

elf

2017

2019



Resilient Society / Rethinking Europe / Public Policy Analysis / Active Citizens
Fund

Sandra Adomavičiūtė, Director of The Open Lithuania Foundation

In 2017 the Open Lithuania Foundation (the OLF) renewed its activity as an independent non-governmental organisation with the aim to further the development of an open, democratic civil society promoting European values. According to Professor Irena Veisaitė, the implementation of the civil society idea is an endless process "as is a task of Sisyphus to roll a great stone incessantly."

The OLF fulfils its mission through the following activities:

- the targeted support to the initiatives and organisations that promote and contribute to the ideal of a more open society.
- the implementation of educational and research projects, the advocacy for the strengthening and sustainability of civil society organisations.

Since its establishment, the Foundation has been aiming to contribute to the modernisation of civil society structures in Lithuania, focusing on all regions of Lithuania, searching for new ideas and initiatives that could help move closer to the ideal. Such a modus operandi does not change - activities are being initiated and institutions are being established in response to specific needs.

The key achievements of the OLF since its re-establishment have been: setting up and funding the think-tank The Vilnius Institute of Policy Analysis, initiating, in cooperation with the partners, the democracy festival "Būtent!" in Lithuania, supporting the regional organisations that operate in the fields of democracy, citizenship and enable socially vulnerable groups. The OLF together with other non-governmental organisations has successfully advocated for the inclusion of the NGO Fund in the Law on the Development of Non-Governmental Organizations, provided financial and creative opportunities for the academic youth to participate in the international summer camps for young intellectuals.

The OLF strives to become a model of an open organisation aiming to achieve the highest transparency and accountability standards and seeking dialogue with different groups of society. The Foundation operates publicly, avoids bureaucracy and is open to ideas and suggestions.

A long-term ambitions of the OLF:

- Support non-governmental organisations and local activists to ensure a higher quality of democracy, in view of the major socio-political challenges.
- Become a sustainable and independent organisation that is able to raise funds and allocate them to organisations, pilot breakthrough initiatives and educational activities of the Foundation.

The priorities for the coming years:

- Improve the quality of democracy through the support for civic initiatives that promote accountability of institutions and strive for social justice.
- Strengthen the role of the civil society organisations in public life through targeted support for organisations and capacity building.
- Foster active citizenship through new pilot forms of participation.

The OLF was founded by George Soros, the US financier and one of the greatest philanthropists promoting democracy, who granted over EUR 60 million to Lithuania. The founder members of the re-established Open Lithuania Foundation are a Long-term Head of the Foundation Prof. Dr. Irena Veisaitė, Dr. Kęstutis K.Girnius, Dr. Rūta Kačkutė, Skirmantė Anna Kondratas and Krzysztof Czyzewski.

The Council of the Open Lithuania Foundation is elected for a term of 3 years and contributes to the formation of the priority axes and strategies. Since 2017 the OLF has been an independent organisation which no longer forms a part of the official Open Society Foundation network but still cooperates with other foundations and institutions promoting the idea of an open society, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, and seeks new ideas and experiences.

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The OLF is an incubator of the Lithuanian non-governmental sector, which launched, supported and implemented numerous initiatives of a high societal value.

Gediminas Almantas, the Chairman of OLF



Resilient society

I. The capacity building and advocacy of the civil society - NGOs, civil society organisations and active citizens.

The Active Citizens Fund

The OLF together with its partners OSFL Projects and Geri Norai LT became a Fund Operator of the Active Citizens Fund (ACF) in Lithuania financed by the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism, which is probably the only systematic financial support provided to the NGO sector in Lithuania. The ACF Program aims to build a strong and active civil society and to empower vulnerable groups of society.



