

2022

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KLAIPĖDA

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International Youth Policy Conference "The Rhythm of Youth", 7-8 July, 2022

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KLAIPEDA

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HELLO

The slogan **“Choose Klaipeda”** appeared back when the young and energetic people of Klaipeda dreamed of changing the city with their own efforts. Meanwhile, after declaring Klaipeda the European Youth Capital in 2018, the dream became a possibility.

The project program, implemented in 2020-2021, brought together more than 150 000 young people not only from Klaipeda and other Lithuanian cities, but also from all over Europe. This youth community was the main driver of the project's implementation, from generating ideas, making decisions and implementing the activities. Such a safe environment to create, act and reveal one's potential allowed one to see the city with different eyes - the eyes of a young person.

The program, consisting of more than 250 different activities, helped to create a solid foundation for further strengthening of the image of volunteering. It also provided more opportunities for young people to express their voice in decision-making and developing a dialogue between city government representatives and young people. All this gave more freedom, encouraged entrepreneurship and its opportunities, and at the same time allowed creating a youthful image of the city without stereotypes.

Although together we have done a lot, we want more. Therefore, the city continues to encourage „Choose Klaipeda“ and to continue the work started. We believe that with this new urban youth movement, we can encourage young people to be interested and share information about what is possible to do, to create, and how to realize yourself in Klaipeda.

Thus, reading this magazine, you can really get motivation from Klaipeda and the participants of the „Klaipeda - European Youth Capital 2021“ project, who are a great example of how to achieve your goals, implement ideas and do it not only for your own benefit, but also for the benefit of others.

EVERYTHING RELEVANT TODAY CAN BE FOUND HERE:

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VIRGINIJUS SINKEVICIUS

project #chooseklaipeda
ambassador

INTERVIEW WITH VIRGINIJUS SINKEVICIUS. **LITHUANIA IS THE BEST COUNTRY FOR CREATING AND PURSUING A CAREER**

Successful role models are often the biggest inspiration for young people. One of them is Virginijus Sinkevičius - the youngest ever minister in Lithuania, and now - the youngest European Commissioner responsible for the environment, oceans and fisheries. This man is obliged to find solutions to solve the ecological crisis, which has overtaken Europe. We talked with him not only about the work of the European Commissioner, but also about youth, its activity and influence on civic life.

What do you think were the most important life choices that led you, as a European Commissioner, to the European Commission?

When talking about the career and even life-changing events, it's too complicated to explain it in one or two choices, because it seems that in one way or another, you've been getting to where you are your entire life. But so far, I think that the most important decision I have made in my life is to return to Lithuania. After finishing school, I went to study abroad. I graduated from universities in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and went to work in Washington. And at one point I decided to return to Lithuania. At that time, I didn't even think or dream about politics, and even less about working in the European Commission, but if I hadn't returned to the Motherland, everything that happened after that probably wouldn't have happened. Therefore, even when I was a minister, I always told all young people that Lithuania is the best country for creating and pursuing a career. And I can do it again today.

Which personal character qualities would you point out as the most im-

portant as a European Commissioner?

I would say that there is no difference whether you are a member of the European Commission, a programmer, a doctor, or a teacher - universal qualities are needed in every job.

First of all, don't shy away from work and put all your effort into what you do. This was the case for me - I've never clocked hours at any of my jobs. I believe that success does not come because you wait for it. Success comes when you work for it.

Secondly, believe not only in yourself, but also in what you do. You have the right to think that I am naive, but I sincerely believe that Lithuania is a country full of innovative, creative, honest and intelligent people - they change and will change the world. I believe that Europe can be a climate-neutral continent - of course, not in the next few years, but in the coming decades for sure. And when you believe that, it motivates you to act in that direction and make your contribution.

Third, think about how your decisions, statements, initiatives will affect people. In other words, measure nine times and cut the tenth, not the other way around. Why do you think European identity is important for the country and its youth? To me, European identity means first of all respect for the person, his right to create his own future, the freedom to express his thoughts, to nurture his culture.

For me Russia's aggression against Ukraine is the best proof that the world needs more European, Western thought and values, because it is a clash of

two different civilizations. Today, the people of Ukraine are the guardians of European values, dying for the ideals of the Western world. Meanwhile, the aggressor, the war criminals - from the soldier to the President - are animals who continue the traditions of the Golden Horde and have no respect for the lives of neither their own people, nor those of other nations. Therefore, as a citizen, I want my country and its people to be Europeans, who cherish fundamental human rights, love Lithuania and its freedom, and respect others.

What would you say to a young person who feels that participating in the civic or social life of the city does not matter?

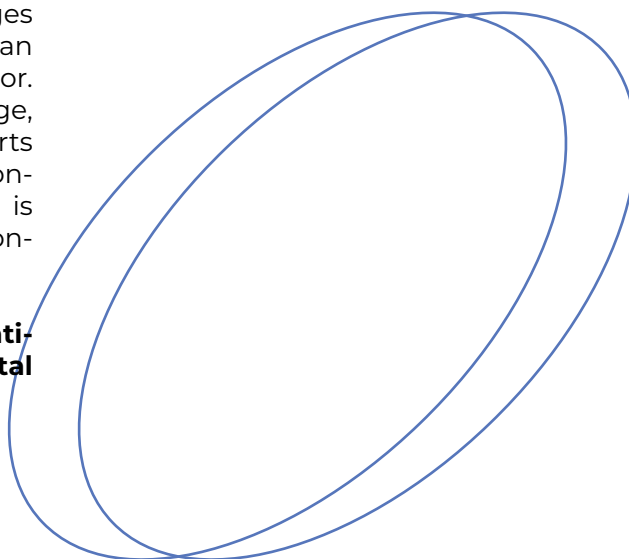
Don't underestimate yourself and your civic powers. A human is the axis of every change. For example, the European green deal, that is all policies related to the environment and the solutions to the climate crisis, came from people, especially young people, who were concerned about the future of the planet and marched to the streets to demand change. That pressure on politicians, the public's activism and the desire to change themselves led to the fact that today environmental protection is one of the most important long-term priorities of the European Union. This is what citizens have achieved on a European scale. At the city or town level, achieving change is even easier. Those changes may seem smaller than the European green deal, but they are not inferior. Solving environmental, climate change, social or economic problems first starts with communities. Each person's contribution to solving global problems is important and each community's contribution is invaluable.

How important do you think initiatives like the European Youth Capital title are for cities like Klaipėda?

It seems to me that the most important thing is not the year when Klaipėda was the European youth capital. What's important is what is left after. Such initiatives are not just concerts and events (although that is also important), but an impetus to think about our city - as we want to see it, in your case - how to make it more attractive to young people. The most important thing is to keep believing in your great city after all the shows and fireworks, so that the desire to live and create in it continues to grow - it's not new buildings or repaired sidewalks that make a city great. This is important, but not the most important thing. The people and the atmosphere they create make a city a place you want to return to.

What would you wish for the youth of Klaipėda and Lithuania?

Be the masters of your city and your country. The mayor, the minister or the commissioner are not your chiefs, they are there to serve you. What your elected people will think about and what problems will be solved depends on the political order of the society. Therefore, be active not only during elections. Take a civil stance when appropriate. Don't be shy, be active in the political and social area. It depends only on you how your country and your city will look like.





ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

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„Erasmus+“ is a support program of the European Union that provides learning and development opportunities for people of various ages, statuses, and professions, as well as the opportunity for various organizations and institutions to implement projects that meet the program's criteria.

Individuals can gain international experience by using the program: studying, improving their competences, improving through non-formal education - abroad, in an international community.

INTERVIEW WITH AISTE VALADKIENE.

SOMETIMES YOU NEED TO PROVE THAT YOUTH POLICY IS A SERIOUS MATTER

The youth affairs coordinator is a person who helps the voice of young people reach city municipalities and other higher institutions. In Klaipeda, this position is held by Aiste Valadkiene, who was brought to this position by fate itself. Of course, now she has set serious goals, which will definitely make young people happy in the future.

How would you generally explain what a youth coordinator is? What functions does he perform?

In simple words, the youth affairs coordinator is an intermediary between the municipality, politicians and young people. He helps these two parties talk and hear each other. The functions of the youth affairs coordinator are to implement national youth policy directions in the municipality, to create and implement municipal youth policy measures, programs, to analyse youth-related data and statistics, to supervise the youth affairs council, and to ensure the involvement of young people in decision-making.

And what is the main job of this profession?

First of all, youth affairs coordinator is not a profession. This is a position. In Lithuania all youth affairs coordinators are civil servants. Their main work is to ensure that youth policy is implemented in the municipality, to ensure that youth organizations are financed, to take care of youth employment, promote volunteerism, and create various services to increase youth employment.

How is this position useful for young people, more precisely for the youth of Klaipeda?

The youth affairs coordinator develops various programs in the municipality related to the employment of young people. He ensures funding for youth organizations, volunteering. He also ensures that open youth centres or spaces appear and operate in the city, that work with youth on the streets is being carried out. The youth affairs coordinator invites

young people to participate in various events, meetings with municipal politicians and administration, tries to hear the opinion of young people and help them implement proposals.

How to become a youth affairs coordinator?

The youth affairs coordinator, as a civil servant, must have a higher education and experience in project implementation. It is also needed in the non-governmental sector. Each Lithuanian municipality has one youth affairs coordinator. You can become one by participating in competitions organized by the municipality.

What qualities should a person, working in this field, have?

The youth affairs coordinator must have analytical thinking skills, must be communicative, able to collect and systematize information. You also need initiative and diligence. It is also important to be diplomatic.

How did you decide to become a youth affairs coordinator? Maybe you weren't involved in this field at all before? If so, what led you to this path?

Before working in the municipality, I actively volunteered in the association of Klaipeda youth organizations „Apskritasis stalas“, I was a member of the council. I also actively volunteered in the field of culture, managing the „Cinema Club 8 1/2“ project. After completing public administration studies at Klaipeda University, I worked at the Youth Work Center of the Employment Service in Palanga. Then there was an opportunity to participate in the competition for the chief specialist position in the municipality for work with communities and youth. After winning the competition, I became the assistant of the former youth affairs coordinator. After a month, this youth affairs coordinator decided to move to another department and I was offered to take her place. That's how I became the youth affairs coordinator. I never thought that I would have such a job, because I was

YOUTH LINE

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always more attracted to culture, but life turned in the direction of youth politics.

What fascinates you most about working as a youth affairs coordinator? Why?

What fascinates me the most is that there is no monotony in this work. I keep getting to know young people, we participate in various events and trainings. There is no lack of opportunities to implement many new projects, to go and learn the practices of other countries. There is also considerable freedom for creativity. We develop and implement various programs for young people.

In your opinion, what are the most difficult challenges in this job? How do you deal with them?

The biggest challenge is that sometimes you have to prove to municipal politicians that youth policy is a serious matter and not just ways of spending your free time. It is often necessary to solve the problems that have arisen between young people and politicians, try to provide appropriate funding. There is also a very large volume of work, but when I love what I do, I do not count the time.

How would you describe present-day youth?

Present-day young people no longer like to stick to activities or commit to organizations. I notice that young people want short-term activities. However, they know very well that they can influence various decisions, they are curious, proactive and innovative.

Does the youth of Klaipėda willingly get involved in various organized activities? Do you have any examples?

I think so. The most important thing is to organize interesting activities. Participatory budgeting is implemented in six high schools in Klaipėda, during which students submit initiatives to the school administration and then implement them. I have seen many beautiful examples when high school students renovate school spaces or replenish school inventory for necessary activities. There are also active youth organizations that implement excellent projects, organize discussions and trainings. And all this is

done by young people.

What can young people expect from the Klaipėda youth affairs coordinator in the future?

I hope that in the future we will be able to implement more programs related to increasing leadership and entrepreneurship, as well as establishing more youth spaces, encouraging young people to be active citizens and participate in the activities of organizations. We will also seek to increase funding for volunteering.

Maybe you have a personal goal that is related to this profession and will be pursued in the future?

My goal is for municipal politicians to recognize youth policy in the same way as other areas. The goal is that the implementation of youth policy in Klaipėda would be an example not only for other Lithuanian cities, but also for the whole Europe.

If you have questions to which you do not know the answers, Aiste can help you.

**Youth Affairs Coordinator
AISTE VALADKIENE**

**Phone 8 46 39 60 64
E-mail aiste.valadkiene@klaipeda.lt
Liepu St. 11, 91502 Klaipėda, room 204**



AISTE VALADKIENE

DIALOGUES

For a large number of young people, global, and not only specific to Lithuania problems are becoming more and more relevant. Yet still there is often a lack of suitable tools with which young people can implement the desired changes. Moreover, young people often face scepticism towards their ideas. The purpose of our platform is to develop the political literacy of Klaipeda's young people, to increase youth participation in civic processes, to develop awareness of local, national and international youth policy and to develop its recognition. We strive for the youth of Klaipeda to be heard; therefore we encourage young people to participate in European youth policy forums, events in various cities of Lithuania or even in other European countries. We are happy that the city's youth policy strategy has been created, which will help ensure the continuity of our activities.

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ZINAU VISKA (en. I KNOW EVERYTHING) is an organization for young people, the main goal of which is counselling and informing, with the aim of helping young people to find their way in various areas of their lives and to promote inde-

pendence in decision-making.

The organization's team provides information on various relevant topics: studies, volunteering, practice, financial literacy, youth policy and others.

INTERVIEW WITH GABRIELE BURBULYTE-TSISKARISHVILI. **POLITICS IS NOT JUST FACTS – YOU NEED TO PARTICIPATE IN IT**

Political literacy is one of the most important areas that young people should develop and be interested in. Unfortunately, recent research shows that the level of political literacy among young people is low. We talked about the importance of understanding politics and active participation in political and social life with Gabriele Burbulyte-Tsiskarishvili, a lecturer at the Department of Public Administration and Political Sciences of Klaipeda University.

Briefly define what is political literacy and what is its importance in our society?

The most concise description of political literacy is as follows: it is knowledge of politics and political processes. Research on political literacy of a wide variety of scopes is carried out around the world. Some of them (for example, one of the most famous, the five-question political knowledge test scale proposed by Delli Carpini and Keeter) are limited to the study of basic knowledge of current political processes (and are usually described as studies of political sophistication), others include a broader and deeper test of knowledge and practical knowledge of processes. Since in democratic states, the population entrusts their lives to a small group of representatives during elections, it is natural that knowledge of political processes directly determines the choice of the population and the ability to monitor and control the elected representatives. In other words, we are talking about the quality of the government. Unfortunately, not only in Lithuania, but also in many countries of the world, the political literacy of the population is a topic pushed to the margins.

When and where to start the education of political literacy?

It is never too early to develop political literacy. It is very important that this is not limited to just memorising facts. Although the authors which I have mentioned - Delli Carpini and Keeter - defined political literacy in the narrow sense of political sophistication as „the range of factual information about politics stored in a person's long-term memory“, it is still very important to know, at least minimally, how the acquired factual knowledge can be applied in practice.

Although in the education system it is often fashionable to repeat that education begins in the family, it is not so easy to acquire political literacy skills in families. Today, in public spaces, I quite often see that political literacy is equated with civic education. Of course, civic education is a good start, a good foundation for developing political literacy. As much as I had to analyse school education programs - today students are provided with all the necessary basic facts so that school graduates can call themselves politically intelligent. Unfortunately, not everyone succeeds in turning the accumulated facts into suitable abilities. It could be compared to mathematics - probably most of us studied the probability theory or the famous sines/cosines in school, but how many of us could then put them into practice? Of course, not everyone needs it. Meanwhile, acquired political knowledge is necessary, for example, during elections, which are not so rare.

A good starting point for developing political literacy is knowing the practical application of the Constitution. It seems to me that a part of our society with the help of Hollywood movies could quite well comment on the first or fifth amendments of the US Constitution and their operation. But does the knowledge of

the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania reach at least this level?

Researches in recent years have shown that the level of political literacy among young people is low. What do you think are the main reasons for this?

The reasons, apparently, should be sought in the education system. Although students are presented with a lot of facts, the competence of practical application of these facts is not developed. Only after the start of the war in Ukraine was attention drawn to the fact that there are major problems with civic education (too few lessons, teachers with insufficient competence, methodological tools are lacking, etc.). The situation is similar in the field of political literacy. Apparently, some of the educators also lack the available facts and competencies of practical application.

What solutions would encourage young people to be interested in politics and political processes?

