



2023 Edition

YOUNG EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS

MAGAZINE




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WELCOME READER,

We are proud to present the third edition of the Young European Ambassadors' (YEA) Magazine! In celebration of 2023 as the European Year of Skills, we have dedicated this year's magazine issue to exploring the topic of skills.

Inside you will find 15 articles written by young people from across the European Union, the United Kingdom and the Eastern Partner countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. We invite you to join us in learning about all things skills: the importance of skills, the process of acquiring and developing them, the relationships between skills and different industries, and how they can be used to positively impact our communities.

The articles cover an array of topics including, but not limited to multilingualism, geography, the arts, environmental sustainability, media literacy, the workforce, and education. Whatever your interests are, you will certainly find an article worth reading!

While you make your way through the magazine, we also encourage you to reflect on the different skills you have learned throughout your lifetime, how they can be used to achieve meaningful change, and what skills you might still want to learn.

In the last pages of the Magazine, you can also find an overview of opportunities offered by the EU to learn new things and gain more skills, programmes such as Erasmus+, EU4Youth training and funding and much more!

Finally, we would like to extend our gratitude to all the authors and editors who have helped to make this magazine possible. We are incredibly proud of the extraordinary time and effort they have put into developing these articles. Through the generous support of EU Neighbours East, the EU/UK Young European Ambassadors' Board Members are very humbled to provide this platform for them to raise their voices and share opinions about the issues they most care about.

Please enjoy the magazine.

**The EU/UK
Young European Ambassadors
Board Members:**

Maria Pia Napoletano (EU/UK YEAs Coordinator)

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Patrícia Raposo (EU/UK Board Member)

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EU NEIGHBOURSEAST



EU NEIGHBOURS EAST is the largest EU Regional Communication Programme for the Eastern Neighbourhood (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine). It is funded by the European Commission (DG NEAR) for the purpose of increasing visibility, awareness, and understanding of the cooperation between the EU and EaP countries and of the tangible benefits it has on the lives of citizens in the EU and EaP.

The 'EU NEIGHBOURS east' activities and results are reflected on its [website](#) and social media accounts: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [Flickr](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

THE 'YOUNG EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURS' NETWORK



Committed to engage young people in its outreach work, The 'EU NEIGHBOURS east' programme in 2016 launched the 'Young European Neighbours' (YEN) network, which includes the 'Young European Ambassadors' (YEAs) initiative. Since then, the network has grown from strength to strength.

It aims to foster cooperation and sustainable links between young people and youth organisations from the EU Member States and the EaP countries. The 'Young European Neighbours' network is primarily an online platform that facilitates the mutual exchange of ideas and information, promoting young people's engagement in outreach activities.

It focuses on people-to-people contact and dialogue-driven civic engagement activities, which enhance the understanding and perception of the EU and foster greater appreciation of its relationships with the EaP countries.

The main role of the Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) Initiative is to create friendships and connections between young people from the EU and EaP countries. At the heart of the initiative is a commitment to empowering young people from the EaP and EU to be active voices in their communities by providing opportunities for youth to make cross-cultural connections, exchange knowledge and experiences, share best practices, collaborate on projects, and work towards a better future together. Workshops and training sessions are also provided to afford young people the skills they need to implement their ideas and bring about meaningful change in their communities.

There are currently more than 900 young people, representing over 30 different nationalities, across the EU and the EaP serving as 'Young European Ambassadors'. They regularly participate in dialogue driven activities and engage online on a daily basis through the [**Young European Neighbours network Facebook group**](#). To date, more than a thousand young people from the EU and EaP countries have performed the role of Young European Ambassador.

Find out more [here](#) and join us!

Welcome to the EUROPEAN YEAR OF SKILLS



2023 is the European Year of Skills! During this year, various entities including the European Commission, European Parliament, Member States, social partners, public and private employment services, and many more are collaborating to enhance skills development and offer citizens more opportunities to learn.

This initiative aims to improve people's professional and personal opportunities and enable Europe to be more competitive by strengthening its workforce. In order to make sure that the green and digital transitions, as well as the economic recovery, are socially just, companies need workers with the right skills.

Young people are, again, at the heart of the EU's policies and efforts, as they are the workforce of the future and those who can bring change in the job market, creating a more just environment, that puts mental health and quality of life at the heart of employment strategies.

The four primary objectives of the European Year of Skills are:

- Promoting investment in training and upskilling,
- Ensuring that skills match the needs of employers,
- Aligning people's aspirations and skill sets with opportunities on the job market, especially in the green and digital transition and the economic recovery, and
- Attracting skilled workers from outside the EU.



ARMENIA

Innovative Tourism and Technology Development

If you're thinking of creating a start-up or looking to develop skills for a career in tourism or technology, the EU4Business **Innovative Tourism and Technology Development for Armenia** project offers a number of opportunities to develop your skills, through advice, events and networking opportunities, as well as grant schemes to back up your business idea. Check out the project's opportunities in **innovative tourism development** and **technology innovation and development**.



AZERBAIJAN

Collaborate for Impact

The EU-funded, **Collaborate for Impact project** aims to develop social entrepreneurship and social investment in the Eastern Partnership countries. In Azerbaijan it partners with the **Education HUB** to increase awareness and collaboration among social enterprises and civil society organisations and provide access to **non-financial resources, education and mentoring programmes**, as well as **social innovation competition events** to promote new social business models. Check out the Education HUB **website** and **Facebook** page for news and opportunities and visit the **Collaborate for Impact website** for success stories and podcasts from Azerbaijan.



BELARUS

MOST+

If you are working in the fields of **society, culture, business, education, health, or sustainable development**, you can participate in the **MOST+ project** (EU4Belarus: Mobility Programme for targeted people-to-people contacts) – an EU-funded programme for **professional exchanges** between Belarusians and their EU counterparts. The programme is open to Belarussian professionals over the age of 18, whether living in Belarus or abroad. **Applications will be accepted without interruption until 3 June 2024**. Check out the project's **website** and its **FAQs** for further details, and their **Facebook page** for latest opportunities.



GEORGIA

Local Hubs for Skills Development

These centres operate in four regions of Georgia – Adjara, Guria, Kvemo Kartli, and Shida Kartli – as part of the Local Investments in Networks for Knowledge and Skill-share (LINKS) project funded by the European Union. The centres offer young people aged 15-29 the following activities to develop market-relevant skills and competences:

- Development of key competences
- Digital and computer literacy
- Citizenship education
- English language courses
- Key entrepreneurial competences
- Access to lifelong learning resources
- Career guidance sessions
- Professional secondments for selected candidates
- Access to skills/vacancy management portal
- Funding of social and socially responsible start-ups

Full details of the centres in Adjara, Guria, Kvemo Kartli, and Shida Kartli:

https://www.una.ge/Employment_centers

Look out for opportunities on the [UNA Georgia](#) Facebook page.



MOLDOVA

Erasmus+ traineeships

Erasmus+ supports **work placements and internships** abroad for Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral students, as well as recent graduates (within one year of your graduation). But your traineeship must be relevant to your degree and, wherever possible, be integrated in your study programme, so check the opportunities with your university. Work placements can last between two and twelve months, and Erasmus+ grants are available to cover your costs..



UKRAINE

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

Young Ukrainian entrepreneurs can join the **Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs** programme, open to anyone who plans to set up a business or has started one within the last three years. The programme matches up young entrepreneurs with experienced small businesses in another European country for a placement of up to six months, helping the new entrepreneur acquire the skills needed to run a small firm. The EU covers 75% of the costs of the exchange, with 25% of the costs borne by the entrepreneur. [Click here](#) for the contact points in Ukraine.

**And youth from all countries (EU, UK and Eastern Partner countries)
can develop your skills while being part of the YEAs network!**



YOUNG EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS

The **Young European Ambassadors (YEAs)** initiative is a non-political, voluntary, vibrant communication network connecting young people from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and the EU Member States and the United Kingdom. The aim of the network is to raise awareness about the EU's cooperation with its Eastern partner countries, showcase the tangible results of this cooperation, and contribute to policy dialogue on various topics.

Through participation in the network, **YEAs learn important new skills**, improving their competences in the fields of teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, and communication – essential soft skills for future careers! There are currently more than 960 active YEAs representing over 34 different nationalities. The network is open to young people aged between 16 and 26, interested in public diplomacy and outreach activities. **Applications** take place every year, usually in the autumn.

SECTION 1: Skills *

TRANSLATION: encapsulating and transcending language

by Hayley Anderson

Translated fiction is an increasingly popular literary genre, and, as indicated in the growing acclaim accorded to the International Booker Prize, demand for fiction translated from, and to, other languages is rising steadily. The 2023 European Year of Skills therefore seems as good a time as any to highlight the frequently overlooked creative skills of the translator, and the talent, imagination, and creativity demonstrated by translators working in the EU and its Eastern neighbours.

While translation software grows in capacity and intelligence, the art of translating remains an unreplicable skill. Translation is sometimes considered a simple or straightforward task, but in reality, it's quite the opposite. Even the best translation software is simply unable to convey accurately the full range of emotions, sincerity and vulnerability that a literary writer may wish to convey. Translators also play an important role as a uniting force, connecting individuals from different languages, communities and countries. Dr Eszter Tarsoly is Associate Professor at UCL's School of Slavonic and East European Studies. Her extensive experience of both translating and engaging with the translated word, has given her valuable insight into the process. She outlined some of the complexities involved in the act of reading translated texts, pointing out

that, "translation works because we believe in it", and because we believe in the "equivalence between two texts". However, for this very reason translation can also be problematic. For instance, she believes it is a misapprehension to expect that a piece of translation will be identical to the original text. Therefore, we should recognise the separate role of the writer in formulating the original piece and the translator in interpreting and reconstructing the text. In this regard, they both hold distinct values and intricacies.

This is particularly true of translated fiction, where a successful translation involves striking a fine balance between the aesthetic and the technical. As the American linguist Eugene Nida outlines in his theory of dynamic equivalence, in literary translations, some technical accuracy and fidelity to the grammatical or structural pattern of the original will inevitably be sacrificed, as the translator attempts to replicate the emotional qualities of the original text. He indicates that the translator should attempt to recreate the feelings that they themselves experienced while reading the original piece, conveying the same emotion in the target language. Nida views this 'dynamic equivalence' as a fluid process, one that is never static, but is constantly shifting to be appropriate for an ever-changing context.

Nida, whose reputation was built on his work on translations of the Bible, warns that “the possibilities for error in the translation of a message are enormous, especially when the languages and cultures involved differ widely”. However, this doesn’t mean that the translation of literature will inevitably be a futile task. Rather, it means we must recognise some inherent truths. Firstly, that translation is never exact, because no form of communication can ever be. It is a fluid process that should take place in the context of a constant dialogue, one in which we acknowledge that the work of writer and translator requires separate skills, each deserving both criticism and celebration.

