

Discussions in Brussels.

Europe takes first step towards assessment of totalitarian regimes, rest depends on efforts of states - Lithuanian MP

VILNIUS, Apr 15, BNS - Public discussions in Brussels last week were the first step towards assessment of crimes of totalitarian regimes on European Union (EU) level, the further steps will depend on the common efforts of Central and Eastern European nations.

Lithuanian Member of Parliament Emanuelis Zingeris expressed this point of view in a press conference Tuesday on Lithuania's negotiations on assessment of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes on EU level.

"Public debates took place after prolonged talks and negotiations. For the first time since the Treaty of Rome, since the establishment of the union, after 50 years did the EU begin assessment of totalitarian regimes.

This step, no matter how small, was taken into the dark, which is completely understandable to us, however not so completely understandable to an average English of Manchester or Italian of Milan", Zingeris commented on results of the discussion.

In the public debates in Brussels, Lithuania presented a bundle of proposals for assessment of totalitarian regimes in Europe, some of which were to pronounce the day of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact the day of remembrance of victims of the European totalitarian regime, to set up a special commission in the EU for investigations of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes, to establish an EU fund, which would tend to spreading information on the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes, as well as found a museum of EU's totalitarian regimes in Brussels.

Lithuania also presented the European Commission (EC) with an action Plan put together by the country on the process of implementing the assessment of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes in EU countries.

Zingeris noted that the made proposals drew the attention of EU member states and were evaluated in a positive light.

"Discussions were positive. The atmosphere - from Spain to Estonia - illustrated willingness to delve upon problems of one another", the Lithuanian negotiator said.

As noted by historian Arvydas Anusauskas, the EU has no common stance

on the issue of assessment of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes at this point, however every step towards solving this issue is not an easy one.

"But even just the expression of the idea that year 1945 was not a victory of democracy for all nations is also very important and topical to us. We always spread this idea, that behind the victory against fascists, often lured the totalitarianism of Stalin", the historian said.

Zingeris noted that Lithuania, which often brings up the issue of assessment of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes, will continue using all channels of influence in the EU and will seek to involve as many countries as possible.

On the other hand, a professor of the Vilnius University Law Department Dr. Dainius Zalimas and Executive Director of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Ronaldas Racinskas, both of whom also participated in the public debates, were less optimistic about their outcome.

They were outraged over the challenge raised against Lithuania and other post-soviet nations, when Director General of the European Commission's Justice, Freedom and Security Jonathan Faull, who hadn't participated in all discussions, unilaterally presented conclusions, which were not backed by over half of those present in the event. Racinskas deemed this type of behavior a "spit in the face".

Zalimas noted that debates, the conclusions of which are written up ahead of time, are organized "for a tick".

"If the director general of the EC's department, who wasn't present in the event, comes and brings his preconceived conclusions, which say nothing and completely do not correspond to the content of the event, and reads the conclusions while chewing gum, this is exactly the viewpoint towards our topic", Zalimas said.

Held for the first time in the history of the EU, the public debates were organized by the EC's Directorate General for Justice, Freedom and Security.

The debates are attended by more than 100 experts.

In 1940, Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union, later, during the years of World War II, its territory was invaded by the Nazi Germany. After the Red Army pushed German troops back, Lithuania was

forced to become a Soviet Union republic once again.

In 1940-1953, Lithuania lost up to one-third of its population to deportations, killings and forced emigration. Lithuania has estimated the damages of 50 years of the Soviet occupation at 80 billion litas (EUR 23 b).

(EUR 1 = LTL 3.45)

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