Unequivocally - only creating conditions for young people to participate in it. At the very beginning of Independence, probably every serious political force had its own youth unit; later such units naturally began to disappear due to the extremely high age limit to be elected to the country's Parliament or municipal councils. Today, the situation has improved - opportunities are opening up for young people, but it will take some time for youth participation to move out of the stagnation point.

Again, if schools only teach facts without showing how they affect people's daily lives, then both the facts and the politics become very uninteresting and even discouraging to the young person. For some reason, I see a lot of parallels with mathematics.

You are a lecturer at the Department of Public Administration and Political Sciences of Klaipėda University. What trends do you notice in your practice?

I see two fundamental problems - the inability to practically apply the know-

wledge acquired at school and the lack of critical thinking. Politics is a very dynamic field. It's not just black and white; there are many different shades. Politics is the ability to reach an agreement, a compromise. And this means that we must be able not only to listen, but also to hear what different sides of the participants in political processes say. Unfortunately, a part of the society (I would say that maybe even the majority) has very minimal ability to listen and search for compromises.

In your opinion, what contribution did the project „Klaipėda - European Youth Capital 2021“ leave after the title year?

This project is the best thing that could have happened to Klaipėda. Only with the help of the project in the city of Klaipėda was it possible to start not only talking, but also to act practically in order to increase the political literacy skills of young people. Undoubtedly, this was only the beginning, because new activities have already been planned, which will probably help to move discussions about political literacy on the Lithuanian scale.



The background of the entire page is a warm, orange-toned photograph of a crowd of people. Many of their arms are raised in the air, suggesting a lively event or a moment of collective expression. The lighting is soft and golden, characteristic of a sunset or sunrise.

KLAIPEDA

YOUTH FORUM

Klaipeda Youth Forum is a new platform for young people in Klaipeda. It will give you the opportunity to express your opinion on topics of concern, ask questions, work together and find solutions to the challenges that young people face in the city. Also, during the forum, you will have the chance to learn more about other opportunities and projects offered to young people in the city of Klaipeda. Follow the [chooseklaipeda.eu](https://www.chooseklaipeda.eu) Facebook and Instagram platforms and find out when you will be able to participate in the nearest Klaipeda Youth Forum. And it doesn't matter, if you come alone or with a friend, there will certainly be no shortage of like-minded people here - the forum will be held twice a year: in autumn and spring.

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INTERVIEW WITH RAMINTA KVEKSAITE. **THE MOST IMPORTANT THING – REACHING THE YOUNG PERSON**

We often hear that the future depends on young people and their work, so it is very important not only to encourage and motivate them, but also to hear them. Today we talked about young people, their needs, expectations and choices, with Raminta Kveksaite, chairwoman of the Lithuanian School Students' Union Klaipeda Student Self-Government Information Center.

You actively participate in various activities of youth organizations. The youth of Klaipėda - how do you see them today?

Over the past year, young people have acquired new competences. Today, a young person is thirsty for freedom, full of creativity, and has the desire to implement the craziest ideas. At the same time, young people are timid and many do not find a place where they can best realize themselves. For this reason, it is not uncommon for a young person's perspective to go unnoticed.

What are the most important goals at youth organizations such as „Apskritasis stalas“, Klaipeda Youth Forum and others? What did you achieve?

In my opinion, the most important thing is to reach the young person - to hear his ideas, opinions, wishes and to help realize them. Another important thing is working with young people, helping young people to find themselves. During these years, we managed to attract quite a lot of people to the events. With such results, we can already apply to the municipality, look for partners for projects. Of course, conferences, lectures and other events are also extremely important. During them, we cooperate not only with other Lithuanian cities,

but also with foreign countries. Very recently, an international youth policy conference „Rhythm of Youth“ was held, where foreign representatives could hear many different presentations about Lithuania, youth policy in Lithuania and many others. Such international conferences allow sharing experience, ideas, insights and are a great opportunity to make new connections.

Do young people willingly and actively join the organized projects, are they interested in the opportunities offered to them and do they make sufficient use of them?

Hardly. Although it seems that information is accessible and disseminated, there are always gaps when information does not reach young people at the right time and they cannot actively engage in organized activities. I am happy with the project „Klaipeda - European Youth Capital 2021“, because it allowed young people to see how many events are actually taking place. For this reason, more people started to get involved in organizations, their activities and projects.

You have to communicate a lot with young people - what is most interesting and relevant to them, what might they be lacking in Klaipeda?

Many young people claim that there is nothing to do in Klaipeda. There are no public spaces for them to come and hang out in, no safe parks for young people to gather in (currently parks are more adapted towards young children or feel unsafe). As for studies, many leave after finishing school, because there are no study programs in Klaipeda or they are of poor quality. This is another

reason why young people leave Klaipėda and see no reason to stay. Young people are interested in new things - new experiences, new acquaintances, new opportunities. They also care about nature - its preservation, conservation and sustainability.

What are the biggest problems you see in the implementation of youth policy and what measures can be taken to improve it?

One of the biggest problems, I think, is the municipality. A lot depends on the government representatives - how they accept proposals, what they decide and other similar processes. If you have a good idea and you need government approval or funding, unfortunately, you can't always get it. Of course, we have several projects that have been approved, or programs that are wonderful and give young people the opportunity to develop, but the municipality is still not open to young people, and there is also a lack of clear information about programs or projects.

What results do you see yourself at the end of the „Klaipėda - European Youth Capital 2021“ title year?

In my opinion, the main results are the following - greater involvement of young people in decision-making, greater renown, newly revived streets of Klaipėda, newly acquired competencies. Here are just a few of the achievements that helped improve not only the young people, but also our city. This project touched on topics that were previously avoided. This is another step in the city of Klaipėda - towards tolerance and a harmonious society.



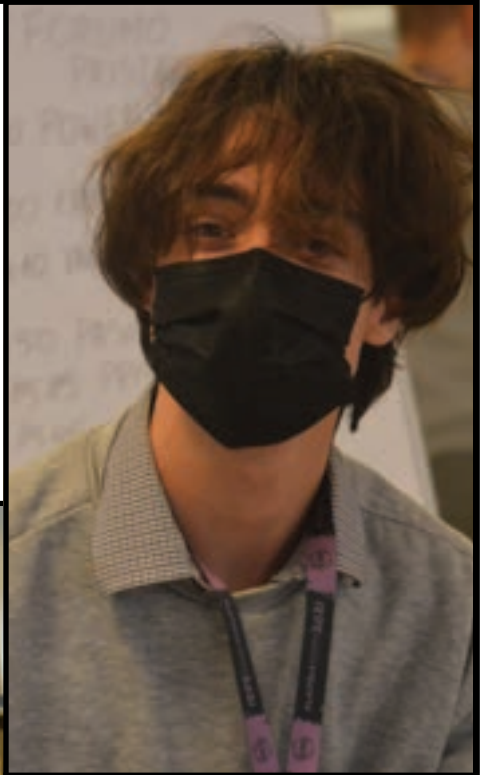
RAMINTA KVEKSAITE



KLAIPEDA YOUTH FORUM



**NOVEMBER 27,
2022**



SOLIDAR



„Solidarity“ is the platform of the „Klaipėda - European Youth Capital 2021“ project, the promotion of volunteering and its recognition, sustainable development and humanitarian aid, which aimed to improve the image of volunteering and change the ingrained stereotype that a volunteer is a physical labour force. This project is intended for both volunteers and those who invite them.

Get to know the active citizens of Klaipėda, with whom we talked about the importance of volunteering and the opportunities it provides, as well as why sustainable development goals are important for the Baltic Sea and how young people who want to help those in need, take leadership.

RITY

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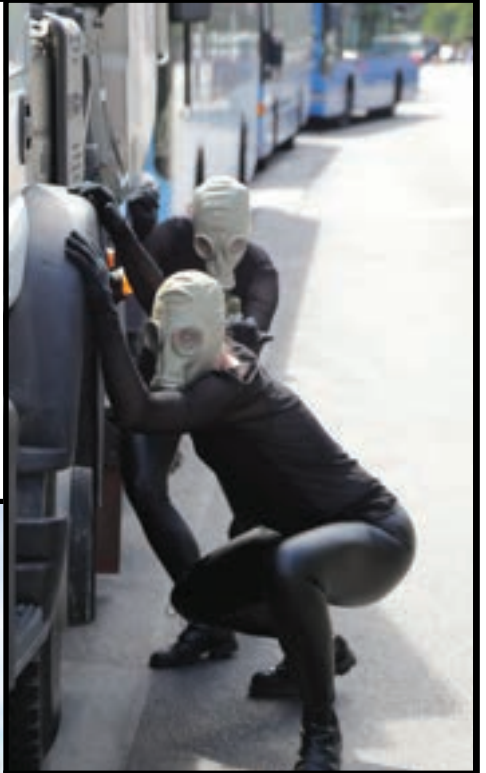


EVENT DEDICATED TO
THE WORLD OCEAN DAY

“EXPERIENCE, HEAR, DISCOVER YOURSELF AS THE SEA”



**JULY 8,
2021**



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INTERVIEW WITH JURGITA VASILJEVIENE.

VOLUNTEERING HAS TO BRING THE SENSE OF THE MEANING OF LIFE

Volunteering is becoming an increasingly popular non-remunerated activity and it should be noted that it is not only about helping others. We talked about the behind-the-scenes of volunteering with Jurgita Vasiljeviene, visitor service coordinator of the Lithuanian Maritime Museum, who claims that volunteering helps you grow as a person, learn, discover and gives opportunities for self-expression.

VOLUNTEERING AT THE MARITIME MUSEUM

Jurgita is happy that during the project „Klaipėda - European Youth Capital 2021“ there was also the opportunity to volunteer at the Lithuanian Maritime Museum - about 115 volunteers came here during the year and were actively involved in various activities. Some had to contribute to the creation of the event program, others participated in forums, prepared video plots, provided information and performed other tasks that were focused on the personal characteristics and expectations of the volunteers.

„Mostly we received high school students, but secondary school, vocational education students and higher education students also participated. Some of them continue volunteering,“ said J. Vasiljeviene.

DESIRE TO HELP, LEARN AND DISCOVER

Jurgita describes volunteering as a sense of the meaning of life, which this

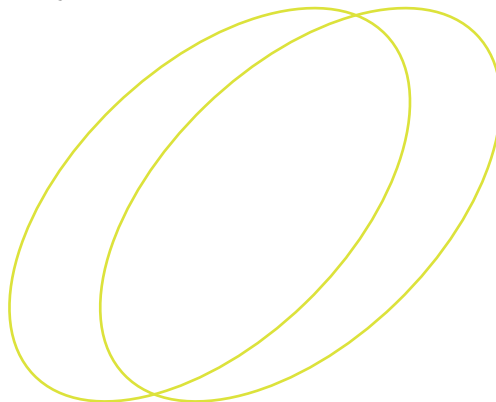
activity must bring. „When you spend your time meaningfully, you help others, you are needed - you grow as a person and feel part of the organization's community.“ The coordinator claims that it is an inner feeling, a desire to help, learn and discover.

According to her, volunteering also requires certain personal qualities - volunteers must have noble goals, be communicative, and curious. They must not only want to do it, but also find the right field and people who will accompany them on this path of personal development.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-EXPRESSION

Summarizing the experience of volunteering at the maritime museum, Jurgita says that the volunteers took on the most varied experiences - from work practice in the field of customer service to the generation of ideas for improving the quality of the museum's services and image.

„I think it is very important that the volunteers acquired organizational, social, communication, responsibility and other competencies. All these activities encouraged personal development and self-expression - we gave the opportunity to implement their own initiatives, contribute to public, community and other activities of the museum,“ said Jurgita Vasiljeviene.







JOLANTA INTEJEVA

Maritime Museum
volunteer

INTERVIEW WITH THE VOLUNTEER
JOLANTA INTEJEVA.

WHAT THE PLANET WILL LOOK LIKE IN THE FUTURE DEPENDS ON OUR ACTIONS

Klaipėdą iš Vilniaus. Visada turėjau svą“The first step was taken - I settled on the seashore, but I wanted even more sea in my life, and where else to look for it, if not in the Lithuanian Maritime Museum!” - says Jolanta Intejeva.

Some of the people who volunteer at the Lithuanian Maritime Museum stay to work there. One of them is Jolanta. When interviewed, she told why this place is so magical and enchanting place that even on her days off, she still comes to spend time at the Maritime Museum.

Why did you decide to volunteer at the Maritime Museum?

I joined the Lithuanian Maritime Museum team a little more than two years ago. It all started when I moved to Klaipėda from Vilnius. I always had a dream to live by the Baltic Sea, so one day I just decided to come here. I felt contact with this wonderful city almost immediately - it was love at first sight, and most importantly, I felt that the feeling was mutual. The first step was taken - I settled on the seaside, but I wanted even more sea in my life, and where else to look for it, if not in the Lithuanian Maritime Museum! I opened the museum's web page - there were no job offers at that time, but I found a volunteering form, which I filled out. At that time, there was the quarantine, everything was closed, so, I must admit, I did not expect much. However, after a couple of weeks, Jurgita called me and invited me to come and talk. We had a very nice chat, I didn't hide my joy - to tell the truth, I was jumping for joy after the conversation. It's very funny to remember now, but I remember how Jurgita asked me if I was currently planning to start working. And I wanted to be accepted as a volunteer so much, that I was afraid that if I told them that I was looking for a job, they might think that I would not have enough time for volun-

teering, so I answered: „No, no, I am not looking for anything at the moment, I am determined to devote as much time to volunteering as needed“. During our first conversation, I learned about that Klaipėda has become the youth capital, that many activities and projects are planned, and that help will definitely be needed.

What were your duties while volunteering?

Volunteering at the Lithuanian Maritime Museum is often imagined as working with animals. In fact, it is much more. The Lithuanian Maritime Museum is a family consisting of over 150 employees of the most diverse professions: biologists, historians, trainers, veterinarians, engineers, museologists, managers, service specialists - there are many of us here, but we are all connected by this vision of the museum: „Together we learn to know, to enjoy and protect the harmony between the human and the sea.“ First of all, as a volunteer, I had to help museum guests find their way around the museum spaces, regulate the flow of visitors, try to answer their questions, guide them correctly, and encourage them to follow certain rules for visiting the museum (for example, not to touch the fish in the aquarium). I remember how in the first weeks I took pictures of the museum's interior plans, exhibits, fish names - I tried to learn as much as possible and ask questions, and then I was in a hurry to share my knowledge with our guests. The museum is staffed by wonderful people and true professionals in their fields, who willingly and with burning eyes share their experiences.

I think there hasn't been a day since I've been in the museum that I haven't learned something new. I really like to travel, and what I experience at the museum reminds me a lot of traveling: one day I learn something new about dol-

phins, the next about ships, and the next day I come home learning about a new species of fish. There are so many activities and opportunities to try yourself in the museum that I did exactly that at the very beginning - I just absorbed all the experiences that this place gave me.

What experiences did you gain at the Maritime Museum?

I think that one of the most important experiences of a young volunteer in the museum is communication and friendship not only with people, but also with nature, with our history and culture. In the museum, we learn from each other, share our experiences, and most importantly, we learn to take care of our sea, the nature of extraordinary beauty that surrounds us. After all, it is necessary to spread the ecological message, encourage the public to listen and maybe think: „What can I do today to preserve the abundance of nature and life for tomorrow and the future?“ We do this through various activities, projects, educations, forums. Even when ordering souvenirs to the museum shop, we try to choose those that are sustainable and friendly to nature. So, of course, we were very happy with the opportunity to cooperate with „Choose Klaipėda“ and thus spread the ecological message to an even wider audience and especially to young people. I think that today we, the inhabitants of the Earth, have a particularly important mission - what this planet will look like in the near future depends on our very specific actions: will we save the Baltic Sea and the species living in it? What will 14 m3 of the Baltic Sea look like, let's say, in the 2050s? By the way, this is the name of one of our educational projects, which encourages young people to think about what it will be: dystopia or utopia?

Do you think that the youth of Klaipėda have many opportunities to volunteer?

I am very happy to see how many different volunteering opportunities are offered to young people in Klaipėda, other cities or different countries. When I was a schoolgirl, volunteering was not compulsory for us. I don't think it was as popular 20 years ago as it is today. However, I have always wanted to volunteer and help others. I have a lot of very diverse

experience: from helping with organizing events to volunteering in summer camps for children and youth, language teaching, providing emotional support. There has always been, there is and there always will be something. By volunteering, we give our time and knowledge to others - but we get a lot more in return: sometimes it's a smile, sometimes it's a new friendship, acquaintance, experience... And it's fun! It's contagious and you just can't live without it.

