

## **2004 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION BRIEFING NO 12 THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTION IN LITHUANIA JUNE 13 2004<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Key points:**

- The European Parliament (EP) election in Lithuania was partly overshadowed by the parallel extraordinary presidential election. The latter took place following the removal of Rolandas Paksas from the office of President of the Republic on 6 April 2004 as a consequence of unprecedented impeachment proceedings.
- 48.38% turned out to vote in the first EP election held in Lithuania. Undoubtedly enhanced by the parallel Presidential election, turnout was above the EU-25 average, and the highest among Central and East European countries but it was the lowest compared to recent national elections. The latter can be explained as a popular reaction to the Presidential impeachment scandal and the “political tiredness” that arose from it.
- The newly formed Labour Party led by populist MP Viktor Uspaskikh, a businessman of Russian origin, gained the largest share of the vote. The party stabilized its popular support during the Presidential impeachment process (November 2003-April 2004). Viktor Uspaskikh succeeded in presenting himself as a “non-participant” during the exhausting conflict between the “parliamentary elites” and the “anti-elite” Paksas.
- Poor arguments were used in the election campaign when one considers the actual functions of the EP. The slogan “fight for Lithuania in Brussels” was the dominant one.
- The election results were in line with the general popular support expressed for political parties in domestic opinion polls, with a possible slight correction in favour of the political parties supporting Mr Adamkus (though formally a non-partisan candidate), and Mrs Prunskiene, the winners of the first round of Presidential elections.
- On the basis of these results, there is likely to be a change of power after the forthcoming parliamentary election due to be held in October.

### **Background/ Context**

The elections to the European Parliament of June 13 took place during a period of political “tiredness” on the part of Lithuanian society, following recurring scandals during the unprecedented impeachment process of the former President Rolandas Paksas. The first round of the new elections

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<sup>1</sup> The election was held simultaneously with the first round of the extraordinary election for the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

for the office of President of the Republic of Lithuania was held on the same date as the EP elections. This might well be the reason why many people in Lithuania knew the exact date of elections, much more than EU25 average.<sup>2</sup>

### The story of the impeachment in brief

On 5 January 2003, Rolandas Paksas was elected to the office of President of the Republic in the second voting round defeating the pro-Western former President Valdas Adamkus. The use of so-called “black election technologies” and the financing of his campaign through the Russian mafia were suspected but not proven. Although, he took the oath and assumed the duties of the President of the Republic on 26 February 2003, after a year he was removed from the office on 6 April 2004.

The impeachment proceedings schedule proceeded as follows. On 30 October 2003, during the process of changing Director of the National Security Department, it emerged that one of Paksas’ advisers had suspicious contacts and an extraordinary meeting of the leadership of Parliament was called. Soon, a secret report of the National Security Department on the activities of the Presidential team became public and broadly commented upon by mass media. On the same date, 30 October 2003, Paksas addressed the people denying any contacts with any criminals claiming that he was a victim of unfounded allegations. On 3 November, an ad hoc parliamentary commission was formed. Its work was public and widely commented upon, dividing people into those opposing and supporting Paksas. The conclusion of the commission on 2 December was that there were enough reasons to begin impeachment proceedings. On 23 December, a special parliamentary commission was formed comprising both members of parliament and independent jurists. Its conclusion published on 19 February 2004 contained 6 indictments: obligations of the President towards a physical person, his main campaign supporter; state secrets not being secured; illegal influence on the decisions of private persons in their property relations; incompatibility of public and private interests; discrediting the authorities; and giving illegal orders to advisors. Before that, on 30 December, the Constitutional Court ruled that the decision to grant Lithuanian citizenship to Paksas’ main campaign supporter was anti-constitutional.<sup>3</sup> After the conclusion of the special parliamentary commission, impeachment proceedings (in a narrow sense) started on 8 March 2004 bringing the Constitutional Court into the process. On 31 March 2004 the ruling of the Constitutional Court was that President Paksas had acted unconstitutionally. This was a basis for the impeachment vote in Parliament. It took place on 6 April, and more than 3/5 of MPs voted in favour of removing Paksas from office. On 15 April an extraordinary Presidential election was called to take place at the same time as the EP election.

