

VOICES

MAGAZINE FOR ALL YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD

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People come and go from our lives. It is simply the way life works. Some people will walk beside us for a long time, while others will take a different path after the very first turn. But every person we truly encounter leaves something behind. A feeling, a memory, a lesson, a story — sometimes even a part of ourselves we had never discovered before.

Some people show us what true friendship means. Some offer us a helping hand when we need it most. Others teach us how to laugh more freely, be more open, how to give and receive, care, or simply enjoy the moment. And sometimes, we only realise the impact someone had on us after we have to say goodbye.

This is the real beauty of volunteering. You travel to another country thinking you are going there to discover the world, only to realise that the world is not made of borders, cultures, or places on a map. It is made of people.

You arrive in a place surrounded by strangers, from different corners of the world. You notice different languages, traditions, habits, beliefs and ways of seeing life. But as you spend time together, those differences slowly become less important.

It reminds us that someone on the other side of the world is not so different from us. We all experience similar joys, fears, love, and hopes.

Fear often grows where there is no understanding and personal connection. But when we actually meet one another, listen to one another and share experiences, a stranger becomes a friend. A different culture becomes a story you can relate to. A place you once knew only from a map becomes connected to people you will remember.

Conflicts can not be solved with the wave of a magic wand. But we can contribute to a better world by being curious, listening before judging, paying attention to the people around us, respecting differences instead of fearing them, and finding beauty in what makes us different.

We arrive as strangers. We leave as part of each other's stories — and I am grateful for every person who has left a little piece of themselves in mine.

Laura Löwingerová

Луѓето доаѓаат и си одат од нашите животи. Едноставно така работи животот. Некои луѓе ќе дојдат и ќе одат со нас долго време, додека пак други ќе свртат на првата кривина. Но секој човек што навистина ќе го запознаеме остава нешто зад себе. Дали чувство, спомен, поука, приказка, или пак дел од нас што ни ние не сме го откриле во себе.

Некои луѓе ни покажуваат што е вистинско пријателство. Некои ни пружат рака кога ни треба помош. Други, пак, нè учат да се смееме послободно, да сме поотворени, како да даваме и примаме, да се грижime, или само да уживаме во моментот. Понекогаш, го сфаќаме нивното влијание врз нас дури кога треба да се збогуваме со нив.

Ова е вистинската убавина на волонтерството. Отпатуваш во друга земја, мислејќи дека одиш да го видиш светот, само да дознаеш дека светот не е изграден од граници, култури, или места на карта, туку од луѓе.

Пристигнуваш некаде, заобиколен од странци, од различни краеве на светот. Приметуваеш различни јазици, обичаи, навики, верувања, и погледи кон животот. Но како што поминуваат повеќе време заедно, тие разлики стануваат сè помалку важни. Тоа нè потсеќа дека некој од другиот крај на светот не е толку поразличен од нас. Сите доживуваме слични радости, стравови, љубов и надежи.

Стравот расте таму каде што нема разбирање и лична поврзаност. Но кога навистина се запознаваме еден со друг, кога се ислушуваме, и кога споделуваме искуства, тогаш странецот станува пријател. Различната култура станува приказка во која можеш да се пронајдеш. Место што некогаш си го знаел само на карта, станува поврзано со луѓе што ќе ги помниш.

Конфликтите не можат да се решат со волшебна стапче. Но можеме да придонесеме за подобар свет преку љубопитноста, слушањето пред да осудуваме, обрнувањето внимание на тие околу нас, почитувањето на разликите наместо плашењето од нив, и пронаоѓањето на убавината во тоа што нè прави различни.

Доаѓаме како странци, а си одиме како парчиња од приказните едни на други, и јас сум многу благодарен за секој човек што оставил мало парче од себе во моите.

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Bodies, Barriers and Belonging

Cities count their citizens without saying a word. Who gets to cross the street, catch a bus, or visit a local office depends far less on who lives in a neighborhood and far more on how the street was designed. In Skopje, a curb dropping twelve centimeters straight onto asphalt or a steep bus step works like an unwritten ban. Pavements emptied by bad infrastructure then get used as proof that nobody was there in the first place. Think about it this way. The built environment filters the public square before anyone even leaves their house.

When we traveled to Spain for the VIVEKAS youth exchange (an Erasmus+ project focused on sports and inclusion), comparing Spanish host cities to our streets back home made something click. Assuming Skopje simply has fewer disabled residents than a city like Valladolid is a basic mistake. About one in six people alive today are disabled. Bioarchaeologists studying ancient human bones find that exact same proportion across history, landing on roughly 16 percent in nearly every period with reliable samples. Skopje has the same share of disabled residents as Valladolid. What it lacks is accessible concrete. Visibility comes down to permission. A city missing curb cuts or level bus boarding makes a hard physical ruling about who can leave home alone, forcing someone to plan a two-day logistics operation just to reach a job interview. Curbs enforce that rule instead of police.

The standard story tells us that accessibility is a modern luxury. First we survived, then we built wealth, and only then did we become kind enough to care. Our ancestors supposedly could not afford to help. Ancient bones complicate that narrative immediately. A child in northern Spain half a million years ago survived with a skull condition that fused her bones too early (Gracia et al. 2009). Living for years with that condition is impossible without constant support. Her group shared food with her long before agriculture, metal tools, or any written concept of charity existed. Four thousand years ago in Vietnam, a young man lived paralyzed from the neck down for a decade. His community fed him and turned his body constantly to prevent sores. He contributed no material labor, yet when he died, his village buried him in the main cemetery alongside everyone else.

Physical access modifications show up early in history too. Fourth-century BCE Greek builders cut stone ramps into eleven healing sanctuaries, including the major site at Epidauros (Sneed 2020). That represents a deliberate construction program answering a simple question: who do we expect to arrive? Historical attitudes were often brutal and survival was hard, so this was no golden



age. But the modern excuse falls apart anyway. Communities with no metal or economic surplus still fed people who could not feed themselves, cutting ramps into stone thousands of years before modern welfare systems were invented.

Two major shifts disrupted this baseline. The factory arrived first. Before industrialization, the pace of work was flexible. Someone who worked slowly or only during the morning still had a place in the local economy. Industrial factories introduced one rigid speed measured against an imagined ideal worker. Arithmetic followed soon after. Nineteenth-century statisticians created the mathematical concept of the average human, and eugenicists quickly turned that average into an enforced biological standard. Once the average becomes the ideal, every variation gets treated as a medical defect (Davis 1995). Combining industrial speed with statistical averages placed the entire problem inside the individual body. The dominant model demanded that society diagnose the person, attempt a cure, or simply store them away out of sight.

Mass institutionalization is the chapter most history books skip over. England held a few hundred people in charitable asylums in 1800, but that figure passed one hundred thousand by 1900. Workhouses operated on a simple rule: living conditions inside had to be worse than the hardest life outside. They trapped anyone who could not keep up with factory work. In the twentieth century, asylum logic expanded rapidly. The United States forcibly sterilized tens of thousands of people under eugenic laws, while the Nazi T4 program murdered up to 300,000 disabled individuals. For over a century, almost nobody built street ramps. Epidaurus had solved the basic engineering twenty-three centuries earlier. The medical model had simply placed the fault entirely inside the individual. If the body is considered defective, the street has no case to answer.

The turnaround came late, and it was driven entirely by disabled activists. A group formed in Britain in 1972, operating in secret because early members lived inside institutions and feared administrative punishment. In 1976, they published the sentence that reshaped the entire movement: society is what disables physically impaired people (UPIAS 1976). Impairment is a biological fact about

a physical body. Disability is the structural barrier that a built environment stacks on top of that body. That distinction created real legal leverage (which matters because charity is always optional). You can withdraw charity whenever you like, but rights are compellable in court. Staircases suddenly acquired defendants once they counted as structural discrimination rather than personal bad luck.

Concrete design changes moved slowly and required intense pressure. In March 1990, protesters left their wheelchairs at the foot of the eighty-three marble steps of the United States Capitol, choosing to crawl up using only their hands. This was grueling physical labor rather than a quick photo opportunity. Activists dragged themselves up one step at a time for hours. The youngest participant was an eight-year-old girl who told organizers she would take all night if necessary. The building where laws were written literally required disabled citizens to crawl inside just to be heard. President Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act that July. Problem is, no polite argument had worked up to that point.

Individual initiative drove design breakthroughs as well. In 1960s Japan, Seiichi Miyake watched a close friend lose his vision and spent his own money figuring out how a blind person could read a street with their feet. Raised domes mean stop, while straight bars mean walk ahead. First installed outside a school for the blind in 1967, tactile paving now exists across four continents. You can spot these tactile strips on streets in Skopje today. Drivers usually just park their cars right on top of them.

