

Crises allowed us to do things that were in our government programme

Interview with **Ingrida Šimonytė**,
Prime Minister of Lithuania (2020–2024)

I would like to ask you first of all about the relationship between different crises which you, as prime minister, and the government had to manage during the 2020–2024 term. Looking retrospectively into those 4 years of experience, when you started working at the end of 2020 against at the time of the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic, and then there were other crises: illegal migration crisis orchestrated by Minsk in mid-2021, the unofficial sanctions of China targeting Lithuania in the second half of 2021, the energy crisis in 2022, and, of course, Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine ... What was the relationship between crisis management and implementation of your government's programme? Have those crises facilitated reforms planned in your program or rather diverted political attention and resources away from your government's priorities?

Well, I wouldn't say that those crises obstructed our work. I also can't say that they have facilitated some specific provisions that were

Interview conducted by Ramūnas Vilpišauskas on January 16, 2025, in Vilnius. Transcribed by Justė Giedraitytė. Interview was edited for brevity and clarity.

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in the government programme, but they have allowed us to do things that were generally in line with the programme. For example, the illegal migration crisis: if it had not been for that crisis, we would probably have continued with incremental steps – strengthening of the border with Belarus here, the installation of cameras there and so on. But we were confronted with a new situation, and we did a lot of things in qualitatively different terms with respect to our border security. So, there was a general commitment in the programme that we would strengthen border security without much specifics back in 2020 when we adopted our program. But the crisis mobilised our efforts and by 2023 everything has been *basically* done: the surveillance system, of course, the physical barrier along the border, and the increased capacity of the State Border Guard Service, all those measures. So, in normal times you are talking the talk, discussing general stuff, but suddenly life happens and you must do things.

The same can be said about increasing the resilience of the health system, having COVID-19 pandemic in mind and especially the increase of the military threat. What we have left in terms of our government's accomplishments are sort of necessary things, which must be there – generators, stockpiles of medicines in those hospitals which are considered critical, plans for such provisions to be accumulated and so on. The same happened in the energy sector, when all Russian energy resources were removed from the country's market, even though we had a certain small percentage of it based on competitive prices before the war.

You mentioned health sector reform measures adopted to prepare for a possible military threat. So they were mostly driven by the geopolitical crisis of 2022?

Initially, we started them in response to COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Then, when Russia launched full-scale war against Ukraine in 2022, it turned out that it is about more than just an epidemiological crisis. By the way, we should not forget the possibility of the accident at Astravas [nuclear power plant in Belarus], – a situation when

you might need a large health care system's capacity to be mobilised quickly. So, you see those crises as more than just infectious disease *cases*, because it's one thing to have infectious disease, like COVID-19 when that sort of the planning had started, but then you realise that the need to suddenly develop a large capacity is much broader.

It's an interesting example of how crises interconnect. So those simultaneous or successive crises incentivised you to do something that you wouldn't do otherwise?

You would, but it would take you much longer to do it because you don't see the actual need. When you have a real situation, even if it's not here but 400 km away, you have a very different motivation to do it. I think some things would be done anyway, although we probably would not have put up the physical barrier on the border with Belarus if it were not for illegal migration, I guess. There would probably be increased surveillance – patrolled paths, people and everything else, armed border guards, but probably not the physical barrier itself. I have to admit that initially I was not convinced of the need to construct it, but looking back now, I have to say, that at the end of the day, I think it is a good thing that it was done.

So, have you discussed in the government already back then that the crisis in Belarus, the Russian aggression, it is going to continue for a long time, that the physical barrier on the border, that fence is an element of the new “iron curtain”?

Well, initially it was related only to Belarus. Yes, in April 2021, Russia massed its military forces near Ukraine, and then withdrew, and because they had built up blood banks and all the other stuff, there were some people who *read* that very clearly. Since I am also one of those not *terribly* optimistic people, I guessed that the risk of something more serious than the Donbass was there... But at that time the Belarus track was separate, because there were Lukashenko's pseudo-elections in 2020, there was Ryanair [forced downing of the flight], then there were sanctions, and then there was the re-

taliation, the revenge [by Lukashenko], you know, that's how I'm going to show now to these *Litovtsy*. That is why, at that stage, it seemed at first that the process could somehow be managed without a back-up, but it became clear quite quickly that we would not have enough people to stand on the border and monitor who is crossing it, we made the decision to build the physical barrier along the border. Then afterwards came the build-up of Russian military and the new full-scale invasion into Ukraine, and we clearly understood that the military threat requires counter-mobility measures.

