

VOYAGER



**INHERITED CULTURE:
YOUTHFUL ENERGY
REVIVES BULGARIAN
HERITAGE**

Find the full story on pages 8 - 13



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**WHAT IS TO BE TEACHER AFTER
BEING A LOVING PERSON**

**ESC JOURNEY INTO
CERAMICS**

**A FOODIE'S GUIDE TO SOFIA
ASIAN EDITION**

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ЦЕНТЪР ЗА РАЗВИТИЕ
НА ЧОВЕШКИТЕ РЕСУРСИ

Table of Contents



02	EDITOR'S NOTE Written by Bulut Erbaş
03	LET'S MAKE THE HISTORY INTERESTING. Written by Anelia Gospodinova
04	LEGACY HUNT Written by Anelia Gospodinova
05	WHAT IS TO BE A TEACHER AFTER BEING A LOVING PERSON Written by Soufiane Ochta
07	CHANCE NETWORK: YOUNG PEOPLE AGAINST CORRUPTION Written by Pepa Peneva
08	INHERITED CULTURE: YOUTHFUL ENERGY REVIVES BULGARIAN HERITAGE Written by Pepa Peneva
10	THERE IS NOTHING MORE WONDERFUL THAN TO.... Written by Kosara Kostova
14	THE CASTIVAL Written by Pepa Peneva
15	BEFORE AND AFTER Written by Hale Nur Tuncay
16	ESC CERAMIC JOURNEY Written by Hale Nur Tuncay
18	MAN AND CLOTHING - SURVIVAL AND AESTHETICS Written by Nadya Molova
21	NO ONE IS BIGGER THAN BREAD Written by Nadya Molova
23	A FOOD GUIDE: ASIA ESITION Written by Yoana Asenova
25	ON A TOUR Written by Anelia Gospodinova
29	THE SILENCE OF SOLO TRAVEL Written by Hale Nur Tuncay
32	YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS AND CENTERS Written by Pepa Peneva
34	UPCOMING EVENTS

Editor's note

Dear Voyager readers,

This is my message that you might miss, or you might read, I don't know?! But I would like to say something to all of you. Everyone thinks they have potential. I don't agree with this way of thinking. I always thought I could achieve anything in this life - to be the best athlete, to be a millionaire, or to be the best editor, etc. There are many examples in our lives.

An old man once told me: *"If you can dream it, you can certainly do it in your life. But the main question is, do you really want to be the best, or do you have the passion and patience?"*

Yes, my story in this journey began with these two questions. Before I joined this project, I asked myself the questions: can I really ask for this project and then can I do it? Then I said to myself: "Yes, why not".

As a result, here I am. In this issue of the magazine you will read many good experiences and examples - there are many good people who work and try to make their dreams come true. Here you will get to know their stories, fears and achievements. The path they have taken. Be inspired! Be bold and show more confidence. I leave you alone with the magazine, happy reading, and enjoy!

Bulut Erbaş
Editor-in-Chief

Let`s make History interesting

by Anelia Gospodinova

In today's digital world, education needs new approaches to capture students' attention. History, often seen as a dry subject, can come alive and become a captivating adventure.

- *Who is the Ancient Greek philosopher a student of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle?*
- *Who is the legendary founder of Rome?*
- *And who said these words: "A person lives well, dies, and another is born?"*

If you know the answers to these questions or want to understand them, we at Open Space have a surprise for you. Our team and our volunteers has been working for two years in a row to offer you some tools that could help to resolve this tasks.

• Boarding game Digit

Let me introduce you our game **Digit**. The game is interesting, involves strategic thinking and teamwork, and is suitable for both children and adults. In this article, we will introduce you to our innovative projects, created with the belief that learning can and should be fun.

The game is made by youth volunteers, whose attempt is to light the flame of history in people's hearts. The game represents the archeological excavation in its three phases – Excavation, Donation and Special find.

Diving into the past, the game faces you with artefacts, historical questions and special benefits. Your goal is to become an author of an archeological article, but firstly you must collect the required amount of artefacts. Will you beat the game, or will it beat you?

It is suitable not only for a home setting, but for an educational one as well. The students will easily learn curious facts about history while playing the game. Open Space Foundation has made sure that, if desired, the game could be ordered with blank question cards, where the history teachers could make up and write their own questions, related to the material they are teaching. In this way our game becomes an amazing educational tool. The required players are from 3 to 8, and the playing time is 25 minutes. With its appealing design and interesting questions, our game is waiting for you on our website: www.inheritedculture.com

Another tool you offer is:

• App Legacy Hunt

We all love travelling and exploring new places. What if there was a way to do it in the form of a game?

With our application, called Legacy Hunt, this is possible. We at the Open Space Foundation have created an application, available for both Android



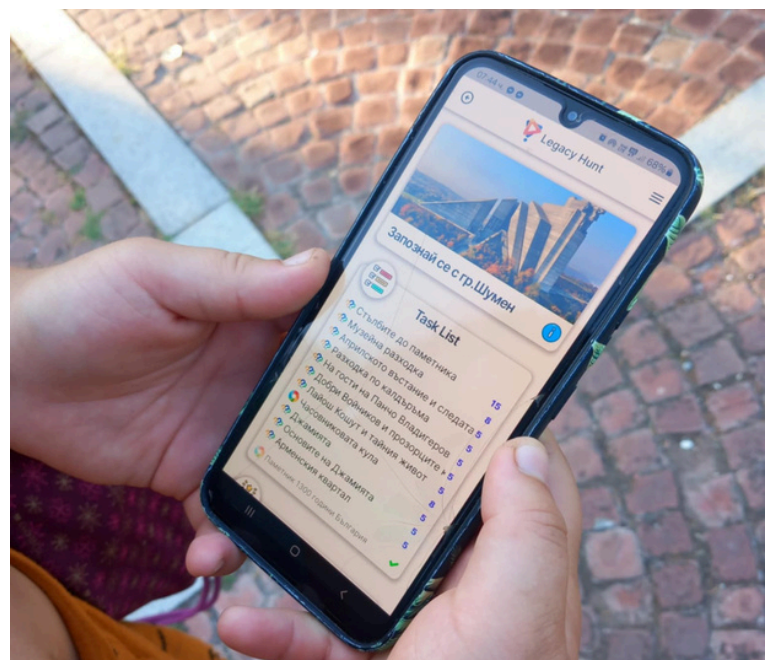
and iPhone, in which we will gradually upload Treasure hunt games for different cities in Bulgaria. In this way, step by step, by completing interesting tasks, players will be able to tour the cities, learn new things and have fun.

Points will be received for each task and at the end it will be possible to see where they are in the ranking, directly from where others have played before. With a slightly competitive nature, the game is suitable for all ages and can be played individually as well as in teams. And it is an extremely fun and interesting way to get to know new cities. Our first game is called "Discover Veliki Preslav town" and it is made for the second old capital of Bulgaria. The game has 18 great tasks that are related to the history, art and culture. If you haven't been to Veliki Preslav, now is the time and don't forget to play our game.

Very soon we will upload new games for other Bulgarian cities.

The **App Legacy Hunt** can be easily downloaded from Google play or App Store completely free of charge.

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What it is to be a teacher after being a loving person

by Soufiane Ouchta

To be a teacher is first to be a loving person. Teaching is not just about giving orders or correcting mistakes. It's about caring for others, being patient, and believing in your students even when things are difficult.

When I started coaching the kids it was not easy at all. Rachid was their first coach. He started the project just last year, and the kids were already used to his way of doing things. They trusted him and listened to him. For them, I was new, and it felt like I was replacing someone they were already attached to.

At the beginning, I didn't even know their names. It took me a long time to remember who was who. That made it hard to communicate and organize any-

thing. And to make things even harder, my very first day with the team was also the day of a tournament. I didn't know the kids, didn't know their positions, and had no idea who was strong at what. It was my first time coaching kids, and I felt lost.