Language evolved much faster than physical infrastructure. Ninety percent of major corporations claim to prioritize diversity, yet only four percent actively design products that disabled people can actually use (WebAIM). Nobody in that ninety percent believes disabled citizens do not exist. But here is the reality. Pavements remain far behind corporate statements. When Baltimore inspected 37,806 curb ramps in 2019, exactly 489 met basic legal standards. A stadium crowd stands up to applaud a wheelchair basketball final, then walks outside past a bus stop the athlete cannot board. Stella Young called this dynamic inspiration porn: using one group of people to make another group feel good about



themselves. Stair-climbing wheelchair prototypes get venture capital funding while basic concrete ramps go unbuilt. Someone gets the warm feeling of having cared, while someone else still cannot get to work.

Skopje runs this exact same gap on a tighter budget. City officials cut ribbons and launch awareness weeks with enthusiastic speeches. Meanwhile, the curb right outside the building where the speech was given drops twelve centimeters straight onto asphalt. Public attitudes are not the root problem here. Awareness campaigns keep failing to fix physical pavements because they target feelings instead of strict legal enforcement. Meaningful change requires legal pressure and budgets that treat physical access as standard infrastructure rather than a special favor. Disabled youth belong in the rooms where city plans get approved. Activists have used a simple slogan for this principle since the 1990s: nothing about us without us.

Disability represents physical friction. It happens wherever a human body meets a space designed without it in mind. Changing the physical design changes the friction instantly. Macedonia signed the UN Convention

on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, where Article 9 guarantees equal access to public buildings and transport. That promise exists clearly on paper. Paper does not lower a curb or install a working elevator. A budget line with a strict deadline lowers a curb. A disabled professional with the authority to reject a bad blueprint gets an elevator built. Anyone can test whether a city takes access seriously right from the sidewalk. Every awareness week deserves one practical question: what funded, physical project does this speech attach to? If the answer is nothing, the city is just producing the feeling of access instead of real access. Societies choose how they build friction into their streets. The builders at Epidauros made their choice twenty-three centuries ago. The demand today centers on concrete rather than sympathy, continuous curb cuts, and buses you can actually board. It is the ordinary right of any citizen to leave their house and be counted among the people who live here. Skopje has simply not given them permission to be seen.

Dorotea Grkovikj and Mihail Naumovski

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Inside the creative SOUL

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANCESCO MURI,
ARTISTICALLY KNOWN AS VISCER
BODY PAINTER • PHOTOGRAPHER • ARTIST

**“I want to create something
that makes people feel
before they understand.”**

Art is more than something we see — it is something we experience. In this interview, Francesco Muri opens up about his journey as a body painter, photographer, and artist, sharing his sources of inspiration, creative process, and the emotions behind his work.



Who or what is your muse?

My muse is the human body, but not the body as something beautiful or perfect. I am interested in what is underneath it: instinct, vulnerability, desire, wounds, sexuality, identity. People are my greatest inspiration. Sometimes a specific person. Sometimes simply the relationship that is created between two human beings. I see the body as a sort of language. Something that can speak even when we don't.

What or who brought you into this specific art performance? I think it came from a need to stop separating the different parts of my artistic identity. I have always moved between photography, painting, design, and visual experimentation. Performance allowed me to put everything together and make the body itself become the canvas. VISCER was born from this necessity: to stop only representing the body and start using it as a medium.

Can you describe your unique style?

I would describe it as ritualistic, visceral, and corporeal. I am interested in the contrast between the beautiful and the disturbing, the sacred and the sexual, attraction and repulsion. My visual language often revolves around the body, fragmented identities, flesh, blood, bones, darkness, and strong contrasts. VISCER is not really about making something "dark" just for aesthetic reasons. Darkness is a way of looking inward.

Is it usually a woman's body that you paint? If yes, why do you think it is the way it is?

The female body often appears in my work, but it is not because I see it simply as an object of beauty. I am interested in the female body because it has historically been one of the most represented, controlled, desired, and mythologized bodies in art. When I paint on it, I want to transform that relationship. The body becomes the artwork, but also the surface on which another identity is created. It can become monstrous, sacred, erotic, alien, fragile, or powerful. For me, the important thing is not whether the body is male or female. It is what happens when the body stops being just a body and becomes a language.



What is one thing you could not survive in your job?

I wouldn't be able to create if I felt constrained by rules, expectations, or established patterns. I need to feel free to experiment. I couldn't survive doing the same thing just because it works. I need to question myself, destroy what I have created, and build something different again. For me, art has to remain dangerous somehow. If I already know exactly what the result will be, I lose interest.

Does your own country have a big influence on your art?

Absolutely. I am Italian, from Southern Italy, and I think that environment inevitably lives inside my work. There is something extremely physical about the South: the light, the heat, the stone, the religious imagery, blood, rituals, bodies, death, sexuality. Even the architecture feels corporeal to me. I don't necessarily want to make "Italian art", but Italy is part of the vocabulary I use without even realizing it.

What moment made you feel like you had truly become an artist?

I don't think there was one specific moment. It happened when I stopped asking myself whether what I was creating was "good enough to be art." I started understanding that being an artist isn't about having permission to call yourself one. It's about realizing that creating is something you cannot really stop doing. At some point, I understood that my work wasn't simply a hobby or an aesthetic interest anymore. It had become a way of understanding myself. That was probably the moment VISCER started becoming real.

How much time does one project take for you?

It depends completely on the project. A photograph can take hours or even minutes to create, but the idea behind it might have been developing inside me for months. A body-painting performance can take several hours of preparation, sometimes days of conceptual work, research, sketches, materials and rehearsals. So I don't really measure my projects only in hours. The physical execution might take one day. The idea can take months or years to arrive.

Do you have some powerful or memorable memories while doing your job?

The most powerful moments are usually the ones I didn't plan. There are moments during a performance when you suddenly stop thinking about the technique, the camera, the people watching, or whether the work is going well. You simply enter a kind of connection with the person in front of you. I remember moments where it felt almost like two bodies were creating something together rather than one person creating something on another. Those moments are probably the closest thing I have experienced to a ritual.

Do you have a goal you want to achieve?

I don't have one final destination. I want VISCER to become a language that exists beyond me, something recognizable even without my name attached to it. I want to create exhibitions, performances, and collaborations where photography, painting, fashion, music, and the human body stop being separate disciplines. Ultimately, I want to create something that makes people feel before they understand.

Laura Löwingerová





Where Magic Happens

In a summer day that tastes like the berries,
Growing in a garden full of life.

The chipper of the children my soul recognizes,
Spreading through the meadows with delight.

Through the eyes of a child, the moos and the meows;
Sound just like the talks of the tales, told in the dark.
The reunion the garden of my grandparents provides,
Chases away the monster that is boredom,
and everything feels alright.

Zeynep Sargin

POV

I thought that gratitude feels like a fresh breeze of
thankfulness for having a roof above my head,
This season taught me that gratitude includes the
accepting of every imperfect part of myself.

I thought that courage looks like a gathering of
all my strength before stepping into an unknown
place,
This summer taught me that courage is actually
going there unprepared, ready to find that strength
along the way.

I thought that empathy tastes like a bread given to
a homeless man,
This September taught me that empathy is also
listening to someone else's story patiently, while
sitting in the room full of emotions with them.

Patricia Palajová



Both of these poems were written during a Poetry Workshop organized by Lukáš Sabol :)

THE CULTURAL HEGEMONY



JAIL

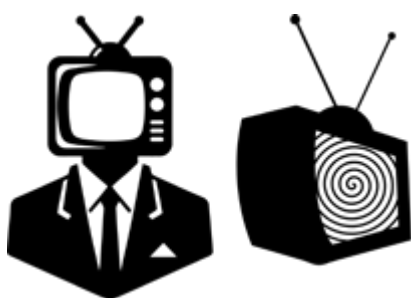


Antonio Gramsci spent years in prison and came out with one of the core ideas to analyse the modern political world. Here's why it still hits today.

In 1928, Antonio Gramsci, one of Italy's sharpest social thinkers, was dragged into a prison cell in 1920s Italy. The political prosecutor reportedly declares, "We must stop this brain from functioning for twenty years." They failed. And not just a bit. In his small cell, he wrote big texts in smuggled notebooks. Gramsci knew he wouldn't survive, that he couldn't leave the jail alive, so he built a bomb—a theory that explains why we obey, and therefore, how to stop doing it.

