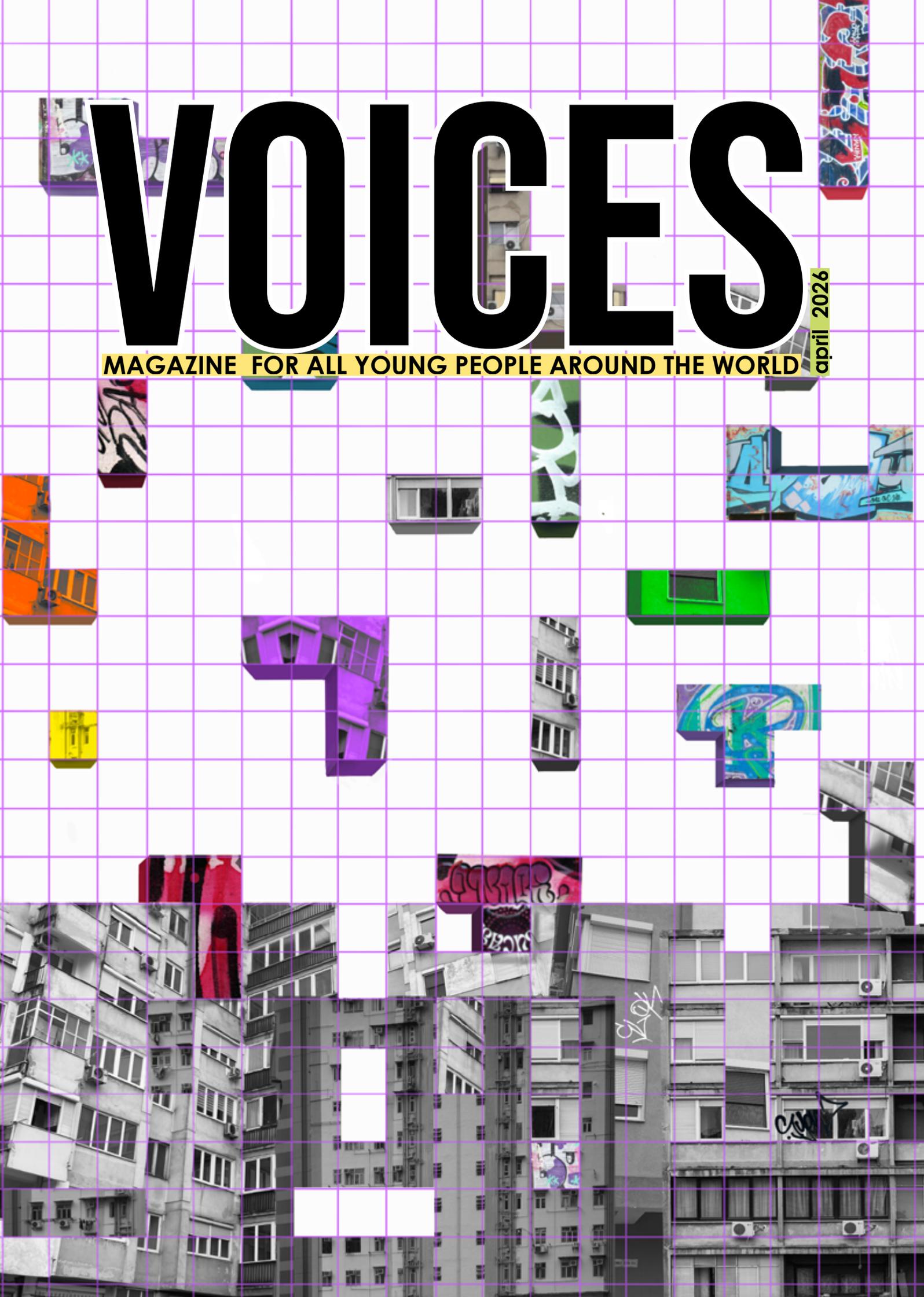


VOICES

MAGAZINE FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD

april 2026





I wouldn't have read this editorial a few years ago. Back then I wouldn't read editorials, introductions, author's notes... I was always too excited to jump straight into the article I wanted to read. Why should I read about the behind the scenes of the article?

With time and experience, the world around us changes and so do we. Now I am more and more curious to read and get to understand what's behind the scenes, or as we say in Slovak "to see inside the kitchen".

It's precious to be able to get to know the people behind the work. Why did they write? What do they want? Who are they?

Not only that, seeing inside the "kitchen" enables us to see the effort, the time and the passion of those behind it. Speaking of VOICES, this month just like any other, there are some wonderful "chefs" behind. Trying to "cook" something meaningful, try new things, dive into their passions, reflect and discover... It's a precious space, a small carving in time which will hold for me and everyone else contributing to this magazine. It will remind us of how we were and which path we have walked since.

So if you have read this far, I hope you will enjoy what we have "cooked" for you this month and maybe take a moment to appreciate the "chefs" behind it. Maybe even take a moment to appreciate you reading this editorial and the path behind it.

Enjoy!

Boris Bielik

Не би го прочитал овој едиторијал пред неколку години. Тогаш не би читал уреднички текстови, воведи, белешки од авторот... Секогаш бев премногу нестрплив да скокнам директно во статијата што сакав да ја прочитам. Мислам, зошто да читам за тоа што се случува зад сцената?

Со текот на времето и искуството, светот околу нас се менува, а се менуваме и ние. Сега сум сè повеќе љубопитен да читам и да разберам што се крие зад сцената, или како што велите кај нас во Словачка: „да се види внатрешноста на кујната“.

Драгоцен е да се можат да се запознаат луѓето во позадина на делото. Зошто пишувале? Што сакале да постигнат? Кои се тие?

Не само тоа, гледањето „внатре во „кујната“ ни овозможува да го видиме трудот, времето и енергијата на оние што стојат зад неа. Зборувајќи за „ВОИСЕС“, и овој месец има прекрасни „готвачи“. Обидувајќи се да подготват нешто значајно, да пробаат нови работи, да се нурнат во своите пасии, да размислуваат и да откриваат... Тоа е скапоцен простор, мал рез во времето кој ќе биде за мене и за сите други што придонесуваат за овој магазин. Ќе нè потсети каде сме биле и по кој пат сме оделе.

Па, ако и натаму сте тука, се надевам дека ќе уживате во она што го „зготвивме“ за вас и можеби ќе одвоите еден момент да ги цените тие што во позадината. И не само тоа, можеби ќе го цените и овој едиторијал и вложениот труд.

