic corded ware culture. Two instrument cultures meet in the areas inhabited by Lithuanians: stringed (kanklės) and wind instrument cultures. Lithuanian folk music is archaic, mostly used for ritual purposes, containing elements of paganism faith. There are three ancient styles of singing in Lithuania connected with ethnographical regions: monophony, heterophony and polyphony. Folk song genres: Sutartinės (Multipart Songs), Wedding Songs, War-Historical Time Songs, Calendar Cycle and Ritual Songs and Work Songs. Italian artists organized the first opera in Lithuania on 4 September 1636 in the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania by Władysław IV Vasa order. Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis is the most renowned Lithuanian painter and composer. During his short life he created about 200 pieces of music. His works have had profound influence on modern Lithuanian culture. His symphonic poems In the Forest (Miške) and The Sea (Jūra) were performed only posthumously. Čiurlionis contributed to symbolism and art nouveau and was representative of the fin de siècle epoch. He has been considered one of the pioneers of abstract art in Europe. In Lithuania, choral music is very important. Vilnius is the only city with three choirs laureates (Brevis, Jauna Muzika and Chamber Choir of the Conservatoire) at the European Grand Prix for Choral Singing. There is a long-standing tradition of the Lithuanian Song and Dance Festival (Dainų šventė). The first one took place in Kaunas in 1924. Since 1990, the festival has been organised every four years and summons roughly 30,000 singers and folk dancers of various professional levels and age groups from across the country. In 2008, Lithuanian Song and Dance Festival together with its Latvian and Estonian versions was inscribed as UNESCO Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Gatvės muzikos diena (Street Music Day) gathers musicians of various genres annually. Modern classical composers emerged in seventies - Bronius Kutavičius, Feliksas Bajoras, Osvaldas Balakauskas, Onutė Narbutaitė, Vidmantas Bartulis and others. Most of those composers explored archaic Lithuanian music and its harmonic combination with modern minimalism and neoromanticism. Jazz scene was active even during the years of Soviet occupation. The real breakthrough would occur in 1970-71 with the coming together of the Ganelin/Tarasov/Chekasins trio, the alleged instigators of the Vilnius Jazz School. Most known annual events are Vilnius Jazz Festival, Kaunas Jazz, Birštonas Jazz. ===== Rock and Protest music ===== After the Soviet reoccupation of Lithuania in 1944, the Soviet's censorship continued firmly controlling all artistic expressions in Lithuania, and any violations by criticizing the regime would immediately result

in punishments. The first local rock bands started to emerge around 1965 and included Kertukai, Aitvarai and Nuogi ant slenks in Kaunas, and Kęstutis Antanėlis, Vienuoliai, and Gėlių Vaikai in Vilnius, among others. Unable to express their opinions directly, the Lithuanian artists began organizing patriotic Roko Maršai and were using metaphors in their songs lyrics, which were easily identified for their true meanings by the locals. Postmodernist rock band Antis and its vocalist Algirdas Kaušpėdas were one of the most active performers who mocked the Soviet regime by using metaphors. For example, in the song Zombiai (Zombies), the band indirectly sang about the Red Army soldiers who occupied the state and its military base in Ukmergė. Vytautas Kernagis' song Kolorado vabalai (Colorado beetles) was also a favorite due to its lyrics in which true meaning of the Colorado beetles was intended to be the Soviets decorated with the Ribbons of Saint George. In the early independence years, rock band Foje was particularly popular and gathered tens of thousands of spectators to the concerts. After disbanding in 1997, Foje vocalist Andrius Mamontovas remained one of the most prominent Lithuanian performers and an active participant in various charity events. Marijonas Mikutavičius is famous for creating unofficial Lithuania sport anthem Trys milijonai (Three million) and official anthem of the EuroBasket 2011 Nebetyli sirgaliai (English version was named Celebrate Basketball).

