

**SCIENCE SHOP**  
**AT EHU**



**osun  
science  
shop**

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# OSUN SCIENCE SHOP GOALS AND PRACTICES



The OSUN Science Shop program collaborates with citizens, civil society organizations and public entities by integrating their questions and requests into academic courses, internships, student projects and thesis research at the university.

Thus, the goal of Science Shop is consistent with the mission of the European Humanities University — to support the development of civil society through quality education, promoting community values and facilitating timely response to challenges in social issues of today.

OSUN Science Shop is a matchmaker offering coordination and support in developing sustainable partnerships between academic community and civil society organizations. These collaborations serve the community partners as well as the University by developing opportunities for co-creation of knowledge, mutual learning and practice-oriented research

## HOW IT WORKS:

- 1) Research questions and topic requests are proposed by civil society organizations and public entities, based on their real needs and concerns.
- 2) Science Shop acts as an intermediary in facilitating partnership contacts between academia and community partners, providing coordination and support for all participants involved in cooperation.
- 3) After matchmaking and finding a fitting course, its academic practices and learning objectives are harmonized with the needs of the civic partner and the research project is formulated.
- 4) Projects requested by civil society organizations are carried out by students within academic courses, thus giving students an invaluable opportunity to connect their academic research with real-world current need and community concern.

Thus, carefully designed cooperation becomes viable for higher education and community beyond, developing real-world, impactful and society-targeted results.



# OSUN SCIENCE SHOP EHU CONTEXT



EHU has been in exile in Vilnius since 2005, after forced displacement by the Belarusian regime that found the mission of the university so threatening, it could not tolerate its presence. The educational standards of leading European and North-American universities were implemented at EHU to educate a new generation capable of leading Belarus away from the heritage of totalitarianism toward an open society. After its forced closure in Minsk, the University relocated to Vilnius, offering at first distance-learning courses, later developing full on-site teaching and learning programs.

The politically repressive situation in Belarus has been worsening ever since, leading up to the mass protests after yet another rigged presidential election in 2020. The wave of repressions against NGOs and educational initiatives in Belarus has been overwhelming, with hundreds of organizations outlawed and thousands of people arrested. Many organizations relocated and families fled. After February 2022, another wave of refugees fled from the surge of violence, this time in Ukraine. Vilnius has become a refuge city not only for Belarusians, but also Ukrainians and Russians fleeing from difficult conditions.



The university now operates in a multilingual environment, offering courses in Russian, Belarusian, English, as well as developing a network of collaborations with Lithuanian NGOs.

In these turbulent times, we found ways to build meaningful cooperation with Belarusian NGOs working in exile, as well as local civic society representatives interested in our mission.

During the Spring 2022 semester, OSUN Science Shop at EHU facilitated 6 projects with the participation of local civil society organizations, engaging 27 students and 4 faculty at EHU.



# OSUN SCIENCE SHOP THE PILOT YEAR AT EHU



The OSUN Science Shop program has been launched at EHU in partnership with [Central European University \(CEU\)](#) with the financial support of the [Open Society University Network \(OSUN\)](#) in the 2021/2022 academic year. The partnership connected the two academic institutions that have been exiled from their home countries but continue to support members of their respective civil society sectors. The OSUN Science Shop program aims:

- to strengthen ties between the academy and civic organizations in Belarus, Lithuania, Hungary and Austria;
- to research community initiatives in the context of current developments in civic engagement;
- to support engaged research, community-based teaching and experiential learning in the academy.

## At OSUN Science Shop, we offer:

- mediation and networking between civil society, students and faculty;
- organization of matchmaking fairs where partners formulate together topics for projects;
- academic support and expertise in real-life concerns of civil organizations;
- financial support.

The OSUN is a global network of educational institutions that integrates learning and the advancement of knowledge, promotes civic engagement on behalf of open societies, and expands access to higher education for underserved communities.



