

EMPOWERED



What should we know when travelling to another country?

When wanting to travel, there are numerous things to do and consider prior to the actual journey. First, we have to choose to which destination do we want to travel, because the conditions vary from country to country. If we choose some EU destination as us, the EU citizens, things will be much easier for us. If we choose destination out of EU and out of Schengen zone, you will need to plan your journey long ahead and more complications will be likely to happen.



To understand things better, I am going to use some concrete examples. If I, as a Slovak citizenship, decide to travel to Cyprus, I will not have much to worry about. Why? Because both my country, and my destination are part of the EU. Both countries are also part of the Eurozone, which means I will not have to worry about currency exchange. I do not have to worry about my passport being expired because I only need my ID card to cross the border. I do not need to fill in any declaration of goods before entering the other country, I do not have to worry about crossing never-ending customs at the airport and not even about managing Visa. If I even decided to stay in one of the EU countries and live there, I have every right to do so. In my opinion, that is very exciting. We are flexible, I may find a cheap flight ticket to Italy for little money, so I buy it and the other day I fly. I enter new country, new culture, I hear every language but

not mine in the background. I am in a completely different world, but I am still considered and treated as a local.

I pay with the same



currency, I have the right for the healthcare in that country, I even have the right to decide and live there. And even now, during the COVID-19 situation we have another benefit, the EU Green pass, so when we choose the vaccine carefully, we can travel across the EU without having to undergo a test.

On the other hand, if I decide to a country which is outside the EU, as well as outside the Schengen zone, I will need to take care of all the things I mentioned in the previous example. First of all, I will need a valid passport, a Visa depending on how many days I will be staying which I will have to pay for, a foreign currency which that country is using, some special health insurance, declaration of goods I am bringing in the foreign country and very likely also a PCR test or maybe even having to undergo a mandatory quarantine for certain amount of time.

European Union made travelling a lot easier for us, which we should be thankful for. Spontaneous trips within the partner countries have never been easier. If you decide to travel outside the EU, you will have to take care of much more things, but the journey will be still worth it!

Do not forget to book your journey ahead to be able to manage every important step in time. Have a safe journey!

Covid-19 policies and their impact on human rights in Europe



Covid-19 pandemic thrived on pre-existing human rights deficits. Today, we know that the high death toll in Europe was directly linked to the high rate of institutionalization. Yet, for many years, human rights bodies have been calling on States to transition to family and community-based care, a call that went often unheard; in some countries, the sector of institutional care actually expanded significantly. We need a fundamental shift in our interaction with older persons, away from paternalistic and ageist approaches.

Another pre-existing human rights gap was the insufficient investment in mental health, a deficit that contributed directly to the mental health crisis we are facing today.

Covid-19 also found fertile ground in inequality and social exclusion. Decades of systemic discrimination have resulted in a very high overlap in Europe between people's race and ethnicity on the one hand and their socio-economic status on the other. This led to a disproportionately high death toll among minorities.

Democracy takes long to build and is easily eroded. We are facing an unseen challenge to human rights, the rule of law and democracy as a result of anti-Covid policies. Under international law, States may restrict certain rights to

protect public health. They also have certain additional powers if a state-of-emergency, threatening the life of the nation, is publicly declared.

But, in either case, restrictions need to be necessary, proportionate, non-discriminatory and time-bound. Certain restrictions to freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, the right to education, and freedom of religion have proven disproportionate to the public health gains made. More and more we hear that people do not adhere to the measures adopted, and there have been legitimate concerns about executive overreach or lack of democratic debate. Some countries are tilting towards repressive measures to enforce compliance, and heavy-handed security responses.

In some parts of the continent, efforts to advance human rights were stagnating or actively rolled back well before the pandemic broke out. This is why it's important to encourage the European Union and its member States to uphold the rule of law in the Union. It's also important for the EU to continue to prioritize human rights in its engagement with candidate countries.

