



Kaunas

The Ecoguide



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The Project

Youth Participation against Climate Change

RYCA is a 2 year project aims at fostering youth networking, participation and action on the matter of Climate Change. This contributing on one hand, to the general goal of the European Youth Together call to increase youths engagement in the European political debate and on the other, to the broader goals indicated in the European Green Deal to address the imminent danger represented by the global climate crisis.

The rationale of the project sees the two streams of general objectives as complementary and intersected with each other:

- Increasing the youth ability to participate in the social and political life, locally and transnationally, in Europe both as a way to reconcile its often disrupted relations with grassroots, informal political streams of action
- and as a way to bring the European Green New Deal to the more capillary level of local actions and debates, where often the Europeans institutions are felt at their farthest from the EU citizen.

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Intro to Kaunas

Kaunas is one of the most historically significant cities in Lithuania. The city was the temporary capital from 1919 to 1939 when Vilnius was occupied by Poland. Today, Kaunas is the second-largest city in the country, estimated to accommodate about 304,731 city residents. Although some residents have moved outside of the main Kaunas area, the city remains one of the fastest-growing regions in Lithuania. From 1996 to 2024, the population has increased by an impressive 37%.

Kaunas - The European Capital of Culture

In 2022, Kaunas was named the European Capital of Culture. That year around 40 festivals, more than 60 exhibitions, more than 250 stage events, and more than 250 concerts were held in Kaunas and its surrounding district.

One of the many cultural initiatives is the art project “Nemuno7”, which was launched in the spring of 2022. “Nemuno7” is the original name of the dredger that was used to deepen the river bed of the Nemunas river. Built in 1965, the dredger’s technology has since become outdated and harmful to the river’s ecosystem, making it unusable for its intended purpose.



Image

However, rather than destroying the historic dredger, people came up with a more sustainable solution by repurposing it as a cultural space, inviting visitors to explore the theme of water from the perspective of art, history, and science. This project is just one of the many projects that make Kaunas such a vibrant and cultural city in Lithuania.

Even after the end of the European Capital of Culture project, Kaunas remains a city of immense cultural significance, hosting various events and fostering exciting new innovations in Lithuania.

Kaunas' Modernist Architecture on the UNESCO World Heritage List

In 2023, Kaunas received worldwide recognition for its architecture. The city's modernist architecture was inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List, described as "architecture of optimism". Kaunas boasts dozens of outstanding modernist buildings from the interwar period between 1919 and 1939. Thus, as a steadily growing city, Kaunas holds both cultural and historical importance.

Kaunas - A City of Water

However, Kaunas is not only defined by its rich history, cultural significance, and modernist architecture. Kaunas also boasts beautiful natural surroundings. It can be described as a city of water, located at the meeting point of two of the country's largest rivers, the Nemunas and the Neris. Also, it has the largest artificial lake in Lithuania, the Kaunas Reservoir. The city has adapted to its waterways by opening parks alongside the river banks and preserving the natural surroundings, allowing residents to reconnect with nature without leaving Kaunas.



Image

Kaunas' Strategic Development Plan for 2030

Kaunas is taking action to become a more sustainable city. In 2022, the Kaunas City Council approved the Strategic Development Plan (SDP), which strives to support the city's development until 2030. The SDP has set both short-term and long-term goals to not only enhance Kaunas' residents quality of life but also be more eco-friendly.

The SDP includes improvements such as developing better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, making public transport more accessible, and reducing the city's overall pollution levels. The plan aims to address various local issues frequently raised by residents to effect lasting sustainability changes throughout the city.

I. Transportation in Kaunas: Easy, Accessible, and Eco- Friendly



I. Transportation

Kaunas' public transport network is relatively affordable and easy to use. Additional travel discounts for commuters, , make it even more accessible. The city's modern buses and trolleybuses offer both residents and visitors a comfortable and convenient way to navigate the city.

- **Modernization and Environmental Initiatives**

As part of Kaunas' ongoing efforts to make the city greener, Kaunas has made significant investments into acquiring new hybrid buses, specifically the "MAN Lion's City 12" buses, which are powered by an electric motor and a smaller-than-usual internal combustion engine. This hybrid technology allows for a more eco-friendly means of transport, reducing emissions and noise. It is estimated that these hybrid buses may even be 7 times better for the environment compared to a standard motor vehicle.

Another drastic improvement in Kaunas' public transport system is the replacement of the city's trolleybuses, which have been serving commuters since the 1980s. They have been replaced with newly purchased low-floor electric trolleybuses, which are expected to reduce CO2 emissions by approximately 2,500 tonnes annually, making the city's air cleaner for everyone.



Image

- **Ticketing Options**

If you'd like to try out Kaunas' new buses or trolleybuses, here are the three main ways to purchase your ticket:

Single-use paper tickets. A single-use, non-transferable paper ticket can be purchased from the driver for only €1. This ticket can only be used for one trip.