Уживајте!

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CITY UNDER INK



In my handbag you can find my keys, a lip balm, probably some coins but most of all a 30 centimetres portable scanner. I scan whatever I can. Posters, doodles on the walls, textures but most of all graffitis and tags. It has changed the way I look at cities. I walk and wonder: what can I scan? Therefore I did not lose this habit when arriving in Skopje.

Modern cities are spaces we pass through every day. Their lines, concrete blocks, and avenues guide our movement almost invisibly. The city tells us where to walk, where to sit, where to stop. Our paths have largely been designed for us, by architects, urban planners and geographers.

I grew up near Paris, a city famously reshaped in the 19th century when Baron Haussmann cut vast avenues through its dense medieval fabric. These boulevards were not only aesthetic projects, they were political. They reorganized circulation, visibility and control of the population. But if the city is planned from above, how do its inhabitants reclaim it from below?

Public space is political space. Governments regulate it, police it and design it. Yet cities are also continuously renegotiated by the people who live in them. One of the most striking ways this negotiation appears is through graffiti and tagging.

Graffiti and tagging, as we recognize them today, emerged in the late 20th century within marginalized communities, especially black American and latino youth, in cities such as Philadelphia and New York, particularly in the Bronx. This practice developed during a politically charged time: after the civil rights movement, amid economic decline and urban neglect. Writing on walls became a form of counterculture. A refusal of a top-down organization of society. By placing their names in public view, writers reclaimed visibility.

In doing so, they also challenged the passive role assigned to citizens within consumer capitalism. Rather than merely consuming the city, writers insisted on actively shaping it. Tagging became a way to negotiate identity and belonging within a particular territory.





A wall might belong legally to a property owner, but visually it belongs to everyone who sees it.

Over time, a coded system of letters, styles and symbols developed. To an outsider, these marks may appear cryptic. But for those within the culture, they form a language: a map of presence, rivalry, collaboration and history.

I spoke with a Macedonian tagger who signs his work KO. For him, the issue is not whether the act fits within legal definitions. Graffiti is a way of living in the city. KO began tagging in his grandfather's basement, practicing his name again and again.

"When I was younger I was changing my tag, to find myself, to find a logo so it can be recognisable. When people see it, they know it."

Recognition is central to graffiti culture. A tag functions almost like a brand.

"It's like Coca-Cola. If you see half the logo, you still know what it is."

Through repetition and style, a writer develops an identity that others recognize across the city. You might not know someone but you know their tag. Sometimes even across countries.

"When I travel, I put my tag somewhere. Later, friends sent me photos. It means I passed there. It is like a game I don't know, a lifestyle."

In that sense, tagging becomes both record and game: proof of movement, presence and persistence. Like the Little Thumb as he says.

Graffiti also changes how a city feels.

"When there are no tags," KO tells me, "a place feels like a hospital."

For him, tags bring life into urban environments otherwise designed to remain neutral.

"You can read the history of the place. People passed there. They left energy."

This idea resonates with theories about urban space and territorial identity. Sociologists have argued that markings in public spaces create invisible boundaries between insiders and outsiders. Tags signal that a space has already been claimed and interpreted by others.

They transform space into territory. The debate around graffiti inevitably turns to the question: is it art?

KO's answer is ambiguous. For him, the distinction between graffiti and street art is often misunderstood.

"Everything on the wall is graffiti, tags, political messages. It has existed since the beginning of time. In caves, in Roman times people wrote political messages."

"But I can say it is art, why not?"

Yet the contemporary art world often draws a sharp distinction. Murals commissioned by institutions are widely celebrated, while illegal tagging remains condemned. KO has experienced both sides.

"Some people won't say it's art but if they can make money (out of it) they will say it's art."

"Before, they chased us with the police, now they pay us." Today he paints commissioned murals and experiments on painting on canvas.

"The same people who are going to chase you or call the police if they see you tagging, are the same people who will see you paint and do a mural during the daytime and will say how beautiful it is."

But he insists tagging remains the foundation of his practice and how we can not dismiss it.

"Tagging is the beginning of what I do now, tagging it is practicing."

Over the past decades, graffiti and street art have increasingly entered mainstream culture. Artists like Banksy have achieved global recognition.

Berlin offers a striking example. Once known for its anarchic graffiti culture, the city has gradually incorporated street art into its branding. Tourist sites such as the East Side Gallery present curated murals celebrating Berlin's alternative identity.

Yet this institutional embrace often produces a paradox. While authorities promote "good" street art for tourism and cultural branding, strict laws against illegal graffiti remain in place. What once existed entirely outside institutional frameworks now sometimes enters galleries and museums. But many argue



that when graffiti moves fully indoors, something essential disappears. Street art is inseparable from its environment. Remove it from the street and it becomes something else.

KO explains as I wonder about the importance of the illicit part of tagging:

"It is part of it. I like the adrenaline, of the trains, the high places you climb. It's part of my life also."

Ronald Kramer highlights in *Straight from the underground* that graffiti's shift has changed its vocabulary. Writers once spoke of "bombing" or "hitting", while today, especially on legal walls, they say "painting". Yet most graffiti artists still did not go through art school or follow a conventional path of institutionalized art.

"The street is my teacher." as KO says.

When I arrived in Skopje, I became curious about the graffiti and a mysterious German word seen everywhere. One Saturday, a waiter revealed it was a local coded joke, a linguistic play only insiders understand. Graffiti creates a parallel system of reading layered over the city. Beneath official signs and street names lies another network of meanings. A hidden geography.

Whether considered vandalism, art or something in between or even the two combined, graffiti forces us to reconsider how we inhabit cities. It asks a simple question: who has the right to leave their mark on public space? Urban planners design cities. Governments regulate them. But every tag suggests another possibility: that the city is also written by those who live in it.

If we pay attention, really look around, we may realize that its walls are already full of stories.

KO compares it to an addiction:

"It's like a disease. You can't stop."

He laughs.

"You should try."

Carolina de Lima Uchôa

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CITY UNDER INK



Ending Reveries

I loved you as one loves a dream,
You turned it into my reality,
And then you stopped believing in it.

Jona Cenameri



Ëndërrime Fundore

Të doja si në ëndërr,
Ti ma bëre realitet
E pastaj se besojë as vetë

Jona Cenameri

Uniaartcity

спој на самошколување,
уметност
и живот во заедница



Се прашуваш што е Uniartcity?