However, this was not an end of the story. An additional ruling of the Constitutional Court was needed when Paksas collected enough signatures to mount a Presidential candidacy. The Constitutional Court forbade participation in any national elections for any person who violated his/her oath once, and occupying any post where an oath was obligatory. In terms of the Lithuanian political system this meant that the highest political post that Paksas could hold would be city Mayor; he was already Mayor of capital city, Vilnius.

The politicisation of society continued during these long months. Throughout this time Paksas was constantly denying all allegations and refusing to resign. Moreover, he was also appealing to his supporters to defend him as the “victim of a conspiracy” of elites. Paksas was constantly visiting small villages where the number of his supporters is relatively high. On one occasion this nearly ended in physical clashes between Paksas’ opponents and supporters.

In such a situation, society became deeply divided into those supporting impeachment and those expressing sympathy towards Paksas; the number of “undecideds” was decreasing and everyone

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<sup>2</sup> See Flash EB 161: European Elections 2004 Barometer.//www.eosgallipeurope.com.

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www3.lrs.lt/cgi-bin/prep2?condition1=227302>.

was trying to define his personal position. The term “the Second Lithuania” began to appear in political discourse. It indicated that two separate societies – the elites and those being in a disadvantageous socio-economic position and opposing the elites - existed in Lithuania. It became clear that these two groups of people had different visions of political processes in Lithuania. This was leading an unprecedented and dramatic escalation of the internal political situation so that it became increasingly polarised.

#### Changes of popular support for the political parties

Shortly before Presidential scandal broke on 18 October 2003, a new political party called the Labour Party was established. Within a few weeks it became the most popular party, supported by more than 20% of respondents. Its founder, Mr Viktor Uspaskikh, is known as a businessman of Russian origin and protector of Russian energy interests; recently he resigned from the post of Chairman of the Economy Committee in the Lithuanian Parliament. Over the years, he developed his successful business in one of the regions of Lithuania, Kedainiai. His popularity in Kedainiai - as an MP and businessman - is similar to that of the “good regional governor” in any of the Russian regions; and his high-ranking post did not prevent him from being able to successfully escape from responsibility for the country’s economic problems. On the contrary, Uspaskikh successfully presented himself as a “creator of jobs”, “fighter for ordinary people”, and “raiser of investments”. Moreover, a number of EU SAPPARD projects were successful in “his domain”. In early 2003, Uspaskikh began collecting signatures to initiate a referendum on Constitutional changes. In doing so he entered into conflict with the parliamentary elites: nobody wanted the Constitutional changes proposed by him and this became one of the reasons why the referendum rules were not facilitated before EU accession referendum and which, in turn, created fears of a low turnout in the accession poll.<sup>4</sup>

During the presidential impeachment process Uspaskikh attempted to present himself as “aside from the scandals”. He successfully exploited the continued and unprecedented politicisation of Lithuanian society to actively reinforce his party structures. As Table 1 shows, support for his Labour Party stabilized as backing for other parties started to fluctuate.

**Table 1. Support for the main Lithuanian parties from November 2003-June 2004.**

Party	11 2003	12 2003	01 2004	02 2004	03 2004	04 2004	05 2004	06 2004	After elections
Labour Party	22.5	20.5	20.7	21.5	20.2	23.6	25	28.1	33.8
Lithuanian Social Democratic Party	13.0	14.9	15.5	15.5	16.7	16.8	12.7	13.5	12.7
Homeland Union (Conservatives)	6.9	6.1	6.7	10.1	8.2	8.2	7.6	11.1	7.6
Liberal and Centre Union	6.6	5.4	4.8	5.2	5.2	4.5	5.6	5.6	8.1
Liberal Democratic Party	6.6	7.5	9.2	8.3	7.0	6.0	7.2	5.7	4.7

Source: Data presented by VILMORUS in the newspaper “Lietuvos Rytas”

<sup>4</sup> See: L. Mazylyis and I. Unikaite, "The Lithuanian EU Accession Referendum 10-11 May 2003", *European Parties Elections and Referendums Network Referendum Briefing No 8*, Sussex European Institute, University of Sussex, 2004 at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/documents/epernbreflith.pdf>.