The “Žiogas” app. For a more convenient option, the “Žiogas” app allows you to purchase tickets on your phone. Using the app, a single bus trip will cost you only €0,70.

Using this purchase method, you are allowed one free transfer within the first 30 minutes of validating your ticket. To use the “Žiogas” app, simply download it, add money to your account, and scan the QR code located on the bus or trolleybus when boarding. You must immediately validate your ticket, as the bus control frequently checks commuters' tickets.



Image

The “Žiogas” card. If you prefer a physical card, the “Žiogas” electronic ticket card is available for purchase for €1,5 at various supermarkets and gas stations in the city. You can load money directly onto the card. A single trip costs €0,70. You can also transfer for free within the first 30 minutes of validating your ticket. To use the card, simply tap your card on the scanner when boarding.

If you plan to stay in Kaunas for longer, the “Žiogas” card is your best option. Once the value of your validated single tickets reaches the value of the monthly pass (28 euros without a discount), you no longer have to pay for travel for the remainder of the month.

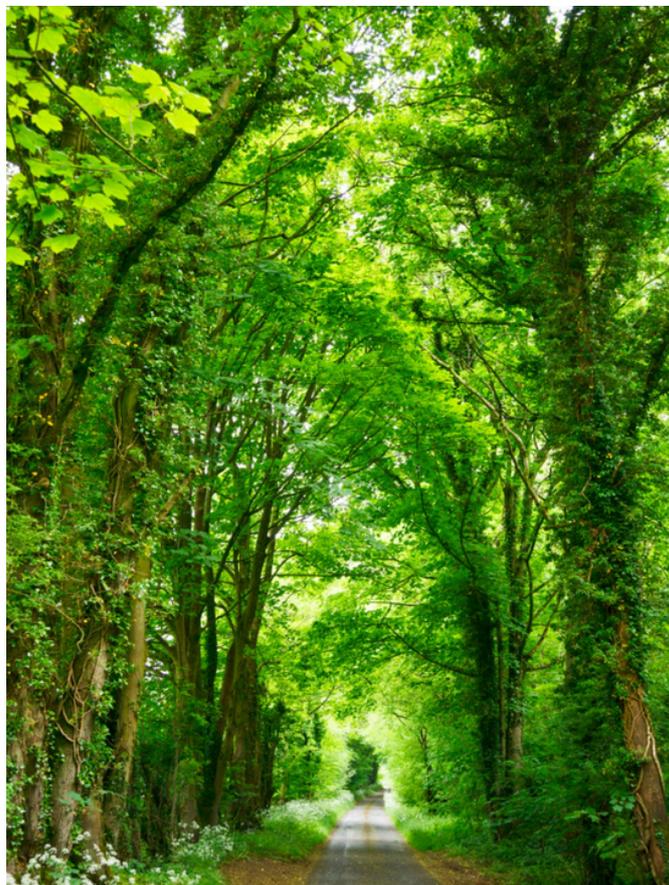


Students can also enjoy a 50% discount on both single-use and monthly tickets. For international students, it's recommended to invest in an ISIC card rather than relying solely on a university student ID. When purchasing your "Žiogas" card, be sure to inform the seller of your discount category. If you prefer the app, you can easily adjust the settings yourself. Remember to always carry proof of your discount to avoid fines during ticket inspections.

Many other groups are also eligible for discounts, such as people with disabilities and the elderly. For more detailed information on the different discounts click [here](#).

- **A Vision for the Future**

There is hope that by renewing Kaunas' public transport system, the city will become greener by not only reducing emissions and improving efficiency, but also providing commuters with a more comfortable and positive commute experience, encouraging residents to opt for a cheaper, more sustainable mode of travel over private motor vehicles.



Image

- **Embracing Greener Ways of Driving in Kaunas: Car Sharing**

Although using the public transport available to everyone is the most green and cost-effective way to get around Kaunas, longer commutes outside the city may require a car.

Car sharing services are a great option if you only intend to use a vehicle for a day or even a few hours. These services provide the convenience of having a car without the long-term commitment or the additional expenses that come with owning your own vehicle, such as road tax, insurance, and mandatory inspections. To acquire a car for a short period of time, simply reserve a car through a car sharing service and the car is yours (for the time being)!

- **Top Car Sharing Services in Kaunas**

Currently, there are three popular car sharing services available to you in Kaunas. Here's a brief overview of each of them:

Citybee was the first car sharing service to establish itself in Kaunas in 2013. The initial Citybee car parking area was established right next to the Kaunas train station. To utilize the Citybee car sharing service, all you need to do is download the Citybee app, fill in your personal details, including proof of a valid driver's licence, and reserve a suitable vehicle for your trip! After completing your trip, leave the vehicle in a designated Citybee parking area, which can be seen on the app.