Во суштина, група на млади луѓе се имаат собрано со заедничка одлука и визија да креираат свој простор каде што ќе можат сами да ги одберат своите предмети за престојниот семестар.

Фокусот се става на градење самодисциплина и правилно организирање на своето време за да можеш да учиш, правиш, градиш свој проект без да имаш притисок од институција, професор, родители, високи сметки за школување итн.

Uniartcity како самостоен факултет е почнато пред некои 3 години во Schloss Tempelhof каде заедницата на Темплхоф ја има видено и препознаено идејата позади проектот и им има отстапено дел од свое земјиште за студентите да си го изградат својот прв кампус. По изградбата на првиот кампус Flow Valley, студентите од престојниот семестар го поминуваат таму летото заедно учејќи нови вештини, градејќи еко-куќи, пријателства, врски кои покажуваат дека кога луѓето се сплотени - нема идеја што не може да стане реалност!

Во наредните две години наоѓаат уште две локации: Стара куќа во близина на Темплхоф и стар напуштен ловциски музеј во Шонсе (Schönsee), Nature Community. Двете места ги реновираат самите и ги приспособуваат да бидат дом на млади студенти преку зимските семестри.

Тука се поврзува мојата приказна со нив, пред неколку месеци во музејот во еко-заедницата Nature Community пред неколку месеци...

Како човек кој сака природа, еколошки начин на живот, градење со дрво... ова ми се виде одлична прилика да го посетам местото и да научам нови вештини кои ќе ми бидат корисни во иднина. Не помислив двапати за да се пријавам преку ЕСК-програмата.

Поминав 50 дена во селото каде што заедно со други интернационални доброволци, изградивме 5 мали соби за студентите од престојниот семестар и го реновиравме делот за "Wellness" во хотелот на Nature Community. Деновите беа исполнети со работа, дружба, смеање, пеење, сауна и по малку драма (не бива без нејзе, нели?:)). Животот во заедница те полни и исцрпува во исто време, но исцрпувањето не е нималку слично како она во градот, барем не за мене. Педесетте дена (некаде пред истекот на старата година) прелетаа за час и дојде време да се вратам дома, но само привремено... веќе бев решен дека ќе присуствувам и на вториот проект во февруари 2026 година.

Дојде и тој ден, се вратив и сфатив колку уживам кога утрата се спори и ти вбригуваат живот во душата. Во Замокот (така го нарекуваме музејот) веќе беа вселени студентите кои таму го поминуваат зимскиот семестар и ги користеа собите кои ние ги изградивме. Чувството е преубаво кога знаеш дека имаш придонесено во нешто што е нов бран, ново движење и потенцијална промена на образовниот систем во светот.

Но, за ова се да биде возможно, мора да работиме сплотено и секој да си има своја улога и одговорност во текот на денот, неделата, па и месецот. Што значи тоа? Секој понеделник во 9:30 часот сите што живееме во замокот (околу 30 луѓе) се собираме во големата дневна соба и се делат обврски за средување на целиот замок, кој не е за потценување кога станува збор за неговата големина.

Доброволно се пријавуваат сите за различни обврски кои треба да се средат тоа утро: да се правосмука дневната соба, да се исчисти тоалетот со тушевите, да се надолнат резервите на пелети за греење, да се исчисти кујната и се она што во целина би имал обврски дома, само 10 пати поголемо. Но, кога 30 луѓе работат сплотено и со убава музика во позадина, замокот повторно заблескува за саат и половина. Потоа се доделуваат обврски за текот на неделата да се знае кој е одговорен за печење леб, менување на плинска боца, среден ходник, чисти тоалети, празнење на кантите за селективен отпад итн. Улогите се менуваат на неделно ниво.

За време на вториот проект, приоритет беше да се опремаат сите соби во замокот со цевки за сидно греење а потоа истите да се покријат со глина. Глината ми стана близок пријател. Иако не сакам да работам многу со глина, работата со нејзе ми е како медитација. За покривање на цевките во собите потрошивме повеќе од 3 тона глина. Последната недела пред да заминам градевме сид од дрвени греди и иверици во една од големите соби каде што целта е да се подели собата на дневна соба и музичко студио. Работа со дрво е она што навистина ме исполнува и секогаш ќе бидам благодарен за оваа можност која ми беше дадена. Би можел уште цел еден текст да напишам за сите мали и големи странични проекти кои ги завршивме, но ќе оставам тоа за следна прилика.

Настрана од градење физички работи, многу ми се допадна процесот на градење пријателства и врски меѓу тамошните учесници на проектот. Не бев сам кој одлучи да се врати по вторпат во Uniartcity, туку тоа го сторивме шест доброволци од првиот проект пред нова година. Моментот кога сите повторно се собравме ни беше дури и како нереален. Чувствував близина кон нив како да ги познавам со години, а не да сум ги запознал пред само 3 месеци. Тоа е магијата на живеење во заедница и надминување на заеднички препреки.

Доколку оваа приказна ви буди било какви позитивни мисли и би сакале да искусите живот во заедница, топло ви препорачувам да поминете еден ЕСК-проект во Schönsee, Nature community, Uniartcity.

Петар Стевановиќ

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The wine that built the nation

In Macedonia, the vineyard is not only a cultivated plant; it's a symbol of tradition, friendliness, and national identity. Since antiquity, wines have accompanied parties and celebrations, and still today, are a major pillar of local culture.

Macedonian viticulture dates back more than 4000 years. Archaeological excavations have uncovered jars, presses, and amphorae used for fermenting grapes, showing how important wine already was in the daily life of the people at that time. Wine was not only consumed, but it was also present at every celebration, banquet, religious ceremony, and, of course, offered to the gods.

Very soon, wine became an essential part of political discussions and commercial agreements. A few centuries later, the Romans expanded the wine trade on a large scale by building roads. That's where the exportation of Macedonian wine starts.

During the Middle Ages, Macedonia was ruled by different empires. Every one of them brought their own rules on wine production. Breaking those rules, villagers continued to make wine, allowing precious knowledge to be passed down from generation to generation. During this period, wine became a symbol of resistance, a local pride that doesn't change, that is consumed with dignity and preserving national identity despite the changes imposed by the foreign power.

At the beginning of the 20th century, wine production diversified and the quality became a priority. Under the socialist regime, production is centralized and industrialized. The wine became a silent spectator of everyday life.



The grape harvest in Macedonia is, for thousands of years, not only a simple period of work; it is the expression of a living culture. Family, neighbors, and friends gather to harvest while singing and dancing.