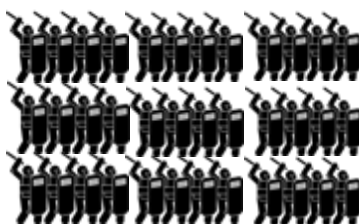
So here is the big question of Gramsci, why do the poorest so often consent to stay poor? Why do people accept systems that don't serve them? Why do poor voters cheer for budget cuts? Why do we shrug at inequality as "just how things are"? Gramsci's answer is cultural hegemony. His insight, no ruling class stays in power through bullets alone. Armies can crush bodies, but they cannot crush spirits forever. Real, lasting domination requires something subtler and infinitely more effective, your consent. The genius of power isn't making you afraid to rebel. It's making you never want to.

Gramsci drew a sharp line between two forms of control,



Gramsci died in 1937, broken by prison. But his idea escaped and conquered the world. It armed Edward Herman, Noam Chomsky, but most importantly Stuart Hall and the Birmingham School to decode how media manufactures consent. It gave postcolonial thinkers the tools to explain how empires ruled through culture long after the flags came down. It's why every advertiser, every marketer, every algorithm feeding your feed is, consciously or not, fighting a war of position for your worldview. Every time you scroll, watch, share, or repeat a "common sense" truth,

Domination, the iron fist. Police. Courts. Prisons. The threat of force. Hegemony, the velvet glove. Schools. Churches. Newspapers. Films. Media. Common sense itself. The fist is crude, expensive, and creates resentment. The glove is elegant, cheap, and breeds loyalty. And here's the kicker, hegemony doesn't feel like control at all. It feels like reality. The ones in power's worldview doesn't present itself labeled "propaganda." It gets in your mind through a thousand tiny channels, the classroom lesson, the bedtime story, the TV pundit, the casual remark at the dinner table, until it hardens into what Gramsci called "common sense", that unexamined fog of assumptions we mistake for eternal truth. Hard work always pays off. Some people are just naturally better. Questioning the system is naive. There is no alternative. Sound familiar? That's hegemony working exactly as designed. Do you know one baker working less than 50 hours a week? And how many are rich? The most brilliant sleight of hand in the whole operation is this, the ones in power present their particular interests as universal ones. What's good for the powerful becomes "the national interest." Their values become "family values." Their economics becomes "expert consensus." Their world becomes the world. And we, busy, tired, distracted, swallow it. Not because we're stupid, but because the fog is engineered to be invisible. You can't resist a cage you don't know you're inside.



you're on the battlefield. The only question is, whose side are you on?

Gramsci leaves us with a challenge not a lot of us want to face. The most powerful empire is the one inside your head. And it doesn't need a single soldier to hold its ground. So ask yourself, honestly, which of your convictions are truly yours, and which were installed while you weren't looking? Because the moment you start asking that question... is the moment the fog begins to lift. And that, Gramsci would tell you, is exactly where critical thinking begins.

Gramsci wasn't naive about where this fog comes from. Every social group, he argued, grows its own organic intellectuals, the teachers, journalists, priests, artists, and organizers who craft and spread its worldview. The dominant group has an army of them. The question is, do ordinary people have their own? This is where Gramsci gets dangerous. He insists that the workers must build counter-hegemony, their own institutions, their own storytellers, their own vision of the world, or they will keep fighting uphill forever with rusty weapons.

Here's the part that made Gramsci a threat to the vision the Italian government had and a prophet for everyone since. Revolution, he realized, isn't a single dramatic storming of the palace. In the advanced societies of the West, the fortress of power isn't just the state, it's civil society, a sprawling web of schools, media, unions, and culture. Storm the palace and you'll find the walls of consent still standing, unmoved. So Gramsci drew the crucial distinction, War of maneuver, the frontal assault. Tanks. Barricades. The Bolshevik dash to the Winter Palace. War of position, the long siege. The slow, patient, generational struggle to win hearts, minds, and institutions. To dig trenches in culture itself. In the modern world, he argued, the war of position is the real war. And most of us don't even know we're enlisted.



Arthur Bonhoure—Tolfo

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YOUTH IS CHANGING SOCIETY

Towards the end of August 2026, Struga became a hub for young minds. From August 22 to 29, the city hosted the "Young Civil Society" bilateral youth exchange, organized by Volunteers Centre Skopje in cooperation with Europa Iuvenis from Poland.

A total of 24 young people aged 15 to 21 from Macedonia and Poland gathered to discuss, learn, and share ideas regarding youth participation in society and how they could become agents of change in their own communities. Through interactive workshops, debates, and non-formal education, the eight days were filled with diverse experiences, cultural discovery, and the forging of countless new friendships.

However, the most important thing is to hear what they learned from this project:

Jana: Being the team leader of such a wonderful team was a truly great honor. I am grateful and delighted to have had the opportunity to collaborate with such amazing people. Although we come from different backgrounds and cultures, the activities, conversations, and time spent together created a welcoming atmosphere that fostered close friendships. Language and cultural differences were no obstacle to bonding with our friends from Poland; on the contrary, those very differences made this youth exchange truly memorable.

Lara: I would definitely like to highlight a few things that made a strong impression on me during the project. First of all, we realized—especially through our daily sessions and workshops—that we, as young people, play a significant role in the process of transforming our community. Each of us can share ideas or solutions that would benefit our community. Another highlight that stands out in my memory is the cultural evenings where Macedonia and Poland showcased their cultures. We shared traditional dishes—such as Polish dumplings and Macedonian ajvar—and enjoyed learning new dances; some were harder than others, which made the experience even more exciting, and we really bonded in the process. For me, that was an unforgettable part of the project.

Nino: Through this project, I had the opportunity to learn more about the power we, as young people, have to bring about change in our community. It helped me understand how to take initiative, launch a campaign or a petition, and analyze local issues to find solutions. It definitely helped me realize that young people have a voice, and it inspired me not only to understand the problems in my community but also to take action to address them. We exchanged various ideas and experiences on this topic with the participants from Poland, while also learning about each other's cultures—which is one of the best aspects of projects like this. This wasn't my first Erasmus project, but it was definitely one of my favorites.

David: Participating in this project was a fantastic experience; I learned more about teamwork, communication, and the importance of being active in my community. I truly enjoyed meeting new people, sharing ideas, and taking part in activities that helped me become more self-confident and open to new perspectives.

By the end of projects like this, we realize that Erasmus+ is much more than just a trip or a certificate. Through "Young Civil Society," Struga became a place where 24 young people showcased their visions, ideas, and courage to drive positive change—and now, they are ready to launch initiatives and make a difference in their own communities.

Nino Gjorgievski



При крајот на август 2026, Струга беше центарот на младите умови. Од 22 до 29 август, Волонтерски Центар Скопје беше домаќин на билатералната младинска размена: “Young Civil Society”, во соработка со Europa Iuvenis од Полска.

Вкупно 24 млади луѓе на возраст од 15 до 21 година се собраа на едно место да дискутираат, учат и споделуваат идеи околу младинското учество во нивното општество и како тие можат да бидат носители на промени во своите средини. Преку интерактивни работилници, дебати и неформално образование, тие седум дена беа исполнети со разни искуства, запознавање на нови култури и правење на безброј нови пријателства.

Сепак, најбитно е да слушнеме што тие имаат научено од овој проект:

Јана: Да се биде лидер на еден прекрасен тим е навистина голема чест. Благодарна сум и многу ми е драго што токму јас ја имав можноста за соработка со толку прекрасни луѓе. Иако доаѓаме од различни средини и култури, преку активностите, разговорите и времето поминато заедно се создаде пријатна атмосфера од која произлегоа многу блиски пријателства. Јазичните и културните разлики не претставуваа пречка во дружењето со нашите пријатели од Полска. Напротив, токму тие разлики ја направија оваа младинска размена една што ќе се памети.

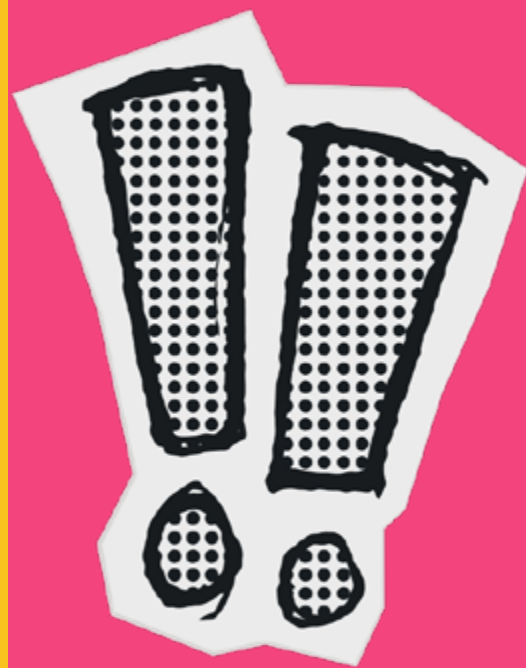
Лара: Дефинитивно би сакала да издвојам неколку работи што ми оставија силен впечаток за време на проектот. Како прво, сфативме особено преку нашите секојдневни сесии и работилници – дека и ние, младите, играме значајна улога во процесот на менување на заедницата. Секој од нас може да сподели идеи или решенија што би ѝ помогнале на нашата заедница. Друг момент што особено ми остана во сеќавање се културните вечери на кои се претставија Македонија и Полска. Ги споделувавме нашите традиционални јадења, како полските кнедли и македонскиот ајвар, и уживавме учејќи нови танци некои беа потешки, други полесни, што го правеше искуството уште повозбудливо, а притоа и многу се зближивме. Тоа за мене претставуваше незаборавен дел од проектот.