The cost of your trip is calculated by adding the time of use and the kilometres driven. If you are planning a longer trip, travel packages can also help you save money. Citybee is valuable in a city like Kaunas, striving to become greener. To make your trip even more environmentally-friendly, opt for an electric vehicle!



Image

citybee

Bolt entered the Kaunas market in 2023 with the aim of reducing air pollution and the number of private vehicles on the city roads. This service operates similarly to Citybee, allowing users to easily reserve a vehicle through the Bolt app. Bolt calculates the cost of your trip based on the time of use and the kilometres drive. Bolt also offers travel packages, allowing you to save money on longer trips.

Spark, the car sharing service that launched in Kaunas alongside Bolt in 2023, sets itself apart from the others by offering only electric vehicles. This provides drivers with certain privileges, such as the ability to use A+ lanes on the road to avoid standing in traffic. Spark aims to encourage the use of more environmentally friendly vehicles. The reservation process is similar to Citybee and Bolt, conducted through the Spark app. Pricing is also calculated based on driving time and distance. However, one standout feature of Spark is the ability to collect eGO points, which can be redeemed for free trips, making it an attractive option for more regular users of car sharing services.



Image

These car sharing services offer residents the flexibility of renting out a car for a few hours or days without the additional fees that come with car ownership. By promoting these services, Kaunas is modernizing its transportation options, becoming a more environmentally friendly city. By providing residents with the choices to make more eco-conscious decisions, Kaunas is steadily transforming into a modern, green, and forward-thinking city.

- **Green Adventures: Bike and Scooter Renting in Kaunas**

Although the city offers affordable public transport options and a variety of car services to choose from, there are also more fun ways to explore the vibrant city. Renting a bike or scooter is a great way to get to know the city firsthand. Kaunas prides itself on making sure we can efficiently commute around the city by creating new bike lanes. So, why not try them out?

Additionally, Kaunas will continue to develop its bicycle path infrastructure. The Ministry of Transport has allocated record European Union (EU) investments for the development of pedestrian and bicycle path infrastructure in Lithuania by 2027, amounting to approximately 100 million euros. Of this sum, 4 million euros will be invested into Kaunas. However, there is no need to wait, Kaunas already offers many picturesque routes and trails to explore!



Image

- **Bolt's Electric Scooters and Bikes Revolutionize Kaunas' City Transport**

Bolt has established the most popular electric bicycle and scooter rental service in Kaunas.

The Bolt electric scooters first arrived in Kaunas in 2019, after becoming immensely popular in Vilnius, offering residents a new, fun alternative to their daily commute. Today, Bolt scooters have become a common mode of transportation for many Kaunas residents.



The scooters can be rented out easily through the Bolt app. Each scooter has a GPS device, allowing you to see scooters close to you. Firstly, you must top up your Bolt account. After doing so, you can scan the QR on a scooter through the app, confirm, and begin your ride.

After the completion of your trip, the app displays the areas in which parking is allowed. You should leave your scooter in a safe place away from the pedestrian path to ensure others' safety.

Bolt scooters cost €0,11 per minute. However, if you plan to use the scooter for longer, there are also subscriptions allowing you to ride for cheaper with a pre-paid weekly or monthly plan.



Image

Following the success of Bolt scooters among Kaunas' residents, Bolt introduced an electric bike rental service in 2022. The bikes have been created to ensure cyclists' safety and comfort. The cyclist has access to a smart dashboard that tracks speed, battery-charging level, and warns about the speed restrictions applied in the city. The advanced GPS system can help you find the best route. If needed, there is a phone charger integrated in to the steering structure, making sure you never have to worry about your phone battery.

Additionally, the bike frame is made of 100% recyclable aluminium, and the integrated battery can be easily replaced, meaning that the maintenance team will not have to load the bikes to the warehouse every time, which significantly reduces carbon dioxide emissions and maintains a relatively low price for the service.

The Bolt e-bike rental process is the same as the scooter's. Though the price differs, costing €0,13 per minute.

- **Trails of Kaunas**

“**Like Bike Kaunas**” is an initiative, striving to brand Kaunas as the first city in the Baltic states fully adapted for cyclists. “Like Bike” aims to make the bicycle a common means of transport in the Kaunas region.

One of the ways this initiative hopes to achieve its goal is by establishing new bike routes around Kaunas. Here’s a few of the many routes you can try out:

“Miesto Širdis” (“The Heart of the City”) Route.

This 6.5 km route winds through the very center of the city, the heart of Kaunas, showcasing the true face of Kaunas: full of photogenic interwar architecture, pleasant bustle, nature, and flowing rivers. You can diversify your trip by cooling off at the fountains, stopping for a picnic in Santaka Park or grabbing a coffee in one of the many cafes in the surrounding area.



