Welcome to

LiTnews

Welcome to the first edition of LiTnews, a fortnightly English language newspaper.

With a small but dedicated staff and the help of ELTA we will bring you the news that covers day-to-day life, and offer a review of the events that are important to Lithuania.

With the help of our readers our aim is to develop the newspaper with a mix of news, interviews and commentary that spans the full gamut of popular and expert opinion.

It is quite fortunate that our maiden issue coincides with the first anniversary of the current Seimas, and as this sort of paper is always going to be a review of events, it is the perfect opportunity to look back on the past year.

We also have interviews with Kęstutis Kemzulia, and Andrius Užbainis, as well as an article about opportunity in tough times by Vincas Giedraitis. So please enjoy.

Ray Vyšniauskas
Editor

A year to Remember

Ray Vyšniauskas & Deimante Dokšaitė

They say a week is a long time in politics, so a year must be an eternity. Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius must be feeling an eon has passed since he formed a ruling coalition one year ago on 17 November 2008, and took the reins of the Lithuanian Seimas, a coalition he prophetically named The Coalition of Change.

The victory celebrations after last year’s general elections will have to go down as the most short-lived in Lithuanian history, as within two months of its first sitting the members of the Seimas were looking out of their windows at a mass protest that eventually led to the deployment of riot police and the use of tear gas and rubber bullets.

To be fair there were a lot of circumstances way beyond the control of the Seimas and the government, one of which was an economy sucked spiralling downward by the worst world economic recession since the Great Depression. Being at the helm of a small nation allows little control on the waves of economic gloom that toss any country around, especially one that did not put any reserves aside in the good years.

Then there was the added intrigue of the newly formed National Resurrection Party, the party of celebrities headed by Artūnas Valiūnas, which in their first election won 16 seats and an instant invitation to join the ruling coalition.

Looking back on the achievements of the current coalition government, you would have to say there is more bad than good news, but let’s go through their litany of change:

• They got straight down to business when Valiūnas is finally elected Speaker of the Seimas, but only after a controversial second vote on 18 November.

• Kubilius is confirmed as Prime Minister on 27 November.

• At the end of December the Seimas worked until midnight in putting the finishing touches on tax reforms with little or no public consultation.

• December 22 the budget is passed by the Seimas.

• January 16 there is a meeting of trades union which end in riots in front of the Seimas, breaking windows, calling out the riot police and extensive use of tear gas and rubber bullets.

• May 19 the opposition launches an unsuccessful vote of no-confidence in Finance Minister Algirdas Semeta, but later he was sent to Brussels to fill the position vacated by President Grybauskaitė. The post of Finance Minister was filled by Ingrida Simonytė.

• In June Valentinas Vilmorus, of the Order and Justice Party, becomes the Opposition Leader.

• July 22 the Minister of Social Security and Labour, Rimantas Jonas Dagys, is replaced by Donatas Jankauskas, because he was not validated by President Grybauskaitė.

• Mid July the National Resurrection Party is split into two fractions, and on October 15 Artūnas Valiūnas is deposed as Speaker of the Seimas.

• October 17 Irena Degutienė is elected Speaker of the Seimas.

• September 16 preparation for the next budget commences.

• September 20 the opposition launches an unsuccessful no-confidence motion against Education and Science Minister Gintaras Steponavičius.

IN BETWEEN THESE specific events the government controversially considered adding the Labour Party to the ruling coalition, there was much criticism of energy wasted on unimportant issues, especially under Valiūnas’ tenure, the policy on car hire by members of Seimas, and the ill-advised ‘Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effects of Public Information’ legislation that brought strong international criticism and EU condemnation.

While it is usual for politics to be a rough and tumble business, it is speculated by many that this is the least liked government ever. In the 11 years since Vilmorus has been taking polls, their data shows this government the least liked, with the government (trust 11.5%, distrust 59.9%), parliament (trust 4.8%, distrust 76.3%) and political parties (trust 4.1%, distrust 76.7%) taking the bottom three places in a poll of general trust in public institutions.

In research conducted by Eurobarometer the popularity of the Lithuanian Seimas is held in equal 25th position with Bulgaria among the EU 27 countries, trailing only behind Latvia.

To the credit of the ruling coalition, they learnt a lesson from the unfortunate riots in front of the parliament, which did prompt them to seek greater public input into policy, and without accepting all external advice, they seemed to start working in a more transparent manner.