During 2019



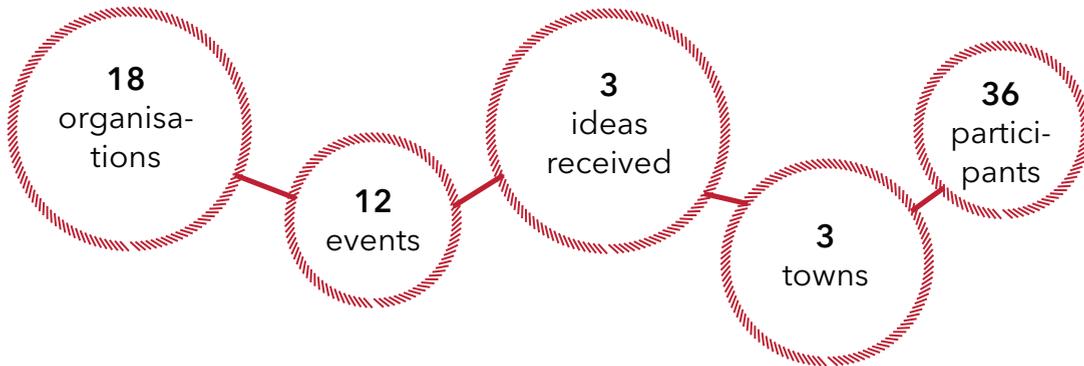


The partnership with the Open Lithuania Foundation means a challenge, a friendship, self-development, a victory over stage fright, a personal fulfilment, a heightened sense of self-worth to me. I am happy to be a partner of the OLF.

Regina Veržbickienė, the Community for the Care of People with Intellectual Disabilities "Viltis", Vilnius branch

Competition for initiatives "Active Communities in Regions"

The competition for non-governmental and community organisations inviting ideas on one's own city/district/community took place in Elektrėnai, Šalčininkai and Kėdainiai district municipalities.



Social leaders in regions

A targeted, continuous strategy for empowering active citizen groups in regions.



A cooperation with active citizen groups has been established in Širvintos and Kėdainiai.



A targeted funding and methodological support have been provided to the initiatives by the above-mentioned groups promoting participation in the decision-making and to the joint community initiatives aiming at generating political and social changes.



11 meetings and trainings



The members of the Association "Sveiki Kėdainiai" and active members of Kėdainiai community gathered together to implement the project "A Resilient Society. Kėdainiai" and organised a number of public events. They are continuing their active efforts.



Discussion in Kėdainiai "Good Life in Lithuanian Regions" ("Geras gyvenimas LT regionuose").



The partnership with the OLF is a pleasant experience of shifting from I to WE TOGETHER.

Henrikas Vaicekauskas, Head of Kėdainiai Education Support Service

Advocacy

To strengthen the role of non-governmental organisations and enhance their opportunities to participate in the public life, the OLF submits proposals and comments to the appropriate authorities of the Republic of Lithuania.

2

Meetings with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania and the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania

4

Participating in the sittings of Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania concerning the NGO Fund

4

Raising the following issues with the authorities: the non-compliance with the international human rights standards or a negative public discourse towards human rights

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Developed product: a feasibility study "The Agency for the Civil Society Development" on the funding of non-governmental sector from the State budget was prepared by the OLF in cooperation with **11** non-governmental organisations

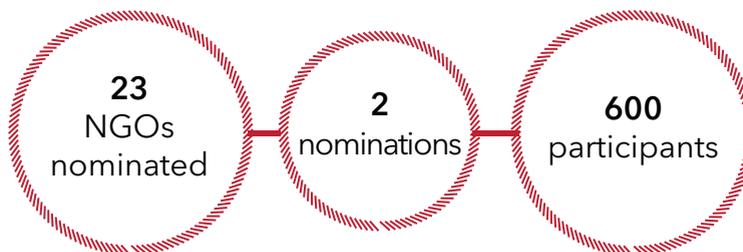


Support for human rights

Cooperation with the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and with the National Equality and Diversity Forum that award Oscar awards of human rights. The National Equality and Diversity Awards are presented in eight categories: The Gender Equality, The Overcoming Obstacles, Rainbow Appreciation (LGBT* equality), The Open Society Citizen, "The Best Age - My Age", The Nations Dialogue, The Diversity of Religions and Beliefs, The Breakthrough of the Year.

The National Equality and Diversity Awards

The Open Society Citizen Award is presented by the OLF in recognition of the courageous fostering of democratic values in one's business, social or public environment.