But little by little, I started learning. I watched, I listened, and I began to understand each player not just how they played, but who they were. We started to connect. And despite all the challenges, we worked as a team. We managed to win the tournament and bring home the trophy for 97 School in Sofia.

That experience taught me a lot. Being a teacher doesn't mean you have all the answers. It means you're willing to grow, to care, and to never give up on your students. Especially with kids, love comes first then trust, learning, and teamwork follow.

So what is it to be a teacher, after being a loving person?

It is to care before you coach.

It is to lead with your heart before your whistle.

It is to believe, even when things feel impossible.



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ЦЕНТЪР ЗА РАЗВИТИЕ
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CHANCE network

Bucharest meeting sets the tone for change

by Pepa Peneva

Educating young people is a key factor in building a more transparent and fair society in the fight against corruption. This is precisely the mission of the CHANCE network, which brings together experts and organizations from across Europe to share good practices and develop innovative approaches in anti-corruption education. This year the network is organizing a series of three trainings, the first of which took place in mid-June in Bucharest, Romania.

Training and engaging young people

The main goal of the joint work in CHANCE is to train young people on topics related to corruption – how to recognize it, how to monitor, request information and report suspicions. Beyond practical skills, the focus is on cultivating **sensitivity and a value system** that does not tolerate corrupt practices – whether it is politicians, managers, traffic police or administration. The CHANCE network is a platform for exchanging experiences and jointly seeking solutions to the challenges faced by different European countries in this area.

The meeting in Bucharest was dedicated to tools for attracting and engaging young people. **Pepa from Open Space** (Bulgaria) and **Maria from Portugal** presented inspiring methods and strategies to make the topic of corruption more accessible and interesting for a young audience. The forum was honored by the **Ambassador of Italy to Romania**, which emphasized the importance of international cooperation in this area. The meeting was also attended by a number of experts and educators who shared valuable experience and presented innovative training programs for anti-corruption education.

A program for schools

OPEN SPACE foundation's participation in the network is an opportunity for a specially developed program for young people aged 10-19 to enter Bulgaria.

The programs are designed to be implemented in schools – in civic education classes. Through interactive methods such as games, simulations and discussions, young people are faced with moral choices. The decisions they make in these scenarios are subsequently discussed in the group, stimulating critical thinking and the formation of ethical principles. This program is proof of the potential of non-formal education in the fight against corruption. Upcoming trainings and ambitions for the future

The CHANCE network initiatives continue in full force. In September, training is planned in Albania, and in November – in Germany. These meetings will build on what was achieved in Bucharest and will provide new opportunities for the exchange of experience and development of joint projects.

The CHANCE team in Bulgaria has the ambitious goal of training more teachers in the country who can apply the developed programs with their students. In this way, the impact of the initiative will expand significantly, reaching more young people. In September, we will present the program at the **Democratic Mosaic festival** - festival for NGO-s in Bulgaria.

Follow our website, as well as our pages on social networks for up-to-date information about upcoming training and activities. Together we can build a generation that actively fights corruption and demands transparency and integrity!



Inherited Culture:

Youthful energy revives Bulgarian heritage

by Pepa Peneva

In an increasingly digital world, where virtual reality often replaces physical contact, there is one place where young people from all over the world are choosing to go back to their roots – literally. The "Inherited Culture" project is proof that enthusiasm and curiosity for history can overcome convenience and mobilize young people in the preservation and presentation of Bulgaria's rich cultural heritage.

For the third year in a row, during the summer months, we welcome young people from different countries to Bulgaria, who join a 45-day mission. Their task? To help with archaeological excavations – at the Ancient City of Heraclea Sintica near Petrich, in the heart of the old capital Veliki Preslav and at the majestic fortress of Misionis near Targovishte. Despite the scorching heat, the energy and curiosity of these young volunteers are contagious. As early as 6:00 in the morning, they are already on the field, ready to immerse themselves in the past.

Of course, the work is tiring. It requires physical labor and perseverance, and the everyday chores of everyday life – from preparing food to doing laundry – are also part of the challenge. But every summer, 40-45 young people arrive in Bulgaria and do more than just help with the excavations. They become true ambassadors of Bulgaria. They return to their countries, share their experiences, tell our story and often return with their families and partners to show

the wealth they have discovered. There are even cases when they wish to return to Bulgaria for longer-term volunteer projects, again as part of the OPEN SPACE Foundation team. "Getting our hands dirty" in the name of knowledge

What makes these young people choose the physical labor and monotony of excavations over other easier summer activities? Ogi Popov from the project team shares an interesting observation: "Recently, we have noticed a decline, even a lack of interest in technical professions, where you will get your hands dirty, you will be outside, you will sweat a little." But "Inherited Culture" proves that there is another type of young people. Those who are ready to get up early, do physical labor and then organize their day themselves.



Perhaps it is precisely the fact that they are together that is the key to their motivation. They learn from each other, share interests, free time and their dreams. Together they cope with the challenges that such a project requires, and imperceptibly learn a valuable life lesson: that most things in life are monotonous and that you have to learn how to deal with routine.

"Inherited Culture" is not just an archaeological project. It is a school of life, a place for the formation of values and for the building of international friendships that transcend borders. It is proof of the power of volunteerism and how young energy can breathe new life into centuries-old cultural heritage.

At the end of June, we welcomed the first volunteers who joined the teams of Prof. Lyudmil Vagalinsky and Mikhail Vaklinov and participated in the rescue excavations of the necropolis near Heraclea Sintica.

In our account in Instagram you can see what they discovered this season:
https://www.instagram.com/archie_the_archaeologist/

On the next page we will meet Kosi - one of the volunteers in the first team that arrived this summer.



There is nothing more wonderful than to....



by Kosara Kostova

There is nothing more wonderful than putting your knowledge into practice. And it is even more wonderful when you can share and improve this knowledge, not with just anyone, but with fresh young people, in whose eyes the same flame for growth burns!

I am Kosara Kostova, a young graduate of the humanitarian high school in the city of Kazanlak. Ever since I was six or seven years old, my dream was to become a paleontologist! Yes, can you imagine, as you walk around Kazanlak, meeting me digging for dinosaur bones! Well, so do I. Over time, this dream turned 180° in the direction of archaeology! I remember how as a child, in front of the apartment building, a friend and I played by cleaning stones from the sand. Haha, the interesting thing was that we did it with brushes and were even equipped with protective masks! As I got older, I started to like history a lot, but definitely not the politics section!!

This year my mother learned that the ancient city of Heraclea Sintica, near Petrich, was looking for volunteers to help with the excavation of the western necropolis of the ancient settlement. We were informed by Prof. Dr. Lyudmil Vagalinski about the Open Space Foundation program, to which volunteers could apply. So, with a lot of courage, hard work and effort, since I had never had to write an autobiography before, even in English, I was approved to participate!





Picture: Kosara Kostova on the excavations

And now comes the interesting part! Students of archaeology, history, economics, political science, and even astrophysics, from all over the world, I had the honor and pleasure of meeting! For more than a month, with this group of 16 people, my horizons have expanded dramatically! To be honest, I've never been away from home for so long, and it made me more independent! At first, I was wondering how the excavations and our life together would go, but later we got along well! We had fun with the Spaniards, they were the life and soul of the company. With a very well-read boy - a Kurd by ethnicity, anyone could argue until dawn, whether it was about the political situation in the world, or how a mosquito's brain works! With Nasko - a wonderful boy from Bulgari...

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liked lyutenitsa more (the Bulgarian version of ketchup, but much tastier).