After volunteering at the Maritime Museum, you stayed to work there. How did this idea come to you? What are your responsibilities now?

After some time (if I'm not mistaken, after a couple of months of volunteering), I received an offer to join the museum's souvenir shop team. Indeed, quite a lot of my colleagues started their journey in the museum by volunteering or working seasonally during the summer. My story is similar - I agreed to work for the summer, and then I stayed. And this is already the third year.

I very successfully manage to combine my work at the museum with my studies (I study psychology), and I fell in love with my colleagues, animals, this wonderful place, the beaches of Smiltynė and even the ferry trips. It became a very important part of my life. Colleagues laugh when they meet me in the museum sometimes even during my days off. I really like to bring all my guests to the museum and explore it together with them. In some sense, volunteering still continues, because my working day and my stay at the museum are never limited to the performance of my direct duties: I always willingly help colleagues from other departments, communicate with museum guests and volunteers, try to answer their questions, recommend something, give advice. Perhaps you can even say that the museum is my second home. And how much is still undiscovered here, and how incredibly interesting everything is!

In your opinion, can all people be volunteers? Or maybe it is not given to everyone?


Can everyone be a volunteer? I think so! You just need to find the activity, the like-minded people, the place where

you can best realize yourself and reveal your talents. Don't be afraid to volunteer. Yes, it means finding time and commitment and being responsible. However, this is an amazing opportunity to test yourself in various activities, discover new acquaintances, expand your horizons... You can name many advantages... However, I personally want to live in a society where each of us feels responsible for the environment and together we create one where we all feel safe, happy and heard.



HACKATHON

“UNLOCK SDG’S”



In order for positive global changes to take place, the SDG strategy provides seventeen goals and specific actions to implement those goals. Until 2030 priorities are set: eradicating poverty and hunger, ensuring good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water, green energy, decent work and economic growth, peace and justice, responsible consumption and production, reducing inequality, mitigating the effects of climate change, giving due attention to life in water and land, sustainable development of cities and communities, development of innovation and partnership.

The participants of the hackathon „Unlock SDGs“ solved these tasks. Although it is often thought that hackathons are

only for the very experienced, this is definitely not true. In the virtual idea game „Unlock SDGs“, the main challenge of which was to create a creative presentation of the sustainable development goals, the team of eighth graders from Klaipeda Lyceum won the first place. It had chosen one of the sustainable development goals - to make cities and human-populated areas safe, resilient and sustainable.

24 teams from Lithuania, Sweden, Turkey and India competed in the match. The idea proposed by Klaipeda Lyceum eighth graders is „Emergency buttons“. According to the team member Rapolas Zygis, the idea was born from personal experience.



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RAPOLAS ZYGIS

member of the hacka-
thon "Unlock SDC's"
winner team

INTERVIEW WITH RAPOLAS ZYGIS.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO PROMOTE YOUTH ACTIVITY

Why do you think it is important to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals?

I think they make it easier to understand what needs to be done in order to create the kind of world we would like to live in. All 17 goals remind us of what we want in the future and let us decide what we need to do now to get there.

Tell us what was the idea for the team and how did you come up with it?

At the hackathon, together with other team members Modestas Jucas and Laura Zyliute, we chose the SDG goal 11: „Sustainable cities and communities“. We decided to install emergency buttons in cities that are accessible to everyone, and when pressed, a nearby camera and high-frequency microphone will be activated. Then, based on programmed criteria, the program could assess whether the threat is real. If the program confirms that a person needs help, the video and audio information would be directly transmitted to the responsible police dispatcher, who could reassess the situation and send the necessary help. We chose this problem from our personal experience. Even though all of our team members live in different neighbourhoods, we know places we wouldn't want to be late at night. So we started thinking about how we could solve this, and we realized that these buttons would reduce crime in cities and help people feel safer, because just the fact that these buttons are installed would deter people from criminal activity. Then another problem arose: how to reduce the burden on the dispatchers, since undoubtedly people could mistake them for the traffic light buttons or, not knowing what they are doing, just start pressing them. Therefore, we have

come up with a solution here as well. By constantly improving the idea in such a way, in two days we got our idea refined to the smallest detail - which, I think, helped us win this hackathon.

Did you develop the idea further? Who do you think could help make the idea a reality?

Unfortunately, after the hackathon ended, we no longer continued the development of the idea. The main reason for this was probably the lack of funding. Since it was not a for-profit idea, we couldn't look for private investors, so that made things much more difficult.

How did participating in this hackathon contribute to your personal development? Would you like such events to take place in Klaipeda city more often?

Personally, this hackathon taught me how to generate new ideas, discuss with team members, convincingly present my work and look at existing problems in a different way. I think it would be great if such events took place in Klaipeda more often, because they teach young people to look at global problems differently and encourage them to make decisions that can really change the world.

What do you think the European Youth Capital title has contributed to the well-being of Klaipeda's youth?

I think that the title of the European Youth Capital brought immense benefits to the youth of Klaipeda: solving the city's current problems encouraged the activity of young people.

HUMANITARIAN HELP

WE TALKED ABOUT THE HELP AND FOCUS, AND THE COMMUNITY SPIRIT IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION WITH THE LCC STUDENT FROM UKRAINE ІЛЛЯ ТКАЧЕНКО (ILLIA TKACHENKO)

WE BOLDLY BELIEVED THAT WE COULD DO A LOT

On the first day of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, none of us students from Ukraine felt anything but frustration, stress and complete disorientation. It was a very difficult day as the emotions took over the brain, but the next day it was replaced by a clear understanding of not being able to stay aside. We needed to take some action as soon as possible to help Ukraine and our mental health. This ability to make a positive impact and help people made it easier for all the members of the „Care Initiative“ Ukraine team to cope with the stress of war. Our families in Ukraine were in danger every day and our friends were fighting, so it was important for us to understand that we also contributed to this struggle with our efforts.

On the second day of the war, we corresponded with friends about the situation and decided to get together and discuss what we could do. By this time, I was included in a Messenger group with other young Ukrainians from all over Europe. That's how I understood what people are discussing and what problems we

will have to solve.

The first meeting with friends and acquaintances was quite chaotic. We tried to find out what we have to do and what we can do. We boldly believed that we could do a lot even in a short period of time. But this time we didn't have a specific deadline like in the university assignments - much more depended on our actions. So, our choice was simply to act as quickly as possible, improvise and move forward.

Our team consisted of around 18 people who contributed in various ways to help: 12 of them dedicated all their time and energy to this initiative for at least two months, and around 90 other people participated in the various activities we organized during that time. These were mainly LCC students and students from Klaipeda University. It is also important to mention that, of course, most of those who helped us were Ukrainians; students from other countries also contributed significantly, including students

An extremely important goal is to promote youth activity and indifference in the global environment in the face of negative factors affecting democracy and freedom. In order to draw attention to the situation in neighbouring Belarus, we organized an action „For freedom and democracy!“ to support Belarus against Lukashenka's policy.

Young people are especially sensitive to the problems of war-torn Ukraine. In order to show solidarity with people affected by the war, an information and assistance center for Ukrainians affected by the war was established in the youth „Pop-up“ space.



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#CHOOSEKLAIPEDA

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of Russian origin.

At the first meeting, it was decided that we should become a connection point between those who need help and those who want to help. In addition, the greatest attention was paid to the collection and delivery of humanitarian aid to the people at the regions of Ukraine most affected by the war. Each member of our team had specific tasks, from coordination, communication with partners, to media involvement and technical work.

Our first and main project was the installation of an information center in Atgimimo Square. Initially, we planned to build an information stand where we could present all necessary information to refugees arriving in Klaipeda and people who want to help Ukraine. During the implementation, this project turned into a large information center. The „Klaipeda - European Youth Capital 2021“ project contributed a lot to this, offering to use a large container with furniture and windows that was standing in the Atgimimo Square. They also helped us with documents and leaflet printing. The Amberton Hotel provided us with electricity. On February 28, we opened the doors of the information center. The center was our team's office, a temporary storage place for the things people brought in, and a place where everyone could come for a cup of tea and share their worries and frustrations.

Despite the fact that the information center was closed on April 4, the initiative was active until May, and some of its projects are currently coming to an end. During that time, 400 Ukrainians visited our information center. They received a variety of assistance, ranging from various basic means of livelihood to accommodation. In Klaipeda we organized 14 events for refugees, for example, weekly events for children that took place at the LCC International University. We collected 1,900 EUR for the first batch of insulin, which was sent to the Chernihiv region. Later, we collected another 2,300 EUR and received a 3,000 USD grant to purchase insulin. This shipment

is currently awaiting delivery to Ukraine. We also contributed to the organization of at least six buses with humanitarian aid to Ukraine, sent through Klaipeda's „Rodyna“ Ukrainian community center. While working on this project, we worked closely with „Rodyna“. This Ukrainian community in Klaipeda did an enormous job, sacrificing time, health, personal resources, etc. Their leader, Lidia Trygubas, is an example of service leadership, Artemas Chuvakovas, like many other people working in the institution, drove to the border and back to deliver aid and bring back people. It was a great experience to work together for the good of Ukraine.

It is important to mention that we would not have implemented anything without the help of other local organizations and authorities. We all feel infinite gratitude to the Lithuanians who helped us and Ukraine. I had no idea that there could be such unity and concentration, and the contribution of such projects as „Klaipeda - European Youth Capital 2021“ and the opportunity for us to work. A cafeteria was also established in the information center, which prepared food for our volunteers. Klaipeda University and the LCC International University provided us with premises for temporary storage of items. City councillors helped accommodate the refugees, even if they arrived at night. KLAS organization contributed with technical equipment. Lithuanian Parliament member Ligita Girskiene helped us with organizational issues. We also cooperated with Jevgenijus Sokolovas and his organization providing assistance to Ukraine.

All in all, it was a huge collective effort involving so many people that it's hard to even remember them all. This time was at the same time the most difficult in our lives, but at the same time full of new hope and faith in humanity and the values that unite us.

Thank you, Lithuania!



In this photo you see the permanent volunteers of this initiative. Top row from left to right: Nina Kurochka, Illia Tkachenko, Julia Syrovatka, Diana Diasamidze, Olia Ivanova, Daria Rudneva, Sofia Mamedova. Bottom row: Arina Dzhendzhera, Yulia Odynets, Daria Meshcheriakova, Oleksii Korotych

LEADERSHIP

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During the „Klaipeda-European Youth Capital 2021“ project, we aimed to promote entrepreneurship among young people. Various initiatives: from a cycle of shows where entrepreneurs shared entrepreneurial success stories, experiences and advice, to events dedicated to the integration of young people from abroad in Klaipeda. The coordinator of the „Leadership“ platform shared the goals and experience of one of the most innovative events.

A vibrant outdoor event where young people are covered in colorful paint splatters. In the foreground, a young man is being piggybacked by a young woman, both smiling and covered in paint. The background shows other participants and a statue under a blue sky. The text "LEADERSHIP" is written vertically on the left, and "DARE TO BE" is repeated in a circular pattern on the right.

INTERVIEW WITH INDRE RAZBADAUSKAITE-VENSKĖ.

THE AIM IS TO RAISE AND BRING TOGETHER LEADERS IN KLAIPEDA

So, we want to share good examples of your events. First of all, we would like to ask, for what purpose did you organize the event „Youth for Youth“?

The purpose of „Youth for Youth“ events is to bring together future and existing youth leaders to learn the basics of entrepreneurship together, examine business problems and encourage young people to create their own businesses. At these events, we had more than 14 Klaipeda businesses, organizations and associations („Neptunas“, Association of Klaipeda Youth Organizations „Apskritasis Stalas“, „Popa Boat“, Klaipeda Science and Technology Park, „Funk Gang“, „10 Tiltu“, „Lyderiams.lt“, Klaipeda open youth spaces, etc.). As we know, challenges were willingly shared and together with young people new ways to solve them were discussed. The format of these events was such, because we wanted to gather and familiarize young people with everyday business problems. After all, it is important to know this for everyone who is thinking about his business in the future.

What would you point out as the most important results?

The first event, which took place in a hybrid format back in 2020, gathered over 120 participants. The most important thing is that schoolchildren and students from all over Lithuania were brought together, who studied business situations together with their teams. Learned more about business and leadership. But one thing is clear, for some it was the first event of its kind, and it left a great impression because it showed the true reality of business and revealed how sometimes it is difficult to survive in the competitive battle. I remember when one of the teams had to deal with a situation presented by

the „Neptunas“ basketball team, and to our surprise, not even the young people had heard of „Neptunas“. But during the presentation, they created a unique and witty advertising video clip, which impressed not only the representatives of „Neptunas“, but also all participants. At the second event, we also received the interest of foreign participants, who looked at the presented business tasks in a different way - they applied the business practices seen and applied in their countries. In addition, we received a lot of positive feedback from the participants, who encouraged the continuation of the events and suggested which business situations they would like to explore further. Finally, we received interest from businesses to submit tasks, encourage young people to create their own businesses and find new opportunities for cooperation.

Why is it important to organize such events and how to ensure their continuity?

This cycle of events encouraged young people to take an interest in business issues and to look for the talent of a future entrepreneur in themselves. In addition, we noticed that talents and other important leadership competencies were revealed in teamwork. Indeed, this event format is an important step in starting to think about your own business and we want to believe that we will be able to continue these events. We have planned that this event would be organized this year as well.

Tell us briefly what is the event „Welcome day“?

The purpose of the „Welcome day“ event is to gather foreign young people and inspire them to create, work and act in Klaipeda. We wanted to show that the

city of Klaipeda has potential, is hospitable to young people, and here you can really find work and business opportunities for everyone.

Why is it important to integrate foreign students into city life? What would you single out the biggest challenges preventing foreigners from choosing Klaipeda?

While teaching at the LCC International University, I noticed that more and more often foreign students ask me how to establish themselves and start creating their own business in Klaipeda. After digging deeper and performing an initial analysis together with „Lyderiams.lt“ director Dovaldas Kuslikis and „Klaipeda ID“ director Kristina Postornak, we saw that the cycle of such events is extremely important for Klaipeda. So, the need was clear; it helped us all to come together and offer events to the foreign youth of Klaipeda“.

An informative event was included in their cycle, where young people could find information about the necessary documents and conditions for working or staying in Klaipeda. We received more than 70 participants. Success stories were shared by foreigners who live in Klaipeda and have established their own businesses. Then, at the next event, young people learned more about how to create their personal brand and prepare their CV. Well, and finally, we had events where entrepreneurs could meet young people and offer jobs.

During all the events, we noticed that the biggest challenges are related to language barriers and lack of information. After all, it is important to know what documents to fill out and what to do next in order to register your newly created business.

Are there plans to continue the events?

After a successful start in 2021, we are again planning a cycle of events in the

autumn-winter period of 2022.

Indre Razbadauskaite-Venske: „We are happy that during all the events and activities we inspired a lot of youth representatives to be more interested in leadership in business and life. Our desire and goal is to raise leaders and bring them together in Klaipeda. We want Klaipeda to be a seen and heard port of youth leaders. In addition to our big events such as „Youth for Youth“, „Social entrepreneurship camps“, „Welcome day“ and others, we visited schools, where we interacted with students and together, we discussed how to reveal themselves and share leadership lessons with each other. In general, we noticed that the topic of leadership is relevant for every youth representative. Many of them cannot confidently say that they are leaders, although leadership can be understood broadly. So, we want to wish that each of us can see and enable the qualities of a leader in ourselves.“

The entrepreneurship promotion event „Youth for Youth“ will also take place this year.

You can follow all the information on CHOOSE KLAIPEDA Facebook and Instagram accounts or chooseklaipeda.eu platforms.