One of the main concerns of the government was the dreaded ‘D’ word – devaluation. While a floating currency along with a much larger populace base helped Poland ride out the worst of the economic storm, Lithuania’s problems were compounded by the fact that most bank loans were issued in euros, and a deterioration of 20%–40% would have meant a double hit on loan repayments, especially considering the already heavy falls in real estate prices.

With no reserves the government chose to placate the concerns of the IMF and EU economic gurus, and this meant harsher fiscal measures, most notably through raised taxes and lowered wages, which in turn does little to raise popularity.

THE ONLY CONSOLATION Lithuanian’s could draw was that things were still not as bad as in Latvia, with the added expectation that if devaluation was deemed necessary, it would hit our northern neighbours first.

While there is still talk of more cuts and hardship to come, some are predicting that as other larger economies seem to be moving out of recession, then Lithuania too may be either at the bottom of the cycle or close to it. The threat of devaluation, though still present, is much subdued since summer and government heads throughout the Baltic are more confidently declaring it no longer an issue.

So on the occasion of the Seimas’ first birthday, perhaps they might finally be able to move forward, rather than just paddle frantically in an effort to stay afloat.

This Seimas really has brought to light the full fury of the curse. May you live in interesting times.
The future of Lithuania is in the hands of creative people - Grybauskaitė

At the initiative of President Dalia Grybauskaitė, the Seimas and the International Cultural Programmes Centre, a forum for creative society has been opened for the first time in Lithuania according to the Press Service of the President.

Addressing members of the arts, culture, educational, and business communities, who came together to discuss possible actions for using and streamlining the potential of creative individuals to build a modern state, President Grybauskaitė invited all of them - artists, scientists and entrepreneurs - to make a joint effort towards this purpose.

“Lithuania’s economic growth, its social well being, and the pride that its citizens have for their country will depend on our innovative ideas and our creative ability to translate them into reality,” the President said, placing a special emphasis on the importance of interaction between culture, education, science, and business.

President Grybauskaitė pointed out that a creative person was the spark that drove Lithuania forward. Therefore, she said, we must seek ambitious goals, we must think and act as future disseminators of creative ideas not only in Europe, but also worldwide.

Energy security discussed by Lithuanian and Polish Presidents

President Dalia Grybauskaitė met with her Polish counterpart Lech Kaczyński.

In Warsaw, the two Presidents discussed important energy-related issues: the course of building an electricity bridge connecting Lithuania and Poland, and the problems of secure energy supply in Europe.

“Lithuania is prepared to co-operate closely with Poland in implementing the electricity bridge project, and will seek to secure financing for this project from the European Commission within the new EU Financial Perspective 2007-2013,” President Dalia Grybauskaitė underlined.

The Presidents also agreed to co-patron events scheduled in the coming year to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Žalgiris Battle, announced the Press Service of the President.

Lithuania To Chair Chemical Weapons Convention

Lithuania will chair the Fourteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) from 30 November 2009 to 1 December 2010.

The Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, also called the Conference of the States Parties, is the main decision-making institution that joins delegates of 188 States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Lithuania, as the chair of the Conference of the States Parties, will play an important political and coordinating role until the next Conference of the States Parties in the end of 2010. Lithuania’s Permanent Representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is Lithuania’s Ambassador to the Netherlands Vaidotas Verba.

Grybauskaitė still most popular

Vilnius, Nov 16 (ELTA) - A survey carried out in October shows that Lithuanian residents viewed President Dalia Grybauskaitė most favorably (89% of respondents).

Seimas Speaker Irena Degutienė, who made the largest jump in the September ratings, remained in second place with an approval rating of 63%.

Ex-president Valdas Adamkus received 56% of votes. MEP Vilija Blinkevičiūtė was gathered 51%.

These four public figures are the only ones that were favorably viewed by over a half of the respondents.

According to a poll conducted by Baltijos Tyrimai between 26 October – 4 November, the respondents evaluated Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius, leader of the Conservatives, most negatively. An astonishing 82% expressed an unfavourable attitude towards the prime minister.

A large number (78%) of the respondents were similarly against former Seimas Speaker Arūnas Valinskas, former Prime Minister Social Democrat Gediminas Kirkilas (74%), MEP Vytautas Landsbergis (74%), Kazimira Prunskienė (64%), who initiated the establishment of a new party, and MP Liberal Centrist Artūras Zuokas (63%).

The highest jumps in approval were for Degutienė, who improved by 34%, Viktoras Uspaskich was up 8%, and the greatest decrease was for Prime Minister Kubilius who dropped 8%.