# OSUN SCIENCE SHOP THE TEAM



Flora Laszlo

Science Shop Director

CEU



Andras Martoni

Science Shop Manager

CEU



Kseniya Shtalenkova

Science Shop Manager

EHU



Natalya Mikhailova

Science Shop Coordinator

EHU

During the pilot year of the OSUN Science Shop, CEU and EHU engaged in a range of activities to implement the program. Following info-sessions targeting the university community and the local NGO landscape, we collected project ideas from faculty members and NGO representatives. The community requests from civic society organizations became the focus of student work in their courses.

The pilot phase continues into the following academic year 2022/23 and extends its cooperation to civil society actors across the region including Poland, Georgia where Belarusian exiles have relocated during the past years of oppression. We invite not only civil society initiatives, but also cultural and educational platforms, research centers interested in cooperation irrespective of their current location.

In June 2022, The results of the cooperation between CEU and EHU were presented at the University of Groningen during the workshop "Changing Role of Science Shops in a Politically Charged Environment" at the Living Knowledge international conference that brings together civic initiatives and universities according to the Science Shop model.

The workshop was dedicated to the problem of Science Shops operating in politically hostile environments where civil society actors are threatened existentially by political pressure, financial and legislative repercussions. The workshop paid specific attention to developing new adaptive strategies in order to stay true to the core mission of Science Shops in such environments.



# SCIENCE SHOP AT EHU PROJECTS SPRING 2022



## Project 1: Digital solutions for online citizenship

**Course:** Digital Technologies and Law

**Faculty:** [Inesa Stolper](#)

**Community partner:** [Meta-Belarus](#)

### Description of the project:

Together with Belarusian civil society organization “Meta-Belarus”, EHU students of the continuing education program “International Law and European Union Law” took the “Digital Technologies and Law” course led by Inessa Stolper. As part of the Science Shop project, students have researched legal solutions for an online government, specifically — legal aspects of smart contracts and decentralized methods of dispute resolution on the example of the system “Kleros”. The focus of the study was on feasibility and risks connected with smart contracts which are a convenient technological solution for protecting online the rights of signees. Students researched the decentralized system of dispute resolution in cases when smart-contracts were not properly executed. The research topic of private decentralized systems that became a very popular tool to litigate commercial issues is of key importance to the civil society organization that requested this research support.

This research will contribute to creating solutions for dealing with digital matters in society within a decentralized online court system.



According to the course faculty Inesa Stolper, “This Science Shop project *revived the whole academic course*. Through participation in the project, students had an opportunity to explore issues that arise in practice and apply their academic knowledge to *solve a “real life” problem*. It gave an impetus to think about theoretical issues *more deeply and critically*, as well as to work in the group and gain valuable experience in the field.





## Project 2: Research on psychological support for Belarusians exiles

**Course:** Methodology of Media Research

**Faculty:** [Andrei Vazyanau](#)

**Community partner:** [PsyVilnius](#)

### Description of the project:

Together with the Belarusian-Lithuanian civil society initiative "PsyVilnius", currently implementing a research on psychological problems of relocation, Maryia Shkumayeva, participant of the course "Methodology of media studies" led by Andrei Vazyanau within the BA program "Media and Communication", has researched the adaptation strategies and psychological needs of Belarusian exiles, as well as the availability, scope and effectiveness of psychological support. The student has collected data by conducting 10 interviews and polling 80 respondents to a questionnaire, subsequently processing and analyzing the results of this qualitative research. Also, a guide for qualitative interviews has been produced that can be used by the civil society organization in their work.

Maryia enthusiastically supports the continuation of the project during the next academic year: "This was my first research project of such a scope and importance. I plan to continue working with my research results during a summer school on digital media and social change, and would like to produce publication-ready material eventually. This Science Shop project **increased my interest in empirical research** and I want to continue and extend my work into inclusive research in Belarusian context of political repressions."

