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The Politician's Word [name of section]

MEP Radvilė Morkūnaitė: “The European Union Should Implement More Actively Legal Regulation of the Crimes of Communism”

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“We should as much as possible seek that young people would not be drawn into ever-changing forms, the traps of hatred and radicalism. The most important thing is to learn the lessons of the past and take legal measures including an EU legal mechanism against the denial of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes,” MEP Radvilė Morkūnaitė said yesterday at the international conference “Legal Regulation of Communist Crimes” held at the European Parliament.

At the conference she pointed out that fertile soil for radicalism and expressions of hatred which some politicians are encouraging out of populist motivations has come about because of present conditions of economic hardships. “That’s why an EU standard must be established, so that there would be no place for hatred of any basis in this space,” Morkūnaitė said.

The event was intended to discuss and analyze opportunities for achieving a model of international justice which would bring into force the ethical, legal and moral duty of the European Union to bring to justice perpetrators of totalitarian crimes. This would create the conditions for restoring justice to citizens who suffered gross violations of human rights during the time of totalitarian Communism.

Morkūnaitė, one of the sponsors of the international conference, spoke about the history education of the European public and provided as an example her recollection of a screening of the film *Ledo Vaikai* [Children of the Ice] at the European Parliament which included living witnesses during a discussion period. “One side of Europe was surprised to learn what happened behind the iron curtain, while the wounds were still bleeding for the other side,” she said of the effect on the public of one of many education projects being carried out by the European Union.

The Lithuanian politician said she was happy over the growing number of applications [for EU funding?] for historical memory projects, reflecting growing public demand for these topics. “It’s encouraging that the Commission in their recommendation ‘For the Citizens of Europe’ allocated seven-percent greater financing for the next EU financing period of programs, of which funding for specific historical memory projects grew by six percent,” Morkūnaitė

Of the new proposals, she named as the first the implementation of a unified EU history module. Besides the importance of education, the MEP also spoke about the necessary EU aid for publication of archives and the possibility of creating a unified virtual archive of member states, because the files existing in one state are often connected with the citizens of other states.

“Beyond this, the EU should speak in a unified voice on this matter with third countries [or “third parties”] in whose archives the greater part of the truth hides,” Morkūnaitė said.

She presented Kazakhstan as an example to followed in agreeing to turn over the entire archive on deportees from Lithuania.

“In Russia many files are guarded as state secrets. How is it that a country which is considered a strategic partner of the EU and with whom a modernization schedule [or “agenda”] is being carried out considers crimes of such a scope to be state secrets?” Morkūnaitė asked rhetorically.