Copely citizenship in violation of Constitution

In conformity with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania, and the rulings of the Lithuanian Constitutional Court of 30 December 2001 and of 11 November 2006, and taking into account the advice of the Citizenship Commission as well as the relevant circumstances and documents submitted, President Dalia Grybauskaitė has decided not to grant Lithuanian citizenship by way of exception to Katherine Leigh Copely, a national of the United States of America.

The Citizenship Commission held two sittings (26 March 2009 and 22 October 2009) to consider whether or not Copely met the requirements for Lithuanian citizenship set out in the Law on Citizenship. Both times the Commission adopted a negative decision and advised the President to refuse Lithuanian citizenship to Katherine Leigh Copely, stated the Press Service of the President.

Katherine Leigh Copely is the partner of Deividas St Guamantas. They have formed a successful skating pair and were hoping to represent Lithuania at the Vancouver Winter Olympics.

The duo took 14th place in the 2009 World Championships which qualified them for the Vancouver Olympics and are widely acknowledged as having great potential.

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Diversity in the media
Vilnius International Airport (VIA) set new prices to promote new flights from Vilnius. This year VIA has already reduced passenger fees paid by airlines, which stood at LTL40.

“As compared to the neighbouring airports, that was a high price to pay. Therefore, now, when airlines count each litas, this price was a serious barrier for new flights,” said Tomas Vaivila, Director General of VIA.

After introduction of the new VIA pricing policy, the passenger fee for the new regular flights will be LTL4 (compared to LTL10.35 in Riga, LTL31.74 in Tallinn and LTL52.2 in Warsaw).

“That’s a serious reason for airlines to revise their plans in Lithuania”, says Vaivila.

VIA has also cut charges for airlines and passengers travelling from current destinations.

The VIA cost cutting programme was launched this year to cut costs up to LTL85 mil, and next year costs are planned to decrease a further LTL60 mil.

After considerable savings of funds, the Ministry of Transport and Communications obliged VIA in principle to revise its price formation for services to make Vilnius Airport the most competitive, attractive and accessible in Europe.

**Irish Cinema Days**

Irish Cinema Days will be held from 20-22 November at the Lithuanian Filmmakers Union, corner Vasario 16-osios 13 and Sermukšnų 1.

Three films will be screened:

**Saviours** - A documentary following three young boxers from the Dublin boxing club, St Saviours

The Front Line - Joe Yumba, a musician from the Democratic Republic of Congo, receives the news he has been waiting for - his application for asylum has been successful. But Joe’s happiness is short lived.

**2A** - Semi-autobiographical story by director Marian Quinn set in Dublin during 1979 and depicts the “in-between” time of a girl’s life, when she is no longer a child and not yet a woman.

The films will be screened on their original language with Lithuanian subtitles. Entrance is free. The festival is organised by the Embassy of Ireland in Vilnius, the Irish Film Institute “Reel Ireland” programme and the Lithuanian Filmmakers Union.

**Star1 to launch Vilnius-Milan flights**

Vilnius, Nov 17 (ELTA) - This week Star1 Airlines launches regular flights from Vilnius to Milan, the restoration of a direct link between Lithuania and Italy.

According to Martynas Latys, head of Star1 Airlines, this route was planned a long while back because there used to be a large number of passengers flying from Lithuania to Italy until the direct flights were stopped.

The airline will start operating flights to Milan from 21 November. Star1 Airlines will fly to Milan’s Malpensa Airport from Vilnius Airport twice a week, on Tuesdays and Saturdays. They intend to increase the number of flights in the summer season.

**Turkey Lifts Visa Requirements for Lithuanian Tourists**

The Government of Turkey lifted visa requirement for Lithuanian citizens travelling to Turkey as tourists. The new Ambassador of Turkey to Lithuania, Omer Altug, presented the note confirming the Turkish Government’s decision during a meeting with Vygandas Ulačiakas, Lithuania’s Minister of Foreign Affairs on 12 November in Vilnius.

“Turkey is among the most popular destinations for Lithuanian tourists. Therefore, lifting the visa requirement is very important for Lithuania,” Minister Ulačiakas said during the meeting.

Lithuania’s Foreign Minister raised the issue regarding a visa-free regime for Lithuanian tourists and regarding the facilitation of visa issuance procedures for individual categories of Turkish citizens during a visit of the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Ali Babacan, to Vilnius on 20 February this year.

