

# Lithuanian Jews happy with progress on compensation issue

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VILNIUS, Nov 05, BNS - The Jewish Community of Lithuania is happy with the fact that a draft law on the compensation for nationalized Jewish property has finally reached the country's parliament, although they refrain from commenting on separate provisions of the draft.

"We are very happy that this issue has finally seen progress," Faina Kukliansky, the deputy chairman of the Jewish Community of Lithuania, told BNS on Friday.

A draft law providing for allocation of 128 million litas (37.2 million euros) in compensation for nationalized Jewish property reached the Lithuanian parliament on Thursday. The draft was approved by 67 MPs, 2 were against it and 7 abstained. The decision on the adoption of the draft will be made after its discussion at parliamentary committees.

The draft, presented by the government, proposes paying compensations in 2012-2013 for Jewish properties nationalized by the Soviets and Nazis. The compensations will have to be used only for religious, cultural, educational, scientific and charity purposes of Lithuanian Jews as well as to support Jewish nationals who lived in Lithuania during the World War II and were victims of occupational regimes,

The compensations would make around 30 percent of the value of properties "nationalized or illegally expropriated any other way by the Soviet or Nazi regimes."

Some Jewish communities had criticized provisions of this draft law for the size of compensations and the distributions of funds. Kukliansky refused to give comments to BNS on separate provisions of the draft.

The authors of the draft law hope that it will demonstrate good will to restore historic justice, to improve Lithuanian-Jewish relations as well as show respect for human rights and commitments made to the global Jewish community and international organizations. Besides, there are hopes that property handover will give Lithuania politically-stronger positions during negotiations with Russia on compensation for damage done by the totalitarian regime.

Around 200,000 Jews lived in Lithuania before the World War II. The majority of them were killed during the Holocaust. At the moment some 5,000 Jewish people live in Lithuania, Kukliansky said.

(EUR 1 = LTL 3.45)

Vilnius newsroom, +370 5 2058514, [politika@bns.lt](mailto:politika@bns.lt)