Нино: Во овој проект имав можност да научам повеќе за тоа како ние, младите, имаме моќ да направиме промени во нашата заедница; тој ми помогна да разберам како да преземам иницијатива, како да започнам кампања или петиција, како и како да ги анализирам проблемите во мојата заедница и да најдам решенија за нив. Дефинитивно ми помогна да сфатам дека младите имаат свој глас и ме инспирираше не само да ги разберам проблемите во мојата заедница, туку и да преземам нешто во врска со нив. Разменивме различни идеи и искуства на оваа тема со учесниците од Полска, а притоа научивме и повеќе за културата на другите, што е една од најдобрите страни на ваквите проекти. Ова не беше мојот прв проект во рамките на „Еразмус“, но дефинитивно беше еден од моите омилен.

Давид: Учесството во овој проект беше одлично искуство преку кое научив повеќе за тимската работа, комуникацијата и важноста од тоа да бидам активен во мојата заедница. Навистина уживав во запознавањето нови луѓе, споделувањето идеи и учеството во активности што ми помогнаа да станам посигурен во себе и поотворен кон нови гледишта.

На крајот на ваквите проекти сфаќаме дека „Еразмус+“ е многу повеќе од патување или сертификат. Преку “Young Civil Society”, Струга стана место каде 24 млади луѓе ги покажаа своите визији, идеи и нивната храброст за позитивни промени и тие се спремни да покренат иницијатива и да направат промени во своите заедници.

Нино Ѓорѓиевски



МЛАДИТЕ ГО МЕНУВААТ ОПШТЕСТВОТО

Walking Through Spaces

Step by Step

For many of us, walking is one of our body's most vital functions, spanning from infancy to the end of our lives. Beyond serving as our primary mode of transportation for centuries prior to the invention of the automobile, it occupies a central place in our lives, often without us even realizing it. We arrange our homes and workplaces by calculating how to move through them most effectively, striving to optimize our movement for both functionality and enjoyment. Given this, it is easy to see the necessity of designing our cities around walking, which is an activity of such great importance to us. However, before digging deeper into this conclusion, let us take a closer look at the role walking plays in our lives.

Since childhood, we have received messages from various sources about the importance of an active lifestyle and walking for our health, and we may even observe these effects in our own lives. We might feel restless after

staying indoors for a few days; when our activity levels drop, we may feel stuck, lose motivation, or experience anxiety about falling behind in life. Such declines in quality of life are also corroborated by the relevant literature. Increased walking time can lead to improvements in blood pressure and heart health, higher blood oxygen levels, and lower cholesterol levels (Hanson and Jones, 2015). The health benefits of walking extend beyond the physical; walking is also associated with a reduction in symptoms of anxiety and depression (Xu et al., 2024).

The benefits of walking are countless, yet we cannot view walking merely as an individual activity. Like everything else, our walking habits are shaped by our environment and politics. Factors such as the suitability of our surroundings for walking, our environment having an accessible structure that affords us room for movement, the ability to commute to work or school on foot, whether the environment is car-friendly or pedestrian-friendly, and having the

necessary time and energy all influence our walking habits and motivation. In this context, the pedestrian-friendliness of urban designs is analyzed, and cities conducive to walking are termed "walkable cities."

I remember the first time I heard the term "walkable cities." Last year, while aimlessly scrolling through social media videos, as I often do, I came across a video by someone. The person in the video was discussing how public transport could be improved to solve Ankara's traffic problems and the benefits of making cities pedestrian-friendly rather than car-centric; notably, she referred to cars as if they were pests. She explained how traffic is a leading cause of death (unrelated to old age), attributing this primarily to car dealerships and urban planning that encourage everyone to drive. In her view, traffic did not merely harm people indirectly; it claimed lives, causing the deaths of thousands of people worldwide every day. Although the language used initially struck me as somewhat extreme, as I watched more videos, her passion began to rub off on me. I hope to do something similar for our readers.

So, what are the characteristics of walkable cities? In his book on walkable cities, urban planner Jeff Speck outlines four fundamental conditions that must be met for walking to be a preferred choice for individuals: it must be useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting. For a city to be “useful,” locations essential to daily life must be situated close to residential areas and organized around pedestrian pathways, enabling individuals to easily meet their needs. The “safe” standard requires that pedestrians can move about without the fear of being struck by vehicles and feel secure while walking. The “comfortable” standard entails that walking areas feel like an extension of one’s home, ensuring individuals do not feel alienated from their surroundings while walking. Finally, the “interesting” standard requires that the walking environment captures people’s attention and fosters a welcoming atmosphere that facilitates interaction with others.

City walkability yields biological, psychological, and social benefits for individuals. Environments favourable for walking increase residents’ activity levels, which can lead to improvements in physical health. Given the link between low activity levels and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, increased activity can also improve mental well-being. Furthermore, because pedestrian-friendly cities facilitate movement within local areas, they encourage residents to interact and build relationships, thereby strengthening local communities, and social networks. “Naturally occurring retirement communities” are emerging for the aging population in these places; such areas and the communities within them support the independence of older adults. Walkable cities benefit more than just pedestrians; as local activity increases, small businesses in these areas become profitable, creating more customer opportunities for local shopkeepers. Moreover, pedestrian-friendly cities are also environmentally friendly, as they reduce the number of people reliant on cars that pollute the environment with carbon emissions.



Although my interest in walkable cities began long before I arrived in Skopje, that interest deepened once I moved here from Ankara and was able to navigate the city on foot. Being able to get around without relying on or being exposed to public transport or heavy vehicular traffic, combined with the structured lifestyle I adopted here, has allowed me to start my day feeling more motivated and active. The main reason I lacked this in Ankara was the traffic congestion and the fact that the distances to my daily destinations were far greater than those in Skopje.

Statistics show that while the average daily commute for a resident of Ankara covers 17.72 km, the figure for Skopje is 7.59 km. According to the same data, traffic congestion, time spent in traffic, and traffic inefficiency are all higher in Ankara than in Skopje.

Of course, these statistics certainly do not imply that Skopje is a pedestrian paradise (as they also don’t imply Ankara is a pedestrian hell). Factors such as the distance between the places I need to visit regularly or the neighborhoods I live in within these cities play a significant role in differentiating my experiences in the two cities. However, having been here for less than two weeks, I neither possess the necessary information nor have the standing to offer a definitive opinion on the matter. That being said, I can certainly say that we all deserve to live in places where we feel at ease, where our health is positively impacted, and where we can age comfortably. It should be unacceptable to the public that—due to economic inequalities engineered solely for the profit of a select few—renting a home in walkable areas has become unaffordable, while urban services remain inadequate and city planning fails to prioritize the needs of residents.

In line with this, I would like to conclude by leaving a wish for the future: I hope that one day, we all have living spaces that support us. Places where we can walk freely, breathe easily, feel safe, socialize, and grow old. Environments that make us feel as comfortable and at ease as sinking into a cozy armchair.

Zeynep Sargin

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WHAT'S BEHIND SOCIAL MEDIA CRAVING?

Endless scrolling, sleepless nights, and hours spent on Tiktok or Instagram leading to temporary pleasure and empty feeling asking for more? Although it might sound unfamiliar for people from older generations, it is the daily reality for most young people nowadays.

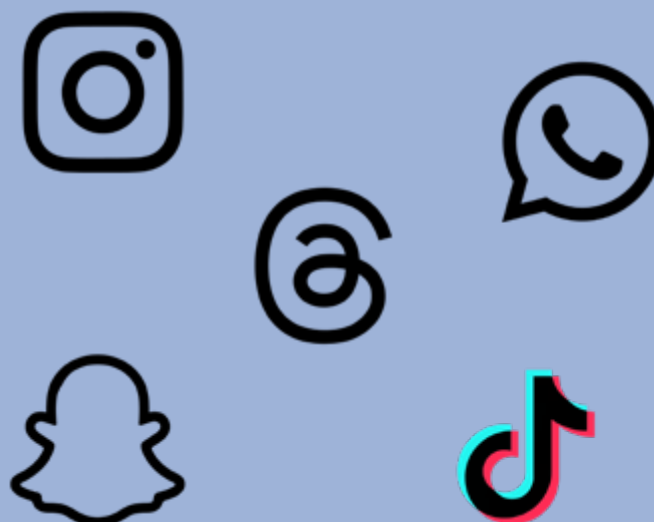
According to recent statistics (2026), an average gen-Z person reports 6.6 hours of screen time per day, while about 3 out of 10 gen-Zers spend more than 8 hours on their phones daily. Moreover, as it was found by researchers, gen-Z people tend to underestimate their daily screen-time, which is likely to create a false perception in their eyes about how much time they actually “waste” online. Another statistics (2026) shows that TikTok is currently the most used social media platform. An average global TikTok user spends around 95 minutes on this app per day, while an average gen-Zer, which is the most prevalent group on this social network, consumes 152 minutes of TikTok content every day. This rather-concerning data thus bring us to the question of why young people devote so much time to their smartphones. What is the cause of this prevailing social media craving among youngsters?