From now on, Lithuanian citizens can travel to Turkey without visas and stay there as tourists for up to 90 days over a period of 180 days. Visa requirement remains for persons travelling to Turkey on other purposes. The visa-free regime for Lithuanian tourists is already in force.

In 2008, about 90,000 Lithuanian citizens visited Turkey and spent a total of about LTL4.7 million for Turkish visas.
We were grateful to Kęstutis Kemzūra (pictured) for sparing some time to talk to us about his appointment as Head Coach of the Lithuanian Men’s National Basketball team.

What are your first impressions of your new job as Head Coach of the Lithuanian Men’s National Basketball team?

What can you say? Like all jobs it has its pressure. It has a big responsibility and like everyone I will work as hard as I can, but hopefully with more energy and enthusiasm. I know there will be more pressure later on, but that is something you have to deal with when the time comes.

What about the team itself – what are you first thoughts on its formation?

There has been a lot of talk about bringing more youth into the team. For me I just want the best and the most motivated players, and then of course a lot depends on whether we will be playing in the world championships.

If not, then I think it’s worth giving players an off-season to relax and re-energise. Age is not the criteria from which you choose your team. All of them could play well in 2011, but no-one knows what might happen in the future. What’s happening now is unseen, it is the creation stage. It is like an artistic composition, it looks like nothing is happening but much of the future is being planned and idealised.

In a club you play for money. There can be monetary problems with players, late wages, and this creates a whole new set of problems. This isn’t a factor in the national team.

Planning, staff, and looking to the future. What’s happening now is unseen, it is the creation stage. It is like an artistic composition, it looks like nothing is happening but much of the future is being planned and idealised.

You have a quiet and reserved character for such a high profile position.

I am open about my work and what I do, but at the end of the day the responsibility is mine. I am ultimately answerable for the success or otherwise of the national team.

You have a quiet and reserved character for such a high profile position.

I don’t like to boast and it is not necessary for me to seek attention for its own sake, and I understand that attention only usually gets in the way. At the moment I haven’t won or lost a game, but there is a lot ahead.

The most important thing is that we don’t take short cuts and work solely for the win. In this business you are judged by your results. Even though it doesn’t always fully reflect the effort you put in. In previous championships teams have played well but not achieved results, and vice versa.

What is your coaching style? Do you demand discipline to stick to a system, or do you give players more freedom?

You always start with a plan and it changes over time. Basketball is a game and you’ll find very few teams with such a tight system that players can’t move out of. I work more on establishing principles that the players can then use as a basic structure, my strategy is based more on principles than a rigid structure.

What is a good shot, what is a bad shot? – it’s often not easy to make that judgement. The players are on the court, you can’t expect them to be robots. But a lot depends on the player. One might have more ability which gives them more freedom to move away from the rigidity of the structure.

So what have you been doing while waiting for the decision on the world championships?

I’m still picking my support team. We have no time pressure so I can look at it properly and give it full
English life is about individuality

I like it when a judge, a policeman, even a tax inspector says “I, and does not believe he must hide behind an organization or a body. This is the single biggest difference that I can admire.

Next to it, the natural mistrust that an Englishman feels toward people who take themselves too seriously. Someone who is not able to laugh at themselves is seen as seriously socially deficient, or at best pompous and humourless. In Lithuania, pommousness comes with social status and often needs to be engaged so that a person is respected as a figure of authority. I always disliked that and England was a breath of fresh air for me in this respect.

The English are famous for their peculiar humour. Do you have a favourite English joke and would share it with your readers?

My main observation — and I note this in my book — is that the principal aspect of English humour is that it is not separate from serious activities and thoughts. We in Lithuania think that joking is an activity which has to know its time and place. A normal Englishman would not immerge a presentation without a joke, a bit of self-mockery, a tongue-in-cheek reference. The only person in UK who can go on for an hour with a sombre expression on his face and be an absolute killy. Lithuania-style, is Prime Minister Gordon Brown, but he is not English anyway and I am not really sure if he is truly a person. He would also qualify as the best English joke, albeit a macabre one. He is also a proof that not only Lithuanians can have scandalously inexact and socially maladjusted people in high offices.

Sorry to have brought politics into this, but I was intentionally keeping these topics off the pages of my book, so I guess they had to surface somewhere.
Vincentas Giedraitis is an assistant professor in the Department of Theoretical Economics at Vilnius University.