On the question of vaccinations, the access to clear health information, in accessible format, across different media, and in all languages, is the core point. As regards the European Commission's proposed Digital Green Certificate to facilitate safe free movement inside the EU during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN human rights mechanisms have yet to pronounce themselves. The general human principles highlight the importance of robust data protection safeguards. What we know from data-capturing processes so far, is that often systems limit the processing of data to what was strictly required for specific health-related purposes.

Human rights work as a roadmap. If anything positive has come out of the pandemic, it's the demonstration of the practical value of human rights. The international human rights treaties can serve as a roadmap out of the current crisis, help to prevent future crises, and make our societies more resilient.

We are already seeing some promising developments: a recommitment to global solidarity and multilateralism, international cooperation for expanded debt relief, COVID-19 vaccines as a global public good, regardless of a person's ability to pay.

Our success or failure in making this a reality depends on our readiness to put people at the centre and to put in place a new social contract. This is where the

pandemic teaches us an important lesson about trust. For the recovery to be successful, people's trust in institutions needs to be restored and this requires meaningful participation and transparency. Human rights are the best vaccine – they must remain our compass, in policy and in action.

Why Lithuania shouldn't be missed out

One of Baltic countries which doesn't get enough spotlight from the rest of Europe is definitely Lithuania. The country itself have borders with huge Eastern European countries like Poland and Russia and been influenced by latter. Lithuania gained it's independence literally by blood and sweat and this only shows how passionate Lithuanians can be in occasions which matters.

Hotspots in Lithuania

And I don't mean Wi-Fi hotspots here, even though internet speed in Lithuania is something we are proud of, while leading the world by downloading speed and rate second in upload speed only being outpaced by South Korea. The hotspots in Lithuania are places which you hardly can find anywhere in the world and one of them is The Hill Of Crosses. An unique place to be, it has deep religion background and some people may say that this place is haunted. But enough about all this nonsense. The real hotspot in Lithuania is right in the center of the country. City Jonava, where your well known three tourists lives, misters Edvinas, Slava and Lukas. It is well known not only in Lithuania, that these guys will make your visit in country unforgettable, emotions and experiences tourists receive during visit with them are for a lifetime. Lets start about Edvinas, young Lithuanian rapping prodigy, who could easily make a disstrack on you so be careful what you say to him. He has a past while doing crazy parkour videos which can be found on youtube, and on your visit in Lithuania he will be able to drive you around with his freshly baked driving license. Slava but as may others know him is Viačeslavas, young entrepreneur with a background of police services, if you'll act inappropriately, he might arrest you. The person can sleep live and survive anywhere in a world, basically like a cockroach, but while he travels he takes from this experiences everything he can, and doesn't keep people left out. Third reason to come to Lithuania is Lukas, his height is normal in Lithuania and everyone there is as tall as him. With a past of playing basketball he doesn't know others activities so probably in Lithuania he will invite you to 1 on 1 match (probably for money).

"My name is
Lukas and I am
from Lithuania

-Lukas

Our services will also include food making as we Lithuanians have the best cuisine in entire world (not subjective). We have a pink cold soup "šaltibarščiai" and we are really proud of this meal, it's just because it tastes amazing. Also a potato dumplings "Cepelinai", they are obviously made from potatoes, like every other dish, and stuffed with meat. If you are crazy it's possible to get them with curd inside. Size varies, they might be as big as your head and one of them could be enough for a lunch, the smallest ones we can make are fist size. But that's not what we are making, we are athletes so for your food we will serve chicken breasts and rice. Yummy.

All of us are located in Kaunas or somewhere around (Slava will probably be somewhere in other side of the globe) if you will be in this amazing paradise called Lithuania - you have our numbers on whatsapp.



Life without EU

European Union changed millions of Human life storys. New standards, increased of opportunities and development has entered to the era of innovation. Nowadays, hard to imagine life without so many benefits. Therefore is so worth to realised how lucky we are to be a part of the Union.