Young children learn how to sort the grapes while adults share knowledge that is centuries old. Joy and effort blend into a unique moment, and each bottle becomes a symbol of unity and social bonds that have connected the people for millennia.



Wine festivals, organized in many towns and villages, extended this tradition. They create a space where modernity and history meet: music, gastronomy, stories, and performances all come together to celebrate wine and its central role in Macedonian society. According to the State Statistical Office of Macedonia, it is the number 2 alcoholic beverage among Macedonians, after beer. These statistics show that each adult resident of the country drinks 1.8 liters of wine per year, but it should be noted that their methodology only takes into account purchased wines, not domestic wines, which would increase the figure several times. Every raised glass becomes a celebration. Every “На здравје” becomes a tribute to wine.

After the 1990s, vineyards were modernized to better adapt to the export market. Producers could finally combine ancestral traditions with modern innovations to create wines that can be recognized all around the world. Wine became an ambassador of Macedonian history and culture on the international stage.

Macedonian wine is not, therefore, and will never be, just a simple drink. It is the liquid history of an entire people. Each glass is a tribute to those who, over the centuries, passed down the knowledge of the vine. It reminds us that despite upheavals and changes in power, certain values, such as togetherness, never fade.

Paul Goumault

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LEGENDS THAT SHAPED

Slavic mythology is vast and richly diverse, filled with myths, legends, and tales about gods, heroes, and the origins of the world that shaped early Slavic society. For centuries, these stories were passed down orally from one generation to the next before being written down.

The Slavs were deeply connected to nature. They viewed the earth as a mother and a giver of life, while water and fire also played important roles in their beliefs and stories. This close relationship with nature strongly influenced the everyday lives of the ancient Slavs. Natural phenomena were interpreted very differently from how modern people understand them today. Every event and aspect of life was believed to be linked to supernatural beings, gods, spirits, and creatures of Slavic mythology.

The monsters and spirits appearing in these stories illustrate how people once explained natural phenomena and their fear of the unknown. Forests were imagined as mysterious places filled with creatures at every step. These beings played both active and passive roles in the lives of the Slavs. They constantly surrounded people, and many of them later became important figures in Slavic folklore.

ПОЛУДНИЦА (THE NOON LADY)

Poludnica was believed to appear as a tall woman dressed in a white shroud, holding a sickle in her hand. In some stories, she was accompanied by seven large black dogs.

She appeared only during the summer, precisely at noon, wandering through fields and forests. Poludnica was blamed for various natural phenomena, particularly mirages and severe headaches. She would approach people working in the fields at midday and challenge them with riddles that could not be solved. Those who failed to answer were punished with serious illness. She especially liked to chase women and children, sometimes even abducting them. For this reason, Slavs avoided working in the fields at noon, fearing that Poludnica might catch them.

ПИКУЛНИК

Pikulník was considered a small household spirit who protected the home and farm. He was described as a tiny, mischievous man whom his owner carried in a coat pocket or a small bag.

He was particularly helpful to wagon drivers. At night, he cared for their horses—feeding, watering, and grooming them. Pikulník also brought his owner good luck, especially in betting and gambling, helped with livestock, and performed various tasks around the household.

However, his services came at a price: he demanded his owner's soul in return. Interestingly, the first owner could pass him on to a second, and the second to a third. But the third owner could never get rid of him. After that owner died, Pikulník would claim his soul and take it to hell as payment for his services.

РУСАЛКА

Rusalky were water nymphs. According to legend, they were the souls of dead children, suicides, or people who died violently or of unclean deaths near water.

A rusalka could only find peace if someone avenged her death. These spirits often lured young men into rivers and lakes. They were said to have golden or green hair, which they combed while sitting on riverbanks or lakeshores, singing enchanting songs. It was believed that by brushing their hair they could even cause floods.

Rusalky were described as beautiful women yet they were also connected with the world of the dead. During "Rusalka Sunday," people were expected to remember and honor the deceased. Those who failed to do so risked being punished by a rusalka.

СВЕТЛОНОС

According to folk tales, svetlonosi were the wandering souls of children, people who had been brutally murdered, or those who had taken their own lives.

According to superstition, it was possible to summon one svetlonos deliberately—simply by going into the forest at night and whistling loudly.

OUR ANCESTORS

With its mysterious light, cries, and strange sounds, a Svetlonos would lure travelers away from safe paths. Many victims supposedly ended up drowning in swamps or rivers. Sometimes the spirit led people to dark places such as cemeteries and was said to appear especially to those with bad consciences.

Yet it was not always evil-minded. In some stories, a Svetlonos helped lost travelers find their way out of the dark forest or even led them to hidden treasure.

LESHY (LEŠIJ)

Leshy was a horned, hairy forest demon who sometimes had hooves and a tail. He often challenged travelers with riddles. If a person solved his riddle, Leshy would show them the way out of the forest. If not, they would fall under the power of evil.

He was said to rustle like the forest itself and imitate the sounds of animals while a strong wind blew around him. Although he lived mainly in forests, he could also wander through fields and meadows at night.

His duty was to guard the forest. He frightened away those who tried to harm it, sometimes even scaring them to death. People who encountered him were believed to sometimes lose their memory afterward. Leshy could also secretly replace human children with his own offspring to harm families. These children would later escape back into the forest anyway. Protection against Leshy was believed to come from offerings and gifts—especially bread and salt.

In the end, these myths remind us that folklore was not only a form of entertainment but also a way of understanding the world. Even today, the legends of Slavic mythology continue to inspire literature, art, and modern storytelling. They serve as a window into the beliefs and cultural identity of the Slavic people, preserving a rich heritage that still captivates audiences centuries later.

ŽANETA KOVĚLIÁKOVÁ

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ECONOMY OF GLOBAL WARMING

The history of agriculture in Macedonia can be traced to an ancient period more than 8000 years ago. The fertile region of Pelagonia is one of the first regions on earth where humanity started agriculture. In the past the weather was perfect for farming and pastures. However, with the recent negative shifts connected to global warming farmers face significant challenges. Due to the increasing amount of weather anomalies both plants and animals are endangered. According to the World Meteorological Organization in the next 25 years the days with critically high temperatures above 35°C are expected to increase by 35%. This will lead to an increase in heat related health risks and

mortality rates. Especially in the cities, where low wind combined with asphalt and concrete trapping heat will lead to unimaginable temperatures. Without significant climate adaptation measures, the economic toll from extreme weather events is projected to escalate. Over the past 20 years, climate related disasters have already caused a total of 35 000 million MKD in losses. In 2050 annual damages in lost economic output are expected to reach 32 000 million MKD every year. According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the World Bank, the global economic burden of natural disasters has surged, now reaching a scale that exceeds the direct costs of modern armed conflicts.