The ideas of 20th century economist and sociologist Joseph Schumpeter can be drawn upon in the case of Lithuania to emphasize the importance of innovation on one hand, and the danger of stagnation on the other.

Innovation can be a means by which to rise in the global economic hierarchy, while stagnation - a means to fall. Schumpeter suggested that innovation and entrepreneurship act as a sort of engine for economies to expand. National institutions such as the government and economy must create favorable conditions for the entrepreneur to be able to bring new commodities to the market. In such countries as Lithuania, still undergoing a post-Soviet transition, opportunities abound for new business ideas.

Schumpeter popularized the term "creative destruction," by which he meant that innovation by entrepreneurs has the ability to radically change stagnant industries or an entire economy. A current example is the inability of large American automobile-industries to rapidly change products under today’s market conditions. The American auto industry is faced with short and long term dilemmas. In the short term, it has taken such measures as reducing costs by asking employees to take extended vacations. But in the long run, will it be able to adapt as quickly as new, smaller, and more innovative companies? The possibility that such massive industries, such as General Motors, which employs some 120,000 workers facing bankruptcy is a very real concern, while little known start ups such as Tesla Motors offer compelling (and far more efficient) alternatives to buyers.

Lithuania has certain real advantages compared to larger economies in terms of innovation. First, Lithuania’s industries are still in a relatively nascent state. Twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, its industries are specializing and adapting to a global marketplace faster than the industries of such Völ“ Europe” countries as Germany. This is a case of the so-called "second place advantage", where a newly opened economy can learn from the mistakes and consequently “out innovate” them, since they have no new infrastructure to need replace.

One sector that Lithuania is specializing in quite successfully is biotechnology, where it is a regional leader. According to the Lithuanian Biotechnology Association, the biotech sector in Lithuania has been growing by about 22% yearly for the past five years. Two such companies, Fermentas and Sicor Biotech, were sold in 2007 for more than 28 million euros (Innovations Report 2008).

Another positive development of the biotechnology industry in Lithuania is related to immigration and the “brain drain” phenomenon. Seventeen advanced European biotech professionals who had previously emigrated have decided to return to the Vilnius Institute of Biotechnology. Dr. Duumantas Matulis from the Institute of Biotechnology has stated that: "The growing importance of life sciences and biotechnology in Lithuania is being recognized with ScanFurlt Forum 2008 to take place in Vilnius. This is a chance to promote Lithuania as an attractive place to work, live and invest. We intend to further strengthen our position as a strong player within life sciences and biotechnology in the Baltic Sea Region" (Innovations Report 2008).

The aforementioned example of car industries can be related to the economy of Lithuania. Such old Europe economies as Germany are juggernauts, compared to the nimble Lithuania. The country has a very high education population and competitive universities that produce bright graduates. Thus, all things equal, per capita, Lithuania needs fewer innovators to make potentially large changes in its much smaller economy, which unlike EU-15 countries, is still in a condition of flux.

Another advantage for Lithuania in terms of innovation is the attractiveness in the previous regard to foreign direct investment. Although Lithuania may lack the capital of “old Europe,” it has a skilled and educated workforce, and low labor costs. This makes it an attractive place for foreign firms that want to also out-innovate the competition.

Why build a factory in the traditionally more expensive EU-15, than in the less expensive business climate of such new member countries as Lithuania?

The current economic crisis can in a sense be seen in a positive light for little Lithuania. While the economy is under stress, Lithuanian firms can continue to innovate. However, when the global economy does improve – with which time it will – it will take a far smaller “push” to restore Lithuania’s economy to a strong position, compared to much larger EU-15 countries. The IMF’s Robert Zoellick stated on 22 March 2009 that, weighed down by large, sluggish economies, the global economy recovery is expected in 2010, at which point major economies will break even. However, developing nation economies are expected to expand by up to 4.3% (World Bank 2008).