We greatly appreciate the long-term contribution of the Open Lithuania Foundation to organising The National Equality and Diversity Awards. We would not be here today without your support.

Tomas Vytautas Raskevičius, Head of the Equal Opportunities Mainstreaming Division

The National Forum on Human Rights

Cooperation with the National Forum on Human Rights, which brings together the public on the International Human Rights Day to discuss what could be done to make Lithuania a good place to live for people, despite the differences. The OLF allocates financial support to the Forum and contributes to the organisation of discussions. The OLF, in cooperation with the students of the Department of Graphics of the Vilnius University Kaunas Faculty, presented the exhibition of posters on human rights at the Forum.

“

A partnership with the Open Lithuania Foundation presents us and our students with an opportunity to contribute to raising and addressing relevant issues on the national and European level; to strengthen our citizenship; and to better understand our place and role in a mature civil society. It presents us the opportunity to make our work and efforts purposeful. It presents us the opportunity to develop, as well as the opportunity to cooperate with those who are genuinely interested in what values we proclaim and promote.

Andrejus Repovas, The Department of Graphics of the Art Academy Kaunas Faculty



II. In search for a dialogue with public

The festival of discussions "Būtent!"

The festival is a place where active citizens and people from the areas of business, academia, NGOs and politics meet to discuss important topics. Initiated in 2017, the festival „Būtent!“ is an open, non-political and free event, which aims to promote the culture of discussions and attentive listening, tolerance for different views, civic engagement and to improve the quality of decisions of high societal relevance. The OLF is one of the initiators and organisers of the festival that explores social topics in its discussions, provides space for NGOs to organise their discussions and addresses inconvenient questions.

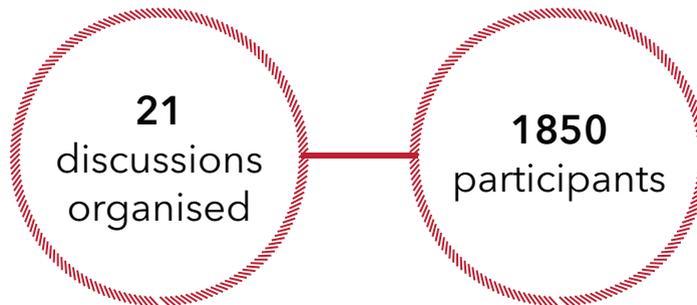


The cooperation with the OLF served as a significant starting point for the festival "Būtent!" and as an important ground to believe that the support will be ensured and that this game is worth the candle.

Šarūnas Frolenko, the Organiser of the Festival and the Manager of the Programme

Discussion at the OLF's

With a view to impacting favourably on the changing idea of Europe and to developing concept of European values, the debates among intellectuals are organised, conceptual insights are provided, a culture of dialogue is fostered.



Participants from Lithuania: A. Ažubalis, Assoc. Prof. K. Šliavaitė, Assoc. Prof. L. Vaicekauskienė, Prof. Dr. M. Ališauskienė, Assoc. Prof. A. Pukšto, Prof. Dr. E. Račius, B. Sabatauskaitė, Dr. D. Baronas, V. Sinica, Prof. Dr. D. Leinartė, Dr. M. Puidokas, U. Albert, Prof. Dr. A. Bumblauskas, A. Zimaitis, P. Gritėnas, Prof. Dr. V. Landsbergis, R. Zemkauskas, Prof. Dr. Irena Veisaitė, Dr. A. Švedas, Dr. A. Bielinis, M. Mikutavičius, Dr. N. Milerius, A. Pranckevičius, I. Šimonytė, V. Jauniškis, D. Puslys

Participants from other countries: C. Leggewie, S. Medvedev, U. P. Hallberg, I. Krastev, Prof. Dr. K. Segbers Prof. T. H. Eriksen, Prof. E. Damanska, K. Zielinska, Prof. Dr. A. Mencwel

Discussions in regions

The aim of discussions is to strengthen the civil society organisations, bring together individuals and informal groups and to take up the running in their local community or town.