## **The Electoral System**

The number of the Members of the European Parliament elected in the Republic of Lithuania is determined in the 'Act concerning the Conditions of Accession of the Republic of Lithuania of the Treaty concerning the Accession of the Republic of Lithuania to the European Union'. Lithuania's 13 MEPs were to be elected by its 3.45 million population. MEPs were to be elected on the basis of the proportional representation system by preferential voting, for a term of five years in one multi-mandate constituency comprising the entire territory of Lithuania. Mandates for lists of candidates would be distributed according to the number of votes received by each of them, applying the method of quotas and remainders. If one of the lists received a larger number of mandates than there were candidates on the list, these mandates would be distributed to other lists, further continuing the division thereof by the method of remainders. Candidates of the same list would receive mandates in the order determined by preference votes (each voter has five preferential votes, the initial sequence of candidates on the list would not be taken into account), after the Central Electoral Committee had counted the number of votes obtained by each candidate. If the party/coalition submitted, together with the application documents, a request that their rating should not be established, voters would be notified about this in advance, indicating this in a ballot paper; then the rating of their candidates would not be counted, and the registered sequence of candidates on the list would be considered final.<sup>5</sup>

Information supplied by the Central Electoral Committee of the Republic of Lithuania shows that the level of the competition for the European Parliament was high: 242 candidates were registered in the 12 party lists. Not only supporters of EU membership were participating but also two Eurosceptic parties: the Party of National Progress and the National Centre Party. However, their performance was poor. One joint list was registered, a Coalition between the Electoral Action of Lithuania's Poles and the Lithuanian Russian Union called "Together we are strong".

## **The Campaign(s)**

### Programmes and slogans

The written programs of the majority of the parties contained a relatively large number of EU-oriented items compared with populist/domestic issues. Statements such as "more EU funds for small businesses", "use of funds for creating jobs", "equalizing direct payments for agricultural production", though only weakly connected with the EP's functions, seemed at least to fall within the remit of EU policies. In terms of campaign slogans, populist/domestic statements were more prevalent, while during campaign debates they were dominant. The programs of the traditional parties affiliated with EP groups contained more substantial statements on EU matters.

The Labour Party entered EP election campaign declaring that "we are experts rather than politicians". Arguments about their candidates' "professionalism" became the essential message sent to the voters by this party. By that, they were trying to use, indirectly, the EU accession referendum experience of a number of governments in other Central and East European countries when they presented "EU experts" as actors in transmitting (positive) EU information. Unlike other parties, the Labour Party used the party programme designed for the national parliamentary election for the EP election as well. In addition, they declared that their members would aim to renegotiate a number of issues with the EU, including the idea that "Lithuania should remain a nuclear state" and VAT harmonisation. The Labour Party's slogan was, "Fight for what is useful for Lithuania". During campaign they played on the fact that their party number - "No11" - was identical to that of a prominent basketball player, Arvydas Sabonis.

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<sup>5</sup> Such a request was, in fact, submitted by Labour Party.