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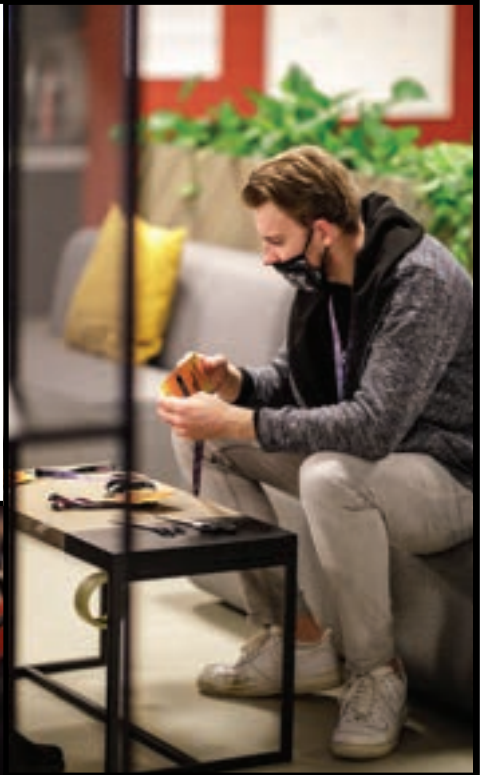


INDRE RAZBADAUSKAITE - VENSKE

ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROMOTION EVENT “YOUTH FOR YOUTH”



**NOVEMBER 11-12,
2021**



LIETUVOS JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT

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Lithuanian Junior Achievement (LJA) is the first non-governmental organization in Lithuania, successfully implementing progressive economic education, entrepreneurship education, financial literacy and career education programs in general education schools, vocational training institutions and higher education institutions for almost 30 years. This organization aims to inspire and pre-

pare young people to achieve success in the global market, strives to be the main partner of business, educators and policymakers throughout Lithuania, to work in the development of youth education and the country's economy. The organization unites more than 400 schools, 500 teachers and 23,300 students.





INTERVIEW WITH THE FOUNDERS OF THE YOUNG COMPANY “DENTINULLAS”.

“DENTINULLAS” - SMALL HABITS FOR BIG CHANGES!

The „Dentinullas“ team is the best example that everything is possible if you want it. Driven by self-realization, and at the same time taking care not only of people's health, but also of the environment, they created a successful business idea. We spoke with them about challenges, achievements and motivation to move forward.

Our team: Agniete Kucinskaite - the general director of the company, who is also responsible for production. Neda Bagdonaite - marketing manager. Austėja Janusaite - finance manager. Augustas Nevardauskas - head of personnel.

Tell us more about the project you created, how long have you been developing this idea? What inspired to create the „Dentinullas“ product? What achievements of your business would you like to share?

„Dentinullas“ is a toothpaste powder with a mission. There are 24.4 trillion microplastic particles in the oceans. This is equivalent to about 27 rockets ready for flight for the Apollo 4 mission. Microplastics are used in many products including cosmetics and toothpaste. Additionally, toothpaste tubes are difficult to recycle, so 1.5 billion toothpaste tubes end up in landfills every year. If you like to travel by plane, toothpaste can be a real headache because it is a fluid. Realizing the extent of these problems, we created „Dentinullas“ toothpaste powder.

Our mission is clear - small habits for big changes. After 55 failed attempts, we developed an organic formula that ensures hygiene - our toothpaste powder is packaged in a glass bottle! „Dentinullas“ powder is environmentally friendly - it is 100% natural, microplastic and sulphate free and suitable for vegans. The main ingredient is bentonite clay. It cleans plaque, remineralizes tooth enamel,

heals its damage and polishes it.

We are proud not only of our invented formula and the difficulties we have overcome. We participated in live and virtual exhibitions in Lithuania. At the Christmas Expo, we were recognized as the most sustainable young company in Lithuania. We won the first place at the Klaipeda regional and Lithuanian national Expo and won the right to represent our country at the largest entrepreneurship event in Europe „Gen_E 2022“. This achievement was crowned by numerous interviews, an appearance on „Delfi TV“ and the virtual „Gen_E 2022“ fair. At „Gen_E 2022“ held in Tallinn, we received good emotions, inspiration, and made a lot of acquaintances. Our team leader Agniete Kucinskaite won the European Alumni Leadership Award! That was the most amazing seven-month trip that opened up the opportunity to hold the Lithuanian flag in Europe!

What motivated you to implement this idea and what motivates you to move forward?

The biggest motivation for us was self-realization through the present-day problems of the world. We created the company and our product because we care about the environment in which we live. If there is a way to change and contribute to a greener future, we will do it. Moving forward, each of us felt our own personal development - we had to leave our comfort zone, learn to work in a team and trust each other, separate friendship and work relationships. Also on this path we were supported, taught and inspired to move forward by the coolest Lithuanian Junior Achievement team!

Business is not for everyone. Would you agree or disagree with this statement? Make an argument.

In our opinion, not all people are made for business and not everyone should be an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship as a trait is very necessary in the era of postmodernism, where you need to be able to plan your time and „sell“ yourself. If we talk about creating a business, the most important thing is the desire, because only from it comes self-motivation. In business, as in any other activity, you need to discover yourself and realize your personal potential in it. There are a lot of personality types in the world and it would be very strange if everyone could become an entrepreneur, because it is defined by the inner world of a person. Everyone can be part of a business and realize themselves in the field they like, but not everyone can become a business creator. Instead, having the opportunity to participate in the process of creating a business is a great way to try to understand what path to choose

later on while still in school.

What are the main challenges you face in developing your young company? What do you think would help avoid these challenges?

One of the main challenges was finding the formula. Since we were developing toothpaste powder, we faced the challenge of safe consumption. Our toothpaste is made from 100% natural ingredients, so we had to figure out how to create flavours and consistencies that satisfied our customers. We solved this challenge by working in a team and collaborating with teachers. Another challenge we faced was the motivation of the team in the business journey. It's hard to stay positive when the project is year-round and most of the work is done outside of school. Everything depends a lot on personal and team moti-



vation and the desire to grow. We used to solve these problems by talking as a team, and in difficult moments - by taking a breather by the sea.

What would you advise peers who are considering, but are still hesitant to take advantage of the Lithuanian Junior Achievement program?

Do not hesitate for a second and join the best educational program, where you will gain not theoretical, but practical knowledge. Teamwork, motivation, positivity, passion, stubbornness, patience - these are the basics of life, which the Junior Achievement organization helps to understand. Dare to have big dreams, because there are no dreams too big, only people are too small, and with Junior Achievement you can realize that you are much more than you think. Here you unlock your potential and start burning

with the desire to improve and get to know people. Junior Achievement is the best adventure of our life, after which we realized that we are not the future, but the present! As young people, we have the right, the duty and the power to change the world according to our values, and starting a business helps us to say this publicly.

LJA – We are raising future leaders of Lithuania!

www.jaeurope.org

facebook.com/Dentinullas

instagram.com/Dentinullas




OUT OF THE

#CHOOSEKLAIPEDA

#CHOOSEKLAIPEDA

#CHOOSE



OUT OF THE BOX is a platform of the „Klaipėda-European Youth Capital 2021“ project, during which we created and implemented different, unusual ideas. With their help we solved the challenges relevant to young people in the city, we made mistakes and learned from it. During the project, the youth of Klaipėda had the opportunity to implement their ideas with the help of the platform team. One of them has become a new tradition - the youth space during the Sea Festival.

THE BOX

EKLAIPEDA

#CHOOSEKLAIPEDA

#CHOOSEKLAIPEDA

NEW TRADITION - YOUTH SPACE AT THE SEA FESTIVAL

The youth space implemented during the Sea Festival showed an excellent example of how young people can become not only participants, but also implementers of ideas during major city festivals. In the youth space, there was an opportunity to organize various performances and activities so that the city's residents and guests could see the young talents. The tradition continues!

“YOUTH SPOT” – A CREATIVE SPACE FOR YOUTH AT THE SEA FESTIVAL



**JULY 23-24,
2021**

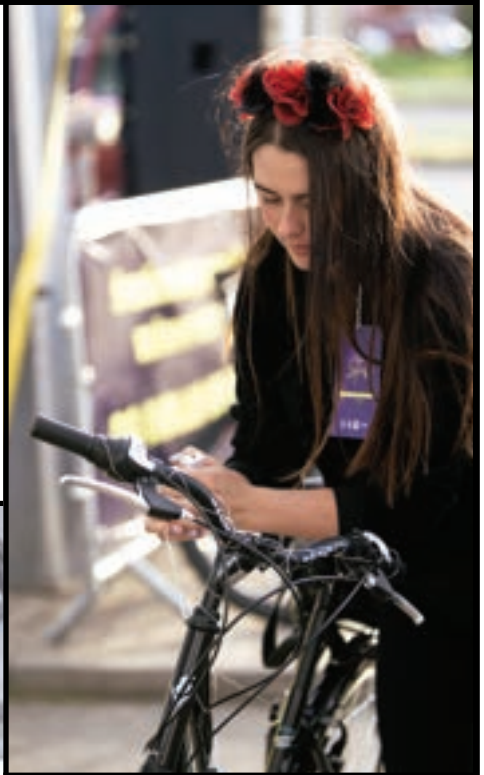


CREATIVE YOUTH FESTIVAL

“CITY STARS: FROM THE SHOPPING CENTRE MOLAS TO THE PEER”



AUGUST 12-14, 2021



The festival, organized by young Klaipeda residents, kept Klaipeda awake at night and united the city from the southern part (shopping centre „Molas“) to the northern part of the city (northern pier). During the festival, a drive-in cinema was shown at the initiative of the Klaipeda State College „Alumni“ club. In order to draw attention to the necessity of choosing an eco-friendly vehicle, illuminated bicycle parade went through the city and the preparation for it took place at SC „Molas“. A competition of young music bands was held, which was crowned by a concert by the group „Sisters on wire“ and a disco at the northern pier, where the winners of the parade were awarded.

“BRAINSTORM FOR YOUR PROJECT”

CREATIVE WORKSHOP FOR THE
PREPARATION OF PROJECT APPLICATIONS
WITH THE SUPPORT OF MENTORS



**DECEMBER 9-10,
2021**



JEDIG



JEDIG



JEDIG.KTMC

INTERVIEW WITH THE BUSINESS WOMAN GABIJA URNAITE.

OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE AND THEY WILL ALWAYS APPEAR

Klaipeda resident Gabija Urnaite, a young entrepreneur who graduated from the twelfth grade this year, claims to be a person who is not afraid to take risks. This is confirmed by the fact that, being so young, she has her own business, which has been of interest not only to Klaipeda residents for two years. In addition to her business, last summer the girl was actively involved in the life of the „Choose Klaipeda“ team. With the help of like-minded people, events were organized that brought joy during the Sea Festival in the „Pop-up“ youth space. Gabija also contributed to the creation of the project attributes.

How did you come up with the idea of organizing events during the Sea Festival and in the Pop-up space?

My business team and I joined one of the Klaipeda young companies Expo. While being there, we received an offer from the „Choose Klaipeda“ team to participate in the Sea Festival. At that time, I didn't even hesitate and agreed, because I realized that it was a great opportunity for me and my business to appear to a much wider audience. After taking an interest in the activities of „Choose Klaipeda“, I thought that I could organize more events in the „Pop-up“ space that could interest people.

What events have you organized?

During the Sea Festival, I organized a fashion show performance, and in September I organized an event that I am also proud of, the „Sustainable Fashion Evening“.

Which event do you think went the best and which event are you most proud of? In my opinion, that was the Sea Festival fashion show. I am very proud that the first collection immediately appeared at the Sea Festival! The joy at that moment was overflowing because I couldn't be-

lieve that I, a young creator, was given such a great opportunity to show my work. This fashion show went very smoothly and afterwards we received many calls with offers to hold such a show in another place or to create another fashion show.

What were the most common challenges you faced when organizing events? The biggest challenge for me was finding models because many young people these days are insecure and embarrassed to appear in public. It was also difficult to attract viewers who cared about what they were seeing and where they were participating.

Did you need to encourage young people to participate in events?

It's a pity, but yes - a lot of them had to be encouraged. Of course, many acquaintances came to my events both out of interest in my work and for support. But the youth I don't know had to be really strongly encouraged to attend the event.

Are you still involved in organizing events?

Yes, I do. Now I usually do this at my school, but I never refuse offers to organize something interesting and unseen in Klaipeda.

Maybe after last summer you got more interest from other people? Maybe someone invited you to contribute to the organization of other events?

I had to contribute to the organization of other events, but many interested people invited me not as an event organizer, but as a participant or representative of my business. They were more interested in what I was creating.

What experience have you gained from organizing events?

I learned to communicate properly with people - that was the most important thing for me. I also learned to plan my time and try not to postpone plans and tasks, and to fulfil them as soon as possible.

Were you not afraid of great responsibility and load? How did you deal with it?

I like responsibility, it shows that other people trust you. It is because of my strong sense of responsibility that many people respect and trust me. The workload, as I mentioned, has taught me to plan my time and be on time. As for the workload, I can say that, especially during the pandemic, I have learned to sometimes even participate in several events at the same time. A heavy load of work and activities helps to arrange everything both in the mind and on the agenda so that everything goes smoothly.

You created pictures for „Choose Klaipeda“ attributes. What was the hardest and what was the easiest?

When creating this attribute, the most difficult thing was to draw drawings that would appeal to both the elderly and the young. The fact that my work is unusual, maybe, I would even call it, strange, bothered me a lot. Many do not understand it and accept it somewhat differently. So there was a lot of re-drawing and tweaking to get everything looking nice and neat. The easiest thing was to press the button to send the finished drawings.

How much time did you spend on their creations?

I spent a few weeks working on them. During that time, I tried to improve the drawings, and transferring the drawings to the program also took quite a lot of time.

Where did you get the ideas from?

All ideas in my work are born very unexpectedly. Sometimes it happens while sitting quietly on the sofa at home or on a park bench. The visual of the idea sud-

denly appears in front of my eyes and then I just write it down or draw a small sketch of it and then get creative. And these drawings were born while thinking about how to bring the youth and Klaipeda to one point. I won't hide it - these ideas came while sitting in classes. (Gabija said that she has had a passion for sewing for a long time. In this way, this interest led the girl to professional sewing studies. After gaining more practice there and talking to her entrepreneurship teacher, she decided to establish her own business „Jedig“. It is a business where the girl gives clothes and things a second life. Gabija also creates reusable bags with her team, for which she chooses the pictures herself.)

Your „Jedig“ business. Tell us how you came up with it?


My entrepreneurship teacher encouraged me to start this business. She invited me to her entrepreneurial group, where I had the idea to create this kind of business. As it developed, an additional idea emerged to offer people a service such as recycling and refurbishing clothes. I received the greatest support and encouragement from the school community, parents and friends.

How long has your business been developing and how is it going?

Our business has been in existence for two years. I am very happy about it. It is developing well. Of course, since all team members are high school graduates, we neglected the business a little during the exams, but we are currently returning to it at full capacity.

Has the team that has contributed to your business changed? Maybe there were like-minded people who willingly joined to work together?

At the very beginning of the business, our team looked completely different. But then we kept losing team members, they left. In the end it happened that I was left alone. This time was the most difficult, because then I didn't know what to do, the question was in my head: should I continue this business? But soon my best friend, who supported me from the start, joined me. Then another team member appeared. I had a lot more fun at that point. So far there



are three of us and we are also helped by the entrepreneurship teacher, who I have mentioned. I know there are few of us, but now we are keeping up with everything and we are continuing to develop our business.

You've mentioned before that you create reusable bags and give clothes a second life. You have also organized workshop-type training. What has changed in all this time?

Honestly nothing. We have stayed at these activities because we feel the demand. The only thing that changes is that new pictures appear on reusable bags. And, of course, there is more and more desire and ideas to create. What are people mostly interested in your business?

These are exclusive designs that we paint on our products. They are all figments of my imagination - you won't find them anywhere else. They are kind of weird, but most people like them.

Where can we find your products?

Our products can be viewed and purchased on social networks Instagram and Facebook. You can also contact me by private message.

You mentioned that you once had the idea of closing the business. Was it just one time?

I had such ideas more than once, more than twice. This happened because we are having a hard time with marketing. This is the reason why we are not reaching the larger audience we would like. But we always try to get out of the predicament and continue our activities, no

matter what we have to do. We just really love what we do.

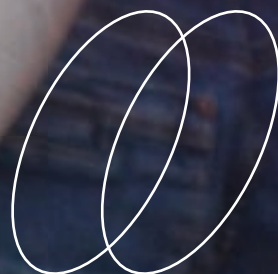
Wasn't it scary to start a business in the beginning?

Since there was great enthusiasm and the desire to start something, I didn't really feel fear. I always went with the idea that if I didn't succeed, I would have tried. And if I don't try, I won't know if this is my successful path or not. That's who I am - I'm never afraid to take risks. What advice would you give to a young person who has a business idea but is afraid to take it to the daylight or doesn't have the means to do so?

I would say to always try, the opportunities are there and they will always appear. When you start doing something, there are people who help and support you. It always happens like this. There are organizations such as Lithuanian Junior Achievement. They help young people start their own businesses. It was with their help that my business was born. The main thing is to do, because everything is possible.

Maybe this year you intend to participate in the Sea Festival with your products?

This year, I will participate in the Sea Festival with several collections of my works, which I hope will attract people's interest and positive reactions.