The shared answer to these questions revealed in this article concerns dopamine addiction. Dopamine can be defined as a chemical messenger which plays a crucial role in communication between the nerve cells in the brain and the body. It is associated with memory, movement, mood, motivation, sleep, attention, behavior, and cognition. Additionally, dopamine is known as a feel-good hormone, meaning that it operates on the basis of the “reward-system”. The human brain is naturally wired to do such activities which trigger the dopamine release into the neuro-system. The feeling of pleasure, which produces a lot of dopamine, comes after the ordinary practices which help us to survive, such as sleeping or eating. Excessive amount of junk food, white sugar, cigarettes, or alcohol intake becomes easily addicting, because it releases dopamine and thus satisfies our “human cravings”. The same is true for scrolling on our phones. In contemporary society, social media scrolling represents a new form of dopamine addiction.

Dopamine-scrolling is a behavioral pattern or habit of watching one video after another on social media with the intention of engaging with the new entertaining content. The main distinction between the dopamine scrolling and the doom-scrolling, though, is that those who doom-scroll view the distressing social media content or the news. While doom-scrolling is based on reward-mechanisms associated with negative emotions, dopamine-scrolling is based on reward-mechanisms connected with positive emotions.

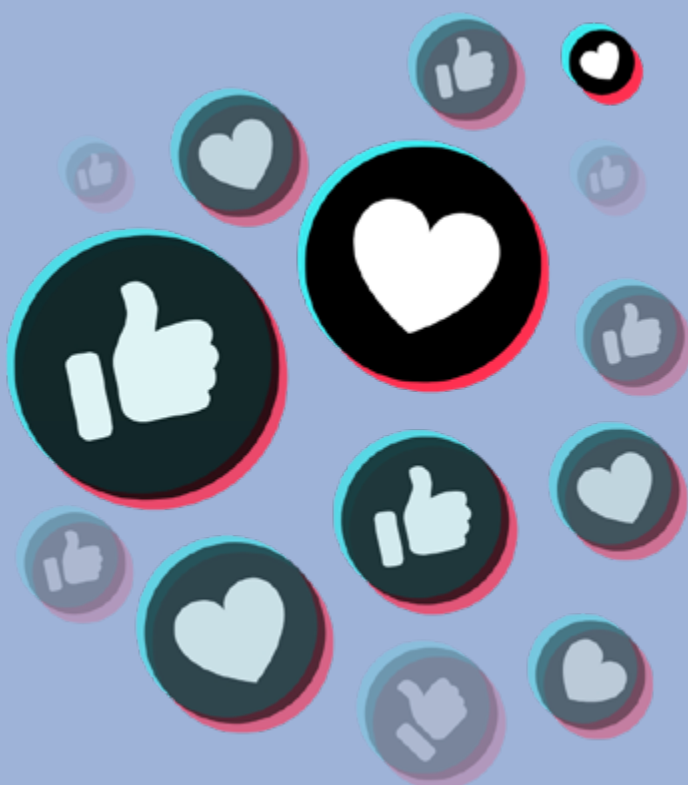


Despite the fact that this post-scrolling feeling leaves a state of temporary pleasure in a person, when it is not restricted or limited, it might lead to various problems, including a decreased social interaction, overstimulation, and mental health issues. Even though the time spent on social media might seem quite easy to be controlled, for instance by setting time limits on a given social media platform, the opposite is often true. The content that pops up on our for-you-page is the result of sophisticated algorithms. The simple trigger in the form of a notification is enough to make us open the social media app, where after watching the first short video or reel it is really common to turn on the autopilot mode and get lost in hours-long scrolling. Now we know that it is a result of receiving the high spike of dopamine, which subconsciously pushes us to crave more and scroll to the following clip.



Therefore, next time you find yourself endlessly scrolling on any of your favorite social media platforms, try to soothe your dopamine craving in a more healthy way. Instead of being stuck in a loop of scrolling, try to go outside and feed your brain and body with a portion of fresh air. And if you are too tired to move, go talk to your family and friends, or simply try to take a nap. In addition to that, I also encourage you to set an effective app timer, which will help you to take a conscious break from these high stimulation apps. TRUST ME, YOUR BODY WILL THANK YOU LATER.

Patrícia Palajová



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Good time indoor and outdoor

What if someone told
you that you have
4 days to connect,
inspire, and build
trust?

“Mission impossible,”
my inner skeptic says.

“Impossible is nothing!”
screams the other, the
half-full-glass side of me.

And here's how the second wins, and I am on my way to Mainz
for a contact making seminar “Connect, Inspire, Build trust”.

Logistically, easy task to handle. There are plenty of flights to take from Macedonia to Germany. But, then again, Germany is big, so it's nice to fly somewhere close to Mainz, not to a 6-hour-away-by-train airport. I flew to Dortmund in the early morning hours, right on time to have breakfast and to break all the stereotypes of Dortmund claimed to be one of the most boring cities in Germany. Is it really? Who said so? For sure not a football fan. 12th September was a game day, so Dortmund was black and yellow. I have seen whole families and friends' groups walking proudly in the colors of the local club, Borussia. For me, as Polish it's a big thing, Borussia is still the closest to my heart thanks to Lewandowski-Błaszczykowski-Piszczek trio once writing a history there. Second thing, Dortmunder U. A tower where on different floors I found exhibitions, galleries, interactive rooms, and simply enjoyed the aesthetic of the building. Very far from boring.

I only needed a few hours to feel the heartbeat of Dortmund, so how could I doubt that a few days won't be enough to connect with youth workers from different organisations?

This contact making seminar was not just another project. It was an experience, an adventure, an exchange of energies and simply: a good time.

Jugendhaus Don Bosco that was our accommodation for those few days stood out among many different accommodations. It is my eco-friendly spirit now feeling an urge to have at least a paragraph about it, but the space we work in is indeed important. The building itself, because of its eco-friendly design, was awarded multiple times. The combination of wood and glass creates a warm and cosy atmosphere that can only boost creativity and inspiration. Perfect place for youth workers to plan their future projects together.

In this kind of place, I was reminded once more, why sustainability matters, especially in our nowadays busy, instant lifestyle. I keep with me the warm and soft light coming through the wooden planks to the dining room, where those very few breakfasts, lunches and dinners we had together were full of discussions. As we never stopped working, even when leaving the activity room. But again, that kind of work is a delight.

On Sunday 13th, the activity room was our safe space where we got to know each other. IBG, our host, presented their activities, where the core is sustainability and providing equal opportunities. The workcamps they organize host young people from Europe and far beyond, where they can do practical work together making our world better, be it by reconstructing an important site or doing forestry or gardening chores.

Showcasing more youth workers and the amazing work they do will continue now, but I feel like each and every one of them deserves at least a line in this article. Let me take you to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a city you might hear about for the first time, Brčko, a group of young people now carry on the mission of organisation Svitac, created in 1998. Svitac means a firefly and their activities are focused on education and arts carried out in a multi-ethnic community. We are moving now to Tuzla to meet KLIK, an energetic group who supports development of young people with a focus on youth participation, sustainability and mental health. Serbia is our next stop, and specifically we are going to Požarevac. There, a very young organisation Novotarium (founded in 2024), creates space for young people to learn, connect, contribute with their own ideas and be part of the local community. Rilindja Gjellbër, Green Renaissance, from Prishtina, Kosovo is a community-based environmental organisation. Through environmental education, advocating for reinforcement of environmental policies and promoting a circular economy, they want a vision of "clean and green Kosovo" to come true. We will pass through Macedonia for a moment too to say "hi" to the organisation Bright that we, from VCS, can call a neighbor. Bright just like us and mentioned above and below supports the development of youth, and again (what a surprise!) the key word is sustainability. We have three stops in Romania now. Shall we start from Bucharest? BeeHave association brought permaculture closer to us. The enthusiasm we felt by hearing the stories of community gardens they built in the heart of the big city made me feel like grabbing a shovel myself to do some gardening back in Skopje. Moving on to the smaller city, Craiova, we meet Tinerii 3D. The 3D from their name stands for Education, Culture and Sport. Literally, a trip to a different dimension, where youth reigns. Maybe the next small town on our way won't tell you much, but Transylvania sure will. Cristuru Secuiesc

is a home of youth association ATA, and as they say: "We show Transylvania to Europe and Europe to Transylvania!". The trip is almost finished... We are in Istanbul now to greet the Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations. It represents national organisations which promote intercultural education, understanding and peace through voluntary service. With 43 members so far and still counting... From the south we are taking a leap to Vilnius, Lithuania. There, Tavo Europa is definitely a right choice for youth and for people working with youth seeking for opportunities to upskill. Miracles are just behind the corner...