Do more cases like this come to your mind, where combination of several crises have pushed to do things...?

The energy crisis, which resulted from geopolitics. The price shock of energy was caused by war. Then there was all this talk about why the Swedes are selling us such expensive electricity, and so on and so forth, even though the price level has gone up everywhere in the EU. But in such situations you realise that you still need your own generation to some extent, for your security and other things.

At the same time, however you look at it, COVID-19 pandemic was still very distinct from other crises [...] it was rather clear – there is an epidemic, there is a vaccine and there is a clear *exit strategy*. Yes, it will be difficult with vaccination, we understand where we live. We understand the times we live in. The whole thing is going to be questioned, the science is going to be questioned, everybody will have done *their own research* and will not vaccinate, in the sense that it will be harder than you think, but all in all, the situation will still be managed and that *exit from the crisis* was very clear.

With migration, the *exit* was less clear, because, of course, we tried to protect the border with everything we had. But we also made a lot of efforts on the other side, the countries of origin of migrants. We involved everyone in this – the Americans, the European Commission, everyone – to stop the flow from the countries of origin. And, of course, we monitored those Belarusian efforts, and we saw that there were Belarusian efforts not only in Iraq – maybe some in

Jordan, maybe somewhere else. From that came the realisation, that it is not going to end there, that even if we go into Iraq, they will probably try to find somewhere else to bring these people from just *for the sake of the matter*, and that it will be a case of ‘catching your tail’, so we need to close that border.

But at the beginning, it looked like a really simple scheme, they had Belarusian tourist agencies, under the cover of some kind of offices in Iraq, in Kurdistan, and it seemed that they are just trying to get people from there to the EU. So we tried to go through the other side, and quite successfully, I must say, because it got under control quite quickly. Initially, of course, because the people had arrived, they didn’t want to repatriate, they were told that they could be in Berlin in no time at all. So, the border crisis in the autumn [of 2021] was very *ugly*, but at the end of the day they had to find ways to repatriate, and they did, because we insisted very strongly that we were not the ones who had caused this humanitarian crisis here, and that therefore the other side had to look for solutions, and somehow those solutions came.

However, soon we realised that this was not just a simple scheme used by Minsk to pressure the EU. Rather, it was part of the wider hybrid attacks on the EU/NATO countries. There have been precedents – the Norwegians had precedents, the Finns had precedents, I mean, there have been precedents, and you know that this is from the *textbook*. You could see already then that the situation was becoming more serious, and then from the lectures of Putin, the endless articles on Ukraine just in the summer, I mean, the time when everything was becoming more serious, you realise that this is from the *textbook* on hybridity, and it can go on *forever*. That’s the difference from COVID, that with COVID, it was already clear that it was going to end. And quickly. Sooner than you can imagine. And here – as now – we are stuck with that war for the third year.

And new escalations take place...

Although, in my opinion, what Lukashenko did was purely his initiative. Maybe he consulted Putin, maybe he did not, but it was

purely his, because he wanted to give the impression that here you are, applying on me sanctions in Brussels, here you are cutting some links, here you are complaining about Ryanair, and now I will show you.

And then at the end of 2021 – do you see connections between what happened back then? I have in mind domestic political crisis related to allowing the transit of Belaruskalij and the application of unofficial sanctions by China in the end of that year in response to Vilnius decision to allow opening of the Taiwanese office?

Yes, the timing was similar maybe.

So my reading of events is – and here I am checking – that these two issues have appeared on the political agenda simultaneously, which led to amendments to the International Sanctions Law and the establishment of the sanctions coordination body under the MFA, would that be accurate?

The first case was sanctioning a sanatorium called Belarus... As I remember, it was at the very beginning of the government term when the discussion about this started... There was a situation where the bank took a decision to block the accounts of the sanatorium, and then this whole situation and how to deal with it was on the agenda. It seems to me that this is the first time that it has come to light that we have this strange situation where sanctions are imposed directly by entities, in this case, directly by banks. You can only appeal to the European Union institutions and, consequently, get a decision from the European Court of Justice, and it is coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and you do not understand what is being coordinated here. In the sense of how you can coordinate something that you do not apply. There were some nuances to it, where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs might allow people's salaries to be paid or utility bills to be paid, but it was clear that there was no coordination here.