Image

“Romantikų” (“The Romantic Way”) Route.

The Pažaislis monastery, the surrounding pine forest, and the yacht club are all located around the scenic Kaunas lagoon, connected by the “The Romantic Way” cycling route, creating an immersive nature. If you get hungry along the way, you can enjoy a delicious meal at the restaurant located in the yacht club or enjoy a romantic picnic by the water. The route is approximately 3 km long, making it a perfect route a peaceful date after a long workday.



Image

“Savaitgalio Iššūkis” (“The Weekend Challenge”) Route.

This cycling route offers a great way to kickstart your weekend, providing both a leisurely experience and a challenge for those seeking a longer ride. The 20 kilometre route, connecting Kaunas to Zapyškis, showcases some of the most beautiful views of the forest and the river. Along the way, cyclists can take a break at a grill area in Kačergė, a great spot to relax and recharge. The floating pier of Kačerginė is also worth visiting. At the last stop of the route, you'll be greeted by the charming town of Zapyškis, with its historic homes and the unique Zapyškis church.



Image

- **Discovering Kaunas by Water**

In the summer of 2023, water transport in Kaunas saw a 48% increase in usage compared to 2022, with the ferry “Nėvėžis” becoming increasingly popular. This shows that both residents and visitors are eager to connect with the outstanding natural surroundings of Kaunas through a more fun way of travelling by water transport. Additionally, exploring the region by water allows you to discover the charming towns along the banks of the Nemunas river.

As a city defined by its rivers and lakes, it is important that Kaunas allows travellers to enjoy its waterways. Here’s a brief overview of the ferry and boat rides available to you:



Image

”Nevėžis”

The ferry “Nevėžis” offers cyclists and pedestrians a convenient way to cross the Nemunas river. It transports passengers from the historic town of Zapyškis, located on the left bank of the river, to Kulautuva on the opposite side, and back. The ferry operates from May to September, though specific beginning and end dates may vary each year.

Currently, the ferry runs from Thursday to Sunday. Adult tickets are €1. Children up to 7 years old travel for free.

More detailed information can be found [here](#).



Image

”Vilkynė”

The ferry “Vilkynė” transports passengers and vehicles across the Nemunas river, connecting Vilkija with Pavilkija in the Šakiai district. The ferry can accommodate 7-8 cars. It operates 180 days a year, from May to early November.

A single ticket is €1. Crossing with a car (including passengers inside the vehicle) costs €6.

Working hours:

May, June, July, August, September: Monday-Sunday 7-20:30 p.m.

October, November: Monday- Sunday 7-19:30 p.m.

More detailed information can be found [here](#).

“Zapyškis”

Excursions on the Nemunas river are a great opportunity to explore the unique towns within the Kaunas district. Boat “Zapyškis” offers trips to the nature-rich and architecturally significant towns of Kačerginė, Kulautuva, and Vilkija. It operates from May through October.

Boat “Zapyškis” can also be privately rented for larger groups, which costs €100 per hour during weekdays and €150 per hour on weekends. Another boat trip available to everyone is a short 45-minute sightseeing cruises at only €5 per adult ticket. Additionally, there are also Sunday trips from Zapyškis to Kačerginė at the same price, and guided excursions to Kačerginė or Kulautuva, which should be booked in advance.

Click **here** for more detailed information.