SEEK SPACE

“POP UP” EXPERIMENTAL SPACE

It is a mobile stage and a closed room for the implementation of youth initiatives. The space provides sound and lighting equipment, assistance and consultation in the implementation of activities. Last year, the space was located in Atgimimo Square. More than 30 different youth-initiated activities were organized in it during half a year. This year, the space was moved to Gluosniai cross street, next to AJE|+Skatepark.

Dainius Silingas
Phone: 8 621 99530
E-mail: direktorius@aukcentras.lt



NEW GRAFFITIES



Graffities are located here:

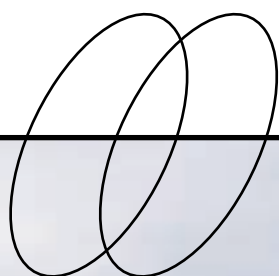
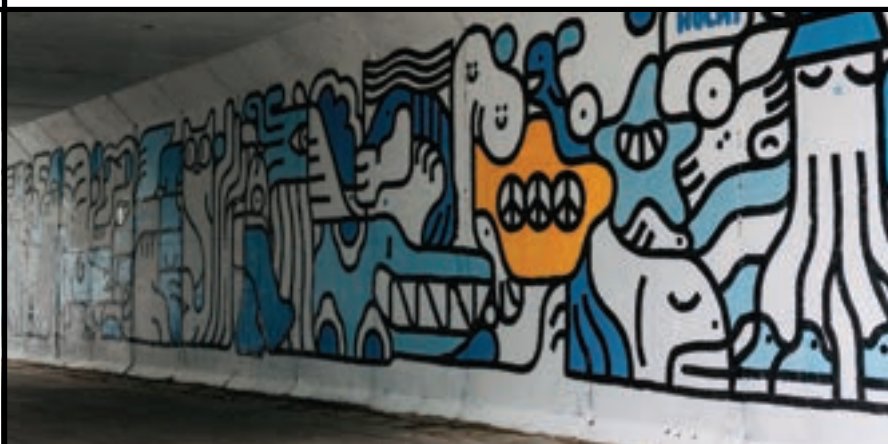
Baltijos roundabout pedestrian crossings 1–4

Shopping centre „Akropolis”

Castle site

Janonio St.

Northern Peer



GET 0.25 ENTRANCE POINTS USING THE YOUTH VOLUNTARY SERVICE PROGRAM!

MORE INFORMATION:

JRA.LT/JAUNIMUI/SUZINOK-DAUGIAU/SAVANORYSTE

YVS PROGRAM MANAGER SANDRA GAUCIUTE
PHONE: +370 633 21906 | E-MAIL: GINTARE.JOTEIKAITE@JRA.LT



MORE ABOUT
SELF-REALISATION
OPPORTUNITIES IN
KLAIPEDA CITY

Youth Voluntary Service - an intensive 6-month long volunteering program for young people aged 14 to 29, during which young people volunteer for an average of 40 hours/month in a chosen accredited host organization, meet once a month with a mentor(s) appointed by the organization organizing the volunteering activity, learn to overcome difficulties, learn to reflect on experience and identify lessons learned, formulate directions for improvement.

The YVS program is an opportunity not only to discover a field of activity that you like, but also to get to know yourself better, to develop general competencies and to strengthen your self-confidence. Volunteers who complete more than 3 months of service obtain a YVS Certificate - a document confirming the skills acquired or strengthened during the service, but only 6 months (at least 35 hours/month) of continuous service provides recognition of 0.25 of the entrance score when entering the first graduate studies.



DARE TO BE
DARE TO BE
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MISSION OF THE OPEN YOUTH CENTRE – CREATE A FOUNDATION FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

Klaipeda Queen Luiza Youth Center structural division Open youth center is a place for young personalities to blossom, nurture their value perception, discuss issues of concern to young people, search for and discover ways to solve problems. The Open Youth Center started its activities in the city of Klaipeda in

2009, and in 2013 became a structural unit of the Klaipeda Queen Luiza Youth Center and now successfully continues its work. Since 2013 until 2021 The open youth center in the city was known as Open Youth Spaces.

In the open youth center, young people (14-29 years old) are given the opportunity to safely spend their free time, engage in activities that are interesting to them, and, if necessary, solve everyday challenges and questions together with the centre's staff. In this way, by participating in joint activities, young people deepen their communication, understanding, empathy skills and create the foundations of a more sustainable society.

Moreover, at the Open Youth Center (I. Simonaitytes St. 24, Klaipeda) young people are welcomed by an excellent team of employees, an environment adapted to leisure: music, creative, dance spaces, a gym and various board games, billiards, table tennis, etc.

From February 1, 2022 the open youth center invited its visitors to another new, modern premises, located in Paryžiaus Komunos St. 16A. In the new unique design environment, energetic youth can develop their general and professional competences, apply information and creative technologies to implement their new ideas, develop social responsibility and citizenship, communicate and cooperate with various non-governmental organizations and other institutions. This Open Youth unit has spaces for conferences, interactive learning, a gym and a youth space where you can play board games, table tennis, foosball or switch on your „Playstation 4“.

This year, the Open Youth Center even implements two projects financed by the Department of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour: „Platform“ and „Street for Youth“.

The „Platform“ project aims to help young people feel safer and more confident in today's online platform, where various types of psychological and moral crimes and bullying take place. With the „Platform“ project, the Open Youth Center will carry out various activities, preventive classes, psychological consultations, mental hygiene activities, training for young people and employees, supervisions and interviews, pre-

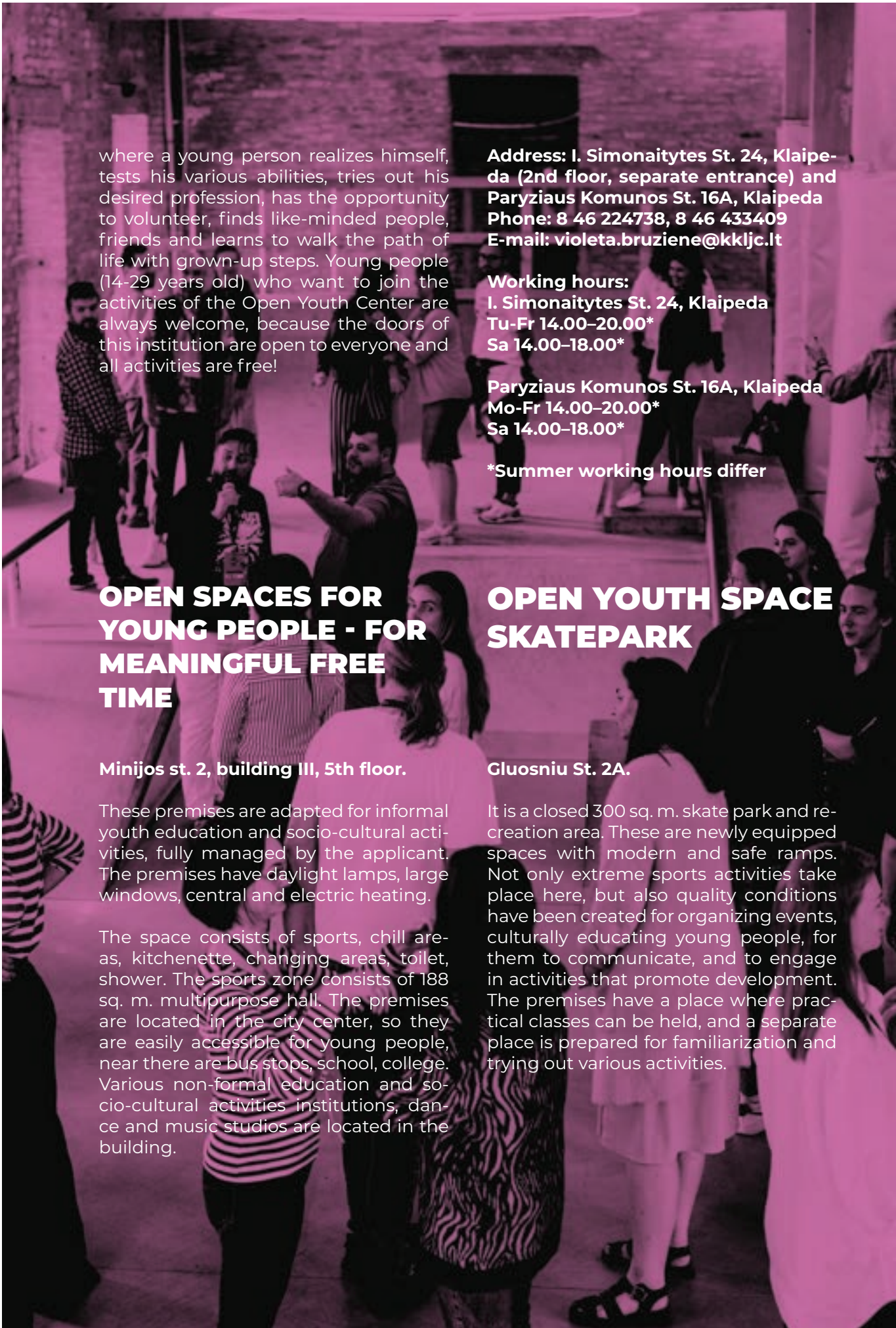
sentations of activities, meetings with employees of other open youth centres, social partners.

The project „Street for youth“ aims to reduce the social exclusion of young people who spend time on the street and increase their opportunities to fully participate in the life of the society. Various activities are organized in order to establish warm relations with young people based on mutual respect and trust, providing all the necessary help to young people, providing information on various issues or directing them to certain institutions in the city of Klaipeda. Also, employees prepare individual consultations for young people, where absolute confidentiality is ensured. The work is carried out in the southern part of Klaipeda. During the cold season, youth workers visit shopping centres and work with young people.

This year, the Open Youth Center presents another novelty - the education „Virtual reality in another person's shoes“. Using virtual reality glasses, students have a unique opportunity to really feel, at least for a short time, what it means to have a mobility, vision or hearing disability and to better understand the harm of bullying. This is one of the strategic initiatives of the European Youth Capital programme. After the screening, there are discussions together with the educators of the Open Youth Center, during which the students discuss deeper about what empathy is and what forms of empathy and understanding are really needed.

From April 1, a youth information and counselling center started operating in the Open Youth Center, which provides relevant information. Therefore, the Open Youth Center plays an important role as an intermediary between young people and state and municipal institutions, actively cooperating between them. The Open Youth Center has also had a tradition of volunteering for many years. By the way, volunteers are from both Lithuania and foreign countries.

The open youth centre is an institution



where a young person realizes himself, tests his various abilities, tries out his desired profession, has the opportunity to volunteer, finds like-minded people, friends and learns to walk the path of life with grown-up steps. Young people (14-29 years old) who want to join the activities of the Open Youth Center are always welcome, because the doors of this institution are open to everyone and all activities are free!

Address: I. Simonaitytes St. 24, Klaipėda (2nd floor, separate entrance) and Paryžiaus Komunos St. 16A, Klaipėda
Phone: 8 46 224738, 8 46 433409
E-mail: violeta.bruziene@kkljc.lt

Working hours:
I. Simonaitytes St. 24, Klaipėda
Tu-Fr 14.00–20.00*
Sa 14.00–18.00*

Paryžiaus Komunos St. 16A, Klaipėda
Mo-Fr 14.00–20.00*
Sa 14.00–18.00*

***Summer working hours differ**

OPEN SPACES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE - FOR MEANINGFUL FREE TIME

Minijos st. 2, building III, 5th floor.

These premises are adapted for informal youth education and socio-cultural activities, fully managed by the applicant. The premises have daylight lamps, large windows, central and electric heating.

The space consists of sports, chill areas, kitchenette, changing areas, toilet, shower. The sports zone consists of 188 sq. m. multipurpose hall. The premises are located in the city center, so they are easily accessible for young people, near there are bus stops, school, college. Various non-formal education and socio-cultural activities institutions, dance and music studios are located in the building.

OPEN YOUTH SPACE SKATEPARK

Gluosniu St. 2A.

It is a closed 300 sq. m. skate park and recreation area. These are newly equipped spaces with modern and safe ramps. Not only extreme sports activities take place here, but also quality conditions have been created for organizing events, culturally educating young people, for them to communicate, and to engage in activities that promote development. The premises have a place where practical classes can be held, and a separate place is prepared for familiarization and trying out various activities.

INTERVIEW WITH A RESIDENT OF KLAIPEDA -
PIJUS CEIKAUSKAS.

STREET ART IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE ART LANGUAGES

Street art is still viewed with scepticism - not everyone thinks that the drawings on the walls decorate the city, although for young people it is a form of self-expression and, at the same time, of putting urban spaces to use. We talked about this with Pijus Ceikauskas, one of the creators of street art, who claims that the SPACES platform created by „Choose Klaipeda“ helped to look at the importance of street art and took a very important step towards change.

The SPACES platform of the „Klaipeda - European Youth Capital 2021“ project - how is it important for young people and the city?

Such projects support the so-called combustion. It is important for the young creator to know that there are platforms for all creative expressions. Street arts, wall paintings, activities with young people, discussions - at first glance, in the context of the city, this is a drop in the ocean. But in my opinion, it helps the artist to grow, and at the same time, his ideas and visions for the city improve.

Are there many spaces in the streets of Klaipeda that can be used for creativity?

One of the reasons why I returned to Klaipeda was the project „Klaipeda - European Youth Capital“. It helped turning the eyes to the corners of the city, cross streets, industrial zones. Those places seemed to be waiting for someone to put them to use. This is motivated by the small involvement of street art in the big city and a kind of lack of it. I observe all angles - from electrical panels, poles to abandoned buildings, fences. I have a whole wall of photographs from urban spaces, which I keep reviewing and thinking about what exactly should appear in that place, how to attract the attention of the passer-by, I am consid-

ering whether to integrate my work into the urban landscape.

What challenges do street art creators usually face?

Some of the challenges are related to me as an artist, when you puzzle over what would fit best in that particular place: whether it could be a painting on the wall, a plywood installation, or a knotted bridge. It is also important to come to terms with temporality and to understand that the creation left on the walls of the city no longer belongs to you, and anyone can change it, deface it, paint it, break it, tear it down. Well, and among the challenges I could include the educational side of this art direction, when you have to educate both with your own language and with works on the streets, to send a message to municipalities, passers-by and other creators that this is not just some random thing that appeared on the wall. It is an effective and easily accessible art language for everyone - street art.

Street art is often viewed quite sceptically. In your opinion - why and who could help change this attitude?

Good examples of replacements. Spaces for that, engaging young people and identifying problems and solving them rather than trying to avoid them. Many questions arise: what is wrong with creativity in the streets? Why is it the way it is? Is it art at all? So, the „Choose Klaipeda“ platform SPACES is one of the first steps that can change the negative attitude. And there is no single solution to such topics. European cities are simply blooming with street art, graffiti culture and the quality of these works. Klaipeda needs several strong, inspiring initiatives, so that more and more people would open up and more easily recognize and accept street art.

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What does street art mean to you - self-expression or not only?

It's a kind of therapy for me. The process itself, from the idea to its realization, is important - all the elements that made me start to draw and create can be found here. People's reactions, observing the city and being a part of it, planning, crystallization of thoughts. I see street art as one of the most influential art languages - here you have airwaves 24/7 and your audience is the city - not only people, but also animals, vegetation, vehicles, shadows of buildings, street pavements. On the one hand, it seems like infinite freedom - after all, there is so much space, you can do absolutely anything. But here is the catch - responsibility for every word written, situation recorded, sensitive topic commented on - this can lead to certain actions and reactions even without your knowledge. It inspires me when I go for a walk and see a work that took a lot of effort and time, but it ended up not in the exhibition hall, but integrated into the city thanks to the author - it's such a kind of surprise moment.

PIJUS CEIKAUSKAS

NORTH – SOUTH



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NORTH-SOUTH is the platform of the „Klaipeda-European Youth Capital 2021“ project, which invited young people to create new traditions, discover new places for various activities closer to home - not only in the central part of the city, but also in the southern and northern parts.

This helped to organize festivals dedicated to street art and old crafts and traditions for the first time in Klaipėda; and the youth picnic on the seashore has a lot of potential to become a popular event that invites communities to one place to have a good time. But about everything first-hand...

DONATA DULKE

INTERVIEW WITH DONATA DULKE.