Especially dangerous for the Macedonian agricultures will be heat waves and flash floods. In the past during winters snow would accumulate on the neighbouring mountains. During hotter seasons it would gradually melt and go down to the valleys watering the plants and providing water source to the animals. Nowadays however, sudden spikes in temperatures lead to significant amounts of snow melting at the same time and flooding the land. Premature snowmelt leads to floods in January and February, followed by severe water shortages in July and August.

To fight the warming and floods farmers are forced to use seeds that are selected not by harvest yield but by their resistance to heat. In extreme cases this can half the amount of food grown. Floods are especially dangerous to the most popular plant grown in Macedonia which is tobacco. Because of tobacco's short root system 2-3 days of too much water on the field is enough to kill the crops. It is often the crop that produces the highest monetary value per hectare, which is why many farmers stick with it despite the labor intensive nature and social cost.

Tobacco is the most heavily subsidized crop in the country, receiving roughly 40% of all crop specific government spending while occupying only 3% of land. As Macedonia aligns its agricultural standards with international and EU frameworks, there is a growing focus on prioritizing food security

over industrial crops. 77% of tobacco farmers admit they would stop growing the crop immediately if the subsidies were removed, proving the crop is not economically viable on its own. Large companies sign contracts with individual farmers before the season begins. These family labor operations are paid at the end when the crop is sold. Almost all family members, including the elderly and sometimes children, participate in the labor intensive tasks of picking and drying the leaves. This contract based model places the burden of environmental risks such as flash floods and heat waves directly on individual families. Furthermore when the cost of the family's labor is actually calculated at a fair market wage, nearly 50% of tobacco households actually lose money. ~25% of tobacco farmers are below the poverty line, which is significantly higher than ~10% of farmers who grow other crops.

For Macedonian agriculture to continue farmers will need to focus on strong crops ready to survive both floods and heat. Significant investments will have to be made in order to water the fields artificially during summers as well as protect animals from heat waves. Addressing these challenges is not only a matter of farming. It is a critical issue that will determine the national food security, economic stability, and everyday life of all Macedonian citizens.

Piotr Mucha

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what if

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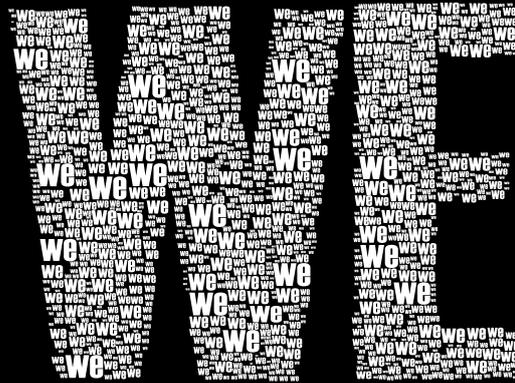
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what if **we** becomes **WE**



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Change

Cheering



clinics, we provide support to mothers and babies living in refugee camps and shelters in greater Athens.

By the time a mother hands me her baby, she has already carried the deep, unwavering strength of a woman, shaped by love and hope. Some journeys are visible on maps, while others are written quietly into growth charts, hemoglobin levels, and the weight of an infant cradled too lightly in the arms.

There is a quiet kind of impact that happens in spaces where care is offered consistently, gently, and without expectation. I witnessed this firsthand while volunteering with CHEERING NGO in Athens, an organization focused on preventive care and referrals for refugee communities.

Within this work, the Grow Clinics hold a special place in my heart. Through these

Each week in the clinic follows a rhythm that is simple, yet of a great value. We weigh infants, measure their length and carefully track their growth over time. These regular check-ups help identify early concerns and allow families to receive guidance and referrals when needed. For many parents, these moments are also an opportunity to ask questions, share concerns, and feel seen.

Supporting breastfeeding is a central part of the Grow Clinics. Thanks to the knowledge and guidance of our breastfeeding counselors, we are able to encourage mothers, provide information, and address their questions and concerns, helping them feel confident in beginning and continuing breastfeeding. Alongside this, basic preventive care remains important. We run an anemia program to address iron deficiency, and a Vitamin program, in collaboration with the Global

Health Organisation - Vitamin Angels, which provides high-dose vitamin A and deworming for children under five.

All activities within the Grow Clinics follow World Health Organization guidelines, ensuring that care is consistent, safe, and aligned with international standards. What makes the clinics truly effective is their consistency. Small, simple tools such as charts, vitamins, and regular check-ups, become powerful ways to track and support growth over time.

Volunteering with CHEERING has been such a rewarding experience. Seeing firsthand how a little guidance and support can make a real difference for children and families really sticks with you. It was a clear example that access to care and information is a fundamental human right, and that even small, consistent efforts can lead to meaningful, lasting change.

Experiences like this are a great reminder of why getting involved matters. Volunteering through the European Solidarity Corps programs is a chance to learn, be part of a dedicated team and be part of something bigger. Something that encourages us all to unite and care for each other.

I will miss my time in Athens; the narrow streets and sunlit squares, the colorful markets brimming with fresh produce, the aroma of coffee and baked goods drifting through the morning air, the lively chatter in every corner café, the weekends spent roaming through the historic sites, and the way the city feels alive at every hour of the day. What I will miss most, however, are the people I had the privilege of working alongside and learning from each day. I hope our paths cross again in the future.

Sara Nikolova

Sources: cheering.eu



A center full of artists

A bowl crafted before our eyes out of paper maché. Necklaces, bracelets and other jewellery made from pearls and stones. Photographs, drawings and paintings of all kinds of things and people.

These are only a few of the things that are being created at the occupational center for people with disabilities run by **NGO KRIK in Skopje, Macedonia**. The products are later sold, and the money is used to fund new crafts and activities for the center's attendants. Mikki, Leon, Aleksander, Stefi and the others are given the space to express their creativity and make full use of their talents.

Last month, we got the chance to visit the occupational center, and get to know the people.

It was Friday morning, 10 a.m. My friend Žaneta and I were on a small expedition. We wanted to see new things, meet new people, and learn more about an important aspect of our society. We weren't sure what to expect, but we were aware that this day will shift our vision on the way we see the world, even if only a tiny bit.