4 satirical discussions organised on the future prospects of Lithuania and Europe in the districts of Tauragė, Alytus, Švenčioniai, Kėdainiai



500 spectators



Participants: M. Stonkus, G. Savickas, D. Puslys, H. Mackevičius, A. Zimaitis, P. Gritėnas

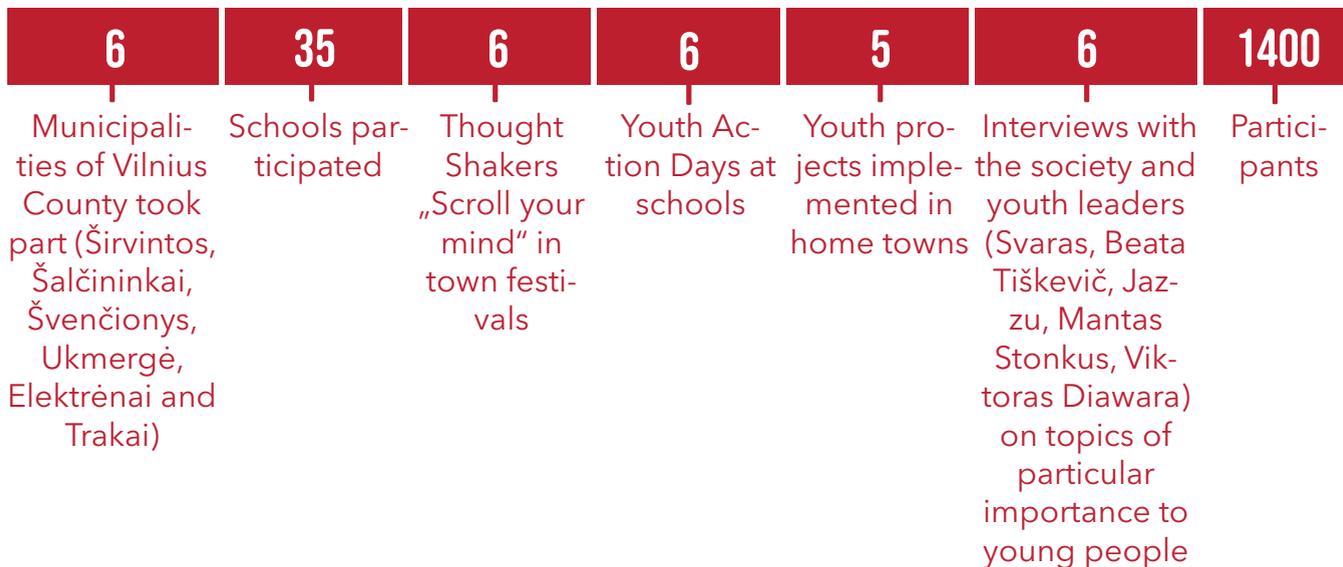


We are very pleased to be a part of the Open Lithuania Foundation's projects that ensure the continuation of the activities with young people and non-governmental organisations in our town.

Neringa Pulauskienė, the Youth Affairs Coordinator at the Education, Culture and Sports Department, of Elektrėnai Municipality

III. Development of critical thinking skills, education

Cooperating with the civil society organisations and young people in their regions, building their capacities and supporting their activities.



Media Literacy Programme

In cooperation with The Vilnius Institute of Policy Analysis a programme has been developed enabling students and senior citizens to identify fake news and propaganda. A methodology of lesson planning has been developed and presented to schools. It will allow teachers to incorporate critical thinking into their curricula.

PRODUCTS

6 lesson planning methods,
1 critical thinking index test,
1 interactive citizenship
knowledge test

ONLINE

The interactive citizenship
knowledge test was placed
online and viewed **76 592**
times

EDUCATION

Students, teachers, non-formal education educators of **5** schools (with national minority language of instruction), students of the universities of the third age and users of public libraries from South Eastern Lithuania developed their critical thinking skills

BROADCASTINGS

2 discussions on the function of disinformation and the role of media in spreading and exposing it were live broadcasted from Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania

PARTICIPANTS

Broadcastings were viewed in **200** libraries in Lithuania. **649** participants took part

Youth Summer Academy "Reading the Other"

It aims to mobilize and empower the community of young active thinkers and promote their texts, opinions and worldviews with a view to create a culture of youth activism and civic participation in the country, to form a novel approach or provide solutions to problems.

