

Providing research support to **civil society**

OSUN Science Shop Projects

Academic Year 2023/24



Numbers AY 2023/24

Teach and learn to engage!



12 PROJECTS

accomplished with the help of "Science Shop"

3 FACULTY

expanded their teaching practice by engaging social partners

50+ STUDENTS

participated in coursework and extra-curricular projects

CYBERSECURITY

In an era where our lives are increasingly intertwined with technology, safeguarding our digital presence is paramount. Cybersecurity breaches can have devastating consequences, ranging from financial loss to reputational damage and even threats to national security. To navigate this digital landscape securely, it is crucial to equip oneself with the knowledge and tools to defend against cyber threats.

The course “ Law and Information Technologies” taught by Inessa Stolper for 1st-year students highlights cybersecurity, digital rights and freedoms, digital violence, antidiscrimination and inclusivity. With the help of Science Shop, a regional NGO offered mentorship for students during the fall semester on these issues.

More than 20 students worked in groups on 3 important projects:

- 1) Legislating online anonymity: Exploring the balance between the right to online anonymity and the need for security and law enforcement;
- 2) The use of facial recognition in social media and other apps. Inconsistencies in laws across countries, leading to challenges for organizations operating globally (on the examples of EU and US);
- 3) Artificial Intelligence and its use in the courtroom.

CYBERSECURITY

The key element in this cooperation between NGO and the university was the semester-long communication process where the NGO provided real-life current cases, informational support, reviewing the media landscape and mentoring students throughout the classes.



At the end of the semester, the NGO also offered an interactive workshop "Online Safety in conditions of extremism" where students explored various aspects of cybersecurity, covering topics such as: understanding cyber threat landscape, securing networks and devices, cyber hygiene.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

In the course "Transmedia Storytelling" taught by Veronika Furs, students learn about the narrative techniques that involve telling a story across multiple platforms and media formats, such as film, television, books, social media, video games. Transmedia storytelling creates a cohesive and immersive story experience that allows for audience engagement and interaction. Students experimented with their own scripts and stories of imaginary worlds, using different media (audio, video, text).

For this course, a Lithuanian NGO "[Mamos Linija](#)" was an ideal partner, as this mothers community association combines various maternity initiatives (mothers' chat groups, informational lectures and emotional support lines for mothers) to prepare women for everything they will face during pregnancy and after childbirth, as well as to educate maternal relatives on how to support mothers with compassion and understanding. Such emotional support lines address common issues like depression and anxiety that can occur during pregnancy or after birth, alleviating feelings of isolation, stress, and loneliness, leading to increased life satisfaction and fulfillment for mothers. The NGO also promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN



One student has prepared a script storyline, created an imaginary map of such a support community and visualized it with images on the website. With several more students of “Media and Communication” program, they intend to transform NGO’s official website into an educational platform and to continue the cooperation with the NGO in order to prepare educational video lectures, assist in holding events, write and publish posts and stories in Lithuanian and English for NGO social networks. The NGO now is interested in continuing the collaboration with EHU in order to animate the story and students of “Visual Design” program can test their animation skills with this future project.

INCLUSIVITY

In the course "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Media" taught by Elena larskaia-Smirnova, four students in their 2nd-year of "Media and Communications" program, carried out group and individual projects on the topics digital violence, antidiscrimination practices, equity, underrepresented groups. One of the aimed results was producing research, media, advertising videos, longreads to promote the partner NGO. The NGO works on enhancement of inclusivity in physical spaces and during events, development of social inclusion practices, as well as increase of resilience of vulnerable groups to external factors.

One of the projects dealt with the topic of representation of women in Belarusian media. Several media projects from Belarus were analyzed by the students, research of academic articles on gender representation in the media has been conducted, statistics reviewed, strategies of challenging or reinforcing stereotypes have been detected. Students also prepared recommendations on how to measure and evaluate diversity in media and how it affects the underrepresented themselves, specifically in entertainment and sports. The cooperation with the NGO continues beyond the semester, with students planning a publication together with the experts.