The second truth is that translation is a subjective and personal pursuit. For instance, in his author’s note at the beginning of *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Milan Kundera comments on how, as a fluent Czech and French speaker, he recognises the French translations of his work as being “equal in authenticity to the Czech texts”. He accepted that there would inevitably be differences, but was nevertheless confident in the translations of his work, largely because of his own incredibly detailed revisions. The author’s agency in this process was therefore vital in creating a text which was authentic to the original.

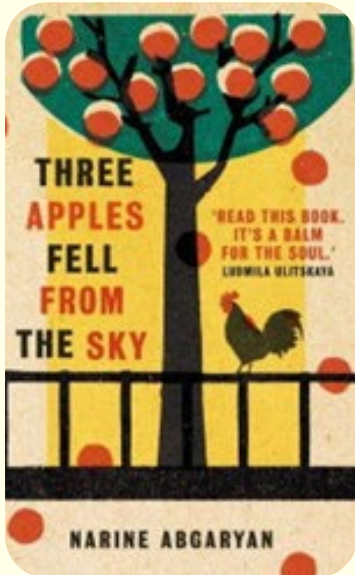
Kundera’s work was translated into English by the hugely respected and prolific polyglot translator, Michael Henry Heim. But even so, it wasn’t until Heim’s second version of his translation that Kundera felt able to recognise the work as his own in the English target language. Tarsoly also emphasises the importance of ‘multiple translations’. Like any skill, the ability to create a

good literary translation is something that must be cultivated, a talent that requires constant reflection and improvement. Distinguishing accurately between the skill sets of a writer and of a translator, allows us to appreciate these distinctions and go further than simply taking a translated work at its face value.

When a piece of literature is translated from its original language into another, it opens the work up to a new audience of potential readers, eager to delve into a world that is either familiar, or completely new to them. It expands the number of people able to engage with a history, culture, or overall experience, which may have otherwise remained unknown to them. Writing last year in the *New York Times*, Alexandra Alter argues that contemporary translations of the work of Ukrainian writers are themselves acts of political defiance, intended to draw attention “to a rich cultural landscape”, which, while distinct, is currently threatened.

Ultimately, translation encapsulates the very peculiarities of language, but also goes far beyond this. It acts as a bridge on which individuals can meet to share their stories; helping us better understand each other and our differences, but also the values we share. However, it is essential that we acknowledge the complexities of translation, and the problems which arise when we fail to recognise these complexities. Reading a piece of translated literature should be considered the beginning of a journey, during which we learn more, not just about the language and culture of others, but also about the places that we ourselves read from.

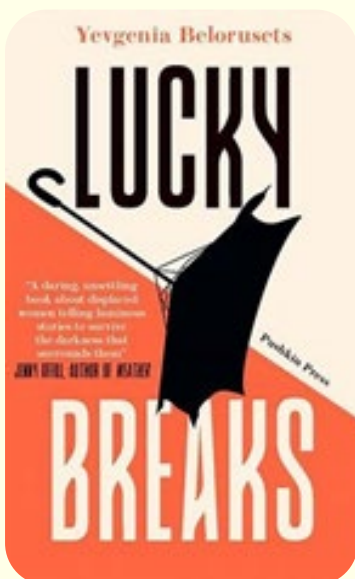
Newly translated literature from the Eastern Partnership Countries



'Three Apples Fell From the Sky' **by Narine Abgaryan**

A stunning portrayal of a town isolated in its location and culture, but simultaneously impacted by events affecting Armenia more widely. The novel replicates the structure of a fable, offering the perspective of three protagonists in three distinct, but connected stories. Through expressive imagery, Abgaryan illustrates how the strength of friendship and human connection will always triumph over hardship.

Translated from the Russian by Lisa C. Hayden in 2020



'Lucky Breaks' **by Yevgenia Belorusets**

A powerful depiction of the seemingly ordinary experiences of women from the Donbass region of Ukraine, as their lives face the upheaval which comes with Russia's invasion. Acclaimed by Paul Theroux as having "an unsettling timeliness", these short stories are still enriched by a dreamlike and satirical quality. Individual tales which are absurd and enigmatic become inevitably intertwined with a sombre reality, an inability to escape the effects of conflict.

Translated from the Russian by Eugene Ostashevsky in 2022

DO WE STILL NEED GEOGRAPHY SKILLS IN EUROPE?

by Danijel Bačan

Why should we go to all the trouble of learning to navigate when we can simply turn on Google Maps? Why should we bother learning about map scales and cultural sites of the world when we can find them all using internet browsers? Did geographic skills die with the development of GPS?

When it comes to the technologies that replace traditional geographic skills, we need to appreciate that they are still in their infancy. Before we can even begin searching for any geographic data we first need an internet connection, which can be a problem even in the most developed European countries outside major cities. When you go on a trip to the countryside, or even just outside the city, it's always good to take a small map because if you rely totally on a cell phone or GPS things can easily go wrong if your battery is empty or you have no signal. There is also the issue of the functionality of the GPS; how many times have you found yourself driving into a dead end, or trying to go down an unsuitable road, just because the GPS suggested it?¹ The fact is that GPS does not constantly update all spatial patterns and does not always provide the most accurate picture of the real situation in space, and can thus lead us astray.

Most people are not even aware that almost every day begins with determining the spatial perception around them, thus introducing the day through implicit geographic skills. When we get up in the morning, sometimes for a few seconds we don't know where we are, and we immediately try to perceptually place ourselves in the space.² And no, this doesn't just apply to hungover mornings. One of the main geographic skills we employ as humans is spatial navigation, which is even considered a type of intelligence³. This intelligence, like any other, needs to be developed and actively used throughout our lives.

One of the best ways to cultivate spatial skills is by going on a trip; almost everyone likes to travel somewhere, at least for a few days or even hours. When we travel, our brain receives much stronger perceptual stimuli of the space around us than when we stick to our daily spatial routines. This is precisely why we have much stronger memories of new spaces of holidays or foreign travel, than we do of everyday life. Despite all the spatial technology available today and the best efforts of travel agents and tour companies to ensure we feel at home on foreign trips, our geographical skills have still not entirely died out, because people still see almost everything around them through the prism of their own position within the space around them.

¹ Gps Insight: "How accurate is GPS technology?", n. d., accessed 14. 03. 2023, <https://help.gpsinsight.com/deep-dive/how-accurate-is-gps-technology/>

² Twinkl: "What are Geography Skills?", n. d., accessed 12. 03. 2023, <https://www.twinkl.hr/teaching-wiki/geography-skills>

³ Thakur, Vishal: "What Is Spatial Intelligence?", January 2022, accessed 12. 03. 2023, <https://www.scienceabc.com/humans/what-is-spatial-intelligence.html>

Although we may think that we are well-versed in the geography of Europe and would fairly easily find our way in any European country, the reality is different. The majority of Europeans do not even know the exact borders of the continent they live on, a certain number of people (mostly non-Europeans) identify the geographical continent of Europe with the European Union, while others may not know, for example, that Ukraine is the largest European country after the European part of Russia⁴. And while it is true that all this information can easily be found using Google or Mozilla, this is important data that we should all know and understand. In much the same way, some people may dismiss the war in Ukraine, saying that it is very far away, or in some remote underdeveloped country, when all they are doing is revealing the extent of their ignorance about European geography. The development of some basic geographical knowledge would enable them to appreciate the importance of Ukraine in the world food industry, in mining and in the overall geopolitical picture of Europe's security as a continent.



Source: <https://www.thelondoneconomic.com/travel/quiz-how-good-are-your-geography-skills-98872/>

Another interesting application of geographic skills is the development of an understanding of the relationship between the continent and

the ocean and cause-and-effect relationships⁵. For example, by learning geographic skills we can understand why the port of Murmansk is so important to Russians, and the effect of the warm Gulf Stream in preventing the sea there from freezing⁶. Another example is understanding the impact of topography on climate or pollution. For example, the construction of a factory in a mountain basin risks causing major pollution because the expelled factory gases cannot pass into the atmosphere and be dispersed due to the surrounding mountain barriers. This in turn then causes the climate in the basin to change, due to the release of heat from the factory into the area⁷. In this way, geographic skills help us both to explain spatial processes and to understand the locations of certain cities, industrial plants, and other processes.

Europeans, and especially EU citizens, have been lulled into a false sense of security in their dependence on spatial technologies. Traditional geographic skills still have a valuable role to play, and they need to be developed – just like any other skills – if we want to progress, both as individuals and as communities. Geography is not about rote-learning countries and capitals, although of course it goes without saying that we should really know who, and where, our closest neighbours on this continent are. Rather, it is about gaining greater understanding of the cultures that surround us, at the same time as enhancing our sense of immediate and more distant spatial awareness.

The main message is that we should not remain closed in our personal space, but should go to as many new places as possible and develop our geographical skills, because maybe one day we will be the future leaders of our countries or of Europe.

⁴ D'Amours, Andrew: "The difference between Europe, the European Union, the eurozone, and the Schengen Area", December 2022, accessed 11. 03. 2022.

⁵ M. ÜNLÜ, „The Level of Realizing Geographical Skills in Geography Lessons“, Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, Vol. 11, no. 1, 2011, pp. 2166–2172.

⁶ World Atlas. "Where Is Russia's Largest Arctic Port?", n.

d., accessed 15. 03. 2023, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/where-is-russia-s-largest-arctic-port.html>

⁷ Global Water Partnership, "A Handbook for Integrated Water Resources Management in Basins" 2009, accessed 14. 03. 2023, <https://www.inbo-news.org/IMG/pdf/GWP-INBOHandbookForIWRMinBasins.pdf>

MULTILINGUALISM – a skill to change the world

by Victoria Arakelyan

“Have a voice!”

You might have heard this phrase, or words to that effect, many times, but have you ever asked yourself what exactly is needed to make your voice heard?

In the modern world, it is imperative that young people possess a variety of skills in order to make a change, but it is the knowledge of foreign languages that will allow this generation to be called global change-makers. Today, English is the most commonly spoken language in the world. So, if everyone speaks this international language, is it still important to learn others?

Multilingualism is directly connected to communication between people of different heritage. There is no doubt that there is a strong link between language, communication, culture, and power¹. To quote Nelson Mandela, “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.” This famous remark is food for thought, serving as inspiration for linguists and polyglots around the world. I have subsequently thought about how we, as young people, can make our voices not just heard, but appropriately understood and appreciated. I therefore surmise that speaking many languages can facilitate the creation of a more peaceful environment, without conflict. Multilingualism affords society the opportunity to go beyond mere tolerance of our respective differences, progressing to genuine mutual respect².



It is important to note that languages are intricately linked to diversity, which is one of the European Union’s values, along with freedom of speech and human rights. Diversity is a unique phenomenon that lays the foundation for creativity and strategic thinking. Imagine a theoretical gathering of people from 20, 30, or even 40 different countries – everyone with a unique background, individual experiences, new visions and ideas. We understand that bilingual/multilingual skills foster a different attitude and a holistic approach. Those with the ability to speak multiple languages are therefore able to reflect on society’s challenges with an open mind. This idea can be supported by the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis: the language we speak has a direct impact on how we perceive the world (Lucy, 2001). Therefore, it can be argued that when we learn a new language, we are able to explore the local culture, but we also begin to understand the context in which the native speakers live. We perceive a new culture through its own lens.