You have to understand that for years what made us different from the Americans was that we did not have normal sanctions in Europe. We had these United Nations sanctions that we had to *enforce*, because everybody *enforced* them, which seemed like a simple thing. But then when things started happening, like the bank imposing sanctions on the Belarus sanatorium, then the American sanctions came in [on Belaruskalij], which were actually secondary, but it is your state-owned enterprise that is at risk of secondary sanctions. Then came the EU sanctions. We had absolutely no knowledge of how to operate in such a situation – then the commission for coordination of sanctions was set up for the sole purpose of getting people to come together...

When we have a situation like this, well, people don't have to be pushing each other around, but they have to come somewhere and talk and assess what is the situation and what else needs to be done, or whether there is a need for something, or whether this is the way it has to be, and so on, and so forth. Since there were a lot of situations like this, because after the Russian invasion the number of these situations increased. For example, Lifosa, which is an ongoing concern, where people are working, where people are being paid, and where, if it were to stop, there could be an ecological disaster. But there is Melnichenko, who is sanctioned and who is a *beneficial owner*. So how do we now make it so that the company works but Melnichenko does not benefit because he is sanctioned. There are a lot of situations that have arisen simply from life experience.

And has the creation of this commission as a coordinating institution worked well in your opinion?

I think it has worked in principle, because we have had a few situations like this. Of course, we have still had situations where it has not worked out or has worked out the hard way, as in the case of the Kaliningrad transit. But this situation has been resolved the hard way, I would say, more because of this external willingness to de-escalate than because of legal issues.

And the fact that implementation remains decentralised, with individual institutions and companies in charge – well, it doesn't get any better than that...?

The world hasn't come up with anything better than *OFAC*. We have looked at all countries where it works, but you have to understand that the EU has actually had personal sanctions until 2020–2021. They are very easy to apply, because there is a list of people that you do not let in, you do not allow to do something and so on. Those economic sanctions, which came in 2021 and later with the Russian invasion, I do not know what nomenclature they have grown to, Europe has never really had such sanctions. No one in the EU has sufficient experience of this. The only sanctions that work as they should, are the ones applied by the United States of America, because those people will find you in China, or anywhere with your *dealings*... We have never had the people to do it, nor the training, nor the expertise to put it together. Well, it was just trying to do something that works – first in the sanctions group, then there was a commission, in the sense of some kind of coordination, some kind of alignment. But the main job of the MFA is still sort of external, which is that we propose sanctions, negotiating positions and so on. There needs to be some sort of thing inside that can coordinate, but in Lithuania all coordination is problematic because we cannot coordinate through the Prime Minister's Office.

And the National Crisis Management Centre?

The National Crisis Management Centre (NCMC) is very good, but it is still not sufficient, because you are at a certain level where there is still a need for a political decision, some political discussion and political responsibility. The NCMC are people who are very good technically, very good at monitoring the situation, very good at making generalisations, very good at drawing conclusions, but the NCMC can only tell something to a minister of a ministry only if the minister wants to hear. But if the minister doesn't want to hear it, then he will say who are you to tell me what to do.

Let's come back to the domestic politics of handling the issue of the Belaruskalij transit. In terms of politicisation of crisis management, have any lessons been learnt?

I don't know if there is much to be learnt from this, because where I see the problem is that it is the problem of social media networks, that reality is shaped by whoever speaks out first. I do not know, for example, what kind of conspiracy were after those people who were talking a lot in public, because, after all, the situation itself was not trivial, because we were talking about secondary sanctions by the United States.

The problem is that our company was involved, which was a state-owned company and which, it turned out, had not yet checked its deal with the governmental commission [which approves transactions important for national security]. When you see the whole picture, it looks like what it looks like, but when all this starts, and then there are other things that are not very public, because that postponement of sanctions was for a purpose, because the discussion on releasing political prisoners was never over. We are very far from that point now, but at that time it was only a year after 2020, and it happens that we are sometimes in the midst of things that our strategic partners are doing, because these are delicate things... Then something goes wrong and doesn't work out, and then you have a ball suddenly rolling down the hill, whereas if you had thought about it earlier you might have been much better prepared, but then somebody comes running out and says you are not following our strategies, and we have been with those strategic partners coordinating all this time.

