

**Welcome Address by Rimantas Sinkevičius,
Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania**

Vilnius, 27 September 2013

Distinguished Members of the Seimas and the Government, Colleagues, Esteemed Guests,

I am pleased to welcome you to this meeting to discuss relevant matters, including the development of European languages and cultures and the political and social aspects that unite the culturally varied Member States of the European Union.

In our global digital world marked by the pronounced domination of the Internet and modern communications technologies, the task of preserving the less frequently used languages is particularly important.

I will not disclose a secret by saying that active participation in modern economic and social life is essentially based on linguistic skills and ICT literacy in the digital environment.

There are three million Lithuanian language speakers. Lithuania being a small country, we need to permanently seek ways to preserve our language and culture as well as develop modern tools helping Lithuanian to thrive in the digital world.

Among the key priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy is the development of a smart, sustainable and knowledge-based economy. Evidently, the use of e-services, high-speed and super-high-speed Internet, intelligence technologies, and various applications will continue to grow.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications, which is in charge for the implementation of the Programme of the Lithuanian Language in Information Society for 2009–2013, has already planned the activities leading to the creation of Lithuanian digital products, resources and new technologies, which will help to address both specific tasks and the strategic challenges of promoting the promotion, learning, training of and doing research in the languages of small countries.

In order to further promote the Lithuanian language and culture, various solutions will receive sufficient funding from the EU structural funds in the period of 2014–2020.

This is reflected in the Lithuanian Information Society Development Programme for 2011–2019, which clearly states that the key priority linked to our language as a part of cultural heritage is to use all available ICT to promote the Lithuanian language and culture.

However, I would like to highlight at the same time that neither the integration of our economy into the European common market, nor effective communication with our business and social partners is possible without the use of modern means of communication and multilingualism.

I believe that the participants of today's meeting will share their insights into the ways this was made possible in other countries. In highlighting the importance of foreign language skills and the role of the dialogue with representatives of other cultures, a discussion will centre on the measures necessary to promote the native language and the ways to provide equal opportunities to all our citizens to learn two foreign languages.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish every success to your meeting. I firmly believe that your decisions will contribute to creating a common trustworthy and united Europe, where languages and cultures of different countries live in harmony side by side.

Thank you. Have a successful meeting.