¹ (Friedrich, 2009)

² (Bailey & Osipova, 2015)

However, it should be considered that intercultural communication is a sensitive topic. A diverse environment can make communication more complex, leading to misunderstanding. This might be caused by a language barrier – a difficulty in communication arising when no common language is shared. The language barrier is a widespread issue among ethnic minorities and migrants. In Georgia, for example, approximately 13 per cent of the overall population hail from ethnic minorities³. This is a significant proportion of the population that may not be able to make their voices heard. It should be underlined that the integration of those ethnic minorities starts with teachers and language tutors. One of the goals of teachers in this case is to make such students feel attached to the language and explain the importance of speaking foreign languages. It will ease the process of integration for the representatives of other ethnicities.

In most cases, conflict arises when one party does not understand the viewpoint expressed by the other, or is unaware of their sensitivity and cultural values. In this case, besides just teaching the language, teachers should instill these sensibilities, cultural values and beliefs associated with the native community of that language. This method of values-based teaching will lead to the formation of a community of peacebuilders and change-makers.

We must take into account that languages may either instill hatred or develop empathy – it is important to learn how to use language correctly to avoid the former. The effect of our message on the world around us often depends on our delivery. So, it is crucial not only to learn a foreign language, but also to gain effective communication skills to defuse tension and resolve conflict.

Therefore, in January 2023, I initiated a project, visiting regions of Georgia populated by ethnic minorities to incentivise and support them in overcoming language barriers. Meeting so many people from different backgrounds



made me realise the importance and power of foreign languages: they unite us, help us make a difference, let us speak up. This is a year of skills and it is a high time to start learning a new language to empower not only yourself, but your community as well!

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³ Mielnikiewicz, J. (2021), Georgia's Minorities: Breaking Down Barriers to Integration. Carnegie Europe

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDIA LITERACY AND FACT-CHECKING SKILLS in Eastern Neighbourhood countries

by Nutsa Dzandzava

Have you ever come across news on social media with a sensationalist, attention-grabbing headline, a suspicious link, a controversial claim and wondered whether it was fake?

The chances are you probably have.

The immediate availability of the internet has revolutionised the way we access and consume information. In the digital age, access to information is easier than ever before. However, this also means that the spread of false information, or disinformation and misinformation, is also more prevalent. With the vast amount of information available online, it can be challenging to distinguish between facts and fiction. Some fake news can be “harmless” – with the aim of accumulating views on social media, and commonly known as clickbait. However, carefully crafted disinformation campaigns can also be driven by a plethora of motives, including political agendas, economic gain, or social manipulation. These campaigns can use a variety of tactics, such as spreading false rumours, creating fake news, manipulating images or videos, and employing bots and trolls to amplify the disingenuous message. Disinformation campaigns can spread quickly, reach a vast audience, and create confusion, fear, or anger. They pose a significant threat to a country's democratic institutions (Tompkins, 2020). This is especially true for the Eastern Neighbourhood countries, like Georgia, where fake news and propaganda threaten the country's European future. Both the government and civil society must take action to combat fake news.

Media literacy refers to the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, and create media in various forms. Some of the most effective solutions to the problem of fake news lie in the development of media literacy and fact-checking skills. Such literacy and skills can help ordinary people to identify and combat disinformation, and to navigate the complex world of media and information effectively. Fact-checking, on the other hand, is the process of verifying the accuracy of information presented as facts (Vinney, 2022).

To ensure that young people are equipped with these skills, it is crucial to introduce instruction in this field from an early age. Incorporating media literacy in formal education ensures that young people develop critical thinking skills. In Georgia, young people who lack awareness are vulnerable to disinformation campaigns. As they rely on social media platforms for information, they are particularly susceptible to the influence of these campaigns. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the use of social media for the spread of disinformation campaigns, which can be easily manipulated. This trend has allowed political actors and organisations to benefit from algorithms, bots, and disinformation campaigns. Unfortunately, Georgian school curriculums are not yet fully equipped for these challenges. Prioritising the education of the next generation in media literacy, particularly in relation to social media, is crucial to ensuring an informed and democratic society (Staudt, 2020).



Aside from formal education, non-governmental organisations also play a huge role in enabling young people and other vulnerable groups with media literacy skills. In Georgian civil society, several NGOs are working in this field, the Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP), the Media Development Foundation (MDF), and Georgia's Reforms Associates (GRASS), to name a few. These NGOs offer training programmes for school and university students, teachers, and civil servants on media literacy, fake news, and fact-checking, providing practical skills that individuals can apply in their daily lives. Through such training, individuals can learn how to identify and combat disinformation, contributing to the development of an informed and knowledgeable society (TI-Georgia, 2019).

To combat disinformation campaigns more effectively, Eastern Neighbourhood countries like Georgia can also implement best practices from EU countries: according to the Media Literacy Index 2021 by the Open Society Institute–

Sofia, Finland, Denmark, Estonia, Sweden, and Ireland emerge as the top-ranked countries in Europe. These countries have comprehensive media education curriculums that cover media production, critical thinking, and ethical considerations. By adopting such practices, Eastern Neighbourhood countries can develop a more media-literate and fact-checking society, contributing to the fight against disinformation (Education Estonia, 2021).

In conclusion, disinformation campaigns pose a significant threat to the European future of Eastern Neighbourhood countries like Georgia. The spread of false information can undermine trust in institutions, erode democratic values, and cause harm to individuals and communities. To combat disinformation, it is essential to develop media literacy and fact-checking skills. By incorporating these skills into formal education and offering a variety of training programmes, individuals can learn how to identify and combat disinformation effectively. Moreover, collaboration of the government, civil society, and the media, means stakeholders can develop effective strategies to combat disinformation and promote media literacy and fact-checking skills. The European Year of Skills 2023 is a perfect opportunity to highlight the importance of media literacy and fact-checking skills in Eastern Neighbourhood countries – to showcase best practices and promote cooperation between countries, organisations, and individuals in the development of anti-propaganda tools.

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KEY SKILLS

for youth workers

by Giorgi Khachidze

Have you heard of youth workers? Who are they? Compared to more established professions, youth work is a relatively new and interesting field. While the term may be better known in European Union countries, many people in the Eastern Partnership region may not even know that such a profession exists. However, there are many youth workers around the world who are trying to help young people to achieve their life goals, and to change the future of young people – and society at large – for the better.

Supporting the development of future generations is what makes the profession of youth worker so important for all of society. Therefore, understanding the skills required of youth workers is critical to ensuring that their efforts to engage and support young people are effective and successful.

One of the popular toolkits for youth workers, the “Youth work competence Portfolio” developed

by the Council of Europe, suggests several key competences (skills, knowledge and attitudes) for youth workers. From this toolkit, it is clear that effective communication, psychological, empathy, project management, and other skills are essential for youth workers. In today’s digital age, it is also essential for youth workers to have technological knowledge and skills to work with the basic functions of computers and smart devices. Digital literacy is an important skill that enables youth workers to communicate effectively, access information, and perform various tasks necessary for their work. Another important skill highlighted by scholars is a capacity for conflict resolution, as youth workers may encounter youth from diverse backgrounds during their work and it is especially important that they are able to reduce or avoid conflict between groups. (Gorsky, 2021)



My own career as a youth worker began three years ago, and since then I have gained experience working with young people using non-formal education tools. In my opinion, the most important skill for youth workers is active and honest listening, because when youth workers actively listen to young people, they can better understand their perspectives, needs, and concerns. This shows that youth workers respect and care about young people's opinions, which helps them to build more trusting and supportive relationships with the work group. Moreover, this skill is important for youth workers to avoid misunderstandings and miscommunication, which in most cases are the main causes of ineffective work. We should also mention that active and honest listening should go hand in hand with empathy.

Another essential skill is critical thinking, because especially in the societies of the Eastern Partnership that have emerged from

totalitarian states, this skill was less developed in past generations. Now, in order to help young people to become active citizens, youth workers must first and foremost have critical thinking skills themselves. By using critical thinking, youth workers can understand the needs of young people more effectively and develop appropriate interventions to support their beneficiaries. Using their critical thinking skills, youth workers can encourage young people to be more creative and innovate, to think outside the box and find new approaches to solve their problems.

Youth workers play a key role in empowering young people to become active citizens, develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, promote social justice, and address the challenges that communities face. To achieve this goal, youth workers must have many different skills, but as we can see, the skills of active and honest listening and critical thinking are among the most important.

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

in the regions of Armenia

by Maria Yessayan

Sustainable development is essential in the post-COVID space, which continues to have ramifications on all sectors of Armenian life.

Last year, 2022, saw many EU-funded projects to boost sustainable development in a variety of fields, such as economic growth, educational quality and human rights.

Since 2005, the European Union has cooperated with the Ministry of Territorial Administration of Armenia and provided technical assistance for the development of individual regions¹. The EU continues to invest in competencies, capacities, and skills, such as communication, management, leadership, problem-solving, decision-making, and computer literacy. All these ensure a sustainably developed society where people have equal rights and opportunities. One of the crucial aspects of this support is to raise the profile of the regions because they are comparatively less developed. In many cases, there are fewer opportunities for further development. In response, the Government of Armenia is in the process of implementing a policy aimed at the development of the country's marzes (regions)².

Among the EU programmes, it is important to underline the role of the EU-funded Mayors for Economic Growth (M4EG) Facility, the second phase of which has been ongoing since February 2022. Many municipalities are part of the M4EG network, and they are already

reaping the benefits of this programme. The regions of Dilijan, Ijevan, and Kapan are focusing on local economic development, Areni is concentrated on its transformation portfolio, and Alaverdi, Ashtarak, and Charentsavan will enjoy mentorship, with a view to later competing for funding to implement innovative small-scale local economic development projects². Through this initiative, the EU is investing in the development potential of these areas. The skills that will be developed as part of the programme will give all the communities the opportunity to reach their strategic objectives submitted to the project. It will help the people there to create opportunities to develop and initiate new business ideas. The regions will fulfil the prerequisites for development, and maximise the potential to grow economically.

The EU also funds the EU Green Agriculture Initiative in Armenia (EU-GAIA), through which the regions of Lori, Tavush, and Shirak have benefited by boosting green agriculture and enhancing local added value³.

The EU supports people in these regions to take initiatives, acquire relevant skills, and take action in the development of their regions. For example, one resident in the Lori region founded the Armbee apitherapy centre, which is the only apitherapy centre in the region, with the help of EU support⁴.

¹ www.dmiassociates.com/en/support-to-the-eu-delegation-and-ra-ministry-of-territorial-administration-for-preparation-of-actions-in-regional-development/

² eu4armenia.eu/the-second-phase-of-the-eu-funded-mayors-for-economic-growth-facility-is-now-in-full-swing-in-armenia/

³ eu4armenia.eu/eu-green-agriculture-initiative-in-armenia-is-opening-a-new-centre-for-pedigree-sheep-breeding-in-shirak-region/

⁴ <https://eu4armenia.eu/with-the-eu-support-alaverdi-beekeeper-establishes-the-only-apitherapy-centre-in-the-region/>



Another example is of a charitable foundation that built a teach-in greenhouse and an anti-hail network for an open-ground test field in the Hartagyugh community of the Lori region⁵. These are not the only examples, but with EU assistance, we can see positive changes leading to sustainable development in the regions of Armenia.