Just like with Taiwan, because you can say that the problem is in the name [of Taiwanese representative office opened in Vilnius], but there have been all sorts of things in the meantime. First there was '17+1', where we did not agree to take part, and that was already unpleasant. Then there was the decision that we were going to open a representative office, and I, for one, am convinced that the name is not an issue, because basically the thing that, in my opinion, has

made the biggest difference to the other side is that after all these years of being able to make it *not* happen, it took off somewhere and it happened. There were moments when the message was that, whatever you want to call it, we are not going to change our position. Is this what we have here as a name crisis? I see the decision to do it at all as the main reason of disagreement.

But was the action coordinated in advance with our strategic partners?

Taiwan, yes, and they helped us a lot when there was already that disproportionate response, it was not that they abandoned us, left us – “I don’t know, I don’t know, it’s your problem”, no. There have been conversations at EU level and with individual countries, maybe companies and others.

But in terms of secondary sanctions, that the Chinese will pressure German and French investors, have you looked at this scenario? As far as I understand, the Bank of Lithuania’s assessments did not include that?

Until then, it hasn’t been assessed. This kind of brutal pressure on investors from other EU countries was quite difficult to foresee. When you are directly targeting exports, imports, everything is understandable because it had been seen before. So we have taken stock of our imports and our exports to China, and the fact that they are interested in us importing goods from them as well, and we see that imports have actually increased over all this time. In terms of exports, we know ourselves what those exports are, there were some higher value-added goods, but much more were raw materials – in terms of exports China was never among most important destinations, but there was a rather asymmetric pressure. On the other hand, Chinese have weakened their position because they have basically intervened in the EU common market. It was initially bilateral issue, but when they escalated it to the EU level, because ‘here we are, we will now regulate your internal trade, because we want to do it’, it created a

lever for us to be able to build support inside the EU institutions to counter China's interference in the single market.

In other words, to Europeanise the issue.

Well, they have "Europeanised" an issue that they could have left completely bilateral.

And in terms of ex-ante assessment of the impact of sanctions, in terms of what we are proposing to the EU in relation to our aggressive neighbours, is the capacity already sufficiently developed in Lithuania? Is the impact sufficiently assessed, or is the thinking that sanctions should be as broad and as wide as they can be, because the alternative is the escalation of war by Russia?

I would say that when you look at, for example, the *profile* of individuals, it's very simple, it's just that you've listed everybody, so to speak, the propagandists, the politicians, everyone linked to the aggression. When it comes to sectors, the thinking is very simple – the first thing is what Russia makes money from, the second thing is the things that Russia gets that keep it afloat. It is very immoral, in my view, to calculate the costs here in this context, and ultimately, our costs are not the same as the costs of others. A good example is when we proposed sanctioning gas from the very beginning and it has not been sanctioned until now. Why? Because those who are sitting on the gas pipe, they calculate and then they say 'it will never happen'. Then, the Russians come in and impose those sanctions themselves and that settles the matter, but our flexibility is, of course, much greater. We understand that we will pay a higher price. But in this situation, where the alternative is that the Russians have made money out of us in order to be able to continue attacking Ukraine, well, somehow, I do not know, for me, there is a question of morality here. It has always been our assessment that we will deal with some of those economic aspects. If it is very necessary, let there be some kind of transition period, but we still have to get out of this trade with Russia, especially in the oil products and other

energy areas, where there is a world market and there are alternative sources of supply.

What about cooperation with the EU institutions? How do you see the management of these crises, for example, with the introduction of sanctions against Belarus or on Kaliningrad transit?

There are different things here. One is sanctions, where there is some politics anyway, and the other thing is what happens *on the ground*. For example, when there was the migration crisis, I think that cooperation was very good, both politically *and on the ground*, but here it was basically because we said that we would not hide anything. We will tell you how it is, we will not try to deceive anybody here, but, you know, there is this border here and we somehow want to protect that border anyway, because otherwise the problem is not even ours, because the people who want to come here, they are not going to stay here. And if the process is to be stopped, then there is nothing we can do to stop it, and it seems to me that there is this understanding on the other side of Frontex, of the EEAS, of everyone. Everybody was working in the same direction, calling the Iraqi leadership there, whatever it was, the Kurdistan leadership there, flying in, using those European Union *carrot or the stick*, things that we can offer.