STRATEGIC GOALS



- "Advocacy of various values"
- "Enhancement of inclusivity in spaces and events"
- "Development of social inclusion"
- "Formation and increase of resilience of vulnerable groups to external factors"

DIVERSITY

Five students have volunteered for a Belarusian NGO that works on the development of an inclusive and tolerant society. The NGO experts publish textual materials continuously on their website and need assistance with advertising, design, attracting more visits. EHU students assisted them with a variety of tasks:

Three articles on the NGO website have been reworked into visual checklists. Visual checklists are more effective at communicating across language barriers or literacy levels - pictures, symbols, and diagrams can transcend language barriers, making the information accessible to a wider audience.

One student has managed the SEO campaign, learning in the process the management of analytics tools, tracking website's performance and traffic trends. As a result, the NGO has significantly improved its chances of appearing higher in search results which has led to more organic traffic directed towards the NGO's site.

More than 20 articles have been included in SEO strategy which has brought an uprise in 31% in website traffic from search which brings more than 1000 new visitors monthly and more than 1500 visits through organic searches.

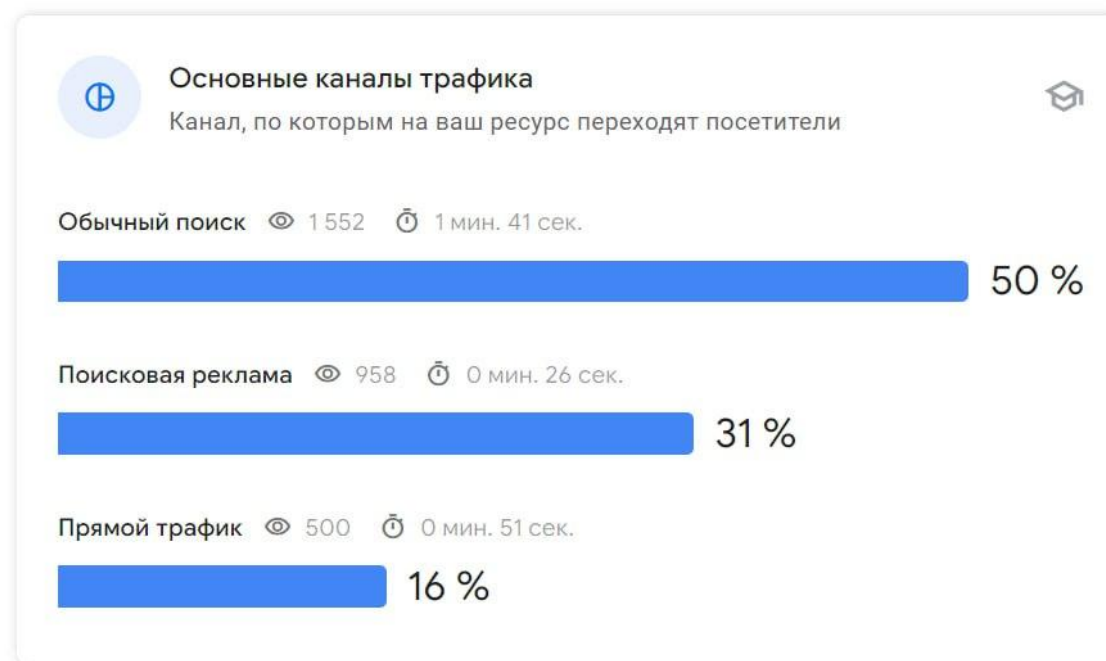
DIVERSITY

Additionally, the NGO offered participation for EHU students in educational webinars.

As one student has shared:

“The webinars were very interesting in that they revealed some important issues that I was not aware of until now. I also made some adjustments accordingly in the project, and it worked better”.

Как пользователи находят ваш сайт



ART AND SUSTAINABILITY

Continuing a successful collaboration with Science Shop from the previous academic year, five EHU students had their internships at [Vulica Brasil Institute of Art and Sustainability](#) (iVB) - an NGO that combines cultural action, sustainable urbanism, science, reactivation of public spaces, social responsibility.