THE GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT - YOUTH'S ABILITY TO CREATE AND ACT

THE KEY TO SUCCESS IS THE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Speaking about how they succeeded to involve young people in the „Klaipėda - Youth Capital of Lithuania 2021“ project, Donata Dulke says that the RM-SOS (rights, means, space, opportunity, support) youth participation model helped a lot here, i.e. the voice of the youth was heard. „Young people were provided with tools, spaces, emotional and physical support to create, improve, develop, build contact networks, achieve both personal and project results - young people performed the functions of idea generators, creators and organizers“.

Donata is happy that even after the end of the project, some of the traditions created during it are continued to this day - for example, the idea that arose at the youth picnic - to invite young performers from Klaipėda to city events and concerts, thus providing greater opportunities for the development and creative potential of young performers.

ABILITY TO MAKE DECISIONS BUILD CONFIDENCE

As one of the greatest achievements in the implementation of the goals of the project platform, Donata names the ability of young people to organize, create, act - the assembled team of volunteers is actively involved in this year's events in Klaipėda - „Europeade“, Klaipėda Castle Jazz Festival.

Donata claims that the opportunity to make decisions gives young people more self-confidence, motivation and the desire not only to act on their own, but also to involve other people. „By creating traditions of their inclusion, the city is renewed, more young people are seen at events, and at the same time, the desire to create and stay in Klaipėda is encouraged, which the project also helped to see with different eyes.“

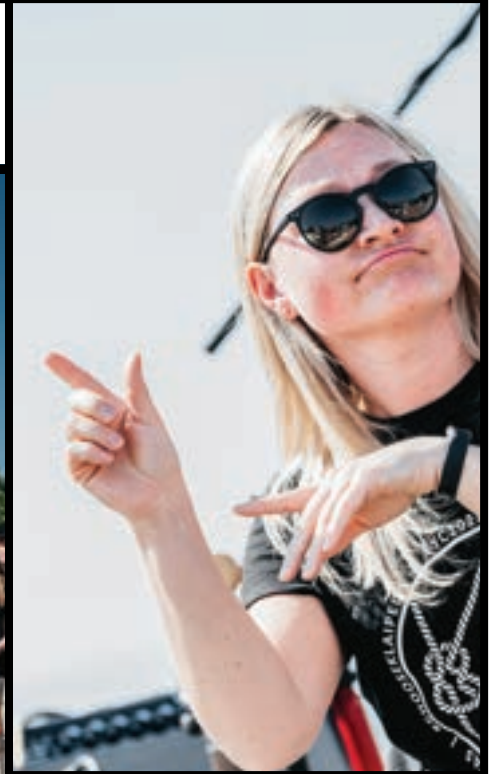
„Young people rediscovered the coastal zone - the northern pier, Melnragė II. Not only the updated infrastructure of the city contributed to this, but also the good memories of organizing events in that area.“

Donata Dulke

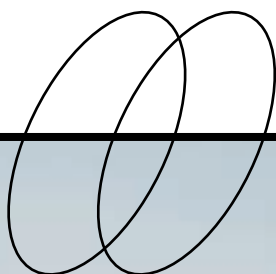
Phone: +370 601 75094

Email: donata.dulke@smk.lt

YOUTH PICNIC



**JUNE 18,
2021**



STREET ART FESTIVAL “ART GATES”



**JUNE 21-28,
2021**

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TRADITIONAL CRAFTS AND ART FESTIVAL “GABYA”



**JULY 16-18,
2021**





INTERVIEW WITH ODETA GIEDRAITYTE.

“KLAIPEDA BY LOCAL” – THERE REALLY ARE THINGS TO DO IN KLAIPEDA!

It is not uncommon to hear that Klaipeda is boring, there is a lack of activities for young people, that is why many people associate this city only with the sea. However, the tour organizer Odetta Giedraityte, the creator of the “Klaipeda by Local” project, says that all you have to do is open the door to curiosity, which will lead you to places full of discoveries and sensations in the port city.

Briefly tell us about yourself and your work. How did you get the idea to start it?

I am Odetta, a young travel organizer who loves Klaipeda madly and sees the potential of this region to grow and prosper. Even before I finished my studies in tourism administration and event organization, I was convinced that I would never live in Klaipeda, I would look for happiness abroad, so I went to Japan, England, Hawaii, and tried to live in Vilnius... After wandering around the world, my values changed and the accumulated experience followed me back home, to Klaipeda. And then the great love for the city began, exploring it and creating the project “Klaipeda by Local”, in which I aim to show locals and guests that there really are things to do in Klaipeda and why it is good to live here!

TOP places in Klaipeda, which must be visited not only by city guests, but also by locals.

Finding TOP places and exploring them is my passion!

TOP 1 - nature: our Smiltieė beach, forests and the Yacht Club, which has a great restaurant, a soothing view of yachts and the lagoon.

TOP 2 - artistic space: “10 Tiltu kiemas” (artists’ courtyard). Here you can eat delicious food or drink coffee, and also visit artistic spaces and participate in events.

TOP 3 – two entertainment and cultural spaces: “Hofas” (concerts, food, informal environment, terrace overlooking the lagoon) and “Svyturys Bhouse” (tours, tast-

ings, concerts, snacks and a terrace with a view of the city).

TOP 4 - historical and a free viewing place: The castle and the views of the city and the lagoon from it.

TOP 5 - active leisure time: a wonderful cycling and jogging path from Vasaros Estrada to Holland’s Cap. If you like to move your body in nature, then this place is perfect for that (you will pass many like-minded people on the way, but don’t forget to catch your breath on the cliffs of Holland’s cap!)

The discoveries that surprised you the most?

It was a surprising feeling when you live in your native land, where you seem to know practically everything, but it turns out that there is still a lot to know or re-discover. I was especially surprised by the fact that there are very, very many people who believe in an even better future for Klaipeda!

What would you say to those who claim that Klaipeda is boring and there is nothing for young people to do here?

Once upon a time, I also thought that there was nothing to do here, especially for a young person. But if I had devoted more energy to opening up to curiosity and just searching, I think I would have distracted myself less around the world and started creating the “Klaipeda by Local” project earlier. So, I wish people to open the doors of their curiosity more. And if that door is too hard to open, write to me - I will help you push it, search for it, find it.

What would you advise those who travel and want to see something new?

There is one sincere advice - learn to stop, breathe in the air of a new place, look at the nature or the people around you, slowly enjoy the feeling here and thank for the opportunity to live like this and then start again on new paths.

COLOURS

The platform of the „Klaipėda-European Youth Capital 2021“ project invited young people to reveal themselves, because each of us wants and has the right to be who we are. In this way, we encouraged to speak out loud about the

daily challenges of LGBTIQ+ youth, national minorities or young people with various disabilities in our city, we looked for ways and solved them together, creating a friendlier city for young people.

On August 28, 2021, the LGBT* conference „Colours“ dedicated to the prevention of bullying was held in the event hall of Amberton Hotel Klaipėda. The conference was attended by representatives of human rights, youth organizations, the LGBT+ community, Klaipėda city municipality representatives, politicians, etc. They not only reviewed the prevalence of bullying among young people, discussed the consequences of this problem for the city and its residents, but also got acquainted with bullying prevention projects that have already been implemented; a memorandum „On the creation of LGBT+ support groups in Klaipėda city schools“ was signed.

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EXHIBITION “HUNGRY FOR LOVE”

AN EXHIBITION PROMOTING EMPATHY AND INCREASING SOLIDARITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, FOREIGNERS AND LGBT+ YOUNG PEOPLE. THE EXHIBITION WAS CREATED TOGETHER WITH THE ARTIST JOLITA VAITKUTE TO REFLECT THE TRUE STORIES OF THE PEOPLE OF KLAIPEDA.





FIRST TIME IN LITHUANIA!



#CHOOSEKLAIPEDA

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On August 21, 2021, the „Finger Creators“ concert was held for the first time at the Klaipeda boathouse. This is an unusual and unique concert program, which was translated into sign language - the concert was intended for hearing impaired and deaf people, who for the first time could participate in such a concert adapted specifically for this disability.

The musical pieces were translated on stage by the chairman of the Klaipeda Deaf Youth Organization with her team, and the translation was also broadcasted on the LED screen.





INTERVIEW WITH ARTURAS RUDOMANSKIS.

“TO BE TOLERANT IS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE DIVERSITY OF THE WORLD”

Tolerance is a sensitive and undoubtedly very important topic in all of our lives, especially among young people. The Tolerant Youth Association, which carries out its activities in various fields, actively contributes to the tolerant society and youth education. We talked about the meaning of tolerance, taboo topics and trying to break free from stereotypes with Arturas Rudomanskis, the project manager and chairman of the Tolerant Youth Association, a member of the Vilnius City Youth Affairs Council and the Vilnius NGO Council.

What is the main mission and goals of the Tolerant Youth Association (hereinafter - TYA)?

TYA operates in the fields of human rights and youth activities and is one of the few youth organizations in Lithuania exclusively specializing in human rights issues. During the 17 successful years of the Association's existence, its employees, members and volunteers gained experience by carrying out a wide range of activities - trainings, educational events, awareness campaigns, civic actions, intercultural education classes, expressing a public position on human rights issues, especially related to the LGBT+ community. TYA unites over 200 members in Lithuania, including Klaipėda. More than 70 projects have been implemented during the entire period of activity, and long-term institutional memory has been accumulated.

The association is proud of its main direction of activity „To develop public respect and tolerance for a person, his identity and choice and to promote the integration of socially vulnerable groups“. This means that the Association has a lot of space for members to express themselves and search for ways

to contribute to the fostering of democratic values. The Tolerant Youth Association, in pursuit of its goals, implements the mission of uniting youth and older persons in solidarity, with the aim of ensuring human rights and creating favourable discourse for diversity, influencing decision-makers, promoting public respect and tolerance.

Why do you think taboo topics still exist?

Equality and freedom have been singled out as pillars of democracy since ancient times. These principles are realized through the equality of all citizens before the law and equal civil and political rights. For many years, Lithuania lived in an undemocratic regime - part of the Soviet Union. It did not adequately protect the following rights: life, prohibition of torture, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, privacy and family life, property, physical freedom. Therefore, in the long run, due to various bad experiences, painful lessons learned from power structures, adapting to the circumstances, protecting themselves and the people close to them, Lithuanian people limited their diversity, hid or even did not recognize their true identity.

After regaining independence and joining Western democracies, where diversity is part of everyday life (and many things were taboo for us for a long time) it is difficult to reorient ourselves. After all, it is still necessary to understand that the still unending propaganda of the Eastern neighbour and the escalation of sensitive topics, the intimidation of the public and the desire of other, for example, religious and political interest groups, to use these topics to maintain or consolidate their power do not con-

tribute to liberation. For these reasons, taboo topics still exist. However, they will decrease if more people actively support the release of diversity.

How and where are stereotypes born and how to fight them?

The relationship between the individual and the culture depends on the policy being implemented. Where the culture and individuals are freer, there are fewer stereotypes. Stereotypes are generally difficult to avoid. On the one hand, they help us to understand reality in a simplified way in the large flow of information, on the other hand, that simplification dehumanizes certain groups and dehumanizes people with stereotypes. Therefore, in such cultures, where democratic freedoms and equality are limited in areas such as the educational process, media, public policy or even families, people do not have the opportunity to know the diversity of those around them and their identities. People base their ignorance on stereotypes that form prejudices, often negative ones, and even increase the gap sometimes even between the closest family members.

What does it mean to be tolerant in today's world?

To be tolerant is to recognize the diversity of the world. Tolerance is putting up with others, understanding that another person may be different from us, and acknowledging that he has the right to be different from us.

Speaking of tolerance, were there any memorable, exceptional situations that you had to face in your practice?

Tolerance is not absolute - it ends when another person's rights are violated or criminal activity is engaged in. I remembered one example of distorted tolerance from the city of Klaipeda, when a homosexual schoolboy, who was fed up with bullying because of his sexual orientation, applied to the Tolerant Youth Association. He asked us: maybe our Association can offer something to his school to contribute to reducing the level of bullying. After all, they are invisible from the outside, but everyone in the school, including the administration, knows about it, but ignores it and toler-

ates it.

Our Association approached the school (of course, without mentioning that the real situation is known) and offered to cooperate in the implementation of preventive activities that would reduce discrimination and bullying. Unfortunately, the school refused to cooperate, insisting that everything is fine in their school and no initiatives are needed. Of course, we will not leave this issue aside, we will find ways to help. But this only proves that a lot of effort and solidarity support from the country is needed.

Your advice and wish for our readers.

If you have read this article and are part of a school community, please contact us and help establish self-help groups in your school community for victims of discrimination and bullying. Even if you feel safe in your school community, it would be great to check and spread the word in your school that it really is safe because of the success of the self-help group. And young people who suffer from or have experienced discrimination and bullying should have somewhere to turn in unfavourable circumstances.

Self-help groups are like clubs for active and civic-minded students who want to contribute to making Lithuanian schools more tolerant and safer for all students. Students who have joined the „Rainbow Challenge“ club, together with the teacher-curator, parents or other members of the school community, organize activism, education and support activities for the entire school community and thus prevent or under various circumstances fight against the spread of homophobia, transphobia, sexism, racism and hatred of the disabled and other socially vulnerable groups. We help establish these groups and support them through the implementation of two initiatives: one of them is Rainbow Challenge for LGBT+ rights and opportunities, supported by the Active Citizens Fund, financed by the EEA financial mechanism, the other is supported by the Youth Affairs Agency program „Different, but close“.

INTERVIEW WITH JURGITA KUPRYTE, HEAD OF SOCIAL EMPLOYMENT AGENCY "SOPA".

EVERY SUCCESS STORY IS A LONG PATH

Integration of youth with special needs in the labour market is another important aspect that needs to be improved in order to ensure the greatest possible opportunities. What they are like today, was discussed with Jurgita Kupryte, director and one of the founders of the Social Employment Agency „SOPA“.

Jurgita, you help people with fewer opportunities in the labour market to get a job. How does the recruitment process work and how is it different?

The employment process for people with fewer opportunities requires attention, time and constant communication with them and the employers. First of all, it is necessary to find out the needs, abilities, and experience of the applicants. Of course, everything becomes clear most of all through practice, so partners who allow you to test yourself in various areas help a lot here. For example, we cooperate with the sharing station „DĖK'ui“. In their workshops organized, job seekers can develop skills, reveal their strengths and better prepare for the labour market. In a safe environment, we try to find the kind of activity that a person is most successful in, and then we look for employers. We mediate between an employer and a person with a disability - we help introduce themselves when there are challenges, for example due to a language disorder, we introduce the workplace, we advise companies on adapting working conditions. Even after finding a job, we never leave a person alone - there is constant cooperation, we provide assistance at the workplace, and together we solve emerging challenges.

What are the biggest challenges you face in your work?

One of them is the still cautious attitude of employers towards disabled people. Employers expect competent, good

workers, and in this case they need to adapt to the employee - not only investing time, training, but also reorganizing certain internal processes, and sometimes creating a new workplace. And this is a negotiation process in which we also participate - we introduce what are the needs of such people, what should be their workplace and other conditions that should be provided.

Another challenge is the rapidly changing labour market. Quarantine and remote work had a particularly strong influence on this. In this case, people with disabilities lack skills, versatility, and practice, as many of them have no work experience at all, so they cannot meet the expectations of employers. However, it should be mentioned that the attitude of employers is changing little by little - they are becoming more creative, open and looking for solutions to integrate workplaces for the disabled, but it would be better if this process was faster.

You have been operating for 16 years. What are the most memorable success stories you can share?

We are always happy when we find employers willing to help, and especially willing to change and, as I already mentioned, adapt. We cooperate with Decathlon sporting goods store. A separate job position has been created here for people with special needs - folding and hanging clothes. However, first of all, the employee himself must check what functions await him, whether he will be able to perform them properly. The employer also does an evaluation - how much time the training takes, how long the work itself lasts and whether he is satisfied with the results.

There are more employers who apply a flexible and open recruitment policy, for example, we have started cooperation with fast food restaurants - McDonalds,

KFC. These and other companies open their doors to people with disabilities and focus not on what a person can't do, but on what needs to be done in the workplace so that a person can express himself in the best way. So every success story is a long path that we all walk together in search of a compromise.

What, in your opinion, should be improved the most in this area in order to ensure more opportunities for young people in the labour market?

Most of all, there is a lack of initiative from the state in creating a system of personalized employment services. We started this activity inspired by a successful example in Holland. They have a developed system with many organizations that provide employment assistance to people with fewer opportunities. In our country, this should also become part of the system. I think that the field of education should also be improved - despite the fact that people with special needs could study. Now, it is not taken into account how a person will find a job after finishing education, whether he will find it at all. After all, it is becoming more and more difficult to establish yourself in the labour market without experience. Thus, the labour market lacks a bridge of opportunities between state decisions and people with special needs.