And my roommate and I always tried to live cleanly. However, when it came to training, I was only able to find a common language with two people! We always spent our weekends in a different place in our homeland, or most often, in our colorful neighbors - Greece and Macedonia. We still had time to go to Albania for dinner! However, at first I was quite skeptical, I didn't think it was possible, or at least not to such an extent, that people who smoke and drink could be so smart! This was actually one of my partially eradicated stereotypes! So, Friday barbecues, barefoot ball games on the grass, jumping into Lake Ohrid or just deep conversations! You can learn from everyone, and the best lessons the group provided me are the following:

Patience, how to listen to the other person, his point of view, no matter how annoying it was sometimes, but it seems - necessary! Real fun, not sitting at a table with a phone in hand. Dancing and smiling with people in front of whom I didn't have to choose my words or clothes! Just pure friendship!

The work! It's time to get down to earth, as they say! Archaeology for me during this month was getting up at dawn (at 5:20 in the morning), and digging, but really digging!! Pickaxes, shovels, hoes, trowels, pitchforks, and even mini spatulas were always in my hands! On the one hand, I tempered my body, and on the other, my patience, because, dear readers, don't think that digging up bones is so easy!

No, first they need to be carefully cleaned, like any other object, with the exception of individual fragments, then they need to be prepared for a photo, photographed, and only then taken out! And if you break something during this process, don't worry, after the excavation you will play a puzzle - you will put it together with paper tape in about 30 minutes. This definitely teaches you patience! Not to mention the hundreds of pine cones removed from the graves! Seed by seed, hop, in a bag! What about the heat?! Petrich is a warm place! But it's good that there was always someone around me to help me, like the archaeologists. I met great support from them and we will definitely keep in touch in the future! And yes, it was difficult, but only through difficulties does one improve!

How will this experience help me in the future? I would boldly say that the most significant help for my career development in years that I have ever received was provided to me by the Open Space Foundation! My friendship with so many people, some of them students at European universities, will one day grow into an international network, where everyone will contribute their knowledge! Who knows, we might become a team in the next 15 years! And the fact that I had to speak and think in English 24/7 will definitely help me become more fluent in the language!

As a final note, I felt sad just thinking about parting ways with the people we became family with! That's why I'm thinking of visiting them again very soon!



Professor Vagalinski holds a session for our volunteers

130 YOUTH from Europe

3 locations in Bulgaria:

- Ancient city Heraclea Sintica (Petirch)
- Veliki Preslav - the second old capital
- Misionis fortress (Turgovishte town)

2023 | 2024 | 2025



Archie the Archaeologist

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The Castival

The "Not only did I speak, but I was also heard" castival, one different festival

by Pepa Peneva

In a world where we often feel lost in the noise of everyday life, being heard is a privilege, and hearing real stories is a value. This is exactly the atmosphere that reigned under the dome of the Largo in Sofia, where the Castival mini expo "Not only did I say, but I was also heard" took place. The event, organized under the **Window Youth** project (<https://window-youth.eu/>) by our friends and partners from the Health & Social Development Foundation - HESED, brought together people of all ages, united by the desire to share and hear. Castival is not just a place to share, but also a stage for the manifestation of talents. The podcasts awarded in two categories will represent Bulgaria at the international Castival in Brussels in September this year. There, they will compete with other young authors from Italy, Spain, Romania and Greece, showing the wealth of ideas and creativity that boils in the young people of our region.

We congratulate our friends from the Health & Social Development Foundation - HESED, and the young people they work with in the field, for this real holiday! And while we wait for the September challenge, we can hide in the shade and immerse ourselves in the world of podcasts here: <https://the-podium.eu/index.php/podcasts/>.

The "Not only did I say, but I was also heard" podcast festival is implemented under the Window Youth project, funded by the Erasmus+ program. This project is a vivid example of how European initiatives support the development of young people and give them a platform to express themselves.



Victoria Mileva, who represented our organization at the exhibition, shares her personal impressions:

"My participation in the "Not only did I say, but I was also heard" youth festival was an inspiring experience. I was most impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of the participants, who, in the short time spent together, showed me how active, thoughtful and frank they are in their causes. It was even more exciting to see how diverse the audience was, from 12-year-olds to adults who are united by the desire to be heard and be part of the change.

The topics that were presented were extremely impactful, I was particularly impressed by the podcast dedicated to the topic "Breaking Stereotypes". I heard a lot of truths that are rarely and difficult to say out loud and I am glad that young people use the various platforms as an alternative to be heard - a place where their voice cannot be silenced.

It was also extremely exciting to hear about the different organizations that attended the event, to touch on so many social topics that they develop in their projects. I was pleasantly surprised to see so many young people who really showed interest in the different causes that each of the organizations is involved in. This event showed me how many talented and aware young people there are around us and I can't wait to see the change that they will bring around themselves."



Before and After

what on-arrival training taught me.

by Hale Nur Tuncay

When I first arrived in this country for my ESC project, I thought I was ready. Ready to adapt, to meet new people, to build my own rhythm. But as time passed, I started to feel something I couldn't quite name—a kind of emptiness, a sense of not belonging. I didn't feel connected.

No one made me feel excluded, yet I couldn't feel like a part of the culture. The food tasted unfamiliar. My daily routines were gone. Even the way the sun set felt strange to me. And slowly, I began asking myself: "Is something wrong with me?" Because somehow, it all felt harder than what I expected.

That's where the On-Arrival Training came in.

It wasn't just a program that explained my rights and responsibilities—it was a space where I realized I wasn't alone. I met people who felt exactly like I did. Some of them struggled with things I found easy, and others were comfortable in situations where I felt lost.



Seeing these differences made me realize that there is no one version of success here. What I was feeling was normal. Those feelings weren't signs of failure—just part of the transition.

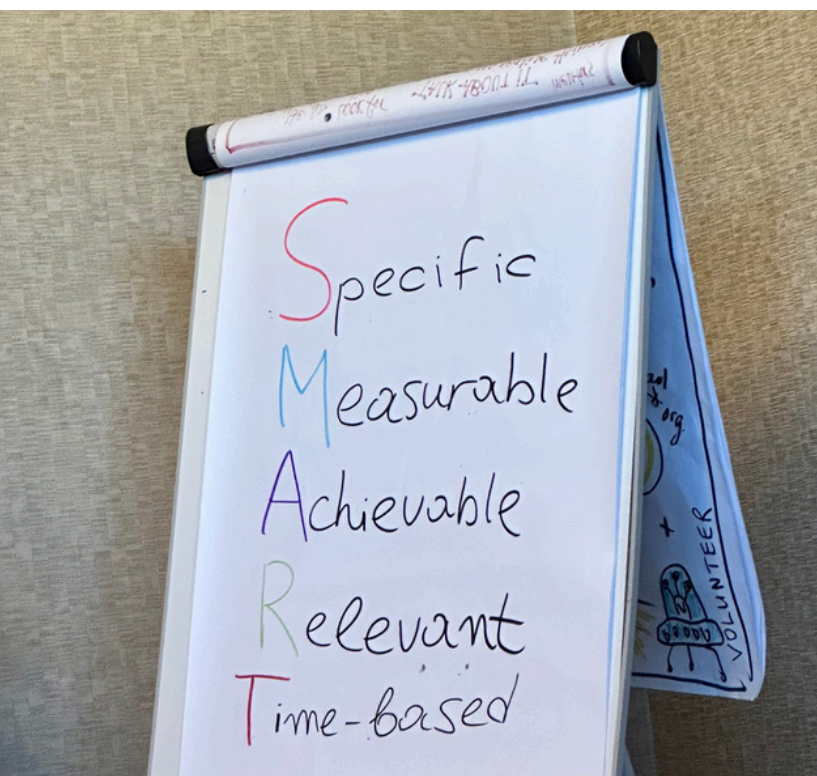
We laughed, we shared, we reflected.

Gaining this clarity gave me a sense of security I didn't know I needed. Now I truly feel more ready. After this training, I don't just know more - I allow myself to feel more. I feel softer with myself and more open to the people around me.

