



Lithuania

This month, our attention turns to Lithuania, the largest and most southerly of the three Baltic republics. Lithuania is situated on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea and borders Latvia on the north, Belarus on the east and south, and Poland and the Kaliningrad region of Russia on the southwest. The official language, Lithuanian, along with Latvian, is one of only two living languages in the Baltic branch of the Indo-European language family.

The capital city of Vilnius is the biggest northernmost and easternmost city of Europe. It has the wonderful architectural styles of Southern and Western Europe, Gothic and Renaissance. Nowadays, it is also a fast growing and advancing capital aspiring to be an attractive centre for business, political and cultural meetings and events in the region.

Greetings depend on the time of the day. You can say "Laba diena" or "Labas rytas" if you meet during the day and "Labas vakaras" in the evening. When leaving, you can use "Viso gero" to mean 'see you later' or 'goodbye'.

When meeting someone for the first time, Lithuanians can be conservative in their manner although they are the most extrovert among the Baltic nations. Nevertheless, they mask their feelings to maintain privacy. They tend to speak softly, not to interrupt others while they are speaking and wait patiently to reply. When introducing a man, use the term "*Ponas*" ("Mr.") before the last name. For a woman use the term "*Ponia*" ("Mrs") or "*Panele*" ("Miss"). Maintaining good eye contact is a sign of respect and demonstrates how seriously someone is taking the discussion.

In Lithuania, business is quite hierarchical; the chair of a meeting is probably the most senior participant. In addition, they will open the meeting and introduce participants in order of seniority. Business meetings tend to be structured and formal affairs. Lithuanians do not like long meetings and expect you to be well prepared with all the relevant information available immediately. You should be ready to answer questions, directly after the presentation.

In the workplace the senior management usually makes decisions, but workers might have some input. New ideas are generated in team meetings where everyone has an opportunity to express their thoughts. When management makes a decision, workers must follow it. A manager is supposed to be treated with respect and the manager-subordinate relationship in general is quite formal.

As with other countries of the former Soviet Union, Lithuanian managerial behaviour and attitudes were historically less flexible, formal, risk averse and with a reduced ability for teamwork. However, the managing authority figures of the last era are losing their influence as business become more dynamic and flexible. Organizational structures are being transformed, team-work orientation is growing, attitudes towards HR management are becoming more liberal, and there is less stress placed on monitoring the personal work of subordinates and bureaucratic decision-making. The role of senior managers is increasingly linked to competences demonstrating initiative, autonomy and creativity in the decision-making process.

Generally, Lithuanians have a tendency to feel awkward about giving and receiving praise, arguing that they could have done better, or really have not achieved anything worthy of note. As such they are modest and keep a low profile, and usually communicate with a diplomatic voice in order not to offend anyone. Although the Lithuanians are considered a relatively reserved culture, they are tolerant towards the culture of other nations. This is partly due to their long experience of mixing with others nationalities.

Finally, punctuality is usually respected and schedules adhered to. Action is valued more highly than deliberation as Lithuanian culture is extremely pragmatic in nature.