The ruling Lithuanian Social Democratic Party argued that they were responsible for economic growth and successful administration of the state. Quite rationally, they also exploited the theme of equalisation of regional imbalances through EU funds. Advertising their Party of European Socialists group membership, they promoted the Lisbon Strategy as a socialist achievement for the furtherance of social progress. Their slogan was: "For Lithuania's future in Europe!" The Homeland Union (Conservatives) attacked both the governing Social Democrats, and the election debutant, the Labour Party. The Conservatives started their programmatic statements with "We belong to the EPP, the biggest power within the EP". The party's slogans were as follows: "Be more/better Lithuanian" and "the Homeland Union, means, Lithuania's voice will be heard in Europe". They also promoted the theme of better implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. The Liberal and Centre Union's election campaign concentrated on persuading special interest groups such as small and medium businessmen and farmers. Their slogans were: "For your truth and prosperity", "Let's make Europe useful for Lithuania". Paksas' Liberal Democrats participated in the election with a slogan, "Lithuania was always a European state". The Union of Farmers Party and the New Democracy Party designed a common campaign for the Presidential and European Parliament elections; their leader and Presidential candidates, Kazimira Prunskiene, also headed the party's list for the EP election. Among the main topics that it promoted was continuation of the running of the Ignalina nuclear power station, although Lithuania had previously agreed to its closure in the accession negotiations. They succeeded in drawing other parties into discussion about this issue, too. Their slogan was: "Representing and defending Lithuania's interests".

All these parties' pre-election declarations and slogans show that they started to compete with each other as to who would proclaim "fighting for Lithuania in Brussels" (not mentioning Strasbourg, typically) most loudly. This competition was even clearer during the TV debates. "Whether such a small country would be able to defend its interests?" was a typical statement for the beginning and end of such discussions. Through such shallow debates, the EP election candidates actually demonstrated their complete inability to defend Lithuania's interests. There was little discussion of the real functions of EU institutions, particularly the EP. The fact that MEPs are grouping themselves not according to their nationality was clearly uncomfortable for the majority of the participants in these debates.

Analysing their performance, one suspects that the Lithuanian political elite did not really consider the elections to the European Parliament sufficiently, or simply regarded them as a test before the national parliamentary elections to be held in October. It was very difficult to notice any fresh ideas, or construction of serious party programmes concentrating on European issues. The European ideas included in the election programmes were rather bureaucratic, conformist and opportunistic, without any trace of political vision. The names of the candidates showed that some political players regarded the European Parliament as a place for the rest and recreation. The public's point of view was almost the same, based on the idea that the European Parliament was a place where you can get a high salary but do not have to do anything special. In domestic public opinion research, 63.2% of respondents acknowledged that they did not have any clear knowledge what the EP is responsible for; the only thing that they could remember they heard was that the salaries of MEPs are high and the life in Brussels is rich.

Thus, the election campaign became a popularity contest for the parties, with a low level of "Europeanization". But the themes projected in the campaign such as unemployment, economic growth, pensions were clearly in accord with people's expectations from both the EU and the EP.<sup>6</sup> It became clear during the campaign that the majority of the parties preferred to adapt to the prevailing political culture of society rather than aiming to change it.

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<sup>6</sup> See Flash EB 161: European Elections 2004 Barometer.//[www.eosgallipeurope.com](http://www.eosgallipeurope.com).

## Mutual influence between the two campaigns

One could expect that the Presidential election campaign would have a mobilising effect but it was not very high in a situation of deep political apathy among large segments of society. Indeed, although turnout in Lithuania was the highest among the new member states and higher than the EU25 average, the Presidential campaign itself looked like more a “beauty contest” than a contest of political ideas.

Five candidates participated in the presidential campaign: former President, and (formally) non-partisan centre-right candidate Valdas Adamkus; non-partisan, former Chief Negotiator with the EU, Petras Austrevicius; the candidate from the New Union, incumbent minister of social affairs Ms Vilija Blinkeviciute; a representative of the leadership of the Social Democrats, vice-chairman of the Parliament, Ceslovas Juršenas; Lithuania’s first prime minister in 1990, who was referred to at that time as the “Amber Lady”, Mrs Kazimira Prunskienė (there was a court ruling at that time on her ties with KGB). Thus, three of them could campaign together with their EP candidates, the fourth, Adamkus, was supported by Center-Liberals and partly by the Conservatives. It is most difficult to comment on Austrevicius who was supported by two different parties of a different nature: the Labour Party and the Conservatives.