And most importantly, I now know I'm not alone. Even in moments of doubt, others have walked this path too. Blending into a new culture takes time - but once that time passes, you slowly begin to feel yourself settle in.

Sitting around that table, a sense of community quietly formed. And with that came strength. I learned that I didn't have to be perfect to belong - I just had to be present, open, and honest with myself.

I also finally understood my rights as a volunteer: what my mentor's responsibilities were, what my hosting organization is meant to provide, and what I could ask for.





Picture: Hale Nur Tuncay

ESC journey into ceramics

By Hale Nur Tuncay

shaping, drying, retouching, painting, and finally firing — works as part of an intricate chain of care.

The work in this studio is not a solo act; it's a team effort. Each new day builds upon the last, correcting imperfections, refining form, and moving closer to completion. And when the final product emerges from the kiln, holding it in your hands is a deeply fulfilling moment — a tangible result of all the patience and work poured into it.

This experience wasn't just about gaining technical skills — it was a chance to engage with a creative community, to connect across language barriers, and to understand the cultural rhythm of making.

I began to see ceramics not just as an art form, but as a practice of mindfulness, a language of expression, and a medium for personal growth.

As an ESC volunteer, this short but intense period helped me gain new perspectives on how I work, create, and collaborate. I plan to continue joining in this studio regularly as a volunteer — not only because of what I can learn from it, but because it has become a space of inspiration for me, where every piece of clay tells a story waiting to unfold.

Sometimes, a one-week experience can shift a perspective shaped over years. My time as a volunteer at a ceramic studio in Bulgaria, as part of the European Solidarity Corps (ESC), was one such transformative moment. It wasn't just about clay — it was about patience, collaboration, attention to detail, and becoming part of a shared production culture.

On the first day, when my hands touched the wet clay, I quickly realized that this material was not just a malleable substance — it demanded time, effort, and a respectful understanding of process. Each stage — softening the clay, eliminating air bubbles,





Picture: Hale Nur Tuncay

Back to the roots

By Nadya Molova

In this issue of Voyager magazine, we once again embark on an unusual journey "Back to the roots" - a column dedicated to the living traditions and crafts that shape our cultural identity. We began this exciting adventure in our previous issue and today we continue with Nadia Moloma, a young and talented woman from the Rhodope Mountains. She has dedicated her life to the study of traditional crafts and customs that are in danger of extinction, and she strongly believes that this living heritage should be passed on to future generations.

In the following pages, Nadia will tell us about two important parts of our lives - clothing and food. We will get acquainted with the ancient technique of felting, which turns wool into art, and we will look at bread - a staple of every table, but not always in the form we are familiar with. Get ready to discover what Nadia will reveal to us about these important elements of our lives.

Man and clothing - survival and aesthetics

Humans have always had a need for clothing, and not just for aesthetic reasons, as I've already shared with my readers in a previous article. Knitting, sewing, felting, and other techniques were vital for survival in different climates, especially for nomadic peoples who were constantly on the move. Gradually, various crafts emerged to meet the essential needs of humanity as it developed over millennia:

- 7th millennium BC: Felting
- 6th millennium BC: Weaving on a loom
- 5th millennium BC: Pottery
- 4th millennium BC: Metalworking



Chiprovtsi felt carpets made of non-woven textile with an apotropaic symbol - sun and plant motifs



Пазирски килим от нетъкан текстил (Пазирик/Сибир) от 5 в. пр. н. е.



Плъстен лебед от Пазирик на 2300г.

- 3200 BC: Appearance of writing and the scribe profession in Sumer
- 3rd millennium BC: Sheep farming
- 2500 BC: Wet dyeing of textiles
- 1st millennium BC: Needle knittin.

We'll focus on the most ancient technique - *felting* - and at the end, we'll look at dry needle felting as a later technique that emerged in late 19th and early 20th-century English manufactories.

Felting is often called a non-woven textile because to create a felted item, the wool doesn't need to be spun into yarn. Instead, it's used in its raw state to create a garment that protects the body from heat and cold, retains temperature, and shields the skin from sunburn, fleas, mosquitoes, and lice—properties that silk doesn't possess.

It's important to note that humanity developed gradually, and knowledge was acquired on the go. It's no coincidence that this technique was discovered first, over 8,000 years ago, in Central Asia in the steppes of Mongolia, China, the Altai Mountains, Mesopotamia (the Near East), and other places. Nomads practicing transhumant pastoralism carried everything on the backs of their livestock: yurts (large, portable homes made of skins, wool, and sticks), and food like meat and milk. They would often place meat under their horses' saddles (low-set and muscular from a specific breed), and the constant riding would flatten the meat, leading to the creation of what's known as *pastırma* (cured meat). Similarly, milk was stored in leather skins. These nomads spent their entire lives on horseback, using it for travel, sleep, and to provide their sustenance. In the same way, wool was stored—under the horses' saddles or in leather shoes for walking comfort. The moisture and prolonged journeys caused the wool to compress, creating a non-woven textile.

This textile led to the mastery of the felting technique: rubbing and pressing wool with water and soap. It was used to make yurts, rugs, clothes, hats, slippers, belts, and much more. These items were decorated with family symbols, apotropaic (protective) symbols, and good wishes. Long before the advent of writing and widespread literacy, symbols and images were the only form of non-verbal communication, conveying information about a person and their lineage—social status, gender, age, skills, and the industriousness and upbringing of the women in the family, indicating their readiness for marriage. Today, we have inherited examples of this millennial creativity, which we have revived in a different, more aesthetic form: dry needle *felting*, used to create pieces of high artistic value.



Dry needle *felting* is associated with English manufactories and the Industrial Revolution of the 18th-19th centuries, especially after World War I in the early 20th century. The technique is specific, involving the dry stabbing of a needle into wool fibers arranged at a certain angle and in a specific direction. Just as

with woodcarving, it's crucial to follow the grain of the wood, so with dry felting, you follow the thread of the wool. The needle, which is pushed into the wool with quick, light movements, has multiple barbs or grooves. When it's pushed in, these barbs create a strong bond between the fibers and ensure that air is trapped between them, creating a dense and stable shape.

This technique is far faster and less labor-intensive than wet *felting*. In the early decades of the 20th century, machines with many needles and hooks performed this task, replacing human labor. In the 1980s, artists like Eleanor and David Stanwood were among the first to start creating purely artistic items from wool. Today, for many, felting and dry needle felting have become a beloved hobby, a business, and the focus of large craft fairs.

In summary, over thousands of years, wool has always been relevant and in demand - a vital textile that protected humans from harsh conditions. Today, it holds a more aesthetic value.

Felt jewelry made by participants in the youth exchange "Mysteries of Art" nowadays



No one is bigger than bread

By Nadya Molova

The bread is a participant in every ritual and every transition in our lives. For the Bulgarian (more precisely, for the Balkan person) it is also part of the daily diet and without it the table is empty and the enjoyment incomplete. And it is not by chance that they say that "no one is greater than the bread", because its contribution to the nourishment of humanity is paramount, especially for agrarian societies. There are many tales and legends about it, it is part of millennia of history, tradition and culture, and we can encounter it in a variety of forms.

About 10 thousand years ago, the so-called Agrarian or Neolithic Revolution occurred in the Fertile Crescent or Mesopotamia region, because as we already know - where there is water, there is life. It was in this place that man for the first time managed to domesticate many animals and cultivate numerous cereals to feed him. The Neolithic Revolution pushed the transition from hunting and gathering (entirely relying on the mercy of nature and the deities) to the cultivation of agricultural crops and domestic animals, from which man obtained raw materials and prepared products, fully satisfying his household or the so-called self-sufficient economy "autarky". Man, of course, continued to rely on the mercy of nature to preserve his harvest, livestock, and home, and this necessitated making sacrifices to God to beg mercy for the land and people. Thus, in addition to the blood sacrifice in the form of a kurban, the bloodless sacrifice - bread - appeared.