3

3 Youth Summer Academies were organised together with Borderland foundation in Krasnogruda (Poland) and Šeteniai (Kėdainiai district). The Academies were dedicated to the reading of texts of Leonidas Donskis and Zygmunt Bauman, Leszek Kołakowski, Simone Weil and Lev Shestov

21

21 young people from Lithuania and 36 from Ukraine and the Czech Republic had an opportunity to participate in discussions with Prof. T. Snyder, Prof. M. Shore, Prof. K. Czyzewski, Prof. Y. Hrycak, Prof. E. Aleksandravičius

11

Participants produced 11 analytical texts



A partnership with the Open Lithuania Foundation gave me an opportunity to foster the intercultural dialogue, analyse the fragility of freedom through the intellectual approach and uphold democratic values. The Youth Summer Academy widened the learning and friendship horizons.

Vytautas Starikovičius, Cultural historian, Ph.D. student at the Vilnius University Faculty of History



Established in 2017, The Vilnius Institute of Policy Analysis implements Good Governance, Media and Democracy, European Security Programmes.



Analysts and associate experts analyse political and civic issues, address inconvenient questions, carry out evidence-based analysis and propose solutions to improve political process.



www.vilniusinstitute.lt/en/



For me, the partnership with the Open Lithuania Foundation means like-minded partners with whom we strive for shared ideals.

Donatas Puslys, Head of Media Programme, The Vilnius Institute of Policy Analysis

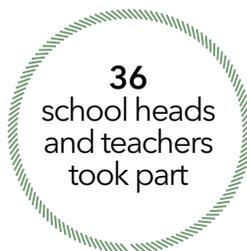


Rethinking Europe

I. International Educational Projects

Baltic Regional Summer Academy

Baltic Regional Summer Academy was organised in cooperation with the Lithuanian Ministry of Education, Science and Sports and the European Wergeland Centre (Norway) in order to provide the opportunity for the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian schools to build the capacity for fostering an inclusive and democratic culture in their schools. Teams prepared projects on the development of the democratic culture in their schools to be implemented during 2019-20.



36
school heads
and teachers
took part

"Democracy fitness" workshop for trainers

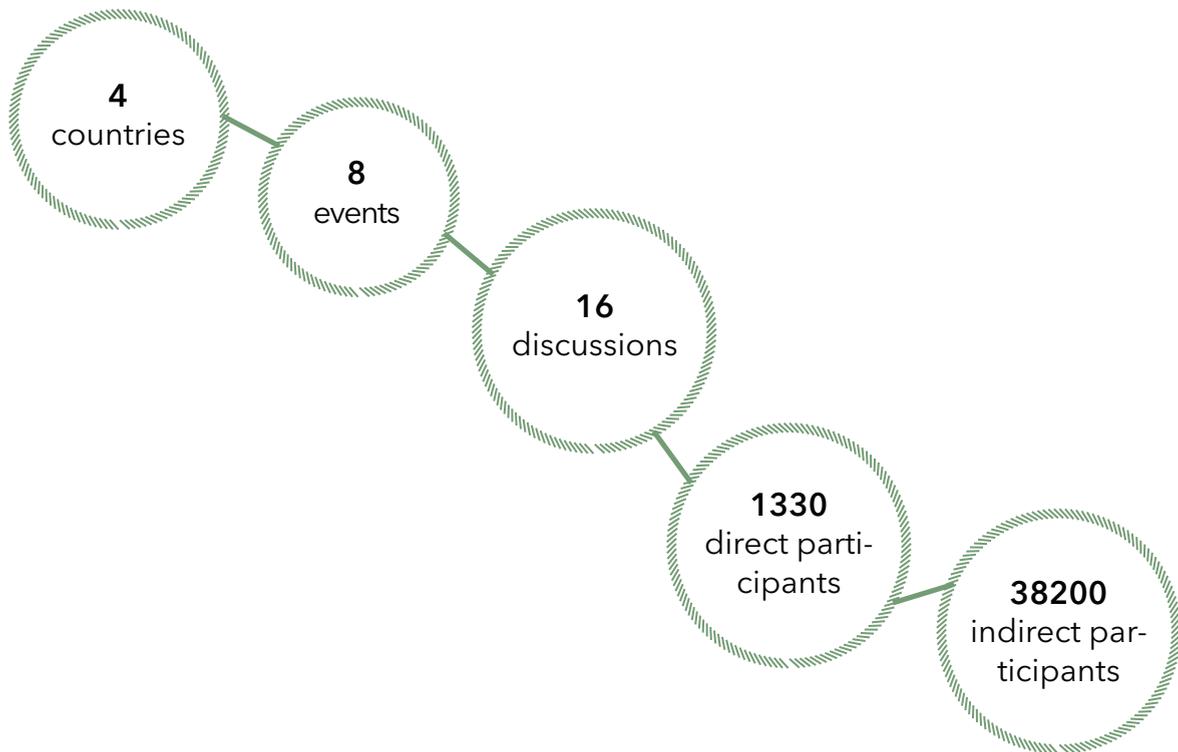
A workshop "Democracy fitness" was organised together with partners from Denmark and Estonia and financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Lithuania. Its aim was to improve important democracy and active participation skills.