I could write separate books about each, from the conversations we had, the stories we exchanged and anecdotes we shared. Thank you truly for being an inspiration. And now I need to get back to Monday 14th.

We are back in Mainz. Precisely in the remote area. It took us a bus and a walk through the forest to get there. I am amazed. Jan, in charge of Ober-Olmer Wald Forest Nature Conservation Centre, is giving us a tour. We are getting to know the activities that they offer to the locals—they can literally touch nature here and take part in workshops. The educational garden, which was built with the help of international volunteers, offers to people living in the city to see different herbs and plants, and what their purpose is. The children can get excited about two donkeys living there, and see an insect house—fascinating, isn't it? Our group meets international young people, who are on the volunteering team. They are building a wooden stove here. A black dog that looks more like a sheep is walking around with us. Jan says that it's apparently a breed called Croatian sheepdog.

Today, I am touching the grass more than ever in the past few weeks.

Indoor and outdoor. The perfect balance we kept during this seminar is the reason why it was a good time. After the presentations, networking and activity room scenery, we changed to forests and a glimpse into workcamps activities. I can say that I left Germany with a bag full of good memories, stories, new friends and partners, and a charged battery to continue my duty as a youth worker. Thank you, IBG, for having us!

Ewelina Chańska

Macedonia

A story of independence and progress

Macedonia is a country well known for its rich cuisine, wines, breathtaking nature, and, of course, Ohrid — a true gem that attracts visitors from all around the world.

On September 8, this country celebrates its Independence Day, reminding us of the 1991 referendum in which citizens voted on whether to start an independent state. More than 95% of participating voters supported this idea. It was a powerful expression of the people's wish to shape their own future.

However, it did not come easily. For generations, people struggled for their identity, language, recognition, and the basic right to define themselves by their own name. The country endured political uncertainty, regional conflicts, isolation, and issues surrounding its identity before establishing itself as a sovereign and internationally recognized state.

That is why it is important to remember this significant milestone, honor the journey that brought the country to where it is today, and continue working together to build an even brighter future. By serving our communities, believing in the country's potential, and striving for progress, we can help create a stronger, more prosperous tomorrow for generations to come.

Now it is the year 2026 and Macedonia marked 35 years of independence with celebrations across the country.

For an entire month, events were organized in 11 cities, bringing together more than 120 Macedonian artists. The celebrations peaked in a concert by internationally known DJ and producer David Guetta.

Tickets were sold for a symbolic 35 denars, and more than 50,000 people attended the concert. The atmosphere was extraordinary. Guetta himself shared his excitement on social media, describing it as an incredible night and expressing his gratitude to the thousands of people who came together for the event by saying: *"What an awesome night!!! Together, we made this the biggest show ever held by an international artist in the country. So grateful for you all!"*

To remind ourselves of great accomplishments and keep the positive energy going, it is worth looking at some of the achievements Macedonia has made since independence and the things people can be proud of today.

Major economic, technological, and institutional transformation were installed since 1991. It also has developed a market-oriented economy, modernized public services, and continued investing in digitalization and infrastructure.

Not to mention, becoming a member of the United Nations in 1993, obtaining European Union candidate status in 2005, and becoming the 30th member of NATO in 2020.



Must include, after independence, Macedonia faced an extremely difficult economic transition. The early 1990s were marked by a severe economic crisis, falling GDP, extremely high inflation, and very high unemployment.

Since then, the country has gradually transformed its economy. GDP has returned to growth, average wages have increased to 48 381 denars which is around 785 €, and unemployment has fallen from 35% to 11,3% and inflation went from 338,7% to 2,6%!

Major infrastructure investments have improved highways, railways, energy, water, and waste management.

Projects such as Corridor VIII aim to improve regional connections and strengthen Macedonia's role as a link between Europe and the Balkans.

Speaking of tourism in Macedonia, it offers much more than traditional sightseeing; it also offers warm hospitality that makes the experience truly memorable. The people are naturally welcoming, willing to help, and happy to include visitors in their community when they show genuine interest. This is something I personally appreciate a lot.

Another aspect to talk about is agriculture. It remains an important part of the country's economy and identity. Investments in rural areas, agricultural production, and rural infrastructure contribute not only to economic development but also to preserving traditions and local communities.

To conclude, we can say that the country that was facing big economic and political challenges now is integrated into major international organizations, developing its infrastructure, modernizing its public services, attracting tourists, and continuing to build its economy.

There is still a long way to go, and development does not happen without challenges. But looking back at the distance already travelled gives people a reason to recognize what has been achieved.

Macedonia may be small on the map, but it carries an enormous heart and importance.

Thirty-five years of independence are not only a reason to look back. They are a reminder that a country has to protect what has been built so far, clear the shadows that hold this land back, work together to create an even stronger country and continue shaping its own bright future.

Laura Löwingerová

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Learning, Sharing, and Growing Together in Transylvania

Fifteen of us, Eco Heroes, set off on our journey on August 16th for the “Eco Heroes Across Countries” youth exchange to Izvoare, Transylvania. After a 20-hour bus ride filled with laughter, secret photos, and what we jokingly called our own “snoring symphonies,” we finally arrived in the small village of Izvoare.

Surrounded by forests and mountains, Izvoare offered breathtaking rural landscapes, peaceful and wonderfully

connected to nature, perfect for bringing young people together, with a large outdoor area where we could enjoy group activities. Nature was truly all around us. We even received occasional alerts on our phones warning us that a bear had been spotted near our accommodation and reminding us not to wander too far away!

The wooden mountain houses quickly became places of friendship and laughter. The balconies were full of

flowers, swings stood in the garden, and the fresh mountain air made every moment outside feel special. During our free time, we often gathered in front of the houses, talking, playing games, listening to music, and simply enjoying each other’s company. One of our proudest little moments was hanging the Macedonian flag on the upper balcony of our house. The nearest shop was about 4 km away, so going there became an adventure of its own; we only managed to make a

few walks for soft drinks and crisps, which also meant that we did not spend much money during the exchange, so we returned home with most of it still in our pockets.

The women working in the kitchen were incredibly kind and prepared delicious meals for us. They did not speak English, which sometimes led to very funny conversations with gestures and body language. Somehow, we always managed to communicate!

A Taste of Macedonia

One of the highlights of the exchange was the Macedonian Cultural Evening, when we presented our country, our traditional food, dances, and songs. Soon, everyone was on their feet dancing. Some participants knew the steps, while others certainly did not—but they tried anyway, and their hearts danced to their own joyful rhythm!

Nature, Adventure, and Teamwork

Our most memorable adventure was the hike to Lake Zetea. The two-hour walk through the nearby forest was a bit tiring, but we were well prepared with hiking clothes, a packed lunch, and water. Along the way, we enjoyed the fresh mountain air and breathtaking landscapes. We swam, rode water bikes, played Treasure Hunt, and took countless photos and videos.

From Trash to Rhythm

The most creative activity was “From Trash to Rhythm”. We discovered that everyday waste could be transformed into something completely different: musical instruments! We created drums, guitars, and other instruments from trash to make real music. We formed our own band and played using the instruments we had created. Surprisingly, the sound was actually amazing. Through this activity, we learned that something that would normally be thrown away can become something useful and even enjoyable. And, of course, the morning energizers deserve a special mention! They were always a fun way to wake up, get moving, and bring positive energy to the whole group before another busy day began.



Until We Meet Again

Every activity brought joy, new opportunity, and inspiration, but perhaps the most special part was the bond we created with each other in a surprisingly short time that will stay with us long after the exchange ended. As we said goodbye to our new friends and the organizers, we carried home much more than souvenirs. We carried the lessons we had learned, the experiences we had shared, and the friendships we had made. This exchange reminded us that change begins with us—and spreads when we share it with others. When young people are given the opportunity to take action, they can become powerful representatives of change in schools, communities, by becoming an eco-hero in everyday life. We are proud of every step we took on our learning journey, and we are grateful for the opportunity to have been Eco Heroes together.