Two students from Media and Communications were involved in SMM, two more students from Visual Design designed visuals for social networks, posters, films, and developed portfolio websites for artists from Vulica Brasil. One student has connected her BA thesis to the project, processing data from interviews with the artists, adding analytical research components. Additionally, she designed an audio guide of the murals in Minsk, also preparing articles on art for iVB.

URBAN GARDENING

Urban gardening and sustainable green initiatives in cities promote green spaces, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability within urban areas. Such practices also foster community involvement and engagement by bringing people together to grow food, beautify neighborhoods, and create shared green spaces. This promotes social interaction, cooperation, and a sense of ownership among residents.



That is why this topic has excited three students from the “Visual Design” program to volunteer at a Belarusian community initiative which for five years already has been successfully organizing planting events indoors and outdoors, upcycling swaps (books, interior decoration objects, arts and crafts supplies), masterclasses and workshops on clay modeling and pottery and many other initiatives that promote sustainable living.

URBAN GARDENING

The many events conducted by the NGO needed social media promotion and community cohesion activities, thus students were accompanying events with social media advertising campaigns, helped with participants registration, designed posters for online and offline, created printed certificates and postcards given to event participants, designed stickers and merchandise visuals, logos.



For the first time, the NGO could have social media reels, videos and stories, polls and questions for interactive engagement, musical accompaniment for each post. Also offline locally, students offered their assistance during the events and with the logistics of organizing. This cooperation has been heart-warming and very engaging for both students and the community initiative members.

YOUTH EDUCATION

[Heta Baza](#), a youth educational initiative from Belarus, develops and implements projects and educational campaigns to educate Belarusian youth both within Belarus and abroad. The initiative promotes democratic culture, activism and social engagement, as well as solidarity and mutual assistance in order to raise awareness and foster informed and engaged citizens.



Four 4th-year students from the Visual Design program have volunteered to assist the social initiative and developed two brand books with accurate and up-to-date graphic and design proposals for adapting the graphic style to social networks. A consistent style is important because it promotes brand recognition, emphasizes the purpose and message of the account, provides consistency in visual presentation, increases engagement audience, and improves the display of posts in the social media algorithms.

YOUTH EDUCATION

In addition, students produced a series of videos on human rights. The videos have been published in Heta Baza social networks [Instagram](#) | [TikTok](#). Also, prints for T-shirts were created on human rights topics and national identity.

Palina Shaiko, a representative of Heta Baza shares:

“For us, participation in the EHU Science Shop program was very important and productive. We highly value the results of our cooperation, the involvement of everyone in the process, especially the students.”



HUMANITARIAN AID

[SpivDiia](#) is a nationwide Ukrainian charitable foundation with an established network of regional support centers that collects, verifies and matches requests of war-affected and vulnerable Ukrainian citizens with support opportunities, uniting the efforts of volunteers, businesses, donors, government and local authorities. The network is sustainable thanks to volunteers who process applications, pack and distribute humanitarian aid in the Hubs.

Two EHU students from Visual Design program 4th year have also volunteered with SpivDiia, helping the NGO to rethink visual communication, conduct an analysis and offer improvements, suggest new concepts for social networks visual identity. The NGO needed assistance to answer the following questions: How to convey the message of mutual aid using visuals? How to attract the attention of the audience? How could we improve our visual style? What successful international practices are there that we could adopt?



СПІВ
ДІЯ

HUMANITARIAN AID

In addition to these recommendations on SM channels design, students also designed postcards which SpivDiia will include in kits with humanitarian aid, also to encourage helping others with the message "How can I help someone else?" or "10 ways to help those who need it." Creating posters and postcards that attract people to use NGO's services or donate helps the organization's sustainability and allows for a wider distribution of their services.