Hailing from Tavush, I often visit my native region. The last time I went to the village of Sevkar, where I grew up, there was a clear increase in interest among young people regarding the development of the village. They are engaged in many activities, taking initiative for economic growth, social inclusion, and regional development. One example of this is the EULEAD4Lori and Tavush Regions project. The project helps the people of the region play an active role in inclusive, resilient and sustainable local development, and aims at designing local development models that involve citizens in setting the development agenda, decision-making, and implementation. Many young people in my home region continue to explore what grants they can apply for or what programmes they can participate in, especially youth initiatives, such as Erasmus+ youth exchanges, training courses, volunteering and other similar programmes.

Armenia has faced great difficulties since 2020, resulting on the one hand from the pandemic, and on the other from the escalation of the ongoing tensions and conflict in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. In light of this, it is not a coincidence that the Resilient Syunik Team Europe initiative was launched in 2023, the aim of which is to promote sustainable socio-economic development in Syunik⁶. Syunik province is a place of fundamental importance for Armenian development. It is home to many important historical and cultural sites, including the ancient Tatev Monastery complex, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site, as well as numerous other medieval monasteries, churches, and fortresses. These sites draw visitors and support the preservation of Armenia's rich cultural history. Syunik is also a region of economic importance, with agriculture and mining being major industries. The region is known for its production of fruits, vegetables, and livestock, as well as its copper and molybdenum mines. The economic wellbeing of Syunik is therefore crucial for the overall prosperity of Armenia.

⁵ <https://eu4armenia.eu/the-teach-in-greenhouse-in-hartagyugh-community-has-revolutionized-the-residents-understanding-of-agriculture/>

⁶ <https://eu4armenia.eu/resilient-syunik-team-europe-initiative-launched/>

Moreover, Syunik is strategically important because it borders Azerbaijan and Iran. The region is a vital link between Armenia and its neighbours, and its security is critical for the country's defence. Nowadays, there is also a deep pressure on the province connected with the Zangezur Corridor. Nevertheless, gaining the skills needed for solving problems, communicating and decision-making empowers people to succeed, to be able to face new challenges, and to fully engage in society. In this way, the EU boosts the growth of Armenia.

On 24 February the European Union, in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank, officially launched the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability assessment exercise in the Republic of Armenia. The results of the assessment will be published at the end of 2023. It provides a framework for assessing and

reporting on the strengths and weaknesses of Public Financial Management. This is important for understanding what are the main fields and sectors in which to invest, and the regions that need support. Thanks to this assessment, the reform process in Armenia will be coordinated more accurately and support will be delivered to where it is most needed.

These are examples of EU-funded projects aimed at promoting sustainable development in the regions of Armenia. The EU has been a major donor for development programmes in Armenia for many years and continues to support efforts to promote sustainable economic growth, protect the environment, and improve the well-being of local communities.

THE POWER OF YOUTH SKILLS: how Ukrainian youth are taking charge of their futures and driving positive change

by Rostyslav Semka

2023 is the European Year of Skills, a year focusing on the importance of acquiring the skills necessary to succeed in the modern world. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-21, followed by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, have had a detrimental impact on world stability but in Ukraine itself they have created unprecedented challenges. Access to quality medicine is limited and power outages are frequent. All these challenges combined continue to cause emotional upheavals among a significant proportion of the population. However, these crises can also provide opportunities for growth and development of new skills in new environments, manifesting as catalysts for change and long term innovation.

Resilience is the ability of people or things to rapidly recover after something unpleasant, such as shock or injury.[1] I consider this skill to be

one of the most important attributes that young people should be able to demonstrate today. Resilience refers to the ability to bounce back in the face of adversity, and continue moving forward. In Eastern Neighbourhood countries, resilience is absolutely necessary, for those who are resilient can better cope with uncertainty and stress, and are more likely to succeed when challenged.

Another term that is sometimes used alongside “resilience” is “resistance”, though the two should not be conflated. Resistance is the act of fighting against something that is attacking you, or refusing to accept the status quo[2]. While resilience can be useful to resistance, it is not the same thing. While resilience is the ability to bounce back, resistance is refusing to comply, perhaps with the authorities, or in Ukraine’s case, the occupation.



More than ever, young people in Ukraine need to be resilient as they are faced with unpredictable events, emergency situations and other dramatic challenges. Not only is this important for individuals, but also for the society as a whole. People who are resilient are more likely to be active citizens in their communities and to make positive changes.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges, especially for young people, but also provided opportunities for growth. The spread of online education, for example, is commonplace today. Now in the conditions of a real war in Ukraine, many young people have been forced to develop even more new skills and thus become more resilient.

For example, youth centres and schools have set up shelters that allow them to continue tuition and activities even during air raids. And in winter, when there were constant power outages, the state and charitable organisations created “unbreakable points”, equipped with a generator and heaters. So, for example, a video spread around the world showing a Ukrainian teacher teaching her online lessons through a power cut, near a post office branch where there was internet from a generator. [3] It was a true example of indomitability.

Another example is Mykhailo Fedorov. The 31-year-old Minister of Digital Transformation and Ukraine’s youngest cabinet member has rallied the Ukrainian IT community and lobbied international tech companies to support Ukraine in the digital hybrid war against Russia. He is also behind the wartime adaptation of a government app that is providing social benefits to millions of internally displaced people who lost their jobs as a result of the war.[4]

Nataliia Shevchuk, Chairwoman of the National Youth Council of Ukraine, highlights the dramatic situation facing young people: in one way, she says, it can seem as if the war *“is creating a protracted and complex crisis in which we are losing a whole generation of children and youth”*.

“This is true when it comes to human losses,” she admits, but adds: “At the same time, there are unprecedented opportunities to seize the moment for profound reforms towards European integration, without the moral right to make a mistake in memory of those who gave their lives for Ukraine and Europe.”

In 2022, the European Year of Youth, the team of the **“TBOPH”** youth spaces and the **European Youth Capital 2025 of the city of Lviv** launched a **video clip** with the main message that Ukrainian youth did not lose their youth, but actually pumped it up, a message echoed by Nataliia Shevchuk. *“We have upgraded our skills in many areas.”* she says. *“We have become more multi-tasking, stress-resistant and adaptable to all kinds of challenges, from air raids to mass blackouts. The full-scale invasion reaffirmed that the environment of civic activism and youth organisations is a unique space for acquiring soft skills at any time.”*

She emphasises the importance of creating a favourable environment for the comprehensive development of youth skills, which in the near future will lead to sustainable reconstruction and growth. *“The adoption of European integration legislation to support adult education (lifelong learning) is important for the creation of such an environment. This will allow us to support young people who lost their jobs due to the war or were forced to retrain, it will promote the reintegration and resocialisation of war veterans, and will help to improve qualifications.”*

But above all, she adds, *“it is important for young people to remember that democracy and peace require constant commitment and work. This does not start somewhere at high political levels, but also from school, university and own community. It is precisely in this that you can acquire all the most relevant and necessary skills and abilities.”*

Yuliana says one of the most important skills young people have developed is the ability to work on their own mental health and support each other: ***“War has created challenges for young people to develop resilience and courage as they face significant challenges every day.”***

Young people’s involvement in civil society is one of the most striking aspects about Ukrainian youth. Despite the war, youth are active in promoting social justice and advocating for change. They have gained new skills in advocacy, community organising and public speaking.

The resilience of young people in Ukraine has been impressive in the face of war. They have

overcome hardships, displacement and loss of loved ones but have displayed great strength and resilience. Many young people have learned new skills like language skills, entrepreneurship, and leadership through EU support programmes, such as [EU4 Skills](#) and [EU study days](#). These programmes help participants to succeed in the face and overcome challenges.



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SECTION 2:

How to acquire skills



AN AMAZING SUMMER WITH BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES: my Erasmus story

by Gulsara Jabbarli

As social beings, we have always been influenced by other people and experiences throughout our lives. These experiences can alter our perspectives and stimulate our personal development. Erasmus+ has taught me so much about myself and life. Having personally experienced Erasmus+, I can attest to its profound significance in both my personal and my professional life, including my future career. Through my Erasmus experience, I have developed, enhanced, and demonstrated abilities and skills that have benefited me in my academic and professional life.

I was 19, a third-year student who was especially interested in the Erasmus programme, when, while scrolling through Instagram one day, I happened upon a post promoting an Erasmus opportunity and decided to apply. This application sparked off my first Erasmus+ experience, a double-stage training course in Georgia about “Strengthening local capacities for community development” in which I took part alongside other young people from the Netherlands, Türkiye, Georgia, Armenia, Hungary, and Azerbaijan, my home country.

The training helped me to improve my ability to conduct research and analyse data. I gained

a deeper understanding of my community’s problems and of potential solutions, thanks to the programme’s focus on strengthening local capacities for community development. I had the opportunity to delve deeper into a variety of topics throughout the training, as we discussed them in pairs or groups. In the first part, we were asked to discuss the issues we consider critical in our country. In the second stage of the training course, we had to present the results of the survey and research we had conducted. Through this training programme, I gained a better understanding of how to write, report, and present data effectively, skills which have helped me to write academic papers in my academic life. At the same time, the experience of working on team projects with a group of people improved my communication, problem-solving, and teamwork abilities.



But apart from the advantages for my career and education, these training sessions were also instrumental in my personal development. I overcame my social anxiety, I became more communicative and at ease in sharing my personal experiences, I was more receptive to criticism. Most importantly, I was able to maintain a better relationship with people.



I returned to Baku after the first stage of the Erasmus+ training in Georgia, and a few days later in June, I received an email inviting me to an interview for a European Solidarity Corps project in Romania. I had been accepted as a volunteer at the “Youth Centres UP 2” project at the Timis County Youth Foundation in Timisoara, Romania for three weeks over August. This was a programme that brought foreign and national volunteers together for solidarity activities with the communities of Timisoara and Lugoj. As part of the project, we organised, promoted, and facilitated cultural, educational, and recreational activities and events for the people of Timisoara and Lugoj. This project also helped me to acquire important new life skills. For instance, we received a certain amount of money for two weeks, and it was up to us to decide how to spend that money during that period. The money was calculated to cover our basic expenses, so wasting money on unnecessary items was not an option. This process taught me a lot about money management and finances, and how to spend more efficiently. Living in the same building with hundreds of other people was not easy, since we shared a room, were on the same team and travelled together all the time. As we all lived in a common space, each of us had a limited amount of time to use facilities like the kitchen or washing machine. Therefore, we were all expected to respect one another's

boundaries. As someone who has never shared a room before, it was a fantastic opportunity to learn more about time management and empathy. It helped me to advance the way I communicated, and to be more understanding.

