

**Lithuania**

## Lithuania's president chides government for China spat

Gitanas Nausėda says decision to allow Taiwan to open de facto embassy in its own name was an error



Gitanas Nausėda, Lithuania's president, said: 'I believe the name was the spark, and now we have to deal with the consequences' © Bloomberg

**Richard Milne**, Nordic and Baltic Correspondent YESTERDAY

---

Lithuania's decision to allow Taiwan to open a de facto embassy in its own name was a mistake, the country's president said on Tuesday, as he rebuked the country's government for a move that sparked a diplomatic spat with China.

Gitanas Nausėda told Lithuanian radio the centre-right government had not consulted him last year before the island's representative office was opened in the name of Taiwan, rather than the city of Taipei — as in most European countries.

Beijing has accused Lithuania of breaking its One China policy, under which it does not allow other countries to treat Taiwan as an independent country. It has recalled its ambassador and [downgraded](#) Lithuania's diplomatic presence in Beijing.

“I think it was not the opening of the Taiwanese office that was the mistake, but the name, which was not co-ordinated with me . . . I believe the name was the spark, and now we have to deal with the consequences,” Nausėda [told](#) Ziniu Radijas.

Since Taiwan and Lithuania agreed in August to open representative offices in each other's capitals, China has ratcheted up pressure on Vilnius. Beijing has not just banned imports from the Baltic country but has [tried to stop](#) manufacturers, including German blue-chip auto parts supplier Continental, from using components produced in Lithuania.

policy on Taiwan, but that Vilnius has the right to establish economic and cultural relations with whomever it likes.

“We would like to also have relations with China based on the principle of mutual respect. Otherwise the dialogue turns into unilateral ultimatums, requirements which are not acceptable in international relations,” Nauseda [told](#) the Financial Times in August.

Taipei has tried to soften the blow to Lithuania from China's economic retaliatory measures. On Monday, state-owned Taiwan Tobacco and Liquor Corporation snapped up a shipment of 24,000 bottles of Lithuanian rum that had been rejected by Chinese customs. Lithuanian beer brand Volfas Engelman's Taiwan sales soared 23-fold in 2021, boosted by goodwill towards the Baltic country.

Taiwan's new envoy has also said that Taipei will set up a taskforce seeking to help Lithuania train semiconductor engineers and attract semiconductor investment.

Nauseda's comments about Taiwan on Tuesday have shattered the fragile unity on foreign policy that had existed between the president, who takes the lead on such issues, and the government, headed by prime minister Ingrida Simonyte, who Nauseda beat in 2019's presidential elections.

Nauseda has already clashed with Simonyte's government over its Covid-19 policies, which descended into open bickering between the pair in November after the president vetoed a bill to make unvaccinated workers pay for their own tests.

As well as its deteriorating relations with China, Vilnius is under pressure from Russia and Belarus, which has sent [illegal immigrants](#) over the border in a bid to make Lithuania soften its stance on sanctions.

Nauseda, who represents Lithuania at EU summits, [added](#) on Tuesday:

“Unconventional measures have started to be taken against Lithuania, and we have to be very active and signal very clearly to the EU that this is an attack, a kind of pressure on one of the EU countries.”

*Additional reporting by Kathrin Hille in Taipei*