Будьте тими змінами,
які хочете бачити в
нашій Україні



SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH

Another example of a very effective research collaboration was the project with a Belarusian activist and researcher Mikhail Volchak who has over 20 years of experience in researching social movements and communities. Teaching a course “Practice of Social Engineering” and writing a book on characteristics of social movements and communities, Mikhail’s initiative needed research assistance. This has provided an excellent opportunity for a student of “World Politics and Economics” program to practice his skills gained from courses on qualitative and quantitative research methods in the social sciences. He assisted Mikhail with preparing, conducting and analyzing interviews.



The research project aimed at examining communities and civil movements to understand what elements they have in common, what are their unique characteristics, how they interact with each other, and what their life cycles are. Additional research focus sought to clarify whether the state limits or stimulates the development of communities/civil society, with what tools and what are the general trends in public policy regarding communities? This research scope offered an excellent opportunity to hone skills in collecting data, systematizing it, analyzing and interpreting it.

ART RESIDENCE

Continuing collaboration from the previous academic year, Science Shop has involved another 3rd-year student of Visual Design with the NGO “[The Point](#)” in Visaginas, Lithuania. “The Point” organizes youth work, art residency programs for artists, interactive museum environments, with the aim to diversify the cultural life in the local community by creating a platform for both professional and amateur artists to connect, exchange skills, and create new artistic projects. To promote their activities, the NGO needed a logo, visual design for merchandise and business cards. All this was designed as part of an internship by the student. While design was created, the history of the town and the NGO have been taken into account, as well as their vision and future plans, all this to reflect it visually in the design.

Now the NGO has these valuable networking tools to promote their programs, events, campaigns, and initiatives, to establish connections, and attract potential donors or partners, to facilitate future collaborations or fundraising opportunities. It shows that the NGO values its brand image and strives to present itself in a polished and professional manner, which can attract supporters and partners.



ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

The NGO "[The LGBT life](#)" has conducted at EHU a project "Stop! Look around! Come to your senses!" which aims at combating discrimination and homophobia, to create awareness and positive impact in society, to create a safe and inclusive space where every person, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or other characteristics, felt respected and accepted. The project strives to promote a culture of tolerance, to develop empathy and educate society about the importance of respect towards differences. The project has involved 13 students from "Media and Communications" and "Visual Design" programs, one of them also designing a poster for the campaign.

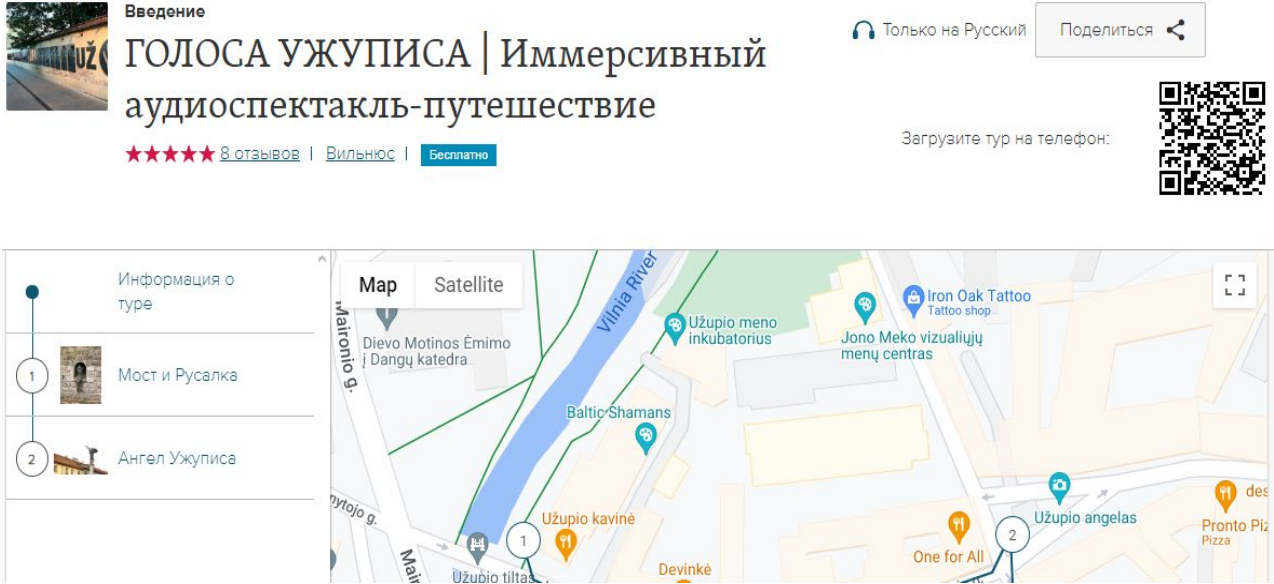
As part of the project and during its implementation, 4 lectures for students were held with a total of 43 students attending. Also, a survey "Inclusion and tolerance in the university community" was conducted among all university students in order to measure and evaluate the level of inclusivity and tolerance in the university community among EHU students, with the goal of creating a more open and supportive environment for all members of the university community. 72 University students took part in the survey and subsequent presentation of results has been held.



