

Cultural Research

General cultural information

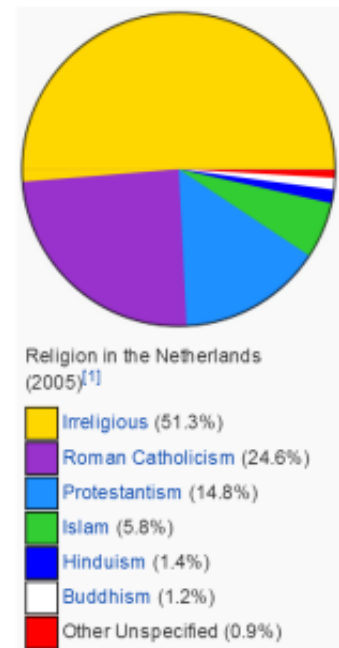
The Netherlands

With a surface area of more than 41,000 km², and a population of around 17 million people, the Netherlands is one of the world's most populous countries. A quarter of the Netherlands' land area lies below sea level. The low-lying areas consist mainly of polders, flat stretches of land surrounded by dikes where the water table is controlled artificially.

The Netherlands, which shares its borders with Germany and Belgium, is often referred to as "Holland", the identity of the two western coastal provinces, North and South Holland, which are at the core of the country and have played a dominant role in the history of the Netherlands. Thanks to their location on to the Rhine-Meuse estuary, these provinces are very important for the economy. They also contain the country's principal administrative and commercial cities – Amsterdam, The Hague (Den Haag) and Rotterdam. Together with Utrecht, the capital of the province of Utrecht, they form the combined area of what is known as the Randstad conurbation, with a population of around 7 million.

The politics of the Netherlands take place within the framework of a parliamentary representative democracy, a constitutional monarchy and a decentralised unitary state. The Netherlands is described as a consociational state.[2] Dutch politics and governance are characterised by a common striving for broad consensus on important issues, within both the political community and society as a whole.

The Netherlands has a maritime climate, with cool summers and mild winters. The average temperature is 2°C in January and 19°C in July, with an annual average of about 10°C. Clouds generally appear every day, and in the winter months fog often abounds, while rainfall occurs frequently.



Lithuania

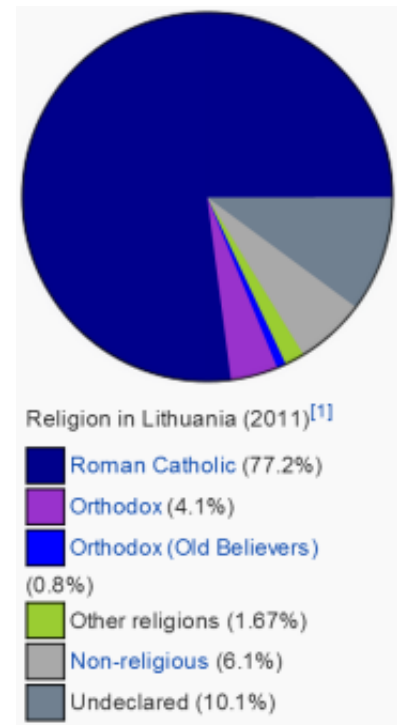
Lithuania is a relatively small country in the northern part of Europe. The largest among the three Baltic States, it neighbours Latvia and Belarus to the north and to the southeast, respectively. To the south, the country borders Poland and to the southwest the Russian exclave of the Kaliningrad Oblast. Reaching 65,300 km², Lithuania's land mass is larger than that of Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium or Denmark. Lithuania has approximately 91 km of sandy coastline; however, no more than 38 km of these face the open Baltic Sea. The remaining length of the coast is along the Curonian Spit. Lithuania has an ice-free port in Klaipėda, which is the largest and most important transport hub in the country and links routes through sea, land and railway from both East and West. The climate can be classed as between maritime and continental, with wet, moderate summers and winters. Lithuania is in the Eastern European Time Zone and adheres to CET (UTC +2) during the winter and EEST (UTC +3) during the summer.