Nonetheless, we have to acknowledge that life is not entirely made up of enjoyable and memorable experiences. At first, leaving the country on my own and spending time in a foreign country without family and friends might seem exciting. However, the experience proved to be as challenging as it was rewarding. Yet even these difficult situations have helped to shape my personality. I remember having a common key with my roommates, and once we had a problem due to having different schedules. I had to wait outside waiting for my roommate to come back. It was an experience that forced us to have better communication about our schedules and to inform each other if anything unexpected happens. Even minor concerns like this require understanding, sensitivity, and patience. Using our common key required us to communicate with each other more and to build stronger friendships. Another example is related to health. Coming from a country with a different climate, I experienced problems such as fever, coughing, and headaches. I remember that I had to go to the pharmacy to get all my medications. As a result of this experience, I became more attentive to what I eat and drink, and I also became more responsible for my actions. For the first time in my life, I understood the importance of having a healthy body.





Erasmus+ is one of the most exciting experiences anyone can have as a teenager or a young person. If you have any doubts or hesitations about participating, just ask those who have done it before. Even though not everything works smoothly and flawlessly all the time, these experiences can teach you ten times more than you can ever imagine. Erasmus dramatically altered my perception of people and my outlook on life. Since Erasmus, I have grown more

sympathetic, understanding, and gregarious. The experience has taught me everything from basic skills like cooking and cleaning to more advanced ones like conducting research for our community. All of these have given me a greater sense of self-confidence and determination, and I would not exchange them for anything else. The Erasmus+ programme provided me with the opportunity to step outside my comfort zone, and become more independent and self-confident as a person, while also teaching me the value of collaboration and co-dependence. I learned how to be more tolerant, sociable, understanding, and empathetic by travelling alone. I attempted to fit in with an international group of teenagers, sharing my culture, and discovering more about others. My favourite memories of my Erasmus experiences consist of cooking together in the same kitchen, playing games, dancing to each other's national music, learning the basics of foreign languages, and having fun while doing all these things.

WHAT'S MISSING

in the Belarusian education system

by T. S.

A common theme in discussions of any aspect of education is the importance of soft skills. The main reason for the priority of skills over knowledge lies in the speed of the development of the world: if a student receives only specific knowledge, and not the ability to apply it in practice, then by graduation he or she will not be needed in the labour market, and this knowledge will cease to be relevant. Therefore, the educational system should be built on the development of skills and their practical application.

The Belarusian education system in many aspects does not respond to the demands of modern life. It is likely that a graduate of a Belarusian school or university will be the most interesting person in the room. He or she might be able to recite Yesenin's poems, discuss the abolition of serfdom in Belarus or the application of Ohm's law, but will struggle in the labour market. Why is this the case? To answer this question, we need to look at the Belarusian education system, which differs significantly from those of other European countries.

Logically we should start with school education. The Belarusian school system is divided into elementary education (ages 6-10), basic secondary education (10-15), and secondary education (15-18), though the last is a formal distinction since secondary education has become compulsory since 2022. Children are taught in classes of 25-30, and are educated from grades 1 all the way through to 11 at the same school and in the same, fixed group of classmates across every subject. Moreover, the curriculum is strictly regimented: each school group has a very clear schedule, and classes do not mix. Thus, the environment that develops in

the first grade remains static for the whole 11-year period. On the one hand, this creates very close, almost familial relationships within the class, but on the other hand, such a system does not allow for full development of social skills, and soft skills that are so needed in modern society. Belarusian schoolchildren get used to the comfort of familiar surroundings and are not exposed to new experiences or differing points of view.

The subjects are as fixed as the study groups. Belarusian schoolchildren have very few opportunities to specialise their education depending on their future profession. Recently, there has been a development of specialised classes in secondary school. However, this offers the possibility of further study in existing subjects like mathematics, physics or biology in grades 10 and 11, but not of branching out into additional subjects [1]. For example, a Belarusian student who wants to become a doctor cannot additionally study organic chemistry, there is simply no such additional subject. He or she can only opt for more chemistry classes. Moreover, if not enough students opt for a particular specialisation, then the option falls off the table.



As for university education, the group formation scheme is the same: a student is fixed in a study group and studies with this group for all 4 years. The exception is lectures for the whole course, where a large number of students come together to listen to the material, but seminars always take place with the same group. The educational basis is a programme approved by the Ministry of Education. A very limited number of elective courses is available. Moreover, elective courses are binary mandatory options. That is, if none of the two or three options corresponds to the narrow academic specialisation of the student, two cannot be abandoned [2].

There is one more feature of Belarusian higher education: almost all Belarusian universities are state-owned, and a significant proportion of study places at universities is financed from the state budget. Almost all applicants strive to get into these subsidised places, because not all families can afford tuition fees, and the system of loans for education is not developed. Upon completion of education, a graduate of a subsidised education is obliged to work for two years in a place determined by the state. The lack of competition in the employment of young professionals therefore leads to a lack of incentives for universities to better prepare students, or students to develop their skills [3].

An essential opportunity for the personal and professional growth of Belarusian students was the opportunity to study as an exchange student under the Erasmus programme. However, as of 2021, all these programmes have been closed.

The educational process in Belarus would benefit, firstly, from the weakening of centralisation, the transfer to the level of schools, colleges,

universities of the initiative in transforming programmes in accordance with the needs of reality. After all, the process of making changes to the programme is rather cumbersome: first, the programme is prepared by the department, then it is approved by the faculty, then by the university administration, and only after this it is introduced into the educational process. By reducing the number of approving authorities, we would be able to update curricula in a timely manner.

Centralisation and uniformity are not always a bad thing. At the level of grades 1-9, this is quite appropriate. However, at grades 10-11, when the student already understands where his or her strengths lie, and aims for higher education, it would be better to take the high school out of the secondary school education system, that is, to be a physically different place with a variety of specialties, more trained teachers, and the opportunity to study more specialised areas.

In addition, the salary of a teacher is less than the average salary in the country. This fact does not speak in favour of the choice of teaching as a future profession for a talented student. This also affects the quality of education [4].

Thus, for all its merits, the Belarusian education system has a major drawback – the lack of dynamism, mobility and democracy. Traditions have to be in education, but not drown out the innovations which are necessary for progress. The full inclusion of Belarus in the Bologna system, the development of specialised education in high school and the increase in the prestige of the teaching profession are some of the keys to improving the Belarusian education system.

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INTERLUDE:

Arts and skills

UNESCO Heritage in the Caucasian states

by Danijel Bačan

Learning hard skills and soft skills is essential. A perhaps unconventional way of developing one's skills is to travel: travelling allows one to become familiar with new cultures, new traditions, expand one's perspective and learn how to communicate in multiple languages - or without the need to learn a new language at all!

Here's an invitation to discover some new sights and beautiful attractions in the Caucasus!

ARMENIA – a country of monasteries and churches

In the high mountainous expanse of northern Armenia is the **Haghpat Monastery**, which has stood proudly since the 10th century. Thanks to its position, the Monastery is often hidden from unwelcome guests, shrouded in fog and low cloud cover. The Sanahin Monastery is located nearby, and together with the Haghpat Monastery, it forms a unique church unit, a place of medieval learning. These monasteries are also significant because of their unique architecture, a combination of Byzantine and vernacular styles. Here, for centuries, priests kept their inner peace and studied a myriad of sciences. These monasteries have been on the UNESCO list since 1996.



Credits: Diego Delso, delso.photo, License CC-BY-SA

The Geghard Monastery is partially buried in the rock in the mountainous region of western Armenia. This monastery dates back to the 4th century, and is traditionally known to have been founded by Gregory the Illuminator himself in the area of the then Šilja. The Monastery keeps the spear with which Jesus Christ was pierced, and is the destination of numerous pilgrimages. Together with the monastery, under UNESCO protection, is the canyon of the nearby river Azat, which attracts attention for its almost untouched natural appearance and irregular stone forms, which look as if they were made artificially. Both locations have been under

protection since 1996 due to the uniqueness of the architecture, that is, the unique natural formations in the canyon.



Credits: Diego Delso, delso.photo, License CC-BY-SA

Echmiatsin is the fourth largest city in Armenia and the main centre of the **Armenian Catholic Apostolic Church**. It is a place of numerous church buildings and sites, a place that exudes tradition and the spirit of the past, the (unofficial) religious capital of Armenia. Under protection are precisely the church buildings that testify to the development of Armenian church architecture and provide a unique opportunity to see more than two thousand years of Armenian history. The ruins of the **Zvartnots Cathedral**, which was one of the first circular church buildings, are also specially protected since 2000.



Credits: Adam Jones

AZERBAIJAN – a country of historic cities and interesting rock formations

The first landmark that Azerbaijan inscribed on the UNESCO list in 2000 was the old centre of Baku, the capital of the country. The **Shirvanshahs Palace**, which was the main residence of numerous rulers over Baku, has a special position within the old centre. The Palace has been demolished and rebuilt several times, either by invaders or by earthquakes, thus representing the continuous flow of Azerbaijani culture. Beside the Palace is the protected **Maiden Tower**, which is associated with numerous legends, the most famous of which is about a girl with fiery hair. The tower is so famous that it is also supported by state funds.



Credits: Urek Meniashvili



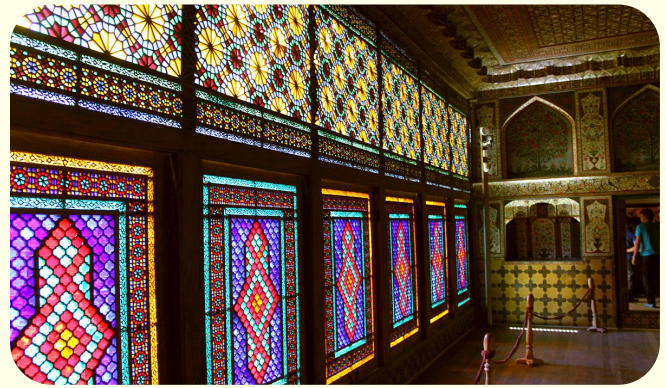
Credits: Diego Delso, delso.photo, License CC-BY-SA

Gobustan State Historical and Cultural Reserve is located south of Baku and is one of the best-preserved archaeological sites of Azerbaijan. The petroglyphs, which depict scenes from prehistoric life, are special to this place; people hunting animals, travelling by boat in the nearby waters, etc. In addition to the petroglyphs, there are also “playing” stones, which produce pleasant musical sounds when struck. One of the attractions is the mud volcano, which also has healing properties and attracts many tourists. This place has been under UNESCO protection since 2007.