The course professor Andrei Vazyanau shared his experience: "I was especially pleased to participate in this format of collaboration between our students and public initiatives. This is not only because I myself combine research and activism, and also not only because communication with civil society is one of the priorities of EHU. **Today, social science simply cannot afford to remain in its bubble of academic ivory-tower remaining purely theoretical: society demands that every university responds to its requests and concerns. As I see it, the future belongs to such collaborations between universities and civic society.**"







### Project 3: Card game on gender inequality

**Course:** Final projects internship for the students of the BA program "Visual Design"

**Curators:** Kseniya Shtalenkova

**Community partner:** [Lygių galimybių plėtros centras](#)

#### Description of the project:

As part of their internship, EHU students of the BA program "Visual Design" Elizaveta Zhytkевич and Hloryia Sychyk assisted a Lithuanian civil society organization "Lygių galimybių plėtros centras" (Center for Equality Advancement) in preparing gender-neutral materials for a card game to be distributed in Lithuanian kindergartens. The intersection of gender inequality and disability has been researched and visualized by the students, the prototype has been tested in several kindergartens by the civil society organization in spring of 2022, with the final design materials produced and given to the civil society organization for use and distribution in kindergartens.





## Project 4: Social media marketing materials campaigning against stigmatization

**Course:** Final projects internship for the students of the BA program “Visual Design”

**Curators:** Kseniya Shtalenkova and Natalya Mikhailova

**Community partner:** [Rigra paramos fondas](#)

### Description of the project:

As part of their internship, EHU students of the BA program “Visual Design” Viktoriya Putsko and Dzmitry Kakhaniuk produced social media marketing and corporate identity design materials for a Lithuanian civil society organization “Rigra paramos fondas” (Rigra support fund) that provides help for marginalized social groups, specifically people with drug addictions and people living with HIV/AIDS. The civil society organization aims to address the need for behavioral change towards stigmatized segments of population. Students have researched the visual design elements that are conducive for positive change in perception and created visual characters to embody the values of help and understanding. Also, a complete package of social media marketing materials has been produced for the civil society organization to use in their outreach and communication campaigns.

## Project 5: System of Visual Communication for the “PsyVilnius” initiative

**Course:** Final projects internship for the students of the BA program “Visual Design”

**Curator:** Kseniya Shtalenkova

**Community partner:** [PsyVilnius](#)

### Description of the project:

In addition to the research on psychological support for Belarusian exiles in cooperation with the Belarusian-Lithuanian NGO “PsyVilnius”, EHU student of the BA program in Visual Design Alesia Shymanovich created a system of visual communication for the “PsyVilnius” initiative. The student’s project was focused on logo rebranding, as well as on designing the templates for information posts and announcements related to the content of the research results, including case studies and the activities aimed at psychological support provided by the initiative.

## Project 6: Research on minorities representations in Lithuanian media

**Course:** Media, communication, and discrimination

**Curators:** [Andrei Vazyanau](#)

**Community partner:** [Lietuvos žmogaus teisių centras](#)





### Description of the project:

Another request from a Lithuanian civil society organization was addressed within the course “Media, communication, and discrimination” led by Andrei Vazyanau for the BA program “Media and Communication”. Belarusian activist and EHU student Alina Pazdniakova and Kristina Rūkaitė from “Lietuvos žmogaus teisių centras” (Lithuanian Center for Human Rights) teamed up to find the answers.

Alina reflects on the idea of the project: «LGBTQ+ in Belarus constantly faced various manifestations of homophobia, transphobia and aggression in their direction: they are subjected to physical and psychological violence, social exclusion, aggressive condemnation. That’s why a lot of LGBTQ+ are forced to leave Belarus due to persecution, repression, and complete disregard for human rights. It is important for us to learn about the experience of people migrating to Lithuania in order **to learn how to help and support political refugees»**.

Kristina shares her experience of working with Alina: “It was refreshing to see Alina’s enthusiasm regarding our activities at the Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights. We agreed that it is important to understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ people from Belarus now living in Belarus **to advocate for better support for political refugees, as well as to contribute to the public discourse on the importance of democracy and the principles of human rights,** especially as we are currently campaigning for civil union law in Lithuania”.

## OSUN SCIENCE SHOP OUR PARTNERS



Operating from Vienna (Austria), our Science Shop partner CEU is a graduate-level international university with faculty and students from more than 100 countries engaging in interdisciplinary education, pursuing advanced scholarship, and addressing some of society’s most vexing problems. During the first pilot-year of Science Shop, 10 projects have been carried out during the 3 academic semesters in academic year 2021/22. Here are brief descriptions of some of them:

### COURSE IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Together with an educational initiative Jelenlet (Presence) of Jesuit Roma mission in Arlo, North-East Hungary, students organized and video-documented a two-day musical festival in the village. The project goal was to create a space that brings people and cultures together that would not have met otherwise, to shed light on the positive values of Roma culture and to show the importance of music and dance in intercultural communication and positive identity-building.