CULTURAL HERITAGE

One of the most creative projects this year has been the creation of a guide in the form of an audio play “Voices of Užupis”. The 40-min long audio play takes the listener into an immersive experience of the culturally vibrant Vilnius district.

Besides engaging storytelling, the audio guide features important anecdotes and information about landmarks and local history. This enriches the visitor experience, educates tourists about Užupis, and enhances appreciation for the historical and cultural significance of the neighbourhood.



Введение

ГОЛОСА УЖУПИСА | Иммерсивный аудиоспектакль-путешествие

★★★★★ 8 отзывов | Вильнюс | Бесплатно

Только на Русский | Поделиться

Загрузите тур на телефон:

Информация о туре

- 1 Мост и Русалка
- 2 Ангел Ужуписа

Map Satellite

Dievo Motinos Ėmimo į Danguį katedra

Vilnia River

Baltic Shamans

Užupio meno inkubatorius

Iron Oak Tattoo Tattoo shop

Jono Meko vizualiųjų menų centras

Užupio kavinė

Užupio tiltas

Devinkė

Užupio angelas

One for All

Pronto Piz Pizza



CULTURAL HERITAGE

The unique engaging element of the guide is that while exploring this neighborhood, the visitors learn essential elements of its history in a very interactive and self-reflexive manner, paying attention to the voices and the rhythm of the city, to one's perceptions and emotions while exploring it. Returning the attention of the listeners to themselves allows for frequent switching between exploring and observing the city - and us in it. Such immersive experience connects us with the city, making the urban situatedness and relationship more noticeably visible.

The MA student Ekaterina Samotei wrote the script for the audio play, recruited a sound engineer and voice actors, organized the media production and translation into English. The guide has been published online and further research on the topic is explored by the student in her MA thesis "Immersive practices as a tool for the actualization of cultural heritage".



BROADENING OF STUDENTS' CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

In addition to supporting projects aimed at engaging with external communities, OSUN Science Shop at EHU also supports student creative activities that support broader engagement within the university community. During 2024, Science Shop supported printing of two comics created by graduating seniors: 'The Gates of the Law' by Alexei Nikolaenko, based on Franz Kafka's parable of the same name, and 'Urban Legends' by Alix Sterina, a series of photo-fiction stories. In addition, Science Shop also supported the development of an IT project where students developed an app for managing university schedules, which will allow for efficient planning of academic activities and increase student involvement in organisational activities, contributing to the strengthening of horizontal ties within the university.



BROADENING OF STUDENTS' CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

"When I held the first printed copies of my photo comic in my hands, it was like a small miracle. Thanks to the support of OSUN Science Shop, my project has taken on a new life: some of the books are now in the library for others to see and read. I've sent a few to my classmates at Bard College, and I'm taking a couple more to an exhibition in France. For me, it's more than just a print - it's an opportunity to share a story that means a lot to me. This project has become one of the highlights of my portfolio, and without this help it would still be just a file on my computer. In fact, no one has supported me as much with actual actions as OSUN, for which I will be grateful to this organisation and all its members forever."



Alix Sterina, a graduating senior of "Media and Communication" BA programme



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