Looking at Christianity, we can be convinced of the correctness of what has been said so far, because the flesh of Christ nourishes man, and wine - his blood, quenches his thirst. However, these symbols have their deep pagan roots, because all agrarian societies believed in this bloodless sacrifice, and bread was revered as sacred food along with wheat as a participant in the rites of passage. The reason for this was the cosmogonic belief (pre-Christian) in the 3-part division of the world - chthonos (the world of the dead), earth (the world of the living), and the heavenly world (of the deities) - it was from the world of the dead ancestors that the living asked for blessings for a good harvest and family prosperity. With the blessing of the forerunner (guardian of the family hearth and home - the house spirit), a good harvest was born, the livestock flourished, and the family grew. As a sign of



Bread and salt (symbol of hospitality)

gratitude, the family set aside the best fruits and grain from the first harvest to repay the ancestors and the deities - a gift for the house of the best apples, pears, grapes, freshly baked bread with sourdough, to multiply and grow the family's prosperity.

At home, this gift is offered on the altar with icons, distributed to neighbors (the surplus is always distributed for health, prosperity and well-being), in the field - a piece of bread and other food from the table of the owner of the house is buried there, in order to nourish the earth, so that it will give a good harvest this year and the next. Each new agricultural season, each new seasonal cycle obliges farmers to seek mercy and guidance from above, because the survival of the species and humanity, the maintenance of cosmic order, depends on this.

It is no coincidence that in various places we can come across the legend of St. George and the dragon as the personification of the cosmos (order) and chaos. The saint kills the dragon, which sows hunger, drought, death and destruction because it has swallowed the abundance. Every year, the inhabitants of the city of Cyrenaica (the region of Cyrenaica in Antiquity) sacrificed virgins to this dragon. George the Victorious performed a feat and managed to save the city and the king's daughter, cutting off the 3 heads of the dragon, from each of which flowed grain, honey and wine, and the rivers flowed again and order was restored. The same analogy in Balkan folklore is the tale of "The Three Brothers and the Golden Apple", in which, however, the brave young man (the youngest of the three brothers) meets an old woman on his way, who instead of water kneads bread with her tears, because there is none - the dragon swallows her. He is associated with the forces of evil (chaos - the broken cosmic order).



The 3 food islands

To maintain it, people tried to have a special attitude towards bread and, depending on culture, geographical specifics and natural conditions, they prepared it in a variety of forms, the most notable example being the three food islands - Europe (wheat), Asia (rice), America (corn). Thus, we can clearly imagine the different raw materials that feed the population of the major continents. Today we have the opportunity to touch each of them, while in the past, the entry of these cultures into the individual continents happened gradually and they adapted to different types of relief and climate - Corn was grown in the poorer, stony areas and made an ideal corn flour that replaced wheat flour. Rice was permanently imported to the Balkan Peninsula through the Ottoman Empire from Asia. It was also considered not only an everyday but also a ritual food and was prepared mainly by men in the army - the so-called pilaf or rice with meat. Another ritual food was halva, prepared as a memorial dish from flour, butter, and water (one of the oldest recipes, which has undergone changes over time).

In desert and steppe regions, geographical and climatic specificities determined the preparation of flat bread due to the lack of suitable conditions for growing cereals, as well as due to the nomadic lifestyle of the population engaged in cattle breeding - an easy-to-transport product.

If we have to talk about ordinary wheat bread, then it can be said that it comes in two main forms - leavened and unleavened. Leavened bread is prepared ONLY on major holidays and auspicious occasions to multiply and grow prosperity, while unleavened bread is an everyday bread and accompanies every family's meals. A very old and primitive technique for its preparation is to knead it with only water, flour and salt and once a flat pita is formed, it is placed on the embers (coals) and more coals are poured on top. When it is ready, the coals are removed and the bread is cleaned. For pre-modern man, this was not considered unhygienic because he believed in the purifying power of fire.

During some holidays that herald fertility and growth, there is also a custom to boil legumes, which are mixed and swelled, as fertility should swell. One such example in Bulgarian folk culture is the holiday of St. Andrew's Day (November 30). It is believed that St. Andrew drives away winter and the day begins to grow longer, just as grains grow longer when we boil them.

The blessing is also manifested in the decoration of the bread as various decorations - wheat stalks, human figures (so that there will be many children), animals (so that there will be many livestock), etc. In the Ottoman Empire, bread was also a sign of religious affiliation, as each millet (ethnicity) had its own bakery in the individual neighborhoods with its own recipes and specific decoration - in order to distinguish Muslim bread from Christian bread, the rule of the distinctive mark appeared - today, bread in Turkey (ekmek) has only one longitudinal cut, which symbolizes faith in the One God, while Christian bread often has three parallel cuts, as in the belief in the Holy Trinity. This is how this distinctive symbol appeared during the period of the greatest cultural flourishing of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, also called Kanuni (Lawgiver), regulated the prices, weight, and shape of bread during this period (16th century).

In the Russian Empire under Peter the Great (17th-18th centuries), many reforms along European lines took place, including in bread, because he brought many European - French and other bakers, who introduced new recipes and a new order in its preparation. Previously, according to the notes and impressions of travelers, bread had a sour taste, probably due to the use of kvass and the specific rye flour as more accessible to the common people.

In the city (St. Petersburg) production for the needs of the army was mechanized - state/casual bakeries, and the sourdough starter was gradually replaced by yeast. Of course, ritual breads were preserved despite the transition.

A typical symbol of hospitality in many cultures remains the welcoming with bread and salt, and the table should not be left empty, i.e. without bread and salt. This is how every guest was welcomed, and the institution of hospitality was considered sacred, and the guest himself as sent by God, it is no coincidence that such a lasting mark has been left in fairy-tale folklore, and bread is the most valuable thing that can be used to welcome a guest, because it is the result of the family's labor, its culture and faith. It may be different in form, raw material and type, but it is always desired and recognized in every culture.

A foodie's guide to Sofia (Asia Edition)

by Yoana Assenova

Have you ever wondered where to try new cuisine in Sofia?

Have you ever dreamed of an app or an article in which you can find an easy and quick food guide for a particular city? In this series called

"A FOODIE's GUIDE TO SOFIA" you will quickly receive the best places where to eat in Sofia from a food lover like me!

Our first article is dedicated to the continent with the widest range of interesting meals – Asia.... And in fact, Sofia has A LOT of Asian places worth trying.

1. Korean restaurant "Yun"

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/EZQx5nxzCSvU6BZ69>

For the first place I chose the Korean restaurant "Yun", located next right next to the Borisova Gradina Park. With its authentic interior and traditional food, this place provides its customers with a unique Korean experience. Apart from the friendly waiters and the excellent service, the food is incredibly delicious.

Everything from traditional soups and stews to the well-known kimchi and kimbap. A must try is their famous Korean "pancakes", especially the ones with seafood and spring onion. Moreover, Koreans are famous for their meat preparing skills, so trying their meat specialties is a must when going to this restaurant.

2. Indonesian restaurant "With Yati"

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/GE3FJxwifeggA1S7A>

This place, located in the center of the city, near the National Palace of Culture, it is everything but an average Asian restaurant.

The food, traditional for the Indonesian islands Jawa and Bali, is rich in flavor and eating there is an unforgettable experience for your taste receptors. A must there is their Rendang – the best meat I have ever eaten, unforgettable for its seasonings. And do not forget to try their famous green pancakes filled with coconut and palm sugar! Friendly staff, nice atmosphere and good food, what more could you want for a nice lunch or dinner?