Despite all the challenges, what motivates you the most to act and not give up?

The biggest motivation is happy and dignified people. It is extremely fun to watch how they go from being dependent on something to being independent - they earn money, they can buy something themselves and they are more self-confident. The feedback is no less gratifying, when after a certain period of time, people who have been employed remember us, visit us, thank us, and often invite others to participate in our programs.

A black and white portrait of Jurgita Kuprytė, a woman with short dark hair and bangs, wearing a dark button-down shirt. She is standing with her arms crossed, looking directly at the camera. The background is a solid dark grey. On the right side of the image, there are three parallel blue diagonal lines.

JURGITA KUPRYTĖ

INTERVIEW WITH THE #CHOOSEKLAIPEDA AMBASSADOR ROBIN MUBARIK.

LIFE CAN REALLY BE ABUNDANT AND VALUABLE

Briefly tell us about yourself

I am from Pakistan. Growing up, I wanted to be a doctor. I was and still am fascinated by the natural sciences. But my dream of becoming a doctor was out of reach and I couldn't go to medical school because I was the 9th child in the family. Several of my sisters are nurses, so I applied to nursing school. During my senior year of nursing, I received an award for being „Class President.“ Back then I was already actively volunteering and serving others. My father and grandfather were pastors, so my siblings and I were also very active in the church community. As I grew up, I began to take seriously the idea of helping those in need, it became my passion.

I am currently a fourth-year student at LCC International University, where I study Theology and Development of International Relations, graduating in 2023.

I try to be active in Lithuania and contribute to various initiatives. I am the founder of the non-governmental organization „Gausus gyvenimas“ (EN „Abundant Life“) established in 2020 in Lithuania. I was recognized as the „Klaipeda Youth Leader of the Year 2020“ for all my involvement in civic activities in Klaipeda and the establishment of my own NGO, and the organization was also awarded as „The most civic organization of 2020.“ What motivates you to be active in the social life of Klaipeda city?

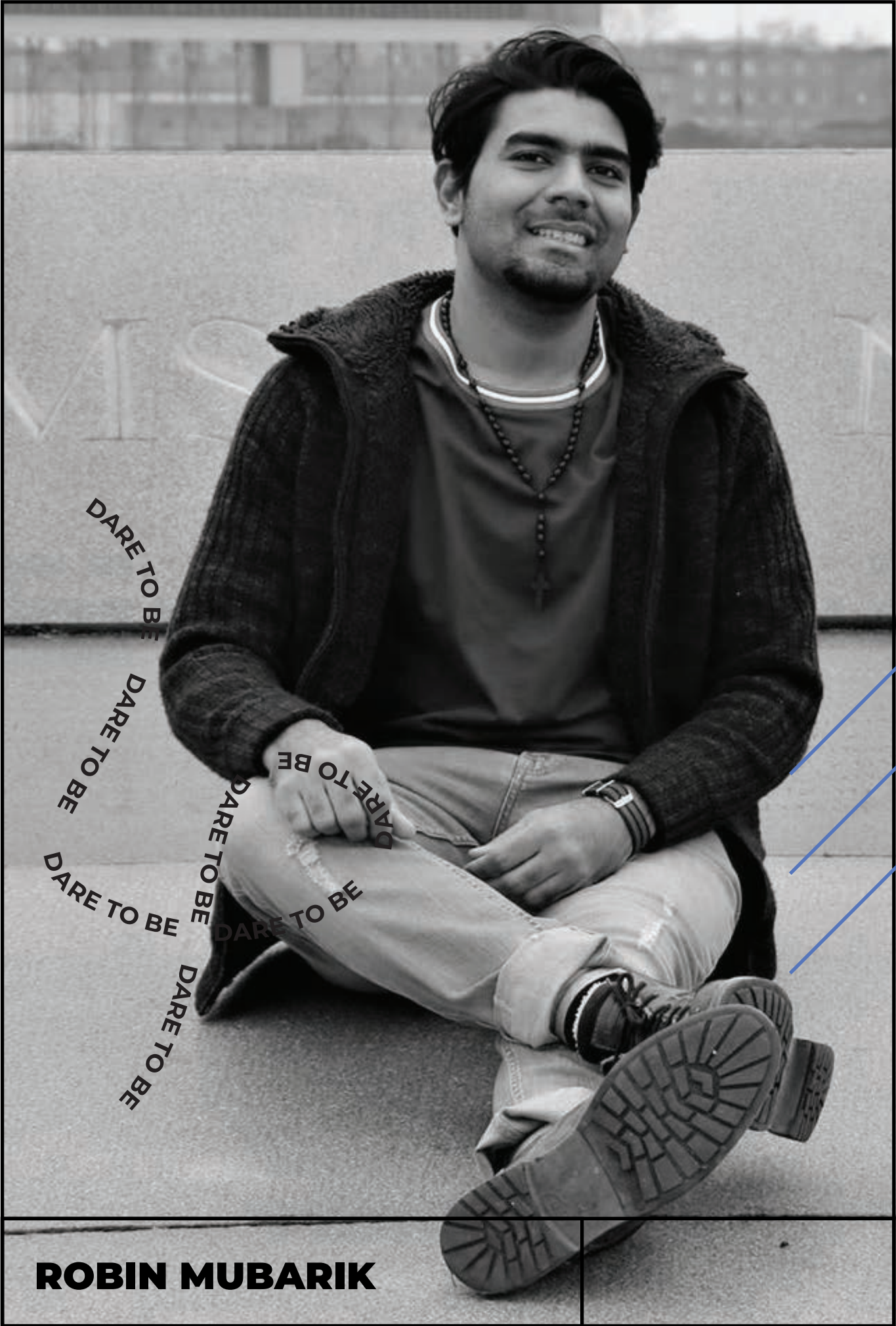
People in Klaipeda are friendly and hospitable. I like the energy of young people and the beautiful environment of the port city, nature. I love the culture we create together with students from over 50 countries. In my opinion, this is an additional benefit for Klaipeda. I am happy to be here and I want to thank the city I have come to love. In my second year at LCC, I learned about the youth program and was invited to join some of their pro-

jects. This encouraged the townspeople to implement other projects. Some of us (LCC students) formed a group together with other young people from Klaipeda, including students from Klaipeda University. In Klaipeda, we started several fun projects, such as: handing out handmade cookies to passers-by during Christmas, walking the streets singing Christmas carols, interreligious dialogues, Bible studies and pleasant recreational activities. At that time, I also saw a great need for mental health education and counselling, which led me to creating the NGO „Abundant Life“.

What is „Choose Klaipeda“ for you? How does it affect your life?

„Choose Klaipeda“ consists of great people. I like that Klaipeda was chosen as the European Youth Capital 2021. This brought great recognition to the city and helped show other countries how special it is. Thanks to the title, a group of young people gathered and focused on all the positive things that Klaipeda can offer. It is a beautiful city with a great harbour and access to the Baltic Sea. We have beautiful parks, great restaurants and a lot of history, so it's important that people can learn about it and enjoy it. As someone who was not born in Klaipeda or Lithuania, this project taught me a lot about this city, people and encouraged me to appreciate it more. I would like more people to come and experience everything that Klaipeda has to offer. „Choose Klaipeda“ was a good platform to communicate and integrate with the local community.

You are the founder of the organization „Gausus gyvenimas“. Tell us more about it. How did you come up with this idea? After moving to Klaipeda and starting my studies at LCC, I realized that suicide is one of the main social problems in Lithuania. When I met young people in Klaipeda, I was deeply touched by their



ROBIN MUBARIK

personal stories about suicidal thoughts. As we talked, I felt their pain and decided to look for ways to bring positive change to the country regarding this issue. Although suicide is a huge problem, I realized that even small steps can have a big impact. In the summer of 2020, I founded the organization „Gausus gyvenimas“. My vision was to create an organization that would be a bridge between local organizations and the community. Despite the provision of mental health services in various institutions, the stigma that surrounds mental health issues makes people reluctant to seek help. My zeal for God and love for people is my main motivation to continuously raise awareness about mental health issues that young people consider taboo. One of our goals is to prioritize mental health and help people understand that there are professionals who can help with issues that arise. Seeking a counsellor should be seen as necessary self-help, not weakness. Together with the team members, we are determined to achieve our goal by 2030 - to reduce the number of suicides in Lithuania by 30%. Although this is a big goal, if we all (as a community) do our individual part, I believe we can achieve it.

What was your first step?

My first step was to get involved in the community and learn about it first-hand. I started volunteering in various youth day centres and youth initiatives. I decided that the best way to reduce the number of suicides was to start an NGO. After discussing the idea with a few close friends who also wanted to be part of the organization, we formed a board and filled out the necessary paperwork. We have compiled a list of our goals, which we want to achieve, and the ways that, in our opinion, could be best. We named the non-governmental organization „Gausus gyvenimas“ (GG). Life really can be abundant and fulfilling - GG wants people to know that. GG wants to help people live full lives and by finding mental health professionals when needed.

Who helped you found the organization?

The biggest support in starting this organization was given by my friends. It was interesting to see that the first pe-

ople who supported me were not from Lithuania. Most were foreigners like me. The second thank you that I would like to give is to the „Choose Klaipeda“ team. They have been a great help and support in making „Gausus gyvenimas“ a reality. Of course, youth organizations and Klaipeda city municipality also helped a lot.

Also, I would like to mention the best senior mentors in the world who also contributed to the NGO - Becky Hass from USA, Aaron Quinonez from USA, Dr. Julia Gaiduk and Professor Scott Olsen, both from LCC. Building such an organization, there were many times when we wanted to give up, when we felt frustrated and unsuccessful. That's when our mentors came to the rescue and motivated us.

On the financial side, from the initial stages of registration of the organization to the opening event, I used personal pocket money. It was money for my education, but I felt that this organization was very necessary and would also help me and others to learn.

What is the biggest motivation for you and your team?

We believe that every person is unique and valuable. Our team promotes love your neighbour as yourself. We do not tolerate any discrimination in our organization. We have volunteers from different social groups. We welcome and accept them as they are. These core beliefs are our core strength. Our team is also constantly motivated by the results we have achieved - the people we have helped. It was heartening to hear feedback about how talking to a counsellor helped a person change their thoughts about suicide. By talking to a professional, a person can see things in a different way - to look at life and enjoy it. We want people to know that counsellors are there to help them and that a person should not suffer alone.

What results are most valuable to your organization?

As I said, we are very happy when we hear stories of young people who have been helped, it gives us courage and makes us feel like we are making progress. It is not an easy task to change

the mind-set that has been ingrained in people for generations.

The most valuable result for us is a change in people's attitude and when seeking help will not be seen as weakness or shame, but as strength and self-care. Changing this mind-set will change future generations and reduce suicide rates. There is always someone to help you. There is always someone to talk to. Look for them - they WANT to help you; they are waiting for you. Equally valuable results are the partnerships we have developed locally and internationally. We contacted many people who are not Lithuanian, but believe in our vision and see the need to help for Lithuania.

What are your future plans in Klaipeda?

Together with the team, we have many projects for high school and university students. A lot of them are dedicated to research to identify the causes of mental health problems in young people. We have a lot to do if we want changes to take place in Klaipeda and Lithuania in terms of psychological health. We would like to expand the activities of our non-governmental organization in other cities of Lithuania. I hope to increase the NGO so that it can become my livelihood after graduation.

What would you wish for the city of Klaipeda?

I wish that there would be more integration plans, and students from other countries living in Klaipeda would be in the centre of attention. For example, the latter face many problems in finding accommodation. Many foreigners get involved in various activities, but still feel the lack of greater opportunities for integration. I think that organizations and businesses should be more flexible, signs in English could be placed in public spaces in Klaipeda, which would help foreigners find their way around the city more easily. Klaipeda has so much to offer to foreigners, and foreigners to Klaipeda. It can really be a win-win situation for both parties.

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The background of the entire page is a photograph of several people wearing VR headsets. They are in a dimly lit room, and the focus is on the people in the foreground, who are looking down or slightly to the side. The image has a soft, slightly blurred quality, emphasizing the virtual reality experience.

“VIRTUAL REALITY. IN ANOTHER’S SHOES”

As we know, the seeds of solidarity and empathy should be sown from a young age - it's never too late to start! We learn best through experience. Therefore, the project „Klaipeda - European Youth Capital 2021“ together with the youth of Klaipeda found a way for a bullied young man with hearing, sight and movement disabilities to feel complete in virtual reality. This tool consists of two simulation films, for which you have to choose a certain ending. This encourages different choices and the specificity of the situations. The tool is adapted for individual and group usage.

This virtual reality tool consists of two films:

„About a student who is bullied at school“

The aim is to help young people become more aware of the harms of bullying and gender stereotypes.

Tasks:

- using interactive options to encourage viewers to consider the consequences of young people's actions during the VR film;
- using the task to invite participants to think about existing gender stereotypes (group reviews);
- during the discussion, invite to discuss the fear of otherness and the resulting bullying, which is often used to insult the LGBT+ community (group reviews).

„Three situations from the everyday life of people with mobility, hearing and vision disabilities“

The goal is to help young people better understand the everyday challenges of people with disabilities.

Tasks:

- with the help of interactive solutions, create audience empathy, the opportunity to identify with people with disabilities;
- during the reflection, invite discussion about the challenges faced by people with disabilities and the influence of other people (group reviews);
- during the reflection, invite to discuss what is empathy for a disabled person and what forms of empathy and understanding are really needed (group reviews).

Individual usage - at the Open Youth Space, I. Simonaitytes St. 24, Klaipeda.

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or group at a selected location or open youth space, please contact Violeta Bruzienne, head of the Open Youth Center.

Phone: 8 656 95648

Email: violeta.bruziene@kkljc.lt

CONNECTIONS

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CONNECTIONS is a platform of the „Klaipeda-European Youth Capital 2021“ project, with which we aimed to create, develop and maintain international partnership, promote more active participation of Klaipeda youth organizations in international activities and exchange of experience, increase the number of international initiatives and events. Because together we can do more!

INTERVIEW WITH GINTARE SELENYTE, HEAD OF
“LIGHTHOUSE CO-WORKING, CO-LIVING”.

THE LACK OF KNOWLEDGE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

„This initiative has a strong value base, as it popularizes the city and strengthens the self-esteem of the youth living in it and the NGOs.“

We talked about the implementation, success and achieved results of the „Workation“ mentor program with Gintar Selenyte, head of “Lighthouse Co-working, Co-living”.

Workation packages (work and vacation at the same time). This „Klaipeda - European Youth Capital 2021“ program, implemented in 2020-2021, was formed taking into account the opinions of youth organizations, youth workers and youth representatives, and the need for training. For this purpose, business representatives of various companies were invited to work and live in Klaipeda. The workplace and accommodation costs were covered, and in exchange for these services the company representatives conducted various trainings for youth and organizations working with youth, and held individual consultations. During the program implementation period in 2020, such companies as Caption, CityBee, Gluk Media, Tele2, Data Miner arrived. In 2021, 5 seminars were organized to strengthen the competencies of youth and organizations working with youth. These are „Practical creative workshops from a new idea to a global success story“, „Attracting financing“, „How to find suitable partners and sponsors?“, „Motivating the team - a challenge or an opportunity?“, „Organizing remote events“, „Communication in the media: how to get in the eyes of journalists?“.

In your opinion, what made the Workation mentor program unique?

While creating and implementing the „Workation“ mentor program, we were happy that it was the only project of its kind in Lithuania. This initiative has a strong value base, as it popularizes the city and strengthens the self-esteem of the youth living here and the NGOs. The participants can use the knowledge gained during the project to improve and grow local businesses or organizations, so everything turned around and returned to the city. Also, this program gave the young specialists of Klaipeda the opportunity to get to know the country's professionals and together to discuss local current affairs in a professional manner.

Which program results pleased you the most?

What was most gratifying, was that the companies and professionals in their field who were invited to become mentors and share knowledge were very motivated by the idea of helping young people. And the youth and organizations actively joined the trainings and consultations, saw their value, so the project was a great success.

Why do you think it is important to implement such programs in the future? How does this benefit the youth and the city?

Such a program is useful for the city of Klaipeda in several aspects: it not only popularizes the city as an attractive location for employment and business development in general, among the best companies in the country and the specialists working in them, but also helps young people and members of non-governmental organizations to acquire much-needed communication, adver-

tising, financing or organization management knowledge. And they come directly from the mouths of the best professionals in the country. Of course, it would be difficult for a young person to get all this on his own and with certain financial resources.