A building appeared in front of us. It was nothing big or particularly remarkable. It looked more like a wooden container, anything could be stored or happening in there. Still, the colorful paintings on its walls already gave away that something, or rather someone special, might be hidden behind this very ordinary construction.

We entered the building, and for the next two hours, Žaneta and I were completely absorbed by the place and the people we encountered.

This is where NGO KRIK has its offices, and where the occupational center is located. After some small talk and a bit of organization, we finally entered the heart of the space. A room opened up in front of us. Spacious, though not too large. It had two levels: the lower one with a table and couches, and the upper one equipped with a machine used to create figures and vases out of papier-mâché.

From the very first moment, the whole room screamed 'creativity'. The walls were covered with paintings, self-made figures stood throughout the space, and traces of paint from recent artwork still marked the floor and tables.

The first person we met was Stojan, the occupational therapist. He was one of those people you meet and immediately feel is living a full life. He cares deeply. His aura shined with a kind of warmth that only people who really and honestly care and live for the well-being of others have. He shook our hands and welcomed us.

We were then introduced to the others in the room. Each of them has a disability, which is why they attend the center on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Here, they have the chance to connect with others, spend their days with more structure and tasks, and, most importantly, express their artistic skills.



While American country music played from Stojan's laptop, filling the warm room, we learned about the different talents of the participants. There is Leon, who plays in a band with some of the others and gives us a small drumming session on a tapan, a traditional Balkan drum. He also is fascinated by buses and dreams of visiting the MAN factories in Germany. There is Victor, who taught himself a bit of English. And then there is Stefi, a photographer who will soon present her work in an exhibition.

Over coffee, Stojan told us more about his life and work. **He explained that he is one of the few occupational therapists in Macedonia, as this field of study is not offered in the country.** He became an occupational therapist abroad, and spent most of his life working in a psychiatric hospital.

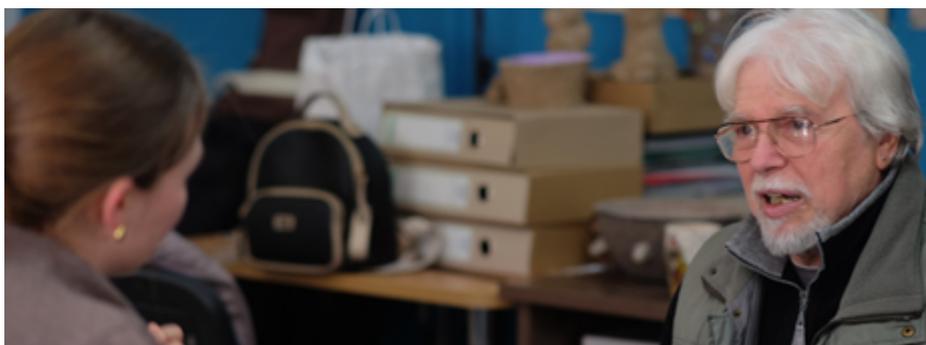
After retiring, he was invited by KRIK to run the center a few days a week, offering a space specifically created for adults with disabilities. He explained that opportunities for adults with disabilities to work or spend their days meaningfully are severely limited in Macedonia. As a result, many spend most of their time at home without structured activities.

He described people coming to him not knowing how to tie their shoes or wash their clothes. Not because they are incapable, but because they were never taught. **This is why KRIK's occupational center is a place of life and hope.** Everyone there is capable of doing things, great things, and here they are given the opportunity to explore their potential in their own way.

Žaneta and I expected many things from our visit, but to meet so many artists was not on that list. Every few minutes, someone would proudly show us another incredible piece of art they had created.

We were also struck by how much they care for one another. The attendees do not only see each other at the center, but also go out to cafés and do other activities together. We were really able to feel the special bond within this small community.

During those two hours, we only caught a small glimpse of the daily lives and challenges faced by people with disabilities in our societies. We entered the building without a real idea what would await us, and left it filled with joy: from meaningful conversations, wonderful company and the experience of meeting such amazing artists.





Once again, we were reminded how important institutions like these are. We also saw the great work of people who give their time to support them despite many challenges. It was clear that every person has many talents within them.

Thank you to KRIK and all its members for taking the time to share your work with us.

And to anyone who has the ability to support social institutions like this in any way: do it. It not only benefits the organizations, but is also very rewarding on a personal level.

Lea Schwegmann

Photos: Žaneta Kobiliaková

“I always writer.”

Why, Who, What, Where, When

She says. “But when somebody asks me what I do? Where do you work? I think, oh man.” Because the answer is not that simple.

Everybody likes to watch movies or theaterplays but who are the people that start it all and lay the base of the play months before the curtain falls for the first time?

Those are the playwrights and one of them is Eva Kamchevska, hating to stand in front of a camera or speak in front of a lot of people she flourishes behind the scenes.

Growing up surrounded by American movies and TV shows it seems like working in the film industry has always been her destiny.

Born in Skopje, she went straight from high school to the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Skopje. After finishing her master’s in script writing, she worked some time for TV channels before receiving a scholarship to study in Canada for a year. When she returned, she joined the production for one of the few children’s shows made in Macedonia.

Freelancing, though creatively fulfilling, proved unstable eventually leading her back to a more stable job at a TV channel.

“I think that I’m juggling and managing it well,” Eva explains. “To have that day job and some salary, which is always on time”.

Unlike freelancing, her job now provides safety.

In a country where making a living solely from writing scripts is difficult, she has made a pragmatic compromise.

For Eva, the challenge is not just personal but a reflection of a broader reality where you need to navigate through an industry that often rewards conformity over authenticity.

Theater and film have the unique ability to make people think and feel. They act as a mirror of society, reflecting cultural values and struggles while fostering empathy and critical thinking. Art being a form of expression and protest in itself makes it fundamental for society.

Yet artists are increasingly undervalued, often expected to work for free, something Eva can tell from first hand experience.

“In my country, people think:

Oh, it’s art.

WHY SHOULD WE
PAY FOR ART?

Like, oh my God, when you go to buy bread, do you say, “I’m hungry, I’m not paying for it”? she says.

While the audience wants to enjoy movies and plays, the artists behind them struggle

say, I'm a



to get paid fairly, forcing many to choose between stability and creativity. Leading art to slowly vanish.

"We went from a horse to a donkey," Eva remarks about the decline of the industry. Still, giving up on writing is no option for her. She continues to work on her scripts in the evenings, keeping her always busy and her passion alive. Her goal is to write stories in which the viewer can recognize themselves.

"I'm trained to work for film and TV. That's my profession. That's my vocation." Eva says emphatically.