=== Cuisine === Lithuanian cuisine features the products suited to the cool and moist northern climate of Lithuania: barley, potatoes, rye, beets, greens, berries, and mushrooms are locally grown, and dairy products are one of its specialties. Fish dishes are very popular in the coastal region. Since it shares its climate and agricultural practices with Northern Europe, Lithuanian cuisine has some similarities to Scandinavian cuisine. Nevertheless, it has its own distinguishing features, which were formed by a variety of influences during the country's long and difficult history. Dairy products traditionally is an important part of Lithuanian cuisine - white cottage cheese (varškės sūris), curd (varškė), soured milk (rūgpienis), sour cream (grietinė), butter (sviestas), katinis - sour cream butter. Traditional meat products are usually seasoned, matured and smoked - smoked sausages (dešros), lard (lašiniai), skilandis, smoked ham (kumpis). Soups (sriubos) - boletus soup, cabbage soup, beer soup, milk soup and various kinds of porages (košės) are part of tradition and daily diet. Freshwater fish, herring, wild berries and mushrooms, honey are highly popular diet to this day. One of the oldest and most fundamental Lithuanian food products was and is rye bread. Rye bread is eaten every day for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Bread played an important role in family rituals and agrarian ceremonies. Lithuanians, Poles, Jews, and other nations which lived in Grand Duchy of Lithuania share many dishes and beverages. Namely, similar versions of: dumplings (koldūnai, kreplach or pierogi), doughnuts (spurgos or pączki), and lietiniai, skindžiai (blini). German traditions also influenced Lithuanian cuisine, introducing pork and potato dishes, such as potato pudding (kugelis or kugel) and potato sausages (vėdarai), as well as the baroque tree cake known as Šakotis. The most exotic of all the influences is Eastern (Karaitė) cuisine, and the dishes kibinai and šeburekai are popular in Lithuania. Lithuanian noblemen usually hired French chefs - French cuisine influence came to Lithuania in this way. Balts were using mead(midus) for thousands of years.. Beer(alus) is the most common alcoholic beverage. Lithuania has a long farmhouse beer tradition, first mentioned in 11th century chronicles. Beer was brewed for ancient Baltic festivities and rituals. Farmhouse brewing survived to a greater extent in Lithuania than anywhere else, and through accidents of history the Lithuanians then developed a commercial brewing culture from their unique farmhouse traditions. Lithuania is top 5 by consumption of beer per capita in Europe in 2015, counting 75 active breweries, 32 of them are microbreweries. The microbrewery scene in Lithuania has been growing in later years, with a number of bars focusing on these beers popping up in Vilnius and also in other parts of the country. 8 Lithuanian restaurants are listed in White Guide Baltic Top 30.

=== Sports === Basketball is the most popular and national sport of Lithuania. The Lithuania national basketball team has had significant success in international basketball events, having won the EuroBasket on three occasions (1937, 1939 and 2003), as well a total of 8 other medals in the Eurobasket, the World Championships and the Olympic Games. The men's national team also has extremely high TV ratings as about 76% of the country's population watched their games live in 2014. Lithuania hosted the Eurobasket in 1939 and 2011. The historic Lithuanian basketball team BC Žalgiris, from Kaunas, won the European basketball league Euroleague in 1999. Lithuania has produced a number of NBA players, including Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame inductees Arvydas Sabonis and Šarūnas Marčiulionis and current NBA players Jonas Valančiūnas, Domantas Sabonis and Mindaugas Kuzminskas. Lithuania has won a total of 25 medals at the Olympic Games, including 6 gold medals in athletics, modern pentathlon, shooting, and swimming. Numerous other Lithuanians won Olympic medals representing Soviet Union. Discus thrower Virgilijus Alekna is the most successful Olympic athlete of independent Lithuania, having won

gold medals in the 2000 Sydney and 2004 Athens games, as well as a bronze in 2008 Beijing Olympics and numerous World Championship medals. More recently, the gold medal won by a then 15-year-old swimmer Rūta Meilutytė at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London sparked a rise in popularity for the sport in Lithuania. Lithuania has produced prominent athletes in athletics, modern pentathlon, road and track cycling, chess, rowing, aerobatics, strongman, wrestling, boxing, mixed martial arts, Kyokushin Karate and other sports. Few Lithuanian athletes have found success in winter sports, although facilities are provided by several ice rinks and skiing slopes, including Snow Arena, the first indoor ski slope in the Baltics. In 2018 Lithuania national ice hockey team won gold medals at the 2018 IIHF World Championship Division I.

== International rankings ==

The following are links to international rankings of Lithuania from selected research institutes and foundations including economic output and various composite indices.

== See also ==

Index of Lithuania-related articles
List of Lithuanians
Outline of Lithuania
== Notes ==

^ Various sources classify Lithuania differently for statistical and other purposes. For example, United Nations and Eurovoc, among others, classify it as northern Europe, the CIA World Factbook classifies it as eastern Europe, and Encyclopedia Britannica locates it in northeastern Europe. Usage varies greatly, and controversially, in press sources.

== References ==

== External links ==

Government
The Lithuanian President – Official site of the President of the Republic of Lithuania
The Lithuanian Parliament – Official site of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania
The Lithuanian Government – Official site of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania
Statistics Lithuania – Official site of Department of Statistics to the Government of Lithuania
Lithuanian State Department of Tourism - Official site of State Department of Tourism
Lithuania - Real is Beautiful – The Official Travel Guide by the State Department of Tourism
General information
Lietuva.lt – Lithuanian internet gates "Lithuania".
The World Factbook.
Central Intelligence Agency.
Lithuania.
CIA Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments
Lithuania from UCB Libraries GovPubs
Lithuania at Curlie (based on DMOZ)
Lithuania from the BBC News
Wikimedia Atlas of Lithuania
Other
Key Development Forecasts for Lithuania from International Futures
Heraldry of Lithuania
Geographic data related to Lithuania at OpenStreetMap