Picture: Indonesian restaurant "With Yati"



Picture: Korean restaurant "Yun" facebook page

3. Bamboo Flavor Factory

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/x2RAh1AwDwFrufat8>

This tiny street place, located in the center of Sofia, is perfect for the ones who are in a hurry or just want to take their food home or some nice park.

Typical Vietnamese meals are waiting for every curious mind who can not wait to try new interesting cuisine.

Moreover, this place sells the best bubble tea in Sofia! (the best one is the Brown Coconut) As a big fan of bubble tea, I have tried it in countless places in Bulgaria and abroad and I could undoubtedly say that this is the best bubble tea I have drunk so far! A must try there is the well-known Vietnamese sandwich banh mi and their bun cha. A favorite place for the leisure days!



Picture: Bamboo Flavor Factory

4. Thai restaurant "King's Thai cuisine"

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/6SL214Dn8u3yHyrE9>

A nice place to try something unexpected, because Thai food is nothing but that. Located in the center of the city, this place welcomes people with its traditional interior, nice atmosphere and most importantly their delicious food.

As a person who does not like soups, this place made me fall in love with them. Thai cuisine is famous for its soups, but this is not the only thing this place offers. Surely, ordering a soup is a must, but trying their rice, curries, meat or seafood should be a part of your lunch or dinner.

Honestly, everything in their menu looks like a masterpiece, leading to endless starrng at the menu just because every meal looks exclusively delicious. Do not skip this place when visiting Sofia and if you are a local – What are you waiting for? Moreover, one of my favorite extras there is the fact that you can chose the level of spiciness for your meals – a perfect addition for a spicy food lover like me!

5. Japanese restaurant "Umami"

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/bvHafck26QFhUE329>

Surely, the best place in some if you seek not only delicious food but an unforgettable experience!

Apart from the traditional Japanese cuisine including sushi, ramen and the tenderest meat ever, this place offers a calm and relaxing atmosphere because of its traditional Japanese garden. Full of fish and birds, your time there could feel like a authentical Japanese lunch with the emperor! Honestly, everything on the menu is a must try, so there is no wrong choice! Moreover, the excellent service contributes to the amazing experience.

Located in a nice neighborhood far from the center, this place provides a peaceful experience which feels like a fairytale!



Picture: Thai restaurant "King's Thai cuisine"

6. Indian restaurant "Shafran"

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/w6n1K6ErHxukPGNv8>

It is not a secret that Indian food is not for everyone, however this place is worth visiting because of its nice atmosphere and rich flavored food! Apart from the rich taste, the food surprises with texture and looks as well. Everything from drinks, soups to meals and desserts is amazing. A must try it the paneer – Indian cheese topped with interesting sauces. Their drinks are very refreshing, especially the lassi. The service is amazing and the waiters are very nice. The perfect place for those who are not afraid to try something different!

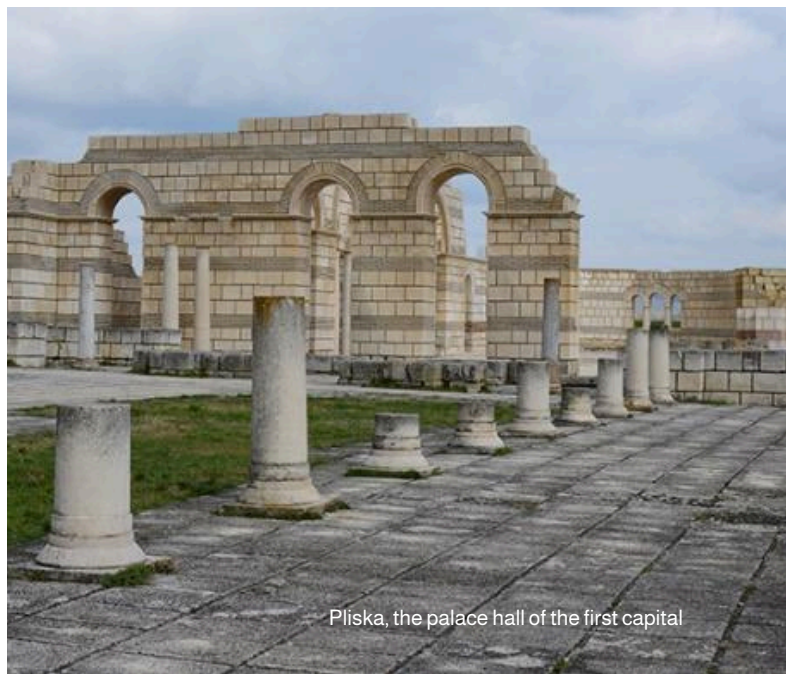
On A Tour

by Anelia Gospodinova

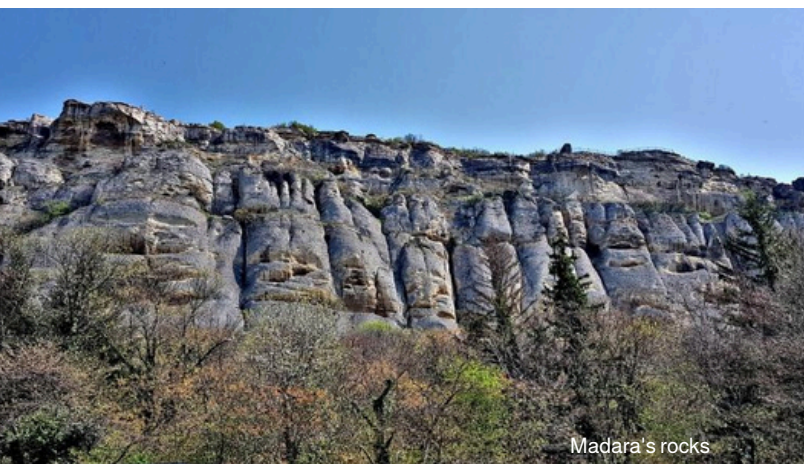
We present to you our new series: "On a tour". Here we will introduce you to different places in Bulgaria and what can be visited there. This way, the volunteers who have come to our country, and you, my young friend who is looking for adventures, can start exploring Bulgaria. Here you will see interesting sights that are close by and can be visited in one weekend. Accept the series as a travel guide to Bulgaria.

We begin the first walk with a route that will reveal a little of our history: **The First Bulgarian Kingdom**. We present to you several very interesting places in northeastern Bulgaria. We start with the First Bulgarian Capital, namely **Pliska**. In Pliska you can immerse yourself in the spirit of the Bulgarian Middle Ages, visiting the Archaeological Complex, the old town, the Great Basilica and the Courtyard of the Cyrillic Alphabet.

Then you can't miss the Madara Horseman, the Madara Fortress and the temple, located near the village of **Madara**. There you will see the beautiful bas-relief of the horseman, don't forget to climb the Madara Rocks to enjoy the view from above. One piece of advice from us - bring water on a hot day, and if you accidentally forgot, you can look for the fairy spring /a small fountain in the rocks/. Of course, don't leave before visiting the museum.



Pliska, the palace hall of the first capital



Madara's rocks



Madara
Horseman

Next on your way is the city of **Shumen**. There are many things to see in it, but for starters you can visit the monument "1300 years of Bulgaria", which is located on the top of the Shumen plateau with beautiful views of the surrounding area. The Shumen Fortress is also a must-see destination, not to be missed. In the city you can find the Regional History Museum, as well as many other house museums scattered throughout the city.



Shumen, Monument 1300 years Bulgaria



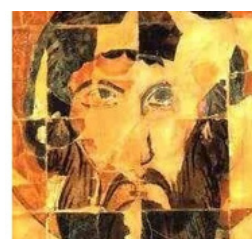
Shumen, Monument 1300 years Bulgaria



Shumen, 1300+ stairs to the Monument 1300 years Bulgaria



Veliki .Preslav, Gate of the inner town



Your next destination is the second Bulgarian capital, **Veliki Preslav**. With its magnificent palace complex and the Golden Church, Simeon's capital was a splendor for the development of Bulgarian culture and writing. The city museum is a wonderful place presenting the life and appearance of the Preslav capital. In the city you can also find an ethnographic museum, as well as a monument to the holy seven saints.