However, instead of co-ordination of the two campaigns, the general tendency (except for the case of the Farmers’ Party, as mentioned above) was to promote the actual leaders of these parties rather than the Presidential candidates. Typically, Uspaskikh was on the posters of Labour Party, Brazauskas on the ones of Social Democrats, the Mayor of Vilnius Mr Zuokas on the posters of Center Liberals.

Features of the “beauty contest” were present during the Presidential campaign: narrow opportunities to win, the absence of bitter attacks against each other, and even a tendency to avoid criticising the programmes of competitors; statements that were slightly populist, oriented towards ordinary people and their future.

This campaign style was in sharp contrast with the EU accession referendum campaign.<sup>7</sup> Although the referendum campaign was both superficial and suffered from a lack of information, it was also much more engaging, inviting people to make a “civilization choice between East and West”. The agitation methods used in the election campaign were conventional (TV adverts, “talking heads”) and generally very boring. Having with all these campaigns in mind, it is possible to presume that this style of campaigning was like studying the situation before forthcoming parliamentary elections.

## Campaign financing

Unclear financing of political campaigns has been a problem of almost all recent elections in Lithuania. In order to prevent unfair and unclear financing, the Law of Political Campaign Financing was amended and became stricter after the Presidential elections of 2002-2003. For instance, the Electoral Committee started monitoring TV and radio advertisements and calculating real average expenditures. This time political parties and Presidential candidates were avoiding the risk of suspected involvement in unclear campaign sources. Possibly, parties also preferred to reserve their money for the autumn parliamentary election campaign. These were some of the reasons for the more calm and silent campaign and led to relative equalisation of the candidates’ chances. The Campaign expenditure of the winners was between 790 thousand litas (the Labour Party) and 184 thousand litas (Liberal Democrats); this was quite a small amount of money compared to other elections in Lithuania.

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<sup>7</sup> See: "The Lithuanian EU Accession Referendum 10-11 May 2003".

## The Results

The turnout, 48.38%, was low compared to other votes in recent years (63.37% in the EU accession referendum in 2003; 53.92% in the Presidential and local elections at the end of 2002; 58.63% in the 2000 parliamentary elections.<sup>8</sup>

The Labour Party's victory was commented upon as a "Lithuanian tragicomedy": the party perhaps least prepared for a work in EP became the winner; its victory and the elections themselves were interpreted as a "referendum on confidence in the incumbent government and the so-called traditional parties."<sup>9</sup> "Yet after elections winners started deliberating political power to belong in EP but for electorate it was of least concern".

As Table 2 shows, six parties secured seats in the European Parliament.

**Table 2. June 2004 Lithuanian election to the European Parliament**

No	Title	Votes	% of valid ballot-papers	MEPs
11	<b><u>Labour Party</u></b>	363996	30.16%	<b>5</b>
2	<b><u>Lithuanian Social Democratic Party</u></b>	174124	14.43%	<b>2</b>
9	<b><u>Homeland Union (Conservatives, Political Prisoners and Deportees, Christian Democrats)</u></b>	151833	12.58%	<b>2</b>
3	<b><u>Liberal and Centre Union</u></b>	135601	11.23%	<b>2</b>
1	<b><u>Union of Farmers' Party and New Democracy Party</u></b>	89452	7.41%	<b>1</b>
12	<b><u>Liberal Democratic Party</u></b>	82420	6.83%	<b>1</b>
6	<u>Coalition between the Electoral Action of Lithuania's Poles and Lithuanian Russian Union "Together we are strong"</u>	68937	5.71%	
5	<u>The New Union (Social Liberals)</u>	58527	4.85%	
4	<u>Lithuanian Christian Democrats</u>	33162	2.75%	
10	<u>Christian Conservative Social Union</u>	31061	2.57%	
7	<u>The Party of National Progress</u>	14294	1.18%	
8	<u>National Centre Party</u>	3663	0.30%	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1207070</b>		<b>13</b>