Regionally, the European Commission states that biotechnology will be a very important part of Europe’s economy in the coming decades. Ernst and Young find that the Lithuanian biotechnology market is one of the largest in the region, with 99% of biotechnology products exported to 86 countries. In 2006, the biotechnology industry had sales in excess of 90 million. Among former Communist countries, Lithuania follows only Hungary in sales volume. The Lithuanian government would be wise to consider investing in up and coming sectors, and thus far seems to be doing so. For example, it has increased biotechnology research funding during the last five years (Innovations Report 2008).
### Main socio-economic indicators of Lithuania

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Change as compared to previous quarter, %</th>
<th>Change as compared to corresponding period of previous year, %</th>
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<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>3,335,700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate %</td>
<td>Q2 2009</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average gross monthly earnings, LTL</td>
<td>Q2 2009</td>
<td>2,172.6</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Real earnings, %</td>
<td>Q2 2009</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agricultural production, million LTL</td>
<td>Q2 2009</td>
<td>1,068.1</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Industrial production, billion LTL</td>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lithuanian domestic construction, million LTL</td>
<td>Q2 2009</td>
<td>1,557.8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail trade, million LTL</td>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>2,059.8</td>
<td>-10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflation, %</td>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Export of Lithuanian goods, million LTL</td>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>2,552</td>
<td>9.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP (first estimate), million LTL</td>
<td>Q3 2009</td>
<td>2,371.3</td>
<td>13.0</td>
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### Consumer goods and services down 0.4% in September

Statistics Lithuania announced that in October 2009, against September, prices for consumer goods and services went down by 0.4%. A decisive impact on the overall change in consumer prices was made by a 4.7% price drop for housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, 0.5% – food products and non-alcoholic beverages, 1.6% – recreation and culture, as well as by a 4.2% price rise for alcoholic beverages and tobacco products, 1.9% – clothing and footwear.

In October 2009, prices for consumer goods decreased by 0.3%, for services – 0.8%.

In the group of housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, the price change was mostly conditioned by a 12.6% price drop for hot water and centralized heat supply, 5.7% – actual rentals for housing.

The price change for alcoholic beverages and tobacco products was conditioned by an 8.7% price rise for tobacco products, 1.7% – spirits, 1.5% – wine and wine products. The price growth for tobacco products was still conditioned by an increased excise duty for cigarettes applied from 1 September.

Other goods and services included: a 1.7% price drop for mobile phone services, 0.6% – fuel and pharmaceuticals each, 5.3% – sanitation services, 1.4% – cosmetics, 2.1% accommodation services, as well as a 0.9% price rise for non-durable household goods, 1.4% – services of undefined level education, 0.7% – local passenger road transport services.

In October 2009, annual inflation (against October 2008) was up 1.8%. The inflation rate was mostly influenced by a 19.1% price rise in alcoholic beverages and tobacco products, 15.6% – health care goods and services, 9% – miscellaneous goods and services, as well as by a 3.3% price drop for food products and non-alcoholic beverages, 9.9% – clothing and footwear.

Prices for consumer goods showed an annual increase of 0.3%, services – 4.3%.

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**Follow the movement, observe the trends, choose the future!**

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**“Only when business starts creating new jobs will we be able to talk about the end of the crisis.” Jakšataris Rokas, Chief economist of DnB NORD Financial Group**

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You are welcome to download the latest comparative analysis of Baltic Rim country economies by DnB NORD Economic research team from www.dbnord.nl/publications

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Lithuania • Latvia • Estonia • Poland • Finland • Denmark
Soggy end to World Qualifiers

Then four losses in a row put an end to a win against the Faroe Islands, but in Marijampolė followed by a 2–0 defeat of Austria came Romania 3–0 in what many high last year when Lithuania over skies of Marijampolė (pictured) the campaign. Under the sodden end their World Cup qualifying Team took a consolation win.

Defending Five Titles

Lietuvos Rytas began the 2009-2010 season with an incredible burden – how to defend the five titles it was holding. Five titles in any season is hard enough, but when you are given a reduced budget, lose the core of your starting five and then have to step up a grade to EuroLeague, well for most teams that would seem impossible.

Chuck Edison, Marjonas Petraitis and Mindaugas Lukauskis were offered contracts elsewhere that the Virtus team couldn’t match, and once again the Rytas scouts were looking for good value recruits that coach Kūtina laid (as above with Giannakis) could mould into an effective unit. They added the under-performing Braxton Cravens, the under-rated Aron Baynes and Dejan Borovnjak, who joined Giannakis, Jomantas, Zavackas, Milko Bjelica, who inked the plus one on his contract, and new captain Baltrusaitis in taking on the best that Europe has to offer.

Kūtina banked on getting an early start. While most pundits agree that EuroLeague starts in earnest in the new year, the coach pushed his boys hard early, hoping to pick up the early wins to get most of the way to the next round early, hoping to pick up the early wins to get most of the way to the next round before the rest of the teams had hit their stride. It was a tough ask, as the coach himself had national team duties, and not all of the players arrived at camp at the same time.

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