## **COURSE IN (MIS)PERFORMING WORLD POLITICS**

SEEK, a network organization that brings migrants' perspectives into policy discourses, needed support in designing a creative retreat for young migrant/refugee women through workshops and mentorship with the aim of providing a safe space for reflection on cultural taboos in their communities. Students designed community building activities and rituals, as well as a range of interactive exercises to facilitate creative expression in a diverse cultural, linguistic and personal backgrounds.

## **COURSE IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PRACTICE**

In collaboration with the Human Rights Education Team of Amnesty International Hungary, students worked to deliver recommendations for teacher training and human rights education workshops, as well as ways to improve efficiency and to develop assessment techniques. This blended course allows students to learn about educational development experientially, through engagement in applied research.

## **COURSE IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

The community partner Teach for Austria working towards education equality has requested assistance with engaging more youth from 10th district of Vienna in employment, education or training.



CEU Students organized three workshops in two disadvantaged schools to showcase different lines of career development for children, to strengthen their desire for further education and to promote equal opportunities regardless of the socio-economic background of parents.

## **COURSE IN FIELD RESEARCH AND QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

Amnesty International Austria has requested data on how to engage young people in human rights activities and what intersections can be created between youth and human rights in regards to communication, engagement and topics. Students have conducted 22 interviews with an interview guide of 21 questions, highlighting the strategies to attract young people and ways of outblancing low motivation by external determinants like socialization.

## **COURSE IN CULTURAL HERITAGE AND EVENT MANAGEMENT**

With the help of Teach for Austria working towards education equality, students worked with a school in 10th district of Vienna to engage children in dialogue about their cultural heritage through art. The goal was to learn together in a way that is empowering and different from elitist or monocultural ideas about what heritage is - and express this through the arts. Students organized two workshops with children's results and artworks exhibited later on CEU campus.





## INTERNSHIPS

Two internships were conducted at Asylum Coordination Austria where students researched the resettlement programs for vulnerable refugees from Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. Further two internships were conducted at SEEK feminist research network designing social media campaigns on climate migration, conducting interviews and writing policy briefs.

## THESIS WORK

In cooperation with GLOBAL 2000, MA student of Sociology and Anthropology has researched mainstream media debates about the environment, specifically the question how diversity issues play out in the activism of environmental organizations and whether barriers to greater support and participation can be removed. A PhD thesis on Political Science and Public Policy has researched the evaluation and impact assessment methods in organizational motivation, strategy and capacity. Through exploratory and experimental approaches, different Science Shops were interviewed with the focus on impact and development of impact assessment.



# OSUN SCIENCE SHOP CONCEPTS WE USE



## Experiential Learning

The process of learning by doing. Students engage in hands-on experiences and reflect on them. Their ability to connect theories and knowledge learned in the classroom to real-world situations is greatly strengthened.

## Engaged Learning

A type of learning in which learning objectives are accomplished by working on projects with a community partner (civil society organizations, active community members, etc.); classroom skills and knowledge are put into practice while supporting and serving one's community.

## Community-Based Teaching/Learning

Learning and education that incorporate the community and immediate environment into the teaching approach. It is done using many methods including working directly with the community via outreach and integrating the community into academic learning.





## **Civic Engagement**

Active participation by members of the university both students and staff in community improvement projects. Includes communities working together or individuals working alone with communities to promote and safeguard public values and make a positive change in the community.

## **Citizen Science**

Scientific research conducted, in whole or in part, by amateur (or nonprofessional) scientists. Outcomes are often advancements in scientific research by improving the scientific community's capacity, as well as increasing the public's understanding of science.

Participatory Action Research

Research in which members of the communities affected by the research participate and play an active role.

Utilizing collaborative reflection in order to broaden the understanding of all participants.



## OSUN SCIENCE SHOP PROGRAM

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