Lithuania has had an interesting history. At the end of the 14th century, the country was the largest in Europe and later it formed a union with Poland creating a single dual state, which was only dismantled in 1795. Lithuania recovered its freedom after World War I; however, it was annexed by the USSR in 1940. Fifty years later, it was the first Baltic State to declare its independence from Russia, on the 11th of March 1990.

The Lithuanian population is more than three million people, mostly comprised of Lithuanians, but also Poles, Russians, Belarusians and other ethnic groups. The main religions are Roman Catholicism and Russian Orthodox.

Politics of Lithuania takes place in a framework of a parliamentary representative democratic republic, whereby the Prime Minister of Lithuania is the head of government, and of a multi-party system.

Executive power is exercised by the government, which is headed by the Prime Minister. Legislative power is vested in both the government and the unicameral Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament). Judicial power is vested in judges appointed by the President of Lithuania and is independent of executive and legislature power. The judiciary consists of the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, and the Court of Appeal as well as the separate administrative courts. The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania established these powers upon its approval on October 25, 1992. Being a multi-party system, the government of Lithuania is not dominated by any single political party, rather it consists of numerous parties that must work with each other to form coalition governments.



Differences between Dutch and Lithuanian business etiquette

Communication

| Dutch | Lithuania |
|--|---|
| Strictly Sir/Madam. | Titles are regularly used. In the absence use Sir or Madam. |
| Very direct, will give their (raw) opinion | Politeness and courtesy get in the way of discussion. |
| Don't have problems saying no or giving their opinion up front | Saying no is troublesome during the first stages of acquaintanceship. |
| When something is "not bad", "okay" or "nice", it should be perceived as praise for the recipient. | Do not show their enthusiasm clearly. Something like "Not Bad" might be the highest appreciation you get. |
| Have a well-developed sense of humour | |
| May look to you to break the ice | |
| Whispering in the presence of other people is considered impolite. | |
| Relatively loud conversations in public are not uncommon. However, they may be frowned upon. | |

Tips

1. Try to guide the conversation in the right direction, but of course prevent coming across as rude.
2. Ask open questions during the first (or first few) meetings.
3. Don't be taken aback if you don't see clear signs of appreciation. Ask for confirmation if you're unclear about their opinion.

Breaking the ice

Any topic of discussion is good to start a conversation with. You can talk about family, work, hobbies and sports. Lithuanians are fond of basketball and their national team is among the best in the world.

People are referred to by their title and surname. Colleagues and supervisors are usually referred to by their first name with Ponas (Mr), Panele (Ms) or Ponia (Mrs) or by title: Doctor, Professor, Director, Principle etc. and sometimes including last names. It is important not to address someone by their first name until invited to do so.

It is advisable to use the information on their business card to determine how to address an associate. So, if he or she has a title written in front of their name, then you should address the person by their title and surname

During a first meeting, Lithuanians will try to be formal and polite, listening very diligently. They like to ask questions to be sure that they understand what you are saying. Usually, Lithuanians like to build a personal relationship with potential partners before moving the conversation to business. It is essential that you try to speed up this process, as it is critical to the success of the discussion and doing business in Lithuania.

General Etiquette

| Dutch | Lithuania |
|--|---|
| Business can be discussed during lunch. Business breakfasts are not common. | |
| Spouses or partners are often included in a business dinner. | Prefer to demonstrate individuality and compete rather than collaberate. |
| An individual's cooperation and trust are valued over performance; one-upmanship is frowned upon. | Like to know who is in control. Find equal partnerships more difficult to manage. |
| In the Netherlands, commitments are taken seriously. Do not promise anything that cannot be delivered. | Believe in education but also believe that one can only do things for which one has had proper training |