Credits: Erdal Turkoglu, Wikimedia Commons

The newest monument under UNESCO as of 2019 is the city of **Shaki** in the northwestern region of the country. The city has been inhabited since antiquity and is a significant staging post on the former Silk Road. The city is also a unique cultural centre with very significant cultural institutions, and numerous establishments from several religious sects. A special part of this site is the Palace of Shaki Khans, which was the centre of the city's khans known for its architecture



Credits: Urek Meniashvili, Wikimedia Commons

GEORGIA – a country of magnificent nature and medieval architecture

Mtskheta is one of the oldest cities in Georgia and in the world, with an extremely long history of settlement. It is a city whose monuments have been under protection since 1994 and boasts a very important church and cultural centre of Georgia. Numerous monuments from the Middle Ages in the river valleys and in the mountain hermitages are also part of the protected site and as such are unique in the world. In one of the protected monuments, the original Georgian alphabet was studied, so the monuments represent the cradle of Georgian civilisation.



Credits: Moahim, Wikimedia Commons

Gelati Monastery is a monastic complex in central Georgia that dates back to the 12th century. This monastery has been under UNESCO protection since 1994 and represents an example of the Georgian Golden Age, an aesthetic that is applied to paintings and buildings. In medieval Georgia, the monastery was an important educational and cultural centre and functioned as the prototype of the first Georgian university.



Credits: Serhii Zysko, Wikimedia Commons



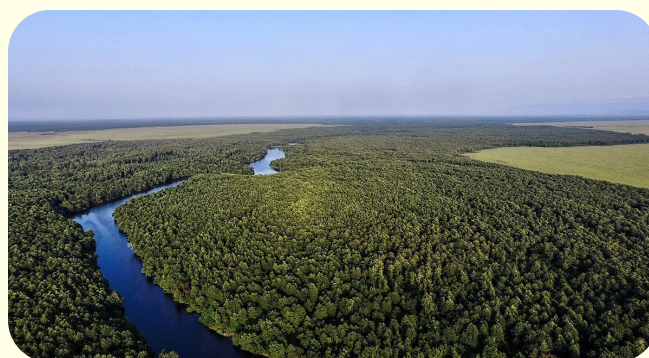
Credits: Ihor Burliak, Wikimedia commons

Svaneti is a historical region in northwestern Georgia inhabited by Svans, a unique ethnic subgroup of Gurzians. It is a region that has been under UNESCO protection since 1996 and represents one of the highest regions of Georgia. The region has a famous site with the Svans towers, which were actually residential buildings that also had a defensive function. The region is distinguished by



Credits: Dmytro Balkhovitin, Wikimedia Commons

Georgia's newest UNESCO World Heritage Site, as of 2021, is the **Colchic Rainforests and Wetlands**, which includes an area along the Black Sea. It is an area of ancient rainforests and the habitat of numerous endangered species and is the only exclusive natural Georgian UNESCO site.



Credits: Paata vardanashvili, Wikimedia Commons

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ARMENIA

whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/am

AZERBAIJAN

whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/az

GEORGIA

whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/ge

TEN EUROPEAN ARTISTS you may never have heard of... but probably should!

by Patrícia Raposo and Despoina Panteli

Like every magazine that respects itself and wants the best for its readers, we too have made a list of our top ten picks! This time, we chose to present ten European artists that you have probably never heard of, but really ought to know... We are confident that this list will increase your personal creativity index by at least one notch.

We came up with a mix of contemporary and established art and artists from the Eastern Partnership countries, because we think that in this way we can keep it fresh and young, while also drawing inspiration from more established art. Balance is the key!

Art is not limited to a specific type or material. It has different means of expression. Art can be figurative, writing, photography and so much more. Our inspirational quote of the day is that it's not just about the conventional "art", but about being able to make art out of anything and everything. Read on, and you'll see what we mean...

So while letting yourself get inspired by the works we have presented, we want you to keep this question in mind after reading the article: why are artistic skills and artistic sensitivity important?

The YEAs of the Arts and Culture Working Group would love to discuss this question with you, so if you want, we can set up a whole online discussion forum about it, drinking some good Georgian Tarhun soda for further inspiration.

ALJOSCHA

Ukrainian contemporary installation artist

The conceptual artist Aljoscha, was born in 1974 in Glukhov, Ukraine, and currently works and resides in Düsseldorf, Germany. Aljoscha is best known for his characteristic visual language exploring the possibilities of synthetic biology in art. His sculptures and installations are a manifestation of organic life with a futuristic touch.

Aljoscha says his works explore the possibilities of bioism, the development of objects in art in such a way as to enable them to express the visual possibilities of synthetic biology. He seemingly creates new living forms based on vitality, multiplicity, and complexity. In doing so, he integrates these new organic forms into public spaces, site-specific installations, or as interventions in an



[**instagram.com/aljoscha.aljoscha**](https://www.instagram.com/aljoscha.aljoscha)

[**contemporaryartissue.com/discover-top-10-contemporary-artists-from-ukraine/**](https://contemporaryartissue.com/discover-top-10-contemporary-artists-from-ukraine/)

[**kyiv.gallery/en/belaschuk-tetiana**](https://kyiv.gallery/en/belaschuk-tetiana)

FAIG AHMED
Azerbaijani artist

Internationally acclaimed artist Faig Ahmed has been described as “daring and futuristic”. He is perhaps best known for his famous, hand-woven rugs that appear to melt into pools of liquid onto the floor. Ahmed seeks to challenge the boundaries of traditional crafts and re-imagine them to create a new visual aesthetic. His work is diverse and includes painting, video work and installations.



Images Courtesy of Faig Ahmed Studio

FARID RASULOV
Azerbaijani artist

A doctor by training, Rasulov only began working in the visual arts after he graduated. He works across a variety of media, and his playfully provocative installations led him to be selected to represent his country at the 2009 Venice Biennale. Rasulov insists that his art is not profound and that he is simply replicating some of the commonplace things he sees around him in daily life.

www.faridrasulov.com

ALBERT GARNIKOVICH YAVURYAN

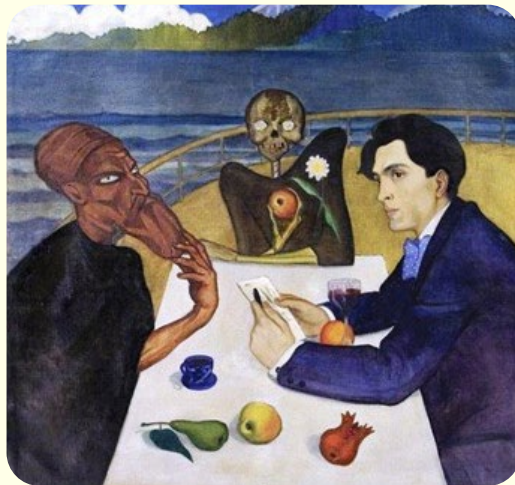
Armenian cinematographer

Yavuryan was one of the most acclaimed cinematographers in Armenia. He was awarded the Movses Khorenatsi Medal in 1999 and given the title, "Merited Artist of Armenia", in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the arts. Amongst his most famous works is the movie Barev, yes em, or "Hello, that's me", (1966), which tells the story of Artyom Manvelyan, a famous physicist and founder of a cosmology laboratory in Armenia. With loyalty and gentleness, the physicist keeps alive the memories of the past war, his friends and lost love. This film, along with his subsequent movie, Ashik Kerib, (1988), secure Yavuryan's reputation as a cinematographer with a worldwide legacy.

SHALVA KIKODZE

Georgian painter, graphic artist and theatre designer

When visiting Georgia, a visit to the Art Museum of Georgia in Tbilisi is a must. This museum contains one of the foremost art collections in the country and the painter Shalva Kikodze occupies a special place within it. From his school days, and subsequently in Tbilisi, Kikodze worked for periodicals, especially satirical magazines, where he published cartoons of public officials, combining his art with political commentary. Here are some of his paintings, which will hopefully inspire you to go and see them in real life.



ANDREI MUDREA
Moldovan Postmodernist

The late Andrei Mudrea (1954–2022) is considered to be one of the most significant Bessarabian painters, and has an entire gallery devoted to his work. A postmodernist, his art is characterised by high drama. His work evolved over five decades, as he sought an appropriate artistic response to the changes he saw around him in national life.



VICTOR CUZMENCO
Moldovan artist

Born in 1948, Victor Cuzmenco is an award-winning artist based in Moldova whose paintings have been exhibited internationally. He works in acrylics and oils to create minimalist geometric forms and describes his artworks as exploring ontological questions of being, through which he attempts to 'express the life of spirit free from matter.'

www.instagram.com/victor.cuzmenco/

cuzmenco.wordpress.com/

VALZHYNA MORT
Contemporary Belarusian Poet

Valzhyna Mort is a Belarusian poet who has received multiple awards for her work abroad. She is the first poet to publish Belarusian/English poetry, thereby making more accessible to the non-Belarusian-speaking world the struggles and birth-pangs of her emerging new nation. Her work inspires us to become more aware of how the environment we live in, our culture and heritage, all combine to influence us in many ways, even subconsciously.

In her poem "Factory of tears" for example the reader can catch for example the essence of pure love portrayed by the feeling of tenderness and at the same time impossibility to find in other people. The metaphors that she is using to capture that feeling can be bodily sensed by the reader while reading as if they are experiencing it since they stem from everyday life.

ZHANNA GLADKO
Belarusian artist

Zhanna Gladko is a Belarusian artist who has exhibited in numerous international galleries and museums. Her work contains a strong autobiographical strand – a recent project focussed on analysing conflicting relationships with the father – but always seeks to relate the personal to contemporary socio-political events. She is drawn to the issue of conflict and the dialogue of divergent systems.



www.instagram.com/zhannagladko/
imacomundicollection.org/artworks/?catalogues=52815

SECTION 3:

Skills in practice *

ARE WOMEN S-strong, T-echanical, E-efficient, and M-otivated enough to close the global workforce gap?

by Nigar Həsənova

Headlines addressing the gap between the demands of the STEM-related jobs market and the availability of suitably qualified personnel have become commonplace. All too often we see articles asking; “Why is there a global labour shortage?”, or demanding to know; “Where are the workers?” or promising to find; “Ways to deal with labour shortage”. Most of us are probably very intrigued about the size of that gap, and wonder what sort of heroic workers might have the superhuman strength required to build a bridge across it, to reach the other side. Could women be the heroes we are looking for to assist us in creating this pathway? I believe that women in STEM could make up the required personnel for the job. Ironically, the abbreviation STEM, which stands for science, technology, engineering and maths, itself contains the reasons why we are even asking this question.

S like – science: the main reason for the workforce gap.

New employment prospects are made possible by scientific advancement and innovations. Yet the rate of advancement frequently outpaces the quantity of field personnel available. If we look at statistics, it becomes clear that the EU is seeing an unprecedented lack of women in STEM disciplines. Only 2 out of 5 scientists and engineers are female, despite the fact that women make up 52% of the European population and the majority of university graduates in the EU. Since 49.5% of the world's population are women, this growing disparity demonstrates the urgent need for more women to enter STEM fields. According to the most recent She Figures study, the gender gap grows as seniority rises, with women making up only 17.9% of full professors in the domains of engineering and technology.

T like – technology: the key to employment for the rest of this century.