Source: Data from Central Electoral committee of the Republic of Lithuania ([http://www.vrk.lt/rinkimai/2004/euro/rezultatai/rez\\_e\\_18.htm](http://www.vrk.lt/rinkimai/2004/euro/rezultatai/rez_e_18.htm))

### Personalities

Among the winners were the following:

*1) Labour Party* ("experts but non politicians"): (i) the signatory of the Lithuanian Independence Act of 1990; (ii) an economist, former co-ordinator of a particular WB project in Serbia/Montenegro; (iii) the person responsible for negotiation of the EU chapter on "Small and medium enterprises"; (iv) a young medic without any political experience; (v) a consultant in the Lithuanian Parliament and lecturer on EU matters. Journalistic investigations revealed their rather poor understanding, even of the basics; of the EU budget procedure, for instance.

<sup>8</sup> See: <http://www.lrs.lt>

<sup>9</sup> See: A. Rozenas. Euroskeptiku ir populistu sturmas. - "Veidas", 2004 06 17, Nr 25: <http://www.veidas.lt>

2) Social Democrats. Justas Vincas Paleckis, diplomat, recent ambassador in UK; Aloyzas Sakalas, one of the most experienced Lithuanian MPs, and one of the most visible persons during the initiation of the Presidential impeachment.

3) Conservatives: Mr Vytautas Landsbergis, the leader of Lithuania's independence movement and a key figure in the democratic transition in 1988-1992; and Mrs Laima Andrikiene, former Minister of European Affairs.

4) Centre-Liberals. One of the party leaders, Mr Eugenijus Gentvilas, and economic expert Margarita Starkeviciute. Both winners are known in Lithuania but have rather limited experience in European politics.

5) Liberal-democrat: Rolandas Pavilionis, former Rector of Vilnius University, one of most radical supporters of Rolandas Paksas.

6) Farmers/ New Democracy: Mrs Kazimira Prunskiene rejected her mandate in favour of the next candidate from her party list due to her candidacy for the Presidency in the second round (though she was not obliged to do so by law).

In total, voters were actively using their right of rating candidates within their parties' lists. Among the 13 winners, three of them (Sakalas, Andrikiene and Pavilionis) won their seats acquiring higher positions in their lists compared to their initial sequencing.

#### Losers

**Table 3: Voting in EP elections compared to the national elections and opinion polls.**

Political party	Votes to EP (per cent of all eligible votes)	Compared to elections 2000	Opinion poll 2004 06 (per cent)	Seats
Labour Party	30.16	+30.16	28.1	5
Lithuanian Social Democratic Party	14.43	-16.65	13.5	2
Homeland Union	12.58	+3.96	11.1	2
Liberal-Center Union	11.23	-6.02#	5.6	2
Peasants' and New Democracy	7.41	+3.33##	4.2	1
Liberal Democratic Party	6.83	#	5.7	1
Polish/Russian Coalition	5.71	##		
New Union/Social-liberals	4.85	-14.79		
Lithuanian Christian Democrats	2.75	-0.32##		
Christian Conservative Social Union	2.57	+0.56##		
Party of National Progress	1.18	+1.18		
National Centre Party	0.30	+0.30		

# The Liberal Democratic Party seceded from the Liberal faction in 2002

## Dividing and joining parties, changing their names, forming and seceding from electoral coalitions (compared with the 2000 Parliamentary election).

The result of the joint Russian-Polish list of candidates was surprisingly high; but although they reached the 5% per cent threshold it was not enough for them to secure even one mandate. This situation was unusual in two ways: firstly, Poles do not usually form joint lists with Russians and, secondly, they never normally pass the 5% hurdle. Among those who failed to pass the 5% was a junior ruling coalition partner, two Christian Democratic lists, and two Eurosceptic parties. The



New Union/Social-Liberals, led by incumbent foreign minister Antanas Valionis and having its “own” candidate to the President’s, Minister of Social Affairs Ms Vilija Blinkeviciute, did not receive any mandates. Junior coalition partners are quite frequently rejected in such situations but this may also have been a “punishment” by part of their electorate not only for their poor political performance in general but also for the “too tough” behaviour of their party leader, Chairman of the Parliament, Arturas Paulauskas against Paksas during impeachment process. Two Christian Democratic lists (Lithuanian Christian Democrats traditionally have close ties with Christian Democratic International and the EPP), dividing their supporters, dispersed their support. Finally, the two Eurosceptic parties, the Party of National Progress and the National Centre Party, also received minimal support.