Whenever we go we can noticed EU influences. Examples? New schools, kindergartens, pavements, roads or renovated buildings. Right next to us another sport fields, high ways or far villages areas are modernized. Thanks to the great combination of 27 countries, we have nothing to fear. All we need is to take a Green Pass, ID and

insurance card. In this way, we are already ready to start the travel. The whole process is of course facilitated by the Schengen zone, including very cheap international flights. Sometimes their prices are extremely low, even as low as 10E for the distance from France to Cyprus. Therefore travelling in the EU can be economical, allows saving much money.

We can't also forget about Erasmus + program. Thanks to the awesome opportunities of development we can raise the bar in many science fields. No matter if we are going choose student exchange, shorter training course or youth exchanges. Idea is common- spread peace, equality, respect and freedom. Thanks to so many activities we have great opportunity to self-development. That's so big possibility because we can learn in an international team which makes activities unique. These circumstances also allows to be closer to cultures, traditions and customs foreign countries. That's why informal education is so valuable for all participants.

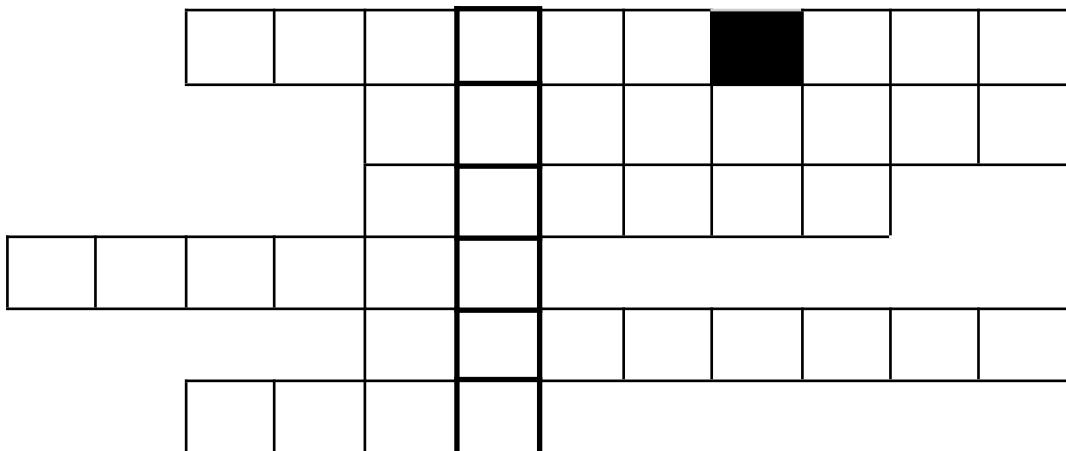
Speaking about education, there are plenty of possibilities, just like the previous ones which financed are from the EU budget. One of them is also the European Solidarity Corps. Thanks to this program you can develop your knowledge in so many different sectors. This volunteering program from 2-12 months offers work for example in – schools, municipalities and even NGOs, where you can gain great experience. Of course, all costs of accommodation and food are also covered by the program which again can be a great way for

development. And what is even more important, this project is available for everyone between 28-30 years

Above, I mentioned only a few EU possibilities that makes our life much easier and more interesting. However, imagine that we suddenly lose all these benefits. Have you ever wondered what life in our countries would be like without the EU? Would it be the same easy to learn, travel or move? Therefore, worth appreciating how much we have and how much we are still able to do. This is the moment to understand how much civic power means and how important is involved in social life.

What EU will miss without Bulgaria, Lithuania, Italy, Poland and Slovakia?

- 1) How many stars there will be in the EU flag without this States?
- 2) Which is the only european country that uses cyrilic alphabet?
- 3) What couldn't pass from Russia to Europe without Lithuania?
- 4) EU is going to miss 16 of the Polish sites.
- 5) You would need a very important document to travel to Slovakia to Italy.
- 6) How many billions of euros do Italy contribute with to the european system?



ANSWER:



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

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