Before leaving for your next destination, you can't miss visiting the medieval Monastery "Saint Panteleimon", founded in the 9th century, in the Patleyna area. The famous mosaic icon of Saint Theodore Stratelates was also found there and could be seen in the Archaeological museum Veliki Preslav.



Veliki .Preslav, the center of the town



Missionis fortress, Turgovishte region

And our last stop on this route is the town of **Turgovishte**. The Regional Museum is filled with beautiful artifacts telling the history of the region. Of course, if you are interested in the Bulgarian Renaissance, don't forget to visit Hadji Angelovata Kashta and Slaveykovo School. And last but not least - Misionis, this is a unique archaeological site, located high in the mountains. Finds dating back to the Byzantine and Bulgarian periods have been discovered, as the place is rich in natural resources, and the view from there is delightful. (photos from Turgovishte, and source of the photos)

So, have we intrigued you? Will you go on an adventure around Bulgaria using our routes? We hope that we have been useful to you and that you will get to know and love Bulgaria as much as we do.

If you searching where to stay, visit:

- our page in Instagram: [Archie the archaeologist](#)
 - or web page: www.inheritedculture.com
- for some ideas.



Marinata dupka cave



Turgovishte, Varosha district



Turgovishte, Park Borovo oko



Turgovishte, Statue of Goddess Europe

The silence of solo travel

by Hale Nur Tuncay

We all carry the concept of a language barrier in our minds. Sometimes it's a real obstacle; other times, just a perception. But what is it, really?

Is it something that stops us in our tracks—or a hidden threshold that pushes us out of our comfort zones, forcing us to think in a way that's more creative and flexible? To me, the language barrier isn't just about not knowing a language. It's about how you respond when faced with something unfamiliar: Do you panic? Do you explore? Do you shut down—or do you find another way? In today's world, nearly everyone has a language in their pocket - apps, translators, AI... What we used to call "I don't know the language" has now become "I haven't tried that app yet."

When I travel solo, I no longer ask *"Do I speak the language?"* I ask, *"How can I communicate?"* And the answer is simple: ChatGPT, Google Translate, Google Maps.

Has the language barrier disappeared completely? Not really.

Because communication doesn't depend solely on you. Even if you speak perfectly, if the person across from you doesn't, there's still a barrier. But that shouldn't discourage you. Solo travel teaches you that flexibility in your plans, your expectations, your pace. You shape everything according to you. And most importantly - once you hit the road, everything finds a way. You'll express yourself in one way or another. Moving slowly isn't a flaw. The only real barrier is not moving at all.

Looking back, I know this for sure: you don't need to be "ready" to travel. Everything starts with taking that first step. And the journey itself is what gets you ready.



Addition from Yoana Asenova: And, from the person, who translated this beautiful text, I dedicate this article to everyone, who has ever dared to take this path or is yet to do so. Be brave and take as much as possible from life, because only in that way can you feel the true meaning of it. I am grateful to Hale, due to the pleasure she has provided to me, while reading her article.

I hope that this article finds everyone, who needs the light push in order to embark on their path, full of adventures or to the ones, who have strayed from their own path and need to be reminded of how far they have come!





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Yoga in the Park

Health and energy for 55+

A program tailored to your abilities and needs will help you improve your balance, strengthen your muscles and recharge with positive energy in nature.



Sofia, Western Park, the meadow with the turtle

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ЦЕНТЪР ЗА РАЗВИТИЕ
НА ЧОВЕШКИТЕ РЕСУРСИ

Youth Organizations and Centers and the Free Time of Young People

The National Meeting in Pernik

by Pepa Peneva

From July 23 to 25, the city of Pernik hosted the National Meeting "Youth Organizations and Centers and the Free Time of Young People." The event, organized by the MoMentor Association at the International Youth Center Pernik, brought together over 70 participants from more than 15 youth organizations across the country. It was a true inspiration to exchange experiences and ideas on how free time can be a driving force for culture, activity, and inspiration.

The forum was opened by the Deputy Mayor of Pernik Municipality, Stefan Krastev, who emphasized the significance of the International Youth Center as a modern hub for youth activity. The Regional Governor, Lyudmil Veselinov, also welcomed the participants, noting that such initiatives create a community that transforms free time into a resource for learning, creativity, and social engagement. The center's director, Radostina Radanova, expressed her joy at the young people's participation and wished them to be energized with new ideas for even more successful youth work.

At the forum, we presented our successful programs that turn free time into a valuable resource for young people:

- **Archaeological Excavations and History Games:** Through interactive activities and simulations of archaeological digs, we spark young people's interest in history and cultural heritage. We believe that this is how we raise future researchers and guardians of our rich history.



- **Anti-Corruption Education:** This program educates young people on the mechanisms of corruption and builds zero tolerance for such practices. We provide them with tools for active civic participation and responsibility.

A special focus during the meeting was also placed on our new G-LENS project, which is set to implement several exciting initiatives:

- **Contests for Young Journalists:** An opportunity for young talents to develop their journalistic skills by covering important social topics.
- **A Youth Camp:** This will bring together bright and active young people from all over the country to create content that counters disinformation that denigrates girls and women.
- **An International Conference:** This will gather experts and activists to exchange best practices in civic education.

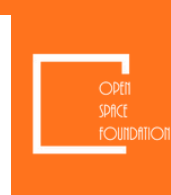
During the meeting, a Free Time Fair was also held—an initiative under the Urban View project. It presented a variety of ways to spend time meaningfully, from volunteering and art to sports, games, and youth causes that go beyond boredom and clichés.

The forum continued with thematic workshops, presentations, and discussions dedicated to youth policies and the future of youth work in Bulgaria. We thank all the organizers and participants for the productive meeting!



Upcoming:

48 volunteers will arrive in Bulgaria for archaeological excavations



3 groups will help in 3 locations in Bulgaria:

I group:

in Ancient town Heraclea Sintica, Petrich, Bulgaria
from 24.06.2025 until 07.08.2025

II group:

in Veliki Preslav town, the second old capital of
Bulgaria from 26.07.2025 until 08.09.2025

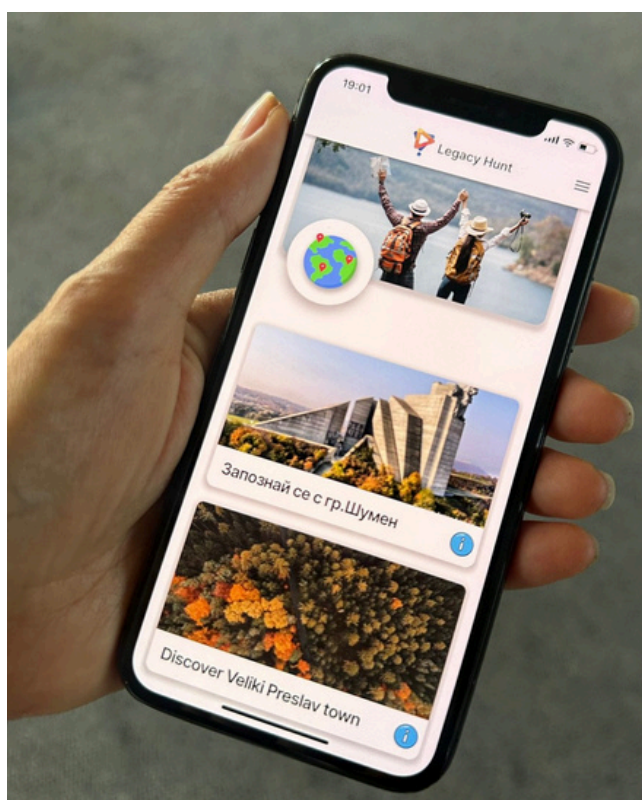
III group:

in Missionis fortress close to Turgovishte town,
Bulgaria from 15.08.2025 until 14.09.2025

Follow us on: www.inheritedculture.com
https://www.instagram.com/archie_the_archaeologist/



Upcoming:



12 August International Youth day with Legacy Hunt

Get ready for an adventure, because on August 12, International Youth Day, we invite you on an unforgettable journey into the past and present of **Veliki Preslav** and **Shumen**.

