

## Press Release

15 August 2009

### **Lithuania's Anniversary to Be Celebrated in Italy too**

The jubilee of 1000 years of Lithuania, the youngest Christian country in the European Union, will also be celebrated in Italy. Marking the millennium of Lithuanian statehood and the first record of the country name in the historical chronicles, Lithuanian yacht *Gold of Lithuania* will raise its flag in Bari in September 23<sup>th</sup>. This visit to Italy will be made in the framework of historical and reconstructive mission *Millennium Lithuaniae as the Birth of Europe*.

The initiative launched by the international organisation *JCI Vilnius* and Lithuanian capital Vilnius has raised the mission to repeat the pilgrim journey of Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł The Orphan, a nobleman of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, to the Holy Land in 1583-1584. During the historical sailing, fifteen cities of the Mediterranean will be reminded that the name of Lithuania was for the first time mentioned in the Annals of Quedlinburg in 1009, while Vilnius acquired the status of the European Capital of Culture in 2009. The organisers of the journey expect this message to be instrumental in establishing and developing further diplomatic, economic and cultural relations.

*In the name of Vilnius Mayor, we send our warmest regards to all these cities and invite their residents to visit Lithuania and definitely see Vilnius that has been well known for its remarkable cultural events for many years now, - says Vilnius Vice-Mayor Gintautas Babravičius.*

*The aim of the historical journey is to bring the message to the ideological centres of Europe about the European phenomena of our country's history and culture. We are the northernmost Catholic country, our churches were built following the most famous examples of the Italian Baroque. The easternmost Gothic and easternmost and northernmost Renaissance cultural monuments can be also observed in Lithuania. Furthermore, starting from the 16<sup>th</sup> c. Vilnius has been known for its tolerance towards not only incoming Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox believers but also the Jews and the Muslims, - tells journey ideologist Vilnius University professor Alfredas Bumblauskas.*

The yacht bearing the noble mission will visit the ports of Croatia, Albania, Greece and Italy and the islands of Crete, Malta, Sicily and Corsica. In ports where the crew of *Gold of Lithuania* will raise the flag of the Lithuania's Millennium, the members of the crew will present Vilnius and its events, communicate with local communities and exchange business contacts. The crew of the yacht was granted Vilnius Mayor's distinguishing letters and invitations to establish and develop the relations between the cities.

*By assuming this symbolical mission, we state that we pursue not only economic but also cultural and diplomatic ambitions. Hand in hand we will strive to spread the word about Lithuania as a marine state that can be successfully reached by sea routes, - says Donatas Juškus, navigator of *Gold of Lithuania* and project manager. He explains that during the journey, they will make a photography album and a documentary, while the unique mission and experiences of the yachtsmen will be recorded in a book of travel sketches by a known Lithuanian writer Tomas Staniulis.*

Lithuanian National Commission for UNESCO provides patronage of the journey. The project is supported by Vilnius City Municipality, Lithuanian Development Agency (LEPA), ICC, Lithuanian Institute, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, and the Directorate for the Commemoration of the Millennium of Lithuania.

**“Gold of Lithuania” will wharf in Bari September 23<sup>th</sup> 5 pm. All interests and press are welcome!**

**For more detailed information:**

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