What added value do you think this program had for the city?

This program became a great advertisement for the city, as it attracted specialists from the best companies in the country, located in Vilnius and Kaunas, to Klaipeda. When they arrived in the city, they had the opportunity to get to know it not only as short-term tourists, but in full, i.e. both to test the workation model and to get to know local NGOs and specialists, to feel the pulse of the city and to try out places of work, recreation and entertainment.

It also created a particularly great value for the young people living here, because there are quite a few conferences or seminars on this topic in Klaipeda - they

are usually organized in the capital, so it was a great opportunity for them to improve competences, gain useful knowledge and, in the end, expand their network of contacts by getting to know the best of Lithuania's professionals in the field. Undoubtedly, the knowledge gained was later used to grow and improve local businesses.

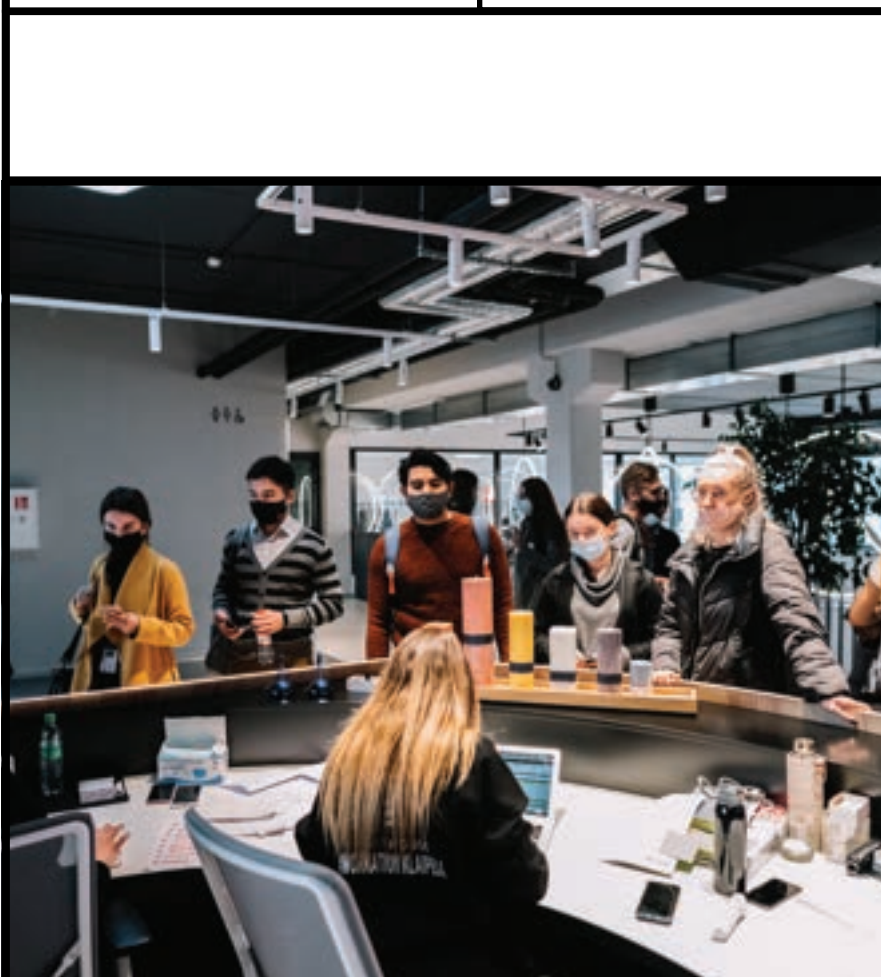
What kind of continuity do you see for the program?

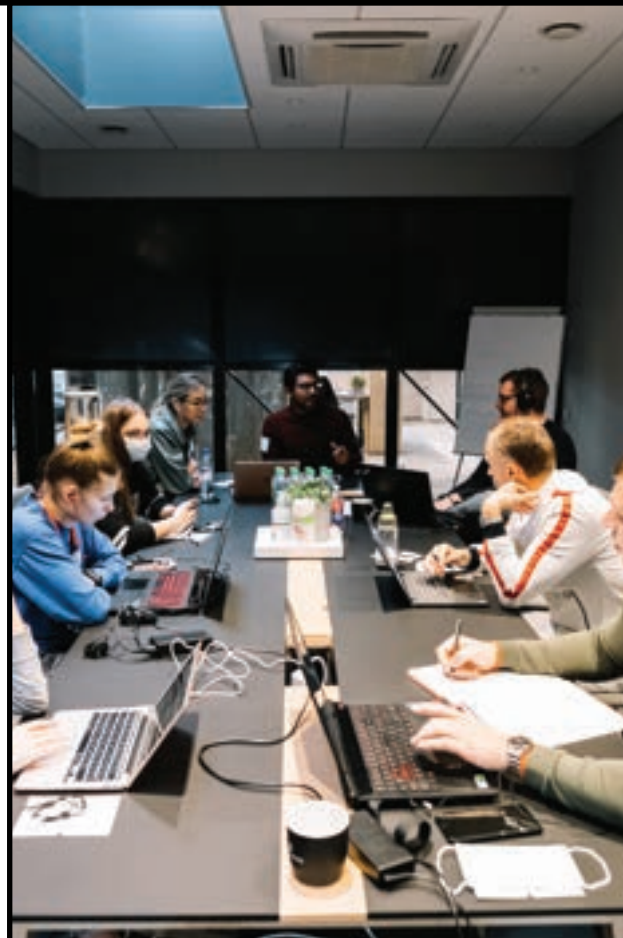
In order to effectively develop the economy of Klaipeda, I think it is very important to continue such programs in the future. Such projects help not only to educate and professionally raise young people, but also attract advanced Lithuanian companies and individual workers, representing the city of Klaipeda, not only as the best location and infrastructure for employment, but also for business development and life. Thus, it is a great opportunity for the big companies of the country to reveal the advantages of Klaipeda and maybe even encourage them to establish branches and create jobs in Klaipeda.



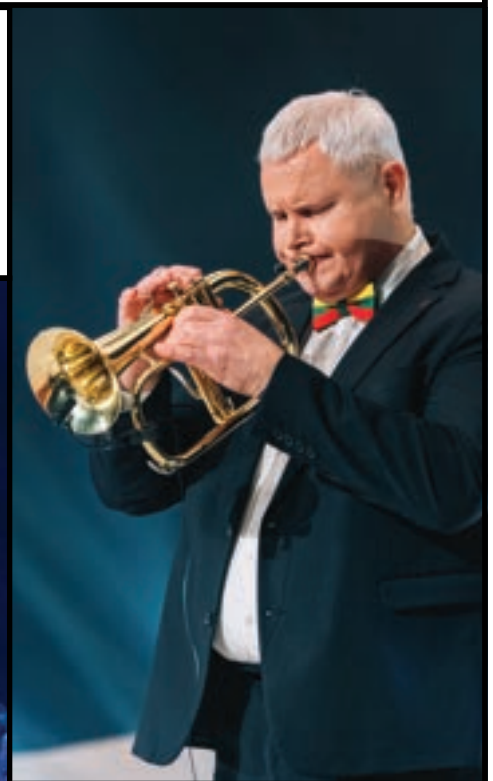


GINTARE SELENYTE





KLAIPEDA - EUROPEAN YOUTH CAPITAL 2021 OPENING CEREMONY



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KLAIPEDA - EUROPEAN YOUTH CAPITAL 2021 CLOSING CEREMONY



**DECEMBER 17,
2021**



**LITHUANIAN YOUTH CAPITAL INITIATIVE:
LITHUANIAN YOUTH CAPITAL 2023 –**

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This is the first initiative of its kind in Lithuania, created by the „Klaipeda-European Youth Capital 2021“ project. It aims to reveal the initiatives of every Lithuanian city in the area of youth policy, to create conditions for the development

and ensure the involvement of young people in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the city. The implementation of the initiative is ensured by the Agency for Youth Affairs.



AISTE RUTKAUSKIENE

INTERVIEW WITH AISTE RUTKAUSKIENE, PROJECT MANAGER
AT THE SOCIETY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE.

SUCCESSFUL YOUTH POLITICS CAN BECOME A TRAMPOLINE FOR ACHIEVING GOALS

What motivated Marijampole to pursue this title?

In Marijampole, various activities aimed at young people have been taking place for a long time: we have both local and international volunteering programs for young people, active representation of young people through the union of youth organizations, and there is no shortage of good experiences of youth initiatives. Seeing how the ideas of the European Youth Capital are perfectly realized in Klaipėda, we decided to try to become the Youth Capital of Lithuania.

Why is youth policy important for the future of the city and its youth?

An orderly, properly planned and organized youth policy in the municipality can become like a trampoline for young people to achieve their goals. Programs such as volunteering at local community institutions, summer employment opportunities, holiday employment and active youth organizations allow young people to develop their identities, values and connections to their home area. Young people who are properly involved in various activities in their community are likely to continue to build their city in the future and have a stronger connection with it.

What are the main goals and visions of LYC 2023?

The most important goal of Marijampole - „Lithuanian Youth Capital 2023“ is to clearly and widely show what opportunities are provided and available to young people in our municipality. We want to share the good experiences that not only big cities have things for young people to do. Marijampole, the seventh

largest city in Lithuania, has various opportunities for young people to realize themselves, test and develop their competencies. Also, this title will allow the implementation of new initiatives that work and gain popularity in other areas of Lithuania.

What activities are in store and how do you envision the city after the title?

I hope that the mechanisms of youth public management processes already operating in Marijampole municipality will be further strengthened during the project. Special attention is given to young people living in rural areas and having fewer opportunities. We will discuss the possibilities of creating youth employment, entrepreneurship promotion, integration into the labour market and other programs. We will pay a lot of attention to the development of youth volunteering in rural areas and in various cultural and nature protection institutions.

A wish for the youth of Klaipėda.

Be bold and pushy, don't stop working! We hope that after the European Youth Capital title, you will not stop and continue to actively create, implement ideas and be able to discuss your opportunities constructively with the city's politicians.

12TH ANNUAL FORUM OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION IN KLAIPEDA – EUROPEAN YOUTH CAPITAL 2021



**OCTOBER 1,
2021**



POTENTIAL

It is necessary to strengthen youth organizations, organizations working with youth and youth workers!

LAURYNAS GECIUS

INTERVIEW WITH LAURYNAS GECIUS, CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION OF KLAIPEDA YOUTH ORGANISATIONS "APSKRITASIS STALAS".

NOW KLAIPEDA IS NOT JUST A DOT IN THE MAP OF EUROPE

Laurynas Gecius, the chairman of the Association of Klaipeda Youth Organisations „Apskritasis stalas“ (KLAS) and the chairman of the Klaipeda Youth Affairs Council, has been involved in volunteering and youth politics for more than a decade.

Why is it important to build skills that are not developed through formal and non-formal education?

In the organization we often say that there are no skills that are useless. Both the formal and informal education system should be focused on preparing a young person for an independent life - after all, rational, reasonable decisions need to be made. However, for many years there have been fears, supported by various studies, that young people are financially illiterate and that a large number of them lack entrepreneurial skills. Both these and other abilities, which are not purposefully developed in formal and informal education, are extremely important for young people transitioning to the life of an independent adult. The lack of financial literacy skills is getting in the way and people are getting stuck in debt or payday loans. The lack of entrepreneurial skills prevents the creation of more jobs and self-employment. This, as we know, is very important now as the number of people who want to work for themselves is increasing. After all, as our society ages, it becomes increasingly important to be financially independent.

Based on the surveys and the experience of the implemented platform program, which abilities do the youth workers themselves want to strengthen?

Youth organizations and youth workers are mostly interested in improving their leadership, team building, and public

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speaking skills. This trend has been prevailing for several years, and has remained in KLAS, which implements the „Potential“ platform. Even before the end of the platform, we continue to strengthen these capacities, as organizations and youth workers clearly express this need.

What can a young person develop by belonging to a youth organization or KLAS?

Being a part of a youth organization or KLAS, a young person can develop so-called soft and hard skills. It all depends on whether he chooses an organization that corresponds to the young person's field of interest. Of course, there are basic skills that can be developed in almost every youth organization. These are the aforementioned soft skills: communication, teamwork, creativity, critical thinking, time management, conflict resolution. These skills are important in the professional field, as they partly reflect the flexibility of the individual, which is very important for every employer. It is also possible to acquire hard skills that are technical, i.e. work with computer programs, document administration, etc. It is very important which organization and which field of activity the young person chooses. It is natural that a young person will not learn to write projects if he chooses planting trees for volunteering. Don't get me wrong, tree planting is important to our environment, but young people should choose the organizations based on the skills they want to acquire and develop.

What is KLAS? What activities can this association offer to a young person?

KLAS - the Association of Klaipeda Youth Organisations „Apskritasis stalas“, uniting 27 youth organizations and informal groups working with youth in Klaipeda city. All this forms and implements the youth policy in Klaipeda. We can offer our members and volunteers various activities that strengthen the competences of young people. We are also the Youth Information and Counseling Point and Eurodesk, so we provide advice on important issues. As we are a voluntary organization, we can offer mentoring services as part of the Youth Voluntary Service Program. Young people have the opportunity to choose the nature and field of volunteering so that

they can strengthen their competencies in the desired areas. Among other things, we provide volunteers with all the necessary tools and opportunities to realize their ideas.

We have a wide range of partners in Lithuania and foreign countries with whom we implement Erasmus+ projects. Therefore, we can offer raising your competences in foreign countries for free. We also offer young people to use our VR glasses, board games, table football. In addition to all the above-mentioned added values, we can offer young people the opportunity to apply for KLAS governing bodies and the Youth Affairs Council, where young people can see the inner kitchen of youth politics and its main actors. This experience is very valuable, because young people can represent youth, and use the gained experience in their professional path.

How do you assess the youth capital project? In your opinion, what added value did the project create for the youth of Klaipeda city?

Klaipeda had the honour of implementing the project at a not the most grateful time - during the corona virus pandemic. Therefore, the platforms needed to significantly improve their events so that they could be implemented in an attractive, interesting way and without physical contact with people. Given these challenges, I believe that the best has been made of the EYC 2021 project. I think that after the end of the project, the city has become more attractive to young people - they can express themselves more freely, with their words, their clothes, and with their hobbies: for example, in the past there were not as many legal opportunities to decorate the city with graffiti as there are now. Also, Klaipeda became recognizable at the European and world level. And this allows young people to join and prepare various projects in the future. As we understand, now Klaipeda is no longer just an unknown dot on the European map.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGET FOR PUPILS



Taking into account the challenges presented by young people during the candidacy, a participatory budget model was prepared and implemented in Klaipeda high schools (for students in grades 9-12 - gymnasium students in grades 1-4). Participatory budget allowed students to decide on the use of the budget for the European Youth Capital - they proposed ideas and voted for the ones they liked the most. In 2020 four schools participated and seven ideas were implemented. In 2021 the student participatory budget initiative was also implemented.

Following the decision of the municipal council, the approved description of the selection and financing procedure of the Pupils' Participatory Budget Initiative projects, Klaipeda high school students can decide which projects they want to implement in their school. One project can be allocated up to 1500 eu-

ros, and the main condition for submitting proposals is that the project must be related to the implementation of sustainable development goals and intended for the school community. In 2021, 24 150 000 Euros were allocated for student projects. 13 initiatives were selected and implemented by public vote: „Textile printer“, „Renovation of the technical equipment of the assembly hall of the „Azuolynas“ gymnasium“, „We project success together“ (production of school lockers), „Bench - soft“ (production of soft benches), „Art therapy room“, „Renovation of the leisure room“, „A more modern school“ (purchase of easily transportable furniture), „Renovation of school spaces“ (upgrade of chairs), „Recreation space in the interior of „Zaliakalnis“ gymnasium“, „Recreation space in the courtyard of „Zaliakalnis“ gymnasium“, „Outdoor physical activity“, „Active recreation area“, „Sewing workshop“. **In 2020, 13 800 Euros were allocated.**

"IT'S GREAT THAT OUR PROJECT WAS SUCCESSFUL AND NOW WE HAVE NEW EQUIPMENT."



"THE CHILDREN LEARNT NOT ONLY HOW TO TAKE CARE OF THE GYMNASIUM'S ENVIRONMENT, BUT ALSO HOW TO IMPLEMENT IDEAS."



**The European Youth Capital title is awarded by the
European Youth Forum. More information about
the European Youth Forum:**



youthforum@youthforum.org



youth_forum



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“Apskritasis stalas”

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