30
trainers from
Lithuania and
Estonia

European Solutions Lab

To increase interest in the EU politics and strengthen traditions of the respectful public discussion public debates were organised and good practices were shared in cooperation with the Open Estonian foundation, the Open Society Foundation DOTS and the partner from Brussels, Jubel during discussion festivals. The main topics of the discussions organised in Lithuania included the engagement of citizens into the policy-making processes and the future of Europe, as well as the Citizens' Assembly model introduced by the guests from Poland (Dr. M. Gerwin) and Ireland (N. O'Connell).



II. Research projects

Rethinking Europe: The significance of 1989 for today

Study visits have been organised in Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Hungary to explore the reasons of diminishing civic and political engagement and the extent to which they are related to the historical circumstances formed by the fall of the Berlin Wall.

A project "Rethinking the Democratic Future: Lessons from the 20th Century" was implemented together with the project partners Res Publica Foundation (Poland) and Jan Nowak-Jezioranski College of Eastern Europe (Poland), as well as with the information partners such as magazine New Eastern Europe and the internet portal Visegrad Insight.



Participants: Adam Reichardt, Editor in Chief of the magazine New Eastern Europe, (Poland)
Wojciech Przybylski, Editor-in-chief of Visegrad Insight and President of Board at the Res Publica Foundation,
Prof. James Mark and Dr. Tobias Rupprecht, University of Exeter, (the authors of "1989: A Global History of Eastern Europe", Cambridge University Press, 2019).



A case study have been prepared based on the material collected during the study visits.

Transition dialogue. Dealing with change in democratic ways

Lithuania and Europe are marking the thirty-year anniversary since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The project aims to analyse the public discourse on the transition period (the last decade of the 20th century) and teaching of transition. The project partners - non-governmental organisations in Germany, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Croatia, Ukraine and Russia - will organise annual public events dedicated to the transition period. The aim of these events will be to delve into the diversity of views, interpretations, and experiences. School curricula and education tools will also be analysed to have a better understanding of how the transition period is presented in the general education context and to identify good practices.

EVENT

The event was organised for history and civic education teachers and history students. "Deconstructing 1990s in MO Museum"

25 PARTICIPANTS

from 4 Lithuanian towns visited the exhibition "The Origin of Species: 1990s DNA" and took part in the discussion on the images and stereotypes of Lithuania in 1990s that prevail in the society and on the importance of education in the process of rethinking the transition in Lithuania

PUBLICATIONS

A publication including recommendations and valuable didactic practices will be prepared based on the analysis of history and civic education textbooks



Networking and cooperation

The OLF is a formal member of networks and associations of international organisations (CIVICUS, Community of Democracies, OSEN).