2. Waste Management & Recycling

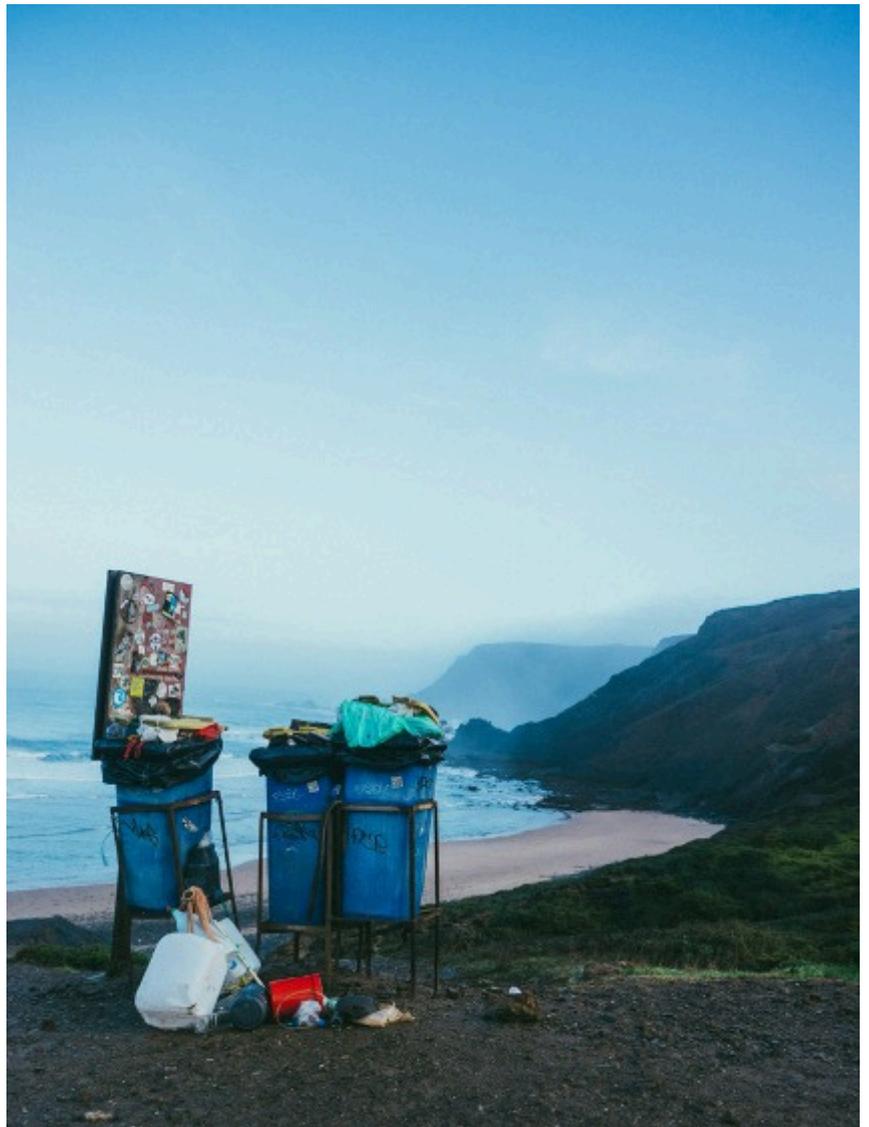


2. Waste Management & Recycling

Undoubtedly, a structured system for waste disposal and recycling is crucial to making a city sustainable. City waste management systems ensure the proper disposal and collection of waste; however, we, as citizens, must take responsibility for how we dispose of our household waste.

Recycling is important, as household waste contains valuable secondary raw materials that can be repurposed to make new goods. By taking the time to recycle, we support the conservation of natural resources, reducing the amount of waste that ends up in landfills. By recycling, we protect our environment, reduce pollution, and contribute to lowering waste management costs.

VšĮ Kaunas Region Waste Management Center (Kauno RATC), the main sustainable waste management system in the Kaunas region, was established in 2005. The primary waste management services, ensuring proper waste collection and recycling throughout Lithuania are provided by **Ecoservice** and **Ekonovus**. For information on collection times and other services, it is recommended to download their apps or visit their provided websites.



Image

- **A Guide to Recycling in Kaunas**

UAB Kauno Švara is one of the leading waste management companies in Lithuania, priding itself on its extensive experience in the field of environmental protection. It offers a variety of waste management services to Kaunas residents. According to their guidelines, here's how to correctly recycle materials using the designated containers:

Recycling plastic and metal

These materials are recycled in yellow containers. This includes plastic bottles, polyethylene bags, milk and juice packaging, as well as steel or tin cans. Plastic packaging often has symbols like PET, HDPE, LDPE,PP, or PS.

Product packaging has to be empty and clean before recycling. Failure to do so can lead to recycling contamination, meaning the container's content can no longer be recycled.



Image

Recycling glass

Glass items should be placed in green containers. This includes, glass bottles, jars, dishes, and broken glass.

While glass jars and bottles must be empty, it is not necessary to remove paper labels. However, porcelain, crystal, or ceramic dishes must not be placed into this container.

Recycling paper and cardboard.

These materials are recycled in blue containers. This includes magazines, newspapers, books without hardcovers, cardboard boxes, paper bags, envelopes, and other paper products.

The paper must be clean and not damaged by food waste or liquids. Lime-coated, paraffin-coated, waxed, or oiled paper must not be put into this container.

Recycling municipal waste

These materials are recycled in red containers. This includes packaging contaminated by food residue, pet litter, diapers, toilet paper, personal hygiene items, and other waste that cannot be sorted into other containers.

Recycling bulky and hazardous waste

Residents can bring and sort bulky and hazardous waste at designated collection sites. This includes large municipal waste (furniture, bicycles, other large household items), packaging waste, including secondary raw materials (paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, metal waste), electrical and electronic equipment waste, textile waste, used tires, household hazardous waste (batteries, accumulators, vehicle hazardous waste, household chemical waste, etc.), and construction and demolition waste.

Click **here** for a list of the hazardous waste and bulky waste collection site locations.