### Regional dimension of the results

Although the Labour Party's results were distributed across the whole country, there were zones where other parties were dominant; namely, the Social Democrats in Silale, the Conservatives in Vilnius, the centre-right in Kaunas, and the Polish-Russian list in the areas surrounding the Vilnius region.

### **Conclusions and future prospects**

Domestic political processes affected the June 2004 EP elections results in various different ways. High turnout (though very low even in terms of typical turnout in recent national elections) was encouraged by the parallel Presidential elections. In the absence of “Europeanisation”, the domestic popularity of parties seems to be crucial factor in determining voters’ choices, allowing the newly created populist Labour Party to become the winner. Compared to the 2000 elections to the Lithuanian Parliament, the centre-left ruling coalition parties lost their supporters, the while Labour Party has acquired exactly the same percentage of voters. The “traditional” centre-right increased its support. After the EU referendum, the EP election was the next occasion when it was possible to use campaigning to increase knowledge of the EU and enhance voters’ interest in European matters. The opportunity was lost. Parties once again simplified the issue and adjusted to the political culture of society.

Attempts by the populist winners of the election to enter influential EP groupings were one of the dominant media topics after the election. The Lithuanian Social Democrats vetoed the Labour Party’s application to join the PES and the Homeland Union did the same with the Farmers’ Party when its MEPs attempted to join the EPP-ED; although the Liberal Centre Union did not attempt to prevent the Labour Party from joining the ALDE. Thus, Lithuania is broadly represented in ALDE by 7 out of its 13 MEPs: the 2 Liberal Centre Union members and the 5 Labour Party members.

In the second round of the Presidential election held on June 27, 77 year-old Valdas Adamkus re-captured this post for a second term of office defeating Kazimira Prunskiene with 52.65% of the votes. The second round campaign was more dramatic and much more typical of a Lithuanian election than the “beauty contest” first round held on June 13. Turnout was also higher (52.46%), as a result of the stronger competition. The two candidates who contested the second round were regarded as proponents of two opposite programmes: pro- and anti-Western. Valdas Adamkus became an unambiguous symbol of Euro-Atlantic integration (his American experience, successful efforts in helping Lithuania to join both EU and NATO in 1998-2002 etc.) while Prunskiene tended to be called a “pro-Kremlin” both politically (given her alleged KGB links) and economically (given her interests in the continuation of nuclear energy production at in Ignalina). Remarkably, Paksas also supported her. The second round election campaign was quite dramatically influenced by the seizure of documents in the headquarters of the four political parties who were the main actors during Paksas’ impeachment. EP election winner, Viktor Uspaskikh, took a neutral stance during the second round of the Presidential election: formally he did not support either of the candidates. One can presume, that his support could have been a crucial factor in helping bring

about a Prunskiene victory. Nevertheless, Uspaskikh told journalists that Adamkus' authority would be of great value to Lithuania at the current. Such behaviour shows the seriousness of Uspaskikh's intention to form a government after an eventual victory in Lithuania's parliamentary elections scheduled for October 2004.

*This is the latest in a series of election and referendum briefings produced by the European Parties Elections and Referendums Network (EPERN). Based in the Sussex European Institute, EPERN is an international network of scholars that was originally established as the Opposing Europe Research Network (OERN) in June 2000 to chart the divisions over Europe that exist within party systems. In August 2003 it was re-launched as EPERN to reflect a widening of its objectives to consider the broader impact of the European issue on the domestic politics of EU member and candidate states. The Network retains an independent stance on the issues under consideration. For more information and copies of all our publications visit our website at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/1-4-2.html>*