Legal movement of people?

Yes, in principle. So I would say that it worked very well and that we didn't try to *fool* anybody there. We told it as it was, we asked for what we needed, and I think that cooperation was very good. When we go into sanctions matters, well, because when you take decisions, you know, those decisions produce consequences very quickly. That how it was with the Kaliningrad transit – EU took those decisions, and the fact that they covered the Kaliningrad transit, it just did not occur to anybody at the time that it was a separate *case*. And we did not think about it, at least not *immediately*, and then a week after those decisions were taken, we asked the Commission to explain

how they imagined the application of this regulation in this situation and European Commission people explained it formally in the sense of how it looks like under the legislation. But, of course, because, again, we were unprepared, because the day came when Lithuanian Railways imposed sanctions, and from that everything was splashed out into the public domain. Well, that's when the partners had to step in. They didn't like it very much. Someone felt that there was some kind of escalation.

In your opinion, is the current system of crises management in Lithuania appropriate in such a geopolitical situation?

I don't know, maybe there are better systems, but the fact is that you still have some formal things and, for example, when you take decisions based on some kind of threat assessment, let's say on the same border posts and so on, then you have a formal procedure, there is a national security commission, and it considers the situation, and it assesses whether or not there is a need for some additional steps. If it is necessary, they make a draft, the government takes decisions or whatever, so there is that track, but for the day-to-day, in the sense that everybody is more or less on the same page, these are the kind of working formats that keep it alive all the time, so that we are all aware of more or less the same information.

Are there bottlenecks in terms of capacity, in terms of money, in terms of human resources and so on?

Everything, and a totally new agenda altogether. For example, sanctions are something that is only three years old. So, if you learn all the other things more or less over a period of time, there is *learning by doing*, there is simply no other way than *learning by doing*, with all the mistakes and with everything.

And what are the main mistakes?

I say that some things are overlooked. Usually the mistakes are that a situation happens, and then not only do you have to react to it,

but you also have a big *culprit* always in the public eye that you could have prepared for. I do not yet have very much faith that you can somehow resolve these communication crises here, because as far as I know from my colleagues, it seems we are all bad communicators. I am being ironic here, but that is how things are perceived by the public. It seems to me that this is more a reflection of maybe our times when anybody can make a message and just format it.

Colleagues in other countries?

Yes, in other countries, all prime ministers are bad communicators, all governments are bad communicators, it seems to me, because first of all, you don't think about what angle the topic can take. The other thing is that you might think about it, but you don't get the process down to the point where you are first – it's really terribly difficult to do that. Usually a lot of people are involved, a lot of information, a lot of ways to leak it, a lot of ways to write to somebody first, and then sometimes maybe some interests or whatever. I am not making excuses, I am just saying I have little faith that a lot of things could have been done differently here.

Thinking about cooperation with companies, with NGOs, are there more opportunities for them to contribute to the sanctions themselves? During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were a lot of initiatives from the public.

Not just during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also during migration and the large-scale invasion. During the pandemic, we had a format with NGOs where we sat down every Saturday and checked who was in education, who was in social protection, who was in the Food Bank, who was somewhere, and we had a very good cooperation. It helped a little bit during the migration crisis, but it was more localised because there was a need for the help of Caritas, well, in the sense of specific organisations to help somehow with the situation, but because they stayed on, for example, when the invasion started and a lot of refugees started to arrive, it was a big help, because ba-

sically we were able to accumulate that very large flow based largely on the initiatives of the NGOs – they did something themselves, somebody else did something and somehow we got tens of thousands of people in two months.

Could it be said that the networks that were created during the pandemic also helped here?

What helped more was that, I think, there was a very good level of trust, and it was still maybe two months before the invasion, so we met, I don't remember, in December 2021 or January 2022, with those NGOs, and I said at the time, look, I have a feeling that we are going to have a very big wave of people and we need to start preparing somehow.

Ukrainian refugees?

Yes, that we need to start preparing and people just said *okay*, let's go and think what we can do. So there was this *ad* that you can register your house to host people, some buses for transfer, there were a lot of things where we just tried to be very unbureaucratic. It seems to me that there was a lot of trust, and when it came to putting people on the ground, the whole thing worked very well, and then the problems became more general and more global, energy, military aid.