Tips

1. The Roman Catholic Church has great influence on the daily life of Lithuanians, so swearing is not done.

Non-verbal Communication

| Dutch | Lithuania |
|---|-----------|
| When entering a room it is customary to shake hands with everyone present, then to shake hands again on leaving | |
| If seated, it is polite to stand up before shaking hands | |
| The Dutch expect eye contact while speaking with someone. Looking away or staring at the ground is considered impolite and may be perceived as disinterest or lying | |
| The Dutch tend to be reserved in using hand gestures. However, having your hands in pockets or arms crossed might be interpreted as a sign of disinterest | |
| When yawning, coughing or sneezing, the mouth should be covered with a flat hand or fist | |

Punctuality

| Dutch | Lithuania |
|--|--|
| Punctuality regarded as virtue | Usually on time, expects partner to be on time |
| Accept apologies for late arrival | Expect partner to notify them when partner is unexpectedly delayed |
| Calling half an hour or less before the start of a meeting to change the time is considered bad manners. | Use time as a tactic, especially if they know you have a deadline |

Tips

1. Arrive for a meeting 10 minutes beforehand to decrease the chances of arriving late.
2. Give the Lithuanians a call when you might arrive late.
3. Lithuanians will not be rushed into making a deal until they believe it is in their best interest
4. Meetings often conclude with a summary of the discussion and a toast to future business

Business hierarchy

77% of the Lithuanian population is roman catholic. Because of the strong hierarchy inside the roman catholic church in Lithuania and the big impact the church has on everyday life, these hierarchical trends carry on into the business aspects of the Lithuanian culture.

There is a strong sense of hierarchy within every part of the culture, this means that showing respect and deference to people of a higher authority is important. At the same time, bragging or overstating your higher authority when you are in this position is frowned upon, as most Lithuanians are very modest. It is also important to note that it is not uncommon for Lithuanian companies to have a strict hierarchy wherein senior-level businessmen only speak with people of the same rank. This could seem arrogant or even rude to some cultures.

In comparison, the Dutch usually have a significantly less strict hierarchy. Hierarchies in the Netherlands tend to have productivity as a goal, and function less as a way of respect or authority above another person.

Tips

1. Key tip here is to keep in mind that not all Lithuanian companies will adhere to such a strict hierarchy, but to know that IF they do. Try to figure out your place in the conversation and do not be offended if a highly-ranked person in the company speaks less often to you (or not at all).

Dress code

| Dutch | Lithuania |
|--|--|
| Conservatively though less formal in different sectors | Conservatively, dark suit and tie for men, trouser suit/jacket and skirt for women |
| Better to be well-dressed rather than under-dressed | Expect business associate to be well dressed |

Tips

1. Dress well, dark suit and a tie is the safest option.

Gift giving

| Dutch | Lithuania |
|--|---|
| Don't like to feel obligated into gift giving | Do not expect gifts at first meeting |
| Don't like receiving gifts with company logo or business card attached | Gifts are generally acceptable, especially souvenirs from your home country |
| If invited to a Dutch home, it's accepted to bring a gift | |
| Gifts are generally not given or expected at business meetings | |

Tips

1. For a meeting **after** the first meeting, bring a souvenir from your home country.

Bribery and Corruption

| Dutch | Lithuania |
|---|--|
| Reputation for honesty | Average corruption and bribery. Anti-corruption measures on the rise |
| One of the highest transparency ratings in the world (9th out of 176) | Somewhat average transparency rating (48th out of 176) |

Basic words and phrases

| Dutch | Lithuania |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Hallo | Labas |
| Goedemiddag | Laba diena |
| Hoe gaat het? | Kaip Sekasi |
| Goed | Puikiai |
| Tot ziens | Viso gero |
| Ik spreek geen Litouws | As nekalbu lietuviskai |
| Spreekt u Engels? | Ar jus kalbate angliskai |
| Wat is u naam? | Koks tavo vardas |
| Mijn naam is ... | Mano vardas ... |
| Kunt u dat herhalen | Prasom pakartoti |
| Wilt u een moment wachten | Prasom palaukti |
| Nee | Ne |
| Ja | Taip |
| Litouwen | Lietuva |
| Graag gedaan, alstublieft | Prasom |
| Dank u | Aciu |
| Pardon | Atsiprasau |
| Ik weet het niet | Nezinau |

Sources

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