Recycling textiles

Textiles can be delivered to the previously mentioned bulky waste collection sites or designated textile containers. This includes clean clothes, shoes, handbags, belts, curtains, bedding, and soft toys.

Textiles should be clean and packed in bags.

For more information about textile containers, click **here**.

Recycling food waste

In September 2024, Kaunas will introduce its first food collection containers, aimed at reducing the amount of municipal mixed waste. These containers will accept unused meat and fish leftovers, greasy paper towels or napkins, tea and coffee grounds, fruit and vegetable peels, and indoor plants or their parts.

An alternative way for Kaunas residents to recycle household food waste is by composting biodegradable, plant-based food waste at home. Fruit, berries, vegetable residues, tea and coffee grounds can all be thrown into the compost.



Image

Learning about proper recycling practices is crucial to preventing recycling contamination and ensuring we contribute to environmental protection.

More information about recycling in Lithuania can be found on **Žaliasis Taškas**, the first and largest licensed packaging waste management organization in Lithuania.

- **The Deposit System**

The deposit system, operating in Lithuania since 2016, has become a huge success. During its first year of implementation, the collection rate of containers reached 70%, which improved by 20% during the second year to reach an outstanding 90% collection rate in 2017. According to **UNESDA**, the most recent data shows a collection rate of 92%.

The non-profit organisation Užstato Sistemos Administratorius USAD), established by Lithuanian beverage producers, importers and sellers, manages the system activities in the country. USAD successfully collects 9 out of 10 beverage cans, one-way glass and plastic bottles, marked with the deposit system mark that are placed on the market each year.

The deposit applies to one-way packaging made of glass, plastic (PET), and metal. Each eligible container carries a €0,10 deposit, which is then returned to the customer.



Thanks to the deposit system's high success rate, Lithuania's natural environment is significantly less polluted by discarded bottles. By encouraging residents to return their containers, the deposit system fosters a sense of personal responsibility, helping to reduce litter and protect our environment.

Image

- **A Guide to Returning your Bottles**

Can I return this bottle?

Yes, if the bottle has a “D” symbol on the label, indicating that it is accepted by the deposit system.



Image

However, if the bottle’s barcode is not clearly visible or the bottle has lost its original shape, such as being folded or creased, the reserve vending machine (RVM) may not recognize the packaging, and you will be unable to recycle the bottle.

It is recommended to rinse out the bottle before returning it. This helps prevent liquid spillage and keeps the RVM and surrounding area cleaner for everyone.



How can I use the money I receive for recycling through the deposit system?

After placing your bottles into the RVM machine, press the button to receive a receipt. You can either cash out the money with a store worker or use it to pay for other goods inside the store.

Where can I return my bottles?

There are currently more than 1,600 manual collection points across Lithuania. Most RVM machines are located inside supermarkets. Click **here** for an interactive map of collection points all around Lithuania.

3. Reuse Initiatives



3. Reuse Initiatives

The three R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. While reducing waste and recycling are essential for building a sustainable city, reusing existing products is equally important. Here are a few reuse initiatives in Kaunas that you should know about:



Ecoservice Textile Containers

Textile products are among the most challenging items to recycle due to their specificity and their diverse materials, making it crucial to extend their life cycle. For this reason, it is important to deposit textiles that are still in good condition into designated textile containers.

Unwanted but still usable textiles must be placed into plastic bags and tied securely to ensure they do not get lost or damaged. It is essential to leave textiles in the designated containers, and not next to them to avoid issues like textiles melting or starting to mold.

You can find a map of Ecoservice textile container locations all around Lithuania **here**.



Image

Lithuanian Red Cross Textile Containers



In January 2024, The Lithuanian Red Cross (LRC), together with Ecoservice built textile sorting containers, inviting the public to drop off their unwanted clothing and shoes.

All of the collected textiles are transported to a sorting center in Vilnius, where usable clothes and shoes are separated and sold on the international wholesale market. A portion of the proceeds from these sales support the LRC's humanitarian efforts.

Textiles that are no longer suitable for wear are recycled and used to generate heat and electricity. In times of crisis, any usable textiles will be distributed by the Lithuanian Red Cross to those in need of clothing and footwear.

You can find a list of Lithuanian Red Cross textile container locations all around Lithuania [here](#).

Textiles that should be placed in Ecoservice & Lithuanian Red Cross textile containers:

- Clothes (summer, winter, children's)
- Bedding
- Footwear (only in pairs)
- Handbags
- Belts

Textiles that should not be placed in Ecoservice & Lithuanian Red Cross textile containers:

- Carpets
- Dirty, torn clothes
- Textile scraps

“Atiduotuvės” (“Giving Shop”)



Image

“Atiduotuvės” refers to an initiative, during which items are given away for free, serving as a way to reduce waste and promote reuse. This initiative, launched by the Kaunas Region Waste Management Center (Kauno RATC) in 2019, aims to encourage the recycling and repurposing of household goods. The first “Atiduotuvės” drop-off points were established at bulky-waste collection sites in Kaunas.