If workers are required to use these technologies, new technologies also create jobs. The expansion of employment may also be prompted by an increase in disposable income brought about by a growth in technology-driven productivity. As technology advances, there is rising demand for individuals with appropriate technical skills. According to figures supplied by the American Association of University Women (AAUW), women make up only 28% of the workforce in STEM areas of employment. This dismal figure demonstrates the primary cause of the global workforce gap and the potential for women with a STEM-based education to successfully address the problem.



E like – engineering: female retention remains an issue.

Even after overcoming obstacles to entering the area of STEM-related jobs, women go on to leave at considerably higher rates than men. An article in the Harvard Business Review in 2016 attributed this to the stress of working in a field where men predominate. Workplace discrimination can be expressed subtly, such as when women feel their contributions are valued less than those of their male peers because tasks and roles have been gendered. When women predominantly hold occupations that are considered less valuable or desirable, this can feed into existing prejudices that female engineers are less technically skilled and in turn makes them feel less appreciated. Female engineers may find it difficult to struggle against pervasive workplace bias, which could lead to burn out and departure from the field.

M like - mathematics: a crucial subject entry to technology-related industries.

Maths is a key component of the bridge's foundation. Yet according to a 2022 UNICEF research report, discrimination and gender stereotypes are among the main reasons why girls globally lag behind boys in mathematics. According to the study, boys were up to 1.3 times as likely to have maths skills compared to girls. This disparity is a result of negative gender norms and preconceptions that are frequently maintained by teachers, parents and peers regarding girls' natural inability to learn mathematics. The paper notes that this damages

girls' self-esteem and sets them up for failure. Girls can learn mathematics just as well as boys, but they don't have the same opportunities, according to UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. Addressing this area alone would make a significant difference to reducing gender disparities in the STEM workplace and the looming shortage of qualified professionals.

The STEM acronym may explain the causes behind the gap and how this affects the global situation. But there is one question that has remained unanswered. How will these heroic builders construct our bridge across the gap?

How to overcome internalised stereotypes.

Women can succeed in STEM on their own. Regrettably, in most patriarchal countries, women do not ask for what they want in their jobs, instead assuming that everyone around them understands what they require. The first and primary goal should be for everyone, not just women, to avoid allowing preconceptions to interfere with women's capacities to express themselves. Women should be able to freely exchange ideas and encourage other women who are growing up in the same way. Businesses should emphasise the significance of creating a culture in which all women may succeed, as well as taking intentional initiatives toward pay equity, child care provision, and return-to-work programmes to encourage women to re-enter STEM workforces after a career break.

O-pportunities for success will increase with women's participation in the innovation process.

Men and women see things differently and can bring various perspectives to the table. This is important because high-tech teams in the workforce require cognitive and gender diversity to create meaningful results. There is increasing awareness of how women can bring varied perspectives to the workplace, their presence inspires people to look outside the box and to think in different ways to find solutions. According to research by the Peterson Institute for International Economics, organisations with 30% female leadership had a 15% gain in profitability compared to similar organisations with no female leadership.

W-omen leaders set a good example for other women

Successful women are self-assured in their talents. They make certain that their ideas are heard. Women leaders motivate young girls to be more confident, to bring their real selves to work, to pursue opportunities for advancement, and to become successful women who can drive gender equality efforts. This has a knock-on effect, with women being able to further their careers by serving as role models for the next generation.

STEM jobs are notoriously tough to fill, and the labour market's expansion is already surpassing the supply of experienced technicians. This type of deficit in important technical fields may in turn suffocate innovation and growth. The technology sector must begin populating the employment pool with skilled, enthusiastic individuals of all genders. Let us carry out this plan by providing our skilled builders with the resources and materials they require to build a bridge that is robust enough to carry both future and existing citizens.

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IF YOU CAN'T MEASURE IT, YOU CAN'T IMPROVE: how does a young Azerbaijani deal with the “oil of the 21st century”?

by Khalid Alakbarov

Exclusively for the YEA magazine, I conducted an interview with a young data specialist, Nijat Hajiyev.

- Nijat, tell us a little about yourself please.

My name is Nijat Hajiyev. At the moment, I am studying for a master's degree in the field of data science (WSB Akademia) in Poland. At the same time, I am working at Amazon as a subject matter expert. I have a bachelor's degree in marketing and as I was finishing this degree, I began to pay attention to the data and IT side of things. It was then I realised that this area is to my liking, so I decided to continue my education in this field, combining it with courses from the internet. And now, I've been in this field for two years already and I am an Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Google certified cloud data professional.

As a graduate, I started as a marketing assistant with the leading Azerbaijani investment company, Gilan Holding and then became a social media manager and paid media analyst at the Baku-based FIL agency. I went on to hold marketing analyst and acting manager positions in various local companies. This eventually led me to the Polish branch of the American financial services company, The State Street Corporation. It was my first overseas experience and was fundamental to my transformation into a data analyst.

- Tell us in more detail how and why you became sufficiently interested in data science to take courses, and eventually to get a master's degree in this field.

In my fourth year as an undergraduate, I worked at the Savadly company and spent time at the

Lotfi Zadeh Technology Centre in Baku, named after the Azeri-American mathematician who founded the concept of fuzzy logic. There, I was surrounded by people who were immersed in IT and as I communicated more and more with them, I began to gradually immerse myself also in the field of IT, and to learn from them. I had a desire to test myself further in this area, in this new field of activity. So, I started doing research on which of the IT specialties might be the most suitable for me, and decided to stop at data. I started taking courses. The more I learned about new features and tools, the more I realised that this was my area. Ultimately, I decided to study current job trends. Given the fact that in the future the data analytics market will be large, I decided to develop expertise in this area.

One phrase that I heard that inspired me at the time and which I always think is worth mentioning is that data will be the “oil” of the 21st century. And indeed, data plays an increasingly large role in our lives, especially during the last 20 years.

- Well, that sounds pretty convincing. But, perhaps, many readers have only heard about data science in the brochures of online courses or university programmes, while not delving into the essence of this discipline. How would you briefly describe a data analyst?

For me, working with data is about how a company uses the data it owns, in order to explore the current state of the business. Data analytics helps a company to understand what level it is at now, and where and how to move further. In short, this is a powerful tool that allows you to describe the past and present of the company, and thus plan its future. Keeping data accurately and being responsible for it, is far from an easy job. So companies hire qualified data analysts who can deliver quality work with data. In addition, you must constantly be aware of changes in data, and be on the alert.

It is worth noting here the difference between data analytics and data science. Data science is a higher level of this area. It includes machine learning and algorithms, building models and forecasts, as well as IT solutions for business.

- What obstacles and challenges did you confront while studying data analytics?

Just as it was not easy to choose which IT field to work in, so the same was true of the field of data. All the time you have to choose which instruments to pay more attention to, where to start, what to learn first, etc. Whether to rely on your background or on technical tools. Those are the problems I've run into the most. And as I identified the correct tools, I needed to figure out how to actually learn to use them. Drawing up a training plan is quite difficult for beginners. Therefore, I studied videos by YouTube vloggers with many years of experience. While these resources are great, they are not enough. In the initial stages, it is quite difficult to maintain discipline and consistency without losing motivation. You see, a beginner wants to develop skills and at the same time gain new knowledge, in a word, to move quickly. And when it doesn't work, it reduces motivation. I stopped training several times, but then continued again.

- What is the difference between a university data analytics education and the courses that you took?

There is a difference in the training schedule. For example, the university offers the study of data analytics in the form of a two-year master's

programme. And over these two years, at different semesters, different areas of both data science and data analytics are studied gradually and separately. An online course, on the other hand, is faster, but also more loaded. Online courses can be more flexible and adaptive to market requirements, unlike the university curriculum. The teachers in the courses are more application-oriented, while in the university they are more theory-oriented.

- You are going to complete your postgraduate degree, how will you use your data skills in your dissertation?

I am working on a very interesting case. The effects of artificial intelligence on unemployment. I used data skills to determine how manufacturing automation drives up unemployment. In the process of working on my thesis, I also created a machine learning model. Through exposure to the data I provided on manufacturing automation, the model was able to understand when it was presented with a nuanced picture with positive and negative arguments. This is called sentiment analysis. Then after learning this, I gave it another set of data that it had never seen before and it was already able to evaluate whether this was positive or negative

After fully building this model, companies will be able to use it so they can classify reviews in their internal systems. This increases the image of the company and brings greater efficiency.

- Nijat, what are your goals and expectations for the near future?

Currently I am at Amazon, and AWS is the largest company in the cloud sphere with around a third of global cloud market share. AI and cloud machine learning is becoming very popular nowadays – a trend that I believe will continue well into the future. In the long term, I plan to focus on automations using AI in order to make people's lives easy. I think for some tasks computers can work well and enable people to spend more time with their families. I expect to see a rise in such technologies and am looking forward to taking my seat on the journey.

WHAT ROLE CAN YOUNG PEOPLE PLAY IN CIVIL SOCIETY? What does it take to be an effective young leader?

by Nataliia Balitska

Young people have always shaped the world around them. They play a determining role in the development of civil society, in particular in the construction of a democratic and legal state with strong values and principles of justice. The question of responsible leadership now is as relevant as ever. Because the qualities of today's young leaders will determine the future of our communities, our countries, of the entire world. Being a responsible leader is about challenges, difficulties, risk, responsibility and opportunity, it is about success, influence, change, competence, and character.

Is it possible to be born with the necessary qualities to lead, or do they have to be learnt? What qualities should a responsible leader possess? How can they be developed – is it even possible to do this? What significance does this have for the construction and development of civil society? And how relevant is all this to the issue of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction and the country's movement towards European integration? We will discuss this and more in this article.

The question of leadership is controversial. Because one's understanding of what a leader is, and what qualities he or she should possess, will in turn determine the role they will play in civil society. In my opinion, it is young people who are today the source of the democratic social changes that motivate and inspire. Youth leaders are ready to change their communities and themselves. And these are not only words, it is a truth that is becoming increasingly evident every day.

Young people can become a driving force behind the development of civil society and ultimately impact on changes in the state and its interaction with citizens – through their activities, organisations, unions, networks, and associations. One great example of such participation is the "Young European Ambassadors" initiative. After all,

this is a network that connects young, ambitious, change-ready people who influence the world, communities and the country with their projects, participation in international, local events, as well as their cooperation in the implementation of projects with various stakeholders.

Another good example from my own experience is my participation as a Student Dean of the Faculty of Economics of BTNAU – the Bila Tserkva National Agrarian University. This is a unique and interesting experience of personal leadership, change-making and influence on young people. As Head of the Student Council, I have responsibility, influence and inspiration through conducting various events for students, cooperating with other faculties and trying to involve them in active public life.

So, as you can see, young leaders take part in volunteer and public youth projects too. They develop youth councils, movements, participate in forums and events, and spread knowledge. They also participate in joint projects with other stakeholders, such as non-governmental organisations, student councils, volunteer initiatives on different levels, school councils, business, private individuals, state government bodies and institutions, local self-government bodies in communities, international organisations, etc.