Ilina Minoska



Çfarë fshihet pas dëshirës së fortë për të përdorur rrjetet sociale?

Shfletim pa fund, net pa gjumë dhe orë të tëra të kaluara në TikTok ose Instagram, që sjellin kënaqësi të përkohshme dhe një ndjenjë boshllëku — duke të bërë të kërkojmë gjithmonë e më shumë? Ndonëse kjo mund t'ju duket e panjohur brezave të vjetër, për shumicën e të rinjve sot është bërë pjesë e realitetit të përditshëm.

Sipas statistikave të fundit (2026), një person mesatar i Gjeneratës Z raporton rreth 6.6 orë kohë para ekranit në ditë, ndërsa rreth 3 në 10 pjesëtarë të Gjeneratës Z kalojnë më shumë se 8 orë në telefon çdo ditë. Për më tepër, siç kanë zbuluar studiuesit, pjesëtarët e Gjeneratës Z priren ta nënvlerësojnë kohën që kalojnë para ekranit çdo ditë, gjë që mund të krijojë një perceptim të rremë për sasinë e kohës që ata në të vërtetë “harxhojnë” online. Një tjetër statistikë (2026) tregon se TikTok është aktualisht platforma e rrjeteve sociale më e përdorur. Një përdorues mesatar i TikTok-ut në mbarë botën kalon rreth 95 minuta në ditë në këtë aplikacion, ndërsa një pjesëtar mesatar i Gjeneratës Z, e cila është grupmosha më e përfaqësuar në këtë rrjet social, konsumon rreth 152 minuta përmbajtje në TikTok çdo ditë.

Këto të dhëna mjaft shqetësuese na shtyjnë të pyesim se përse të rinjtë kalojnë kaq shumë kohë në telefonat e tyre. Çfarë qëndron pas kësaj prirjeje kaq të përhapur të të rinjve për përdorimin e vazhdueshëm të rrjeteve sociale?

Përgjigjja e përbashkët ndaj këtyre pyetjeve, të cilën e trajton ky artikull, lidhet me varësinë ndaj dopaminës. Dopamina mund të përkufizohet si një lajmëtar kimik që luan një rol thelbësor në komunikimin midis qelizave nervore në tru dhe në trup. Ajo lidhet me kujtesën, lëvizjen, gjendjen shpirtërore, motivimin, gjumin, vëmendjen, sjelljen dhe aftësitë njohëse.

Për më tepër, dopamina njihet si një hormon që lidhet me ndjenjën e mirëqenies dhe kënaqësisë, që do të thotë se funksionon në bazë të të ashtuquajturit “sistem i shpërblimit”. Truri i njeriut është i prirur natyrshëm të kryejë aktivitete që nxisin çlirimin e dopaminës në sistemin nervor. Ndjenja e kënaqësisë, e cila shoqërohet me çlirimin e dopaminës, vjen pas aktiviteteve të zakonshme që na ndihmojnë të mbijetojmë, si gjumi ose ushqimi.

Konsumimi i tepërt i ushqimeve të pashëndetshme, sheqerit të bardhë, cigareve ose alkoolit mund të krijojë lehtësisht varësi, pasi këto substanca nxisin çlirimin e dopaminës dhe, në këtë mënyrë, plotësojnë “dëshirat tona njerëzore”. E njëjta gjë mund të thuhet edhe për shfletimin e vazhdueshëm në telefonat tanë. Në shoqërinë bashkëkohore, lëvizja pa fund nëpër rrjetet sociale përfaqëson një formë të re të varësisë ndaj dopaminës.





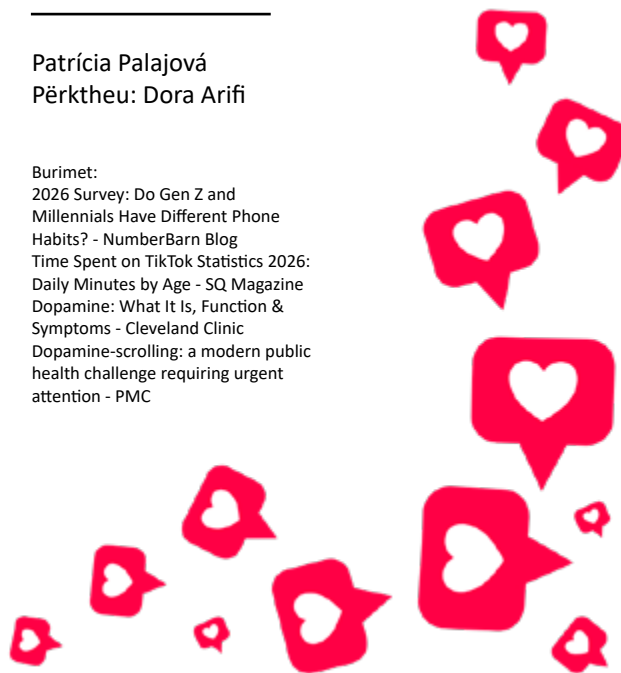
“Dopamine-scrolling” është një model sjelljeje ose një zakon që konsiston në shikimin e një videoje pas tjetrës në rrjetet sociale, me synimin për të konsumuar vazhdimisht përmbajtje të reja dhe argëtuese. Dallimi kryesor midis “dopamine-scrolling” dhe “doom-scrolling” qëndron në llojin e përmbajtjes që konsumohet. Personat që praktikojnë “doom-scrolling” priren të shohin përmbajtje shqetësuese në rrjetet sociale dhe lajme negative. Ndërsa “doom-scrolling” bazohet në mekanizma shpërblyes të lidhur me emocione negative, “dopamine-scrolling” bazohet në mekanizma shpërblyes të lidhur me emocione pozitive.

Pavarësisht faktit se ndjenja që përjetojmë pas shfletimit në rrjetet sociale na sjell një kënaqësi të përkohshme, kur kjo sjellje nuk kufizohet apo kontrollohet, ajo mund të çojë në probleme të ndryshme, duke përfshirë reduktimin e komunikimit shoqëror, stimulimin e tepërt dhe problemet e shëndetit mendor. Edhe pse koha e kaluar në rrjetet sociale mund të duket relativisht e lehtë për t’u kontrolluar, për shembull duke vendosur kufizime kohore në një platformë të caktuar, në realitet shpesh ndodh e kundërta. Përmbajtja që shfaqet në faqen tonë “For You” është rezultat i algoritmeve të sofistikuara. Një nxitje e thjeshtë, në formën e një njoftimi, mjafton që të hapim aplikacionin e rrjeteve sociale. Pasi shohim videon e parë të shkurtër ose “reel”-in e parë, është shumë e zakonshme të kalojmë në një lloj “autopiloti” dhe të humbasim për orë të tëra duke shfletuar. Tani e dimë se kjo lidhet me një rritje të menjëhershme të dopaminës, e cila në mënyrë të pavetëdijshme na shtyn të dëshirojmë më shumë dhe të kalojmë te videoja tjetër.

Prandaj, herën tjetër që ta gjeni veten duke shfletuar pa fund në një nga platformat tuaja të preferuara të rrjeteve sociale, përpikuni ta përmbushni nevojën për dopaminë në një mënyrë më të shëndetshme. Në vend që të mbetenit të bllokuar në ciklin e shfletimit të pandërprerë, provoni të dilni jashtë dhe t’i jepni trurit dhe trupit tuaj pak ajër të pastër. Nëse jeni shumë të lodhur për të lëvizur, bisedoni me familjen ose miqtë tuaj, ose thjesht provoni të bëni një sy gjumë. Përveç kësaj, ju inkurajoj të vendosni një kufizim efektiv kohor për përdorimin e aplikacioneve, i cili do t’ju ndihmojë të bëni një pushim të vetëdijshëm nga këto aplikacione me nivel të lartë stimulimi. MË BESONI, TRUPI JUAJ DO T’JU FALËNDEROJË MË VONË.

Patrícia Palajová
Përktheu: Dora Arifi

Burimet:
2026 Survey: Do Gen Z and Millennials Have Different Phone Habits? - NumberBarn Blog
Time Spent on TikTok Statistics 2026: Daily Minutes by Age - SQ Magazine
Dopamine: What It Is, Function & Symptoms - Cleveland Clinic
Dopamine-scrolling: a modern public health challenge requiring urgent attention - PMC



Summer under the fig tree

July

Summer is the time of the year when Skopje is getting empty. Some people go on long-awaited holidays, students are free from school and come back to their hometowns, or go abroad to work. Some others just seek to escape the hot concrete city. A lot of places, like restaurants, cafés, bars, close for long weeks. And it is difficult to imagine that a new place will come to life in this very period. And the reason is exactly - not a big crowd waiting for the door to be opened.