Since its beginning, the initiative has expanded beyond bulky-waste drop-off areas. “Atiduotuvės” has also taken root directly within Kaunas communities through

“Atiduotuvės Kiemas” (“Giving Yard”), where community members can exchange items they no longer need for those they do.

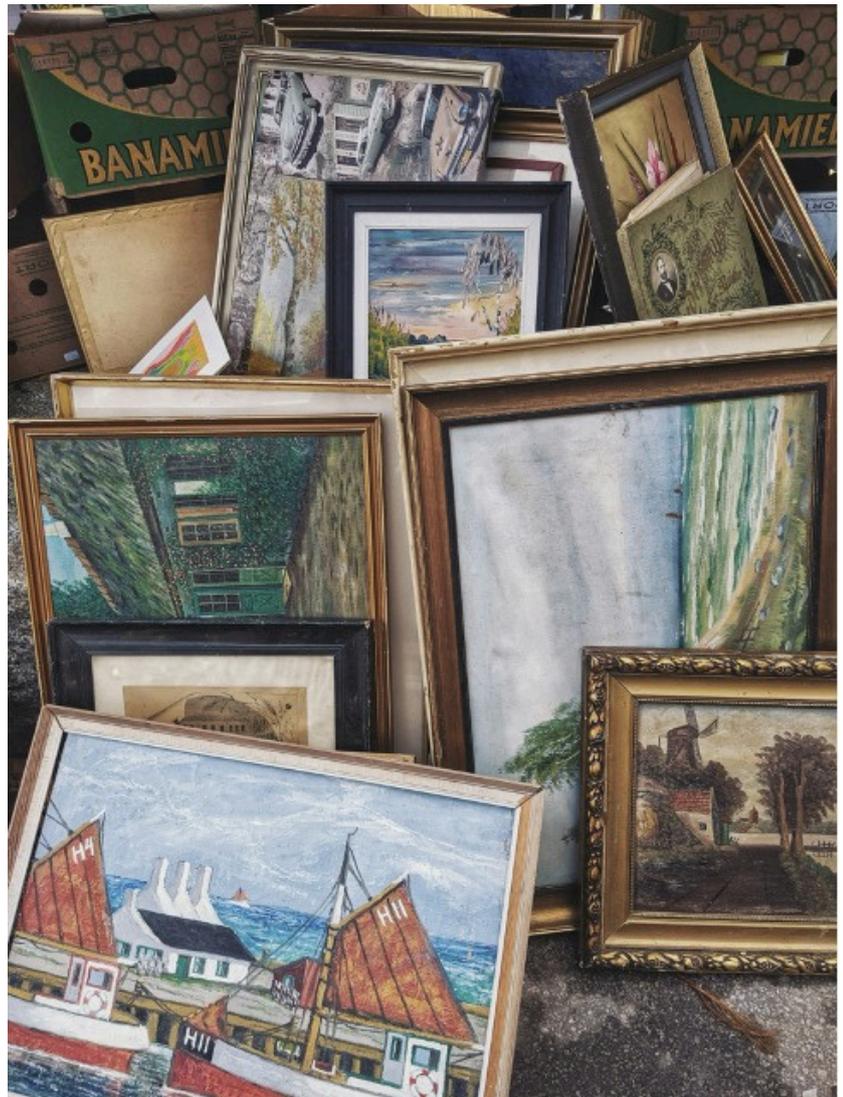
People often donate a variety of items, including dishes, cutlery, books, children's toys, furniture, household appliances, photo frames - essentially anything found in a typical home. This service is entirely free of charge, allowing anyone to donate clean, reusable items and, conversely, take anything they find useful, also at no cost.

Items accepted by “Atiduotuvės” drop-off points:

- Bulky items (such as furniture)
- Construction and repair materials
- Books, magazines
- Dishes, utensils
- Toys
- Home textiles (rugs, curtains, etc.)
- Leisure inventory (bikes, tents, etc.)
- Other household items suitable for use

Items not accepted by “Atiduotuvės” drop-off points:

- Clothing and shoes
- Electronic devices
- Items dangerous to health and the environment



Click [here](#) for a list of “Atiduotuvės” drop-off point locations.

Image

4. Community Initiatives



4. Community Initiatives

As English poet John Donne says, “No man is an island”, insinuating that we cannot exist without some form of community. In the same way, community also plays an important role in achieving our sustainability goals. Without a unified and driven community, it would be impossible to foster sustainable habits and create a more environmentally-friendly space for everyone.