More importantly, young people have their own values and priorities and recognise that they have a critical role and a unique responsibility in determining their nations' futures. And this, in my opinion, is a key component of responsible leadership; the ability to be held accountable for the effect your actions have on others, in particular the team you are working with, as well of course as the ability to inspire that team. Leadership today is about youth, their faith, their readiness and responsibility.

Of course the question is always asked whether a leader is born or made? Naturally those who are born with certain inherent qualities may have an advantage, but not always. Having studied this at some length, I have identified several factors that can help in the formation of a leader. These are: early leadership experience, a humanistic education, which teaches one to think widely and creatively, the experience of defeat and failure, which gives important life lessons, and the opportunity for continuous self-development.

But it is worth mentioning that there is no "magic pill", for effective, responsible leadership, these environmental factors need to act in combination with certain inherent personal qualities. A leader has to have a natural thirst for knowledge, personal charisma, a sense of vision, energy, communication skills, the ability to motivate and maintain a team, empathy and passion. A truly responsible leader needs to demonstrate compassion towards the community at large and not be motivated by personal ambition, and

to have the strength of character to learn from their mistakes.

Therefore, I believe that everyone has a chance to become a leader. In my opinion, and based on my personal experience, the ideal combination of these factors is found in the person for whom leadership is a natural mission. For those of us who perhaps do not have this sense of mission, it is possible to become a leader through a combination of great will power and the investment of a lot of effort in yourself. And on the subject of how this can be done, here is a recommendation of how to develop leadership skills: be proactive and manage your life, set goals and priorities, be responsible for your actions and lifestyle. You should stop being afraid of the new and should be prepared to leave your comfort zone, follow your desires, communicate, and actively build a network of contacts. You must understand the interests of other people, think about their point of view, and try, in controversial situations, to find mutually beneficial solutions. Enjoy what you do, because enthusiasm and motivation should become your best friends.

Why is the participation of youth in leadership roles so important? Because such participation is crucial to sustainable democracy and the development of civil society, and to a better understanding by the state of the needs of young people. Furthermore, the state then takes young people seriously, and realises the part they can play in the future of their country.



Youth participation in democratic processes is about being free and able to make a choice to live the life you want and deserve. And it is also about building an awareness of your rights, using the opportunity to express your opinions and to defend your point of view. It can give you confidence and greater self-respect, but the most important thing is the experience it gives you of the daily struggle for a better future. Yes, this involves losses and failures, but we as individuals, will be strengthened and enriched by those experiences and as a result will be able to make our country the best version ever!

Thus, the question of Ukraine's post-war reconstruction and its progress towards EU membership is relevant to the issue of youth leadership development, because of the crucial role the young play in the existence of civil society. The values of the young, their thirst for growth and the development of their country mean only one thing: young people, ambitious and able, with a strong belief in democratic values, are already contributing to today's struggle for a just and fair Ukraine and for movement toward European integration.

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SECTION 4: *

Learning to learn - programme and opportunities for youth

EU-funded programmes to learn new skills

ARMENIA



AZERBAIJAN



BELARUS



GEORGIA



MOLDOVA



UKRAINE



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Rostyslav Semka has been working in the civic sector in Ukraine since 2019 and is the head of a nongovernmental organization "Inspiration Place". Has a master's degree at Kyiv National University of Trade and Economics majoring in management of foreign economic activity. Member of the Young European Ambassadors initiative in Ukraine. He has participated in various international conferences and trainings and has significant experience in active social work with children and youth in Ukraine and abroad. In 2021, Rostyslav was a panelist for GFC's Spark Fund. Member of the commission on membership of the National Youth Council of Ukraine.

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Giorgi is a fourth year International Relations student at Tbilisi State University. He spent the last semester as an Erasmus student at Comenius University. Since 2015, he has been actively involved in volunteering. Outside the university, he works as a youth worker in the youth center for non-formal education "Sunny House" and works with young people to change their environment for the better.

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DANIJEL BAČAN

Danijel Bačan is a second-year student of two master's studies in geography at the Faculty of Natural Sciences in Zagreb. His specialization is political geography and geopolitics and he is the author of several scientific articles in this field. Danijel is also the national representative of YATA Croatia, a councilor in the Zagreb County Youth Council and an active member of the youth association in his municipality.

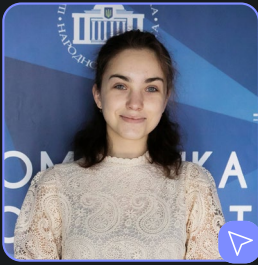
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DESPOINA PANTELI

Despoina is a double degree master's student in "European Governance" in the Czech Republic and in the Netherlands. This year, next to being a YEA, she is the Youth Representative of Greece at the Council of Local and Regional Authorities at the Council of Europe. Despoina has been part of "Participate", an initiative that is bringing together people with a migration background with their new local communities, the Chairwoman of the Model United Nations Society Düsseldorf and a Public Relations Officer of Bringing Europeans Together Association. She has offered voluntary service to Y.M.C.A. and to "Include", an Interdisciplinary Network for Intercultural and Special Education. She has also been an active participant in many international conferences such as Model ASEM, Future Leaders Global, World Forum for Democracy and Global-In Fellowship. Despoina's fields of expertise are youth participation and minority groups' rights.

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NATALIIA BALITSKA

Currently, Nataliia is a fifth-year Master's student at the BTNAU in the "Public management and administration" program. She actively engaged in processes of increasing the engagement level of students and young people in community life, youth projects, and academic research. She was one of the implementers of the Ukrainian project "School for Reformers", which aimed to teach children about complex reforms simply and many other educational and coaching projects. Her passion is leadership, scientific work, gender equality and public speaking. Nataliia is brave to be ambitious, that's why she's here and she hopes to change the world for the better!

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ELSIE HALDANE

Elsie is from Scotland, where she has just finished a master's degree in gender studies. Her interests lie in tackling social injustice, promoting inclusivity, and amplifying voices. Alongside her work with young people, she is also Junior Editor-in-Chief of The New Federalists, the webzine for the Young European Federalists (JEF Europe).

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AFONSO MORANGO

Originally from Portugal, Afonso Morango completed a Bachelor's in International Relations at the University of Porto and a minor in European Studies at the University of Maastricht. Currently, he is pursuing a Master's in Development and International Cooperation at the Lisbon School of Economics and Management. Afonso is deeply passionate about the European Project and vehemently believes that the European Union is a truly suis generis area in the world.

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SAYAD ALAKBAROV

Sayad Alakbarov is a third-year LLB student at Baku Student University, who is deeply committed to using his skills and knowledge to contribute to his community. He has a particular interest in public policy, and is eager to explore opportunities in these field.

Sayad is also passionate about attending MUNs conferences and practicing judo, which provide him with opportunities to expand his horizons and connect with like-minded individuals. Beyond his academic and extracurricular pursuits, Sayad is actively involved in efforts to support youth from rural areas, and is dedicated to promoting opportunities for these communities. With his diverse interests and strong sense of purpose, Sayad is a promising young leader who is poised to make a difference in the world.

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HAYLEY ANDERSON

Hayley Anderson is currently in her second year of studying European Social and Political Studies at University College London. Her specialism in Hungarian and History has sparked a particular interest in linguistics and the ways this can inform history and politics. With Hungarian and Australian heritage, she has been fortunate to experience the benefits of the EU from both inside and outside of its borders. She is passionate about social mobility and providing opportunities to others through her own volunteering efforts.

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GULSARA JABBARLI

Gulsara is in her last year of studies at the Azerbaijan State University of Economics, where she is majoring in World Economy. She is working as an Intern in Internal Communication while completing her thesis on the impact of FDI on income growth in Azerbaijan. She had previously participated in an Erasmus+ training course and ESC short-term volunteering over the previous summer. She has been a Young European Ambassador since 2021 and is regularly involved in network-organized activities. Gulsara attended the 3rd European Forum of Young Leaders, which took place in Katowice, Poland, on April 24-26, 2023.

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VICTORIA ARAKELYAN

Victoria Arakelyan is currently studying International Relations at International Black Sea University. She is an aspiring influencer, educator and entrepreneur. Victoria has founded an online language school "iCan", which helps young people in learning foreign languages in an effective way. Besides, she herself teaches English and German languages, but is also fluent in three more languages. Victoria is interested in Intercultural Communication and as a YEA tries to instill the sense of tolerance into different communities.

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NIGAR HASANOVA

Nigar Hasanova is a young professional in the field of media production. She successfully completed a number of courses organized by Asia – the Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) and Global Citizenship Education (GCED), where she learned about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), knowledge she later applied to the planning of numerous projects at her workplace. She believes that by using knowledge and the power of the media, she can raise awareness of global issues and contribute to the development of society.

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JOANNA BAGADZIŃSKA

PhD student in political science specialising in language policies and minorities, associate at the Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw. Inspired by changes in society, I am constantly expanding my knowledge of political processes and international relations in the post-Soviet area. Fan of backpacking, travelling without an itinerary and long hours on trains. European at heart, standing for equality.

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IRINA SEBEKO

Irina Šebeko holds a Bachelor's degree in Finance and Business Administration and an MBA in International Business at the University of Latvia. Irina started her career in Bank Operations back in 2019 and in 2022 she made a twist in her career and started to work as an Account Manager for a payments fintech company. While being a Young European Ambassador since 2021, Irina has participated in many different projects, events and also is a member of the Board for EU/UK.

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FREYA PROUDMAN

Freya Proudman is from the United Kingdom and has been a YEA since 2021. She is proud to support YEAs through her roles as a Board Member and the Mentors' Facilitator for the EU/UK Chapter. She especially enjoys coordinating the Dialogue Initiative EU-Ukraine Working Group which organises collaborative events and projects between EU and Ukrainian YEAs. Freya holds an MA in Russian & Eurasian Politics and a BA in History, Politics, and Economics from University College London (UCL) School of Slavonic & East European Studies (SSEES). She will start her PhD at UCL SSEES in September. Freya is inspired and energised by her fellow YEAs colleagues and loves being a part of the initiative!

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PATRÍCIA RAPOSO

Patricia is a young professional and holds a Masters specialisation in International Relations. She is interested in the intersection of International Relations and Cultural Anthropology methods, with a focus on Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Inside the YEAs she is a Board Member and the Coordinator of the Working Group Dialogue Initiative EU-Azerbaijan.

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VITTORIO CASCONI

Vittorio is a young student of Law at LUISS University in Rome. Since he was very young, he had an interest in youth policies cooperating with the mayor of the city in which he lived. He has practised Volunteering in different local organizations and charity works. He has always had a passion for travelling and the opportunity of the Erasmus+ in the first semester of 2022 opened for him new horizons in getting involved in projects of the European Union.

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MARIA YESAYAN

Maria is a third-year student majoring in International Relations, Public Administration. She is the Vice President of "Youth Opportunities Club" NGO. She is active youth worker in different NGOs. Maria is interested in human rights, public policy, international organisations and international law. She is eager to represent Armenia to the international community. She loves all kind of exchange programs as they are a wonderful platform for making new acquaintances, discovering new things and representing one's country.

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