- With public authorities: the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of National Defense, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour

with universities: Vytautas Magnus University, Vilnius Academy of Arts, Vilnius University, Vilnius University Institute of International and Political Science;

with other institutions and organisations: Goethes Institute, Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Lithuania, British Council, PAFF, embassies (USA's, British, Finnish, Latvian, Estonian, etc.), NGOs, the National Forum on Human Rights, the National equality and diversity forum

- EEA and Norway Financial Mechanisms Office (FMO), OECD, Central European university; ELLA fund

 **Belgium:** JUBEL – European conversation Festival

 **Bulgaria:** Sofia Platform

 **Canada:** Canadian Council for International Co-operation

 **Denmark:** Demokraticenen, SPARK

 **Estonia:** Open Estonian foundation, Neno, Estonian Institute for Human Rights, the Ministry of Education and Research

 **Ireland:** European Movement

 **Latvia:** Civic Alliance, Latvian Rural Forum, Foundation for an Open Society DOTS, National Education Development Centre, Ministry of Education and Science

 **Norway:** European Wergeland Centre, Norwegian Helsinki committee, Norwegian MFA

 **Poland:** Stefan Batory foundation, Borderland foundation, Polish American Freedom foundation, Sopot Development Initiative, Education for Democracy foundation, Leaders of Change foundation, Stoznia, Center for Citizenship Education, Res Publica Fond, Jan Nowak-Jezioranski College of Eastern Europe

 **Romania:** Civil Society Development Foundation

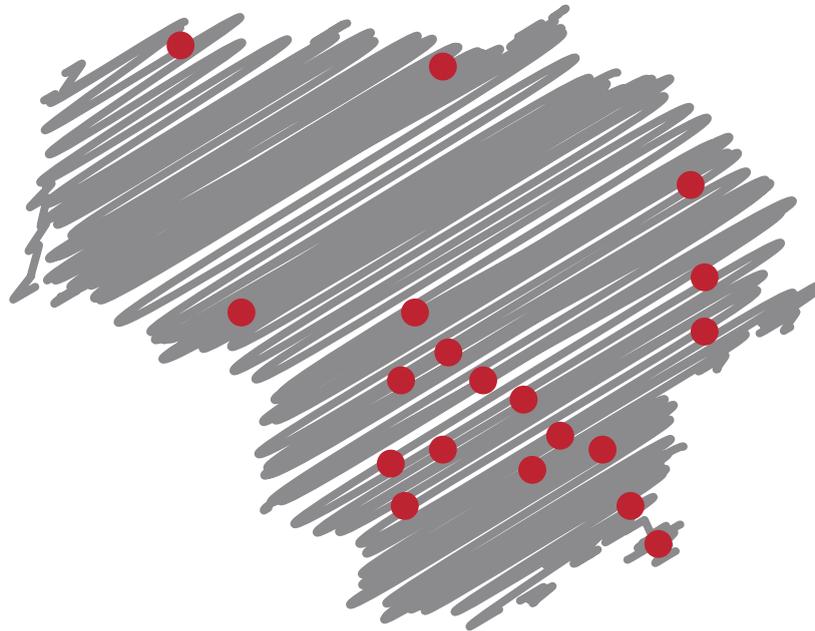
 **Ukraine:** International Renaissance foundation, Congress of Cultural Activists, Association of Active Citizens

 **the USA:** Baltic American freedom foundation, NED, Freedom House, United States Holocaust Memorial museum

 **Germany:** DRA e.V.

 **Croatia:** Ivo Pilar Institute

 **Russia:** Permer Centre for Civic Education and Human Rights



Šalčininkai

Vilnius

Švenčionys

Trakai

Širvintos

Elektrėnai

Kėdainiai

Tauragė

Alytus

Kaunas

Skuodas

Ignalina

Joniškis

Birštonas

Dieveniškės

Lentvaris

Vievis

Švenčionėliai

Prienai

Ukmergė



Norway

Iceland

Liechtenstein

Belgium

Bulgaria

Canada

Denmark

Estonia

Ireland

Latvia

Poland

Ukraine

USA

Germany

Russia

Croatia

Romania

