

## **Marcel Philipp and Jürgen Linden visit Dalia Grybauskaite, the designated recipient of the Charlemagne Prize, in Vilnius**

"I am delighted to accept the honour of the Charlemagne Prize" - these were the words of the Lithuanian president Dalia Grybauskaite following a meeting with Marcel Philipp, the Lord Mayor of Aachen, and Dr. Jürgen Linden, the spokesperson of the board of directors of the Charlemagne Prize. And she continued: "The International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen is a high evaluation of what the Lithuanian people have achieved over the last years and is simultaneously a recognition of our contribution to the unity and stability of the European Union. The Charlemagne Prize demonstrates that Lithuania - having joined the EU nine years ago - is a committed member of the European family of nations."

Philipp and Linden flew to Vilnius today to "proffer" the Charlemagne Prize officially to Dalia Grybauskaite. The act of "proffering" the Charlemagne Prize has a long tradition. The Lord Mayor and the spokesperson of the board of directors of the Charlemagne Prize always invite the recipient of the Charlemagne Prize to the award-giving ceremony in Aachen during a personal meeting. They use this opportunity to clarify matters of protocol and to discuss the programme of the award-giving ceremony.

This year the Charlemagne Prize will be awarded on Ascension Day, the 9th May, in the coronation room of Aachen Town Hall. The Lithuanian president will arrive in Aachen on the 8th May, the previous day, and will then take part in various events. Grybauskaite will receive the Charlemagne Prize in appreciation of her "significant personal service to European integration and the exemplary development of her country for Europe." This is how it is described in the explanatory statement of the board of directors of the Charlemagne Prize. Dalia Grybauskaite is the 55th recipient of the Charlemagne Prize.

After the meeting in the president's office, Lord Mayor Marcel Philipp spoke of a most pleasant and constructive discussion. "Dalia Grybauskaite is one of the outstanding figures of the Baltic area and a representative of a region which has pledged itself clearly to Europe and European values" said Philipp. He also reported that the Lithuanian president was looking forward to her visit to Aachen and in particular to talking to students from Aachen University. She was already familiar with the city from previous visits.

Dr. Jürgen Linden noted: "In the current situation Dalia Grybauskaite sets out a path for overcoming European problems with her courage and excellent judgement, assertiveness and self-confidence." It is therefore an important signal "that the Republic of Lithuania continues to strive to join the monetary union in a time of the greatest uncertainty, when there is speculation almost everywhere on the breaking up of the monetary union." Over and beyond this, he observed, Dalia Grybauskaite cultivated good neighbourly relations not only with western European neighbours but also with Russia, acting as a bridge-builder between the EU and the eastern countries in terms of both security and diplomacy. Lithuania's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2013 was therefore in accord with bringing the eastern European countries closer to the European Union.

The International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen is regarded as one of the most important European awards. It has been awarded since 1950 to persons and institutions that have made outstanding contributions to European unification. Last year's recipient was Wolfgang Schäuble, the German Minister of Finance.