

EUROPEAN CONTACTS OF LITHUANIAN FORECASTERS

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For the Lithuanian Hydrometeorological Service (as probably for some other services), direct contacts between weather forecasters are rather limited due to financial constraints. We can participate in international seminars, meetings and even training courses if our related expenses (or, at least most of them) are covered by the organisers. Usually we are involved in the training events of 1 (sometimes 2) of our weather forecasters per year. Also, we can invite only those guests who are in a position to cover their travel and accommodation expenses by themselves. In 1996, we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the first weather forecast to be produced in Lithuania and many guests attended on that occasion.

The year 2001 was exceptional and outstanding for Lithuanian forecasters. As many as eight of them had the luck to associate with their colleagues from other European states. We were happy to see increasingly close relations with forecasters from neighbouring Poland. In June, following our request, two of our employees (one of them a forecaster) raised their qualifications at the Polish Institute of Meteorology and Water Management (IMWM) on the observation of ultraviolet (UV) solar radiation and UV index forecasting matters. In the same month, one more forecaster was invited to attend the joint EUMETSAT-IMWM training course entitled "From MTP to MSG – Where Are We and Where Are We Going", also held in Poland. She was given an opportunity not only to listen to EUMETSAT lecturers on very useful topics, but also to meet forecasters from all Eastern European states (of the former Socialist camp) and get acquainted with their experience in the use of satellite data for weather forecasting.

One of our forecasters raised her qualifications by attending a seminar at the Langen Training Centre of the German Weather Service (Deutscher Wetterdienst). In September 2001, one of our forecasters participated in the Met Office RSMC workshop in Reading.

However, the most important event in 2001 for Lithuanian forecasters was the NOMEK training course held in Vilnius. This was the first time that the course had been held outside the Nordic region. These forecaster courses first started in 1995 and in the following year EUMETSAT became the main sponsor. Since then, it has continued to support the participation of one Lithuanian (as well as a Latvian and an Estonian) forecaster in these NOMEK training events. EUMETSAT took the responsibility of covering the expenditure of local arrangements whilst the Finnish Meteorological Institute (FMI) took on the responsibility of both the scientific and administrative organisation. The course took place from 18th to 21st April 2001. All together there were 19 forecasters: Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark each sent three, Iceland, Latvia and Estonia each sent one and Lithuania sent four forecasters. In addition, one student position was allocated to the University of

Vilnius. Lectures and case studies were conducted by eight teachers from eight countries: "Use of Satellite Data" was presented by Dr Veronika Zwatz-Meise from Austria, Dr Karl-Göran Karlsson from Sweden and Mr José Prieto from EUMETSAT; "Numerical Weather Prediction Models" was presented by Dr Niels Woetman-Nielsen from Denmark and Dr Björn Rösting from Norway; "Radar Meteorology" was presented by Mr Jarmo Koistinen from Finland. There were also two newly invited lecturers: Dr Haraldur Olafsson from Iceland and Dr Gintautas Stanknavius from Lithuania (Vilnius University).

One day after the lectures, a visit to our Weather Forecasting Division was arranged thus enabling our forecasters (not participating on the course) to associate with their foreign colleagues.

The course leader was Mr Vesa Nietosvaara of FMI (a former forecaster himself), whilst the local arrangements were successfully handled by our forecaster, Mrs Izolda Marcinonienė. We were happy to get a very high evaluation of our local arrangements. It was a pity that such a unique event attracted little attention in the mass media. There was only a single short article though it did appear in a leading Lithuanian daily. We put much effort into public relations and the apparent lack of interest can only be explained by the fact that the NOMEK training course coincided with a meeting of presidents from six states which became the focus of mass media interest.

So in all, we received 22 foreign guests, 15 of them forecasters. I would like to thank the Nordic meteorological services for their confidence, the FMI for their assistance, and EUMETSAT for financial support in arranging the course.