This year, we will celebrate the holiday in an innovative and fun way – with treasure hunt-style games published in the **Legacy Hunt mobile app**.

What awaits you?

The games will kick off at exactly 10:00 AM.

Download the app, choose your city, and immerse yourself in a world of riddles. You'll have the chance to discover hidden places, solve curious challenges, and learn interesting facts about the history and culture of your hometown.

How to Participate?

- Participation is completely free, and you can join in at your convenience.
- All you need to do is download the **Legacy Hunt app**.
- To have your participation counted, take screenshots of your phone screen at the start of the game and after completing the last task. Upload them to your personal profile in the app.
- The winners, who collect the most points in the shortest time, will receive our special prizes!

Don't miss the chance to explore your city in a new way while having fun and competing with friends. **The winners will be announced at 8:00 PM**, so don't waste any time!



Upcoming:



Youth Camp dedicated to combating online violence against girls and women!

Do you have a passion for **theater** or **video productions**? Do you want to use your talent to help solve an important social problem? Then this is your opportunity!

If you are 13-28 years old, join to the Youth Camp. During the camp, you will have the opportunity to:

- Develop your artistic skills in theater and video production.
- Work in a team with other young people who share your interests.
- Create impactful theatrical etudes and short videos that raise awareness about online violence and inspire change.
- Contribute to an important social cause, giving a voice to those affected.

The camp will take place on August 30 and 31, 2025, at Mladost Hut, near the town of Targovishte.

Arrival: August 29, **Departure:** September 1.

What do we cover?

To ensure your comfortable participation, we cover accommodation for 3 nights, as well as food throughout the camp period.

If you are enthusiastic and wish to be part of this important initiative, please [fill out the application form](#).

For more information, visit our [website](#).



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INSTITUTE OF
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Upcoming:

Democratic mosaic III edition festival for NGO-s



Join Us at the "**Democratic Mosaic**" Festival!

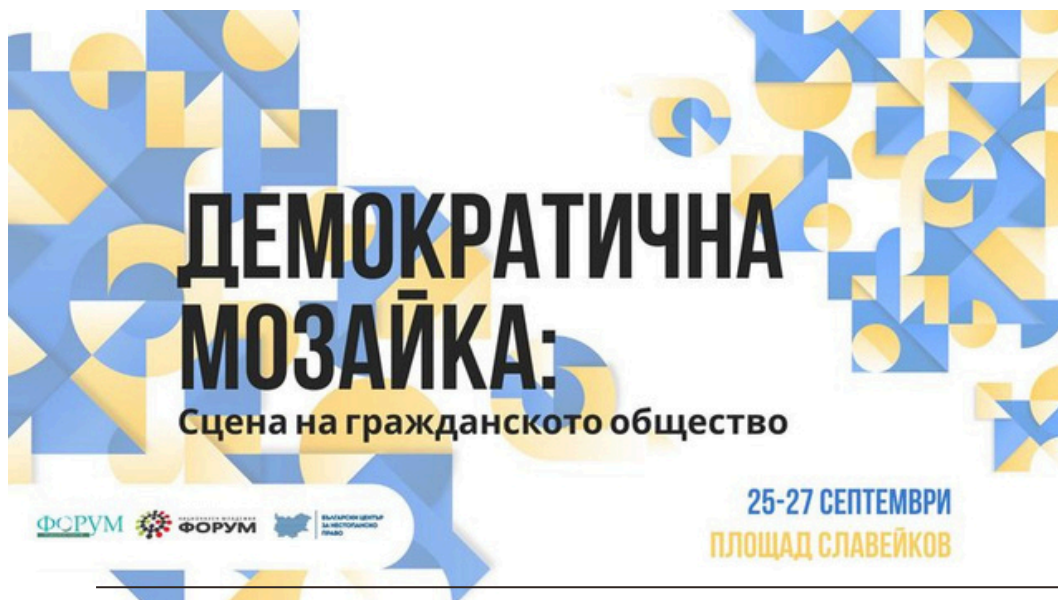
The third edition of the "Democratic Mosaic" festival, organized by the National Youth Forum and the Civic Participation Forum, will take place in Sofia from **September 25-27**.

This year, our team will be part of the event to present our **educational materials on the topic of anti-corruption education**. These materials were developed in partnership with organizations that are members of the [International CHANCE Network](#).



We invite you to come and get a closer look at our educational games and meet our team in person. Don't miss the opportunity to learn more about how we can work together to foster civic engagement and integrity.

We look forward to seeing you at our booth!



Upcoming:



CHANCE network brings us for Training 2 in Albania

As part of the EU YOUTH IN POWER project, the CHANCE Network will implement a structured training plan to strengthen the capacity of its members and key local stakeholders in civic engagement, anti-corruption, and the prevention of organised crime. The training programme is closely aligned with the strategic priorities of the CHANCE Manifesto and aims to empower young people as proactive actors of democratic change across Europe.

Second training for 2025 will be in Tirana (Albania)

Main focus:

- the social reuse of confiscated, abandoned or underused assets, and
- the role of the social economy in preventing criminal infiltration, with a combination of expert inputs, peer-to-peer exchanges.

When? September 25-26, 2025

Who is it for? CHANCE member organisations and local stakeholders (youth organisations, CSOs, educators, public officials)

The CHANCE Training Plan 2025 serves as a catalyst for empowering youth leadership, promoting anti-corruption and antimafia culture, and nurturing a shared European civic space grounded in justice, integrity, and solidarity.



Upcoming:

Open call for Keynote speakers



You are invited to the "Digital Citizens" Conference in Sofia!

The team at the Open Space Foundation is pleased to invite you to the **"Digital Citizens: Rights, Responsibilities, and Critical Thinking in the Digital Age"** International Conference and Exhibition, which will take place in Sofia from October 9-11, 2025.

This event is part of the G-LENS (Gender-Inclusive, Long-lasting and Empowered Networks and Societies) project and will bring together academics, researchers, journalists, and citizens.

You will have the opportunity to participate in discussions, workshops, and get to know innovative educational tools and games that help combat gender-based disinformation. The conference is an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas, create new contacts, and build partnerships.

We look forward to seeing you there to build a better digital future together!

The registration is open now: [link to the web page](#)

Upcoming:



Training program: Anti-Corruption Education

Corruption and organized crime affect our democracies, societies and economies around the world, undermining trust, justice and human rights. But how can we fight it? Education is the key to building a culture of integrity and resisting abuses of power!

We invite you to participate in our series **"Anti-Corruption Education - The Path of Integrity"** starting with two Escape Games:

- "The Sports Dilemma – Monitor Yourself" and
- "Keep It Clean, Bront! – Monitoring the Common Good"

What will you learn?

- How corruption affects our daily lives and why it is important to fight it.
- Tools and strategies for recognizing and preventing corrupt practices.
- The role of young people in building a transparent and just society.
- Innovative and interactive approaches to integrity and anti-corruption education.

When? on demand

Where? in your school/club/NGO

Who is it for? Young people who want to be active in the fight against corruption and contribute to a more honest society.

If you are interested, we can also play games at your school during a Civic education lesson or class time. Participation is free.

Register now! Be part of the change!

e-mail: info@openspacebg.com



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