Her struggle is not just about opportunities but about being understood on her own terms.

"You have to know how to play the game," she says. "I'm really not into that kind of stuff and that gets me to where I am. So that's also an issue."

Wanting to build a career beyond her home's borders has presented yet another set of obstacles. "When you come from such a small country they see you as an outsider," she explains. "They have their own vision, what they want to see from a country like Macedonia."

Expecting her to write about war even though she never experienced one.

"If I was affected by the war, I would write that kind of stuff if I feel like it," but she never was.

Her refusal to play into those narratives and adapt to those expectations is a conscious choice.

I'M REFUSING
TO PLAY THIS GAME
FOR THEN THE ART
DOESN'T MAKE
SENSE

So she sticks to absurd scripts and that with success.

A script disliked in Macedonia got her an award in Germany showing that cultural backgrounds can influence our taste in movies and art as well.

The popular idea that if you "find your passion, you'll never have to work a day in your life" seems almost cynical in this context. For many artists, that quote feels increasingly detached from reality and more like a romanticization of their struggle. Passion in Eva's case, does not replace work - it adds on.

Her path reflects the quiet reality shared by many artists: even though passion might not pay the bills, without it art wouldn't exist at all.

Nelli Winzer

CAT-HUMAN CONNECTION



Once upon a time, there was a family that decided to adopt a kitten. A black, big eyed animal quickly became the purrfect addition to a family of five. The family now had two teenage girls and two babies. The babies—one with fur and the other one who just started to learn how to walk. But the magic did not last long. One feral day, when the kitten had its time for leisure and fun in the garden, a sudden loud sound frightened the pet and made it run away. He was too tiny to remember the way back. The kitten got lost.

The years were passing by and everything changed. Home once full with laughter and adorable meowing becomes more and more quiet. Sisters move out for studying to other cities and a giggly baby becomes a pupil in the nearby primary school. The young boy had a dream about having a company. He always loved cats, so there was nothing else he wanted to fill out the gap with other than a four paws friend.

One magical day his dream came true. On the doorstep to Łukasz's big surprise was standing a black cat. The bond between the child and the animal developed at an incredible pace, and after a while, the two of them became inseparable. The cat plays with Łukasz, stays aside when he plays lego and sleeps in his bed when dad is reading to his son a goodnight book.



“pet effect” - simply living with a cat can reduce negative emotions

Stories like this may seem like simple fairy tales, yet in recent years the relationship between humans and cats has become an important subject of scientific research. Studies show that this bond is influenced by many factors, including the cat’s living conditions, the owner’s lifestyle, and even the owner’s understanding of feline communication. Research conducted on hundreds of participants suggests that cats who spend less time alone, live indoors, and experience fewer behavioral problems tend to form stronger and more positive relationships with their owners. Even factors such as housing type or the presence of other cats can shape the quality of this connection.

The growing popularity of cats in Europe is no coincidence. Modern lifestyles - smaller homes and less time spent indoors - make cats particularly suitable companions. At the same time, scientists describe what is known as the “pet effect” (Nugent and Daugherty, 2022). Simply living with a cat can reduce negative emotions, while interacting with one can increase feelings of comfort and happiness. However, this bond does not appear automatically. It requires understanding the animal’s needs, its

body language, and its natural instincts. For instance many behaviors seen as “problematic” are, in fact, completely normal for cats. Recognizing signs of stress or communicating gently even through something as subtle as slow blinking - can significantly strengthen the relationship between human and animal.

The question remains: could it be possible that the cat from the story I told was the once-lost kitten? And how is it that animals can form such deep and immediate connections with humans? Science may explain part of it, but not all.

Perhaps we will never know the full answer. Yet one thing is certain: the bond between humans and animals is something beyond tangible. Nonetheless we need to remember that every day, countless cats are still waiting—lost, abandoned, or never chosen to form such a connection with someone. Maybe the real magic does not lie in finding a lost pet after years, but in giving a home to the one who is still waiting.

Karolina Tulik

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AN ELEPHANT DOESN'T FIT

IN OUR COMPANY



There was once a girl in the tiniest small town you can imagine. For the purpose of this story we can call her Fanny.

We first meet Fanny in kindergarten. She is not like the other girls, playing with dolls and being all the mothers want their little girls to be—a gentle, well-behaved being. Instead, Fanny is **a bully**. She doesn't play with other girls, but spends her time in kindergarten with the boys, wrecking **a little chaos**. Sometimes, she is put in the corner of the kids' room, facing the wall. She must kneel there with hands up for half an hour, as a punishment for bad behavior, her best boy-friend winking to her from the opposite corner of the room, both giggling.

From a good source we know that Fanny doesn't have problems at home. So, the bad behaviours she possibly copies from elsewhere.

Fanny is **capricious**. She doesn't want to eat at kindergarten because she doesn't like the food. The teachers are helpless, they can't let a child be hungry all day, but they can't force her to eat either. When a mother comes to pick up her daughter from kindergarten she always carries fresh buns. Before Fanny reaches home she eats one to three buns, depending on the day. This small detail can be crucial later on to understand the other part of this story.

Fanny beats the other girls at the kindergarten, but there is one (let's call her Ana), that is being beaten the most. According to Fanny, Ana smells bad and is way too calm to **accept it**. Ana's life in kindergarten is not easy. She doesn't do anything on purpose, she is just the way she is, and she tries to avoid Fanny as much as possible. The curious case is that none of the boys beat Ana, only Fanny. Then one day, for scared but determined Ana **it is enough**. She tells her father. Ana's father comes calm while all the children are getting ready to leave and tells the teacher: "Ana told me that some Fanny is beating her". Fanny doesn't remember what happens next. She only remembers, until today and very vividly, Ana's father saying this and then blank.

Our **memory** works in mysterious ways. Sometimes we don't remember things being said yesterday, but we remember those from 30 years ago.

The next thing Fanny remembers is that she and Ana are **best friends**. They are still in kindergarten. Spend time outside

kindergarten too. They grow together. In school, they are in the same class and they are deskmates. Fanny has top grades, Ana mediocre. They are both beautiful girls. They are the same height but not the weight. Ana is and has always been skinny and fragile. Fanny, with puberty knocking, starts gaining weight. This is where her life at school is not being easy anymore, just like Ana's life at kindergarten once. A bully becomes bullied. The other kids laugh at Fanny, calling her **"elephant"**. They say: "An elephant doesn't fit in our company". Everyone laughs except Ana. Ana is a good friend and she doesn't see a reason why "an elephant" can't fit in company.