Are there any lessons here for the future, for example on climate change, extreme weather events, if such crises are still growing?

Well, we are experiencing climate phenomena, not necessarily pleasant phenomena, but quite localised phenomena, in the sense that it is not a *catastrophe* like the fire in California, for example – and I can imagine that this is the case here – because it is still the case, mostly from the extremes we have had here, that agriculture, whatever, is suffering a lot, and it needs to be compensated. Power grids are very badly affected, where we have to manage our energy system in such a way that there is a mass of people who are very badly affected,

either by flooding or by fire, so I would say that we have not yet experienced this. We may experience it, but I think it is already working pretty well. For example, Astravas, where, of course, the more Lithuania thinks about this region, but there is the whole scheme in place. And Šauliai [Riflemen's Union – the civilian self-defence organisation] is a very good organisation for this, they have also been helping with the migrants and the Ukrainians as well.

One last question: in 2008–2012, when you were Deputy Minister, then Minister of Finance, you had to deal with the effects of the global financial crisis that affected the real economy and individual sectors. And in now there are several crises going on at the same time, and they are escalating. Is there any difference in terms of crisis management, in your view, or is it just easier when there is one crisis?

For me, the financial crisis, the one from 2008 to 2012, including the euro crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic crisis are the most comparable and the most similar. We had to manage those crises by adopting textbook advice and in dry economic terms, the task was to get back to equilibrium, and we did get back to equilibrium, painfully, with political losses, but you just know what you have to do. If you can't devalue the currency, you have to devalue internally, and we did. And with COVID-19 pandemic it's exactly the same, that you realise that there is an infection, an epidemic, you realise that you need a vaccine, once certain share of the people have been vaccinated, especially globally, it's over.

I mean, for me, I would say that both of those crises, despite the fact that the political loss was probably the biggest in those crises, because in both cases you were in a situation where there were people who were completely clueless about what you were doing, and if, even in the financial crisis, you can understand where that cluelessness is coming from, because there is somebody who has heard something about fiscal stimulus, or something, you can also understand that. When you realised during the COVID-19 pandemic cri-

sis to what extent scientists are no longer in authority, that probably scared me a little bit for the first time. When we started working on pandemic, I immediately did this *wise-man* commission, where there were more radical people, less radical people, all sorts of people, but they were all professionals. And at some point you realise that their word is not decisive, public does not trust them...

But with geopolitical crisis that we have now, well, we are in the midst of things that are pushing the world towards what is potentially the end of the former order, the *rules-based international order*. The thing is that I don't know where the bottom is and that seems to me to be the scariest thing, because you just don't know if you can do anything else to somehow protect the public, infrastructure... That's what scares me the most, no matter how many crises at the same time, but they can be managed if there is a clear exit strategy. But there might be one crisis like the geopolitical one we have now – the main problem with it is that it is so *open-ended*, and that is the most frightening thing in the whole of history in my opinion.

And perhaps what you need most in such a situation are partners, allies?

Yes, not only do you need allies, but you also need allies to somehow see things the way you do. If you see that in a society, that there is a change of sentiment, there is a change of dynamics, there are some other opinions, maybe some search, some quick fixes, and in the EU we have 27 countries, or there are even more in NATO, with their own political systems, with their own political dynamics, with their own new governments, with their own alternative opinions, with their own reactions to their own societies, and a completely different understanding of where we are. If they are out there somewhere, that ability to still keep those allies on the same page is more difficult the further away you go, objectively more difficult, because people are saying that we are tired. And then the question is, what is it that you are tired of, what is bothering you? I am just tired of being emotionally in some kind of an uncertain situation, whereas it seems to me that

all the solutions that are out there, or that are now in sight, are only making the situation even more uncertain.

The biggest problem is not that people do not believe in politicians. Because *why should they* – a lot of times a lot has been promised, a lot hasn't been done, and probably the reputation of a politician is what it is. But when you realise that there is no authority anymore, nobody is an authority anymore, who used to be an authority in particular, the people of science, the church. There is no authority anymore, everything is being questioned, I can decide everything myself – this is obviously the phenomenon of social networks one hundred per cent. I do not see any other explanation.

Thank you very much for your insights!