It was very rare, even for me, with the end of July to discover a new place on the map of Skopje. Spacious, colorful, with a dominance of lush green (the garden does the job), with benches and tables made of wooden pallets. Before entering the yard, one word - Melentie - catches the attention. To me, a word just as strange as it is beautiful.

Café Melentie, located in the city centre, yet far from street noise, is my biggest summer discovery. The heart of it is a fig tree spreading its branches over the café's yard. Big enough to give the much needed shade in the hot summer peak.

I met Melentie's owner, Ivan, the first day I came. He has been working in the cafe-bars for 17 years. And it was not strange to him at all that I asked for a double espresso with a tint of milk on the side. (Usually, people can hardly understand why I am not fond of a foamy coffee.) My second question was about the name of the place. Ivan's grand-grandpa was named Melentie, and he just liked the way it sounds. The name itself is rare and originates from the ancient Greek, meaning "caring". I looked around the yard. "Perfect name", I thought.

The fig tree dominates the space. It is full of fruits that are slowly starting to get colors. It means that soon they will be ripe, but they already spread a sweet scent above our heads. I can't believe that the tree stayed untouched like this and is so healthy. Recently, Skopje was touched by a storm that put down a lot of trees throughout the city. The storm also made a decent amount of rooftops and other materials whirling around, wrecking chaos. In general, it caused a lot of damage and the consequences were still visible everywhere. And this fig tree was just there, striving. "Fig and walnut are one of the strongest trees to be", said my friend. Thank the heavens, I couldn't imagine this yard without the fig tree.

The next visits in Melentie were opportunities for more conversations with Ivan. But these visits were also deep breaths taken in the middle of the hot summer in the city. Because August was just about to show how hot it can get...

Мелентие

August

It's August 6th. Today Melentie is exactly one-month-old. But how old is the fig tree? Ivan says that it's more than 30. And the house where the café is located is from 1929. Almost a hundred years old. It means that it survived the big earthquake in Skopje in 1963. (And the yard survived the recent great storm in July. The fig tree untouched.)

For now, Melentie offers space outside. Ivan is still building, renovating and decorating the interior in the house. He does everything on his own. Today, he showed me the shank he made. Solid work. He says that he grew up in a house with a yard. He is used to doing things on his own. When he moved to the city, it was natural for him that his coffee place needed to be in exactly such a house with a yard.

We go outside and I am admiring plants I can't even name. I do recognize basil among them. And lavender. Ivan studied agriculture and he planted them. Everything has a purpose. The fig tree soon will give very sweet fruits and that's what attracts a lot of different insects. The plants underneath are there to repel them. In the yard there are also quince and Japanese apple trees. For the next warm season coming, Ivan wants to plant tomatoes, raspberries, strawberries... That would attract not only insects, but more people too. Me being first in a row to steal some raspberries from a bush. (Just joking here). But now, Ivan focuses on preparing inside. While the yard is welcoming in the summer, the cosy interior will do the job for the winter.

I am looking at the cats running around the yard. Ivan invites them in with delicious snacks. One of them reminds me of ladybug, despite the fact that obviously not being red with black dots but black and white.

Late-August

I am having a coffee with a friend. We are discussing a book by a Polish author that we both recently read. Me in original, him in English. It feels like Melentie is the audience of our conversation. A lady sitting next to us asks about the book title. Probably fascinated by us being so enthusiastic. We both imagine Janina Duszejko, the character from the book, being a guest in Melentie. She would love it. The herbs, the plants, the cats running around. Even the fig without its fruit is still stunning. Yes, I missed the moment when the figs were ready to eat and bombarded the yard falling. "It was chaos", Ivan says. He gave most of the fruits to family and friends. And birds. The figs were also a nice side dish for all the coffees and cocktails drunk in the past few weeks. Highlighting the refreshing cocktails. Ivan mastered mojitos. It is my summer favorite.

*"August
afternoons
already
smell of
Autumn"*

- a quote from the other Polish author says. Maybe in Poland, but not in Skopje. It is still so hot here.

September

Summer never ends. But Melentie changes so much. Inside, there is already a cosy room with boardgames in the corner. Ivan is in the middle of the "workshop". He is showing me tiny balls that he is making from clay. Inside, he is putting the calendula seeds. These will be perfect gifts for people who want to plant something in their gardens.

We are brainstorming what we can do to capture more warm moments in the yard before the cold comes. "Don't worry, there is still October", Ivan is laughing. Maybe we can do some collective ajvar-making? While the fig tree is sending its last scents to our noses, the smell of peppers is slowly spreading.

Soon summer will be slowly pushed away by autumn. And the fig tree will change its colors. It is going to be another season to remember. Sometimes in the yard, sometimes in the cosiness of inside. But in Melentie.

Ewelina Chańska



УЧЕЊЕ, СПОДЕЛУВАЊЕ И РАСТ

во Трансилванија

Петнаесетмина „еко-херои“, на 16 август тргнавме на патување за младинската размена „Eco Heroes Across Countries“ во Трансилванија, Романија. По 20-часовно возење со автобус исполнето со смеа, тајни фотографии и она што на шега го нарековме наши сопствени „симфонии на рчење“, конечно пристигнавме во малото село Извоаре.

Опкружен со шуми и планини, Извоаре нудеше прекрасни рурални пејзажи, прекрасно поврзани со природата, совршени за зближување на младите, со голем простор на отворено, каде што можевме да уживаме во групните активности. Природата беше навистина насекаде околу нас. Дури и повремено добивавме известувања на нашите телефони кои нè предупредуваа дека е забележана мечка во близина на нашето сместување и нè потсетуваа да не талкаме премногу далеку!

Дрвените планински куќички брзо станаа места за пријателство и смеа. Балконите беа полни со цвеќиња, лулашки стоеја во градината, а свежиот планински воздух го правеше секој момент надвор да се чувствуваме посебно. Во слободното време, често се собиравме пред куќите, разговаравме, игравме игри, слушавме музика и едноставно уживавме во меѓусебното друштво.

Еден од нашите најгорди мали моменти беше закачувањето на македонското знаме на горниот балкон од нашата куќичка.

Најблиската продавница беше оддалечена околу 4 км, па одењето таму стана авантура сама по себе; успеавме да направиме само неколку пешачења за безалкохолни пијалоци и грицки, што исто така значеше дека не потрошивме многу пари за време на размената.

Жените што работеа во кујната беа неверојатно љубезни и ни подготвуваа вкусни оброци. Не зборуваа англиски, што понекогаш водеше до многу смешни разговори со гестови и говор на телото. Некако, секогаш успеавме да комуницираме!

Вкусот на Македонија

Еден од важните моменти од размената беше Македонската културна вечер, кога ја претставивме нашата земја, нашата традиционална храна, танци и песни.

Наскоро, сите беа на нозе танцувајќи. Некои учесници ги знаеја чекорите, додека други сигурно не - но сепак се обидоа, а нивните срца танцуваа во нивниот радосен ритам!

Природа, авантура и тимска работа

Нашата најнезаборавна авантура беше пешачењето до езерото Зетеа. Двочасовното пешачење низ блиската шума беше малку заморно, но бевме добро подготвени со облека за пешачење, спакуван ручек и вода. По патот, уживавме во свежиот планински воздух и прекрасните пејзажи. Пливавме, возевме педалилки, игравме Лов на богатство и направивме безброј фотографии и видеа.

Од отпад до ритам

Најкреативните активности беа „Од отпад до ритам“. Откривме дека секојдневниот отпад може да се трансформира во нешто сосема друго: музички инструменти!

Направивме тапани, гитари и други инструменти од отпад за да создадеме вистинска музика. Формиравме свој бенд и свиревме користејќи ги инструментите што ги создадовме. Изненадувачки, звукот беше всушност неверојатен. Преку оваа активност, научивме дека нешто што нормално би се фрлило може да стане нешто корисно, па дури и пријатно.

И, секако, утринските „енерџајзери“ заслужуваат посебно спомнување! Тие секогаш беа забавен начин да се разбудиме, раздвижиме и да внесеме позитивна енергија во целата група пред да започне уште еден активен ден.

Додека не се сретнеме повторно

Секоја активност носеше радост, нова можност и инспирација, но можеби најпосебниот дел беше врската што ја создадовме едни со други за изненадувачки кратко време, која ќе остане со нас долго по завршувањето на размената.

Додека се збогувавме со нашите нови пријатели и организаторите, дома понесовме многу повеќе од сувенири. Ги понесовме лекциите што ги научивме, искуствата што ги споделивме и пријателствата што ги создадовме.

Оваа размена нè потсети дека промената започнува со нас - и се шири кога ја споделуваме со другите.

Горди сме на секој чекор што го направивме на нашето патување на учење.

Илина Миноска

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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