Fanny likes to eat. Her soft spot is still fresh buns and she eats them plenty. We wouldn't say that she eats more than the other kids. But for some reason she is still bigger than them and they cannot accept it. "An elephant" grows, still being laughed at, but still being top in class.

Sometimes, not always, the trouble **doesn't stop** you from getting good grades.

Meanwhile, all the girls have their boyfriends, but Fanny is still **"too big"** to **deserve love**. Ana doesn't have a boyfriend either, so it is ok. They are together. They are best friends, even though they go to different high schools later on, they choose different universities. And they are both still very beautiful, Ana still skinny, a top model shape, Fanny a bit curvy, but loving her body.

On one of many nights out, the girls share a drink. They laugh at the past, they smile at the future. Fanny randomly comes back to where it all started. She bullied her own friend. Ana is in shock. She doesn't remember a thing. Fanny is in shock too, Ana's father's voice still ringing in her ears. Vividly. They both laugh. Now it is funny, but then it was not. Fanny remembers "an elephant". Ana does too. But now an elephant doesn't seem so traumatic, it is almost sympathetic.

They sometimes meet the colleagues from kindergarten or school, shortly, in a bus, or on the street. Being bullied and called "an elephant" is a reason big enough to not to talk to certain people, but Fanny is nice. **She doesn't hold a grudge**. She is smart. And Ana is too.

Ewelina Chańska



2026

IS

THE

NEW

2016

CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT 2016 WAS TEN YEARS AGO?

Ten years after its peak, the electronic music of 2016 is back in the spotlight. Driven by a wave of nostalgia on social media, an entire generation is rediscovering the anthems that once defined festivals and dance floors.

Let's be honest for a moment. If you're reading this, there's a good chance you've recently found yourself stuck in a loop listening to songs from ten years ago, wondering where the time went. The good news is that you're not alone.

A YEAR THAT BECAME ICONIC

A viral trend on Instagram has reignited cultural conversations around 2016, with fans, DJs, and producers celebrating that year as a key moment for dance and electronic music. This movement has boosted streams of EDM classics, inspired DJ sets entirely dedicated to 2016 hits, and reminded a new generation why that year holds an almost legendary place in the history of electronic music.

The year 2016 marked the absolute peak of mainstream EDM popularity, festival culture, and the production of anthems that still define dance floors a decade later.

THE SCIENCE OF NOSTALGIA

The most interesting part is that there is a real psychological reason why you can't stop idealizing 2016, and it's not just because your knees were better back then.

"We're in 2026, and people feel nostalgic about 2016 because enough time has passed to create warm feelings toward that period," said Clay Routledge, an existential psychologist and recognized expert on the science of nostalgia, to NBC in January 2026.

"People tend to feel nostalgic when they're anxious about the future or uncertain about the direction of their lives," explains Routledge, Executive Vice President and Director of Operations at the Archbridge Institute. *"So I think this generation is facing those concerns and using nostalgia as a way to respond to them."*

THE ANTHEMS OF A GENERATION

It's true that the sound of 2016 reminds us of moments when the world felt more colorful... or maybe it was just a trend at that time. Either way, nostalgia for 2016 exists in all of us, more strongly in some than others. Let's dive back into a few iconic tracks from that era that we still hear everywhere today:

MIKE POSNER - I TOOK A PILL IN IBIZA (SEEB REMIX)

**THE CHAINSMOKERS - CLOSER FT. HALSEY
SKRILLEX & DIPLO - TO Ü FT. ALUNAGEORGE
J BALVIN, WILLY WILLIAM - MI GENTE**

**DAVID GUETTA FT. JUSTIN BIEBER - 2U
MAJOR LAZER - LIGHT IT UP (FEAT. NYLA)
KE\$HA - DIE YOUNG**

**CLEAN BANDIT - SYMPHONY (FEAT. ZARA LARSSON)
THE CHAINSMOKERS & COLDPLAY - SOMETHING
JUST LIKE THIS**

AXWELL INGROSSO - MORE THAN YOU KNOW

LOOKING BACK, IMAGINING WHAT'S NEXT

What we can take away from that period of the past decade is that sometimes we need to look at the world with more color and allow ourselves, from time to time, to be a little "cringe" in the eyes of others, as long as joy and fun are part of it.

What remains for us to do today is to enjoy this nostalgia by revisiting these tracks and staying attentive to how the music industry evolves so we can see whether this phenomenon will repeat itself in 2036 with today's musical trends.

David Stoilkovski

HOW TO WRITE ARTICLES FOR VOICES



TOPIC

Anything, except politics or hate speech

Think of topics that would interest **our audience** (youth)

Maybe a **current event or trend** that you could write about?

RESEARCH

Use **credible sources** when researching your topic

Double-check any information you include in your article to ensure **accuracy**

Don't plagiarize

Link the sources at the end of your article

STRUCTURE

Use **short, attention-grabbing headline**

Write an **introduction** at the beginning (what, who, when, why, how)

Include **body** and **conclusion** in your article, maintain a logical flow

Write your **full name** at the end

WRITING

Use **clear and concise language** that your audience will understand

Avoid too technical terms and **hard language** unless necessary

Be engaging and try to make your article interesting to read

FEW RULES

The article should be around 500 - 1000 words

Don't include images or illustrations in the document

Send possible **photos separately** (with sources and assured they're **free of copyrights**)

Edit and revise (clarity, grammar, and spelling error)

WHAT ELSE?

You can write in **English, Macedonian and Albanian**

You don't need to be pro, **VOICES is open for everyone!**

Writing to the magazine is **voluntary**

We can provide you with a **certificate** if you become a writer for VOICES magazine





Our monthly magazine has a very simple, yet powerful, mission - to be the voice of youth. And how do we do that?

We encourage young people to take an active part in today's society through journalism and designing by giving them a platform to express themselves. VOICES is produced in Skopje, Macedonia, and published online every month and four times per year as a printed edition.

Join VOICES team!

Contact us in our social media pages or write us an e-mail. What would you be interested in doing?



Writing articles

VOICES accepts articles about anything, except politics or hate speech. Brainstorm your ideas with us and write articles once, twice, or every month!



Translating articles

VOICES is published in three languages: English, Macedonian and Albanian. If you are a native speaker or fluent in these languages, join our translation team!



Featuring your work

If you are an artist, photographer, designer or other, your work can be presented in the magazine. Send us your method of art and a short bio of yourself!



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