



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

L. Sapiegos str. 15, LT-10312 Vilnius, Tel. (+370 5) 251 4188, E-mail info@teismai.lt

European Network of Councils for the Judiciary
E – mail: office@encj.eu

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Honorable Mr. Filippo Donati,

Honorable Executive Board members,

On the morning of February 24th, the World has changed dramatically, with the criminal Kremlin regime waging war against an independent Ukrainian state and invading its territory.

Democratic European and global institutions, including the Network of Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the European Union, the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary, the Consultative Council of European Judges, and others, unanimously condemned Russia's military invasion, declared solidarity with the Ukrainian people and promised them full support in the fight against the aggressor, realizing that Russia's actions were not only an attack on Ukraine but also an attack on universally recognized norms of international law, human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The Lithuanian people, and the judiciary among them, have been resolutely and unconditionally supporting Ukraine since the first day of the war by all available means: by publishing official solidarity resolutions, by participating in various civil and charitable actions, and by sheltering refugees fleeing from the war zone. Our nations are bound by our common history, we recognize the true face of the anti-democratic Russian regime: we still remember the Soviet occupation, the hundreds of thousands of our citizens exiled to Siberia, the destruction of the Lithuanian economy, the extermination of freedom of speech and the stalled development of our society for 50 years. And we know that if successful, Putin will not stop in Ukraine. We acknowledge the warnings we have heard more than once that "Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland will follow next". However, the map of Europe does not end beyond the borders of these countries, and there are many more letters in the alphabet for the names of other countries... The war started by Russia in Ukraine is a threat to every European country, let's remember the lessons of previous wars and consider them.

For 19 days, Ukraine has been bravely opposed and defending its land and its freedom. Peaceful people have been dying in Ukraine for 19 days, humanitarian crises have erupted in cities sieged by the enemy and millions have been forced to flee their country. We must grasp that in the fight against the criminal aggression perpetrated by the Putin regime, the Ukrainian people are defending not only their future, but also that of Europe as a whole, and perhaps even the world, the values on which the foundations of a democratic society are based. The moral support and solidarity of all of us is of paramount importance to the heroes fighting in Ukraine.

The Lithuanian judiciary has been cooperating with its Ukrainian counterparts for many years, assisting in their European integration processes. We are glad, to have earned the trust of our colleagues.

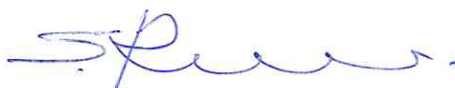
Based on this trust, the Chairman of the Judicial Council of Ukraine – Mr. Bogdan Monich – has appealed to the Judicial Council of Lithuania on March 10th, asking to raise the issue of promoting amendments to the statutory documents of the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary to remove regulatory barriers to establishing direct contacts between Ukrainian judicial institutions and involving the Council of Judges of Ukraine and the High Council of Justice (after the resumption of its work) to the projects of the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary.

The Judicial Council of Lithuania has considered this request in its meeting of the 10th March and via a unanimously adopted resolution decided to mediate on the possible participation of the Ukrainian Judicial Councils' inclusion in the activities of the ENCJ as observers. We are aware of the ENCJ's position of 2020 on the formal obstacles to such a decision and its non-compliance with ENCJ rules. However, the situation has changed radically and extraordinary circumstances call for extraordinary solutions. We believe that granting observer status to Ukrainian judicial institutions/councils would not only be a significant gesture of moral support; the possibility of participating in the ENCJ would provide an opportunity for a close look at the rule of law-based activities of the EU-based Councils for the Judiciary and would allow Ukraine to accelerate its European integration process. It would also strengthen ENCJ's international authority as the institution that genuinely defends the principles of democracy.

Therefore, by signing this on behalf of the Judicial Council of Lithuania I would like to kindly ask you to discuss this issue at the next meeting of the Executive Board and assess the possibility of including it on the agenda of the General Assembly of the ENCJ in June.

Sincerely

President of the Judicial Council



Sigita Rudėnaite