Image

- **Cleaning Initiatives**

Kaunas residents are actively engaged in various sustainability initiatives, with community clean-up events being a popular way for residents to come together to clean up their environment. One of the most well-known clean-up initiatives, operating all over Lithuania is “Mes darom” (“We do”).

“Mes darom” is a cleaning initiative dedicated to raising awareness about environmental issues and bringing communities together to clean and restore the natural environment. This popular movement encourages people to clean lakes, forests, beaches, and nature reserves all across the country throughout the year.

In addition to their nature clean-up events, “Mes darom” also enjoys combining sustainability with culture. One of their most recent initiatives, the sustainability festival “Darom prie jūros” (“We do at the sea”), took place in Melnragē. This festival, lasting the entire weekend, was not only filled with fun activities but also focused on environmental education and practical contributions to nature. Volunteers participated in workshops on sustainability, reinforced the beach dunes with protective fences to prevent erosion, and collected trash along the beach.



Image

Have some fun ideas for a sustainability event?

Well, “Mes darom” not only invites you to participate in their cleaning initiatives but also encourages you to create your own. In partnership with SDG, the initiative introduces “Darom kartu su SDG” (“We do with SDG”), offering a platform for motivated individuals to bring their environmental initiative ideas to life. All you need to do is register your event on their official page. This can be your own cleanup event, a sustainability workshop, a community tree-planting activity, or any other creative and sustainable idea.

This is a great way to educate your school community, family, or friends about sustainability and nature preservation. Don't forget to share your photos and memories on the “Mes Darom” page to inspire others!

- **Community Care and Sustainability**

Embracing a more sustainable lifestyle often goes hand in hand with caring for others. One way to care for your community is by supporting food banks, charities that collect and distribute food to those in need of it. By helping others combat hunger, we can become more mindful of our own food purchasing habits and have an active role in supporting our local communities.

The Lithuanian Food Bank “Maisto Bankas”

“Maisto Bankas” is a Lithuanian food bank that began its operations in Lithuania in 2001. Initially, it was part of the charity and support fund “Lietuvos ir JAV Iniciatyvos” (“Lithuania and U.S. Initiatives”), which launched the “Maisto Bankas” program in Lithuania’s larger cities. This initiative brought together hundreds of non-profit organizations and thousands of volunteers to collect food donations for those in need.

In 2007, “Maisto bankas” became an independent charity and support fund. Its mission is to fight against food waste, promote social solidarity, and help the poor.

Today, “Maisto Bankas” operates in 84 cities and districts across Lithuania, distributing food in 203 areas. Every year the charity collects and redistributes over tens of thousands of tons of food to feed those in need. In 2021 alone, they distributed 9,000 tons of food, 6,045 tons of which were saved from being thrown away.



Image

• The Power of Volunteers

The volunteers are the main driving force of “Maisto Bankas”. Every day, they travel to various stores to collect food products that are close to their expiration date, as well as fresh produce that is no longer suitable for sale, but still good for consumption, such as very ripe bananas. The charity also accepts donations from farmers, giving away produce that does not meet the ideal selling size or shape but is still perfectly edible.

Once the food donations are collected, volunteers sort it in warehouses according to specific categories, checking expiration dates. Some foods, although past their “Best before” date, can still be safely consumed and are sorted accordingly for distribution. All good and edible food products are then distributed to food stores or other non-governmental organizations.

“Maisto Bankas” also accepts food that may not withstand transportation due to its condition, like overly ripe tomatoes. In their processing kitchen, volunteers and a cook prepare jams, stews, and soups from these items, preserving them to distribute later to organizations or directly to those in need.

Some food items are no longer suitable for human consumption, even after processing. In these cases, the food is donated to animal welfare organizations if it's safe for animals. Alternatively, farmers use it to feed pigs or as compost to fertilize fields.

Additionally, the volunteers also participate in other “Maisto Bankas” initiatives, such as the annual visits to supermarket stores all across the country, encouraging shoppers to donate longer-lasting food products, such as pasta, groats, flour, oil, canned food, sugar, breakfast cereals, etc.

If you'd like to support this initiative, click **here** for a map of stores, where the next “Maisto Bankas” supermarket initiatives will take place!

Want to Become a Volunteer?

Luckily, anyone aged 14 and above can volunteer, with plenty of roles to fill. If you're interested in joining the “Maisto Bankas” team as a volunteer, click **here** to apply!

“Maisto Bankas” Academy

“Maisto Bankas” is committed not only to providing resources and nourishment but also to equipping people with valuable life skills. The “Maisto Bankas” Academy offers practical training for those receiving the European Aid to the Most Deprived Fund (EPLSAF).

This program provides essential guidance on job search strategies, tips to enjoying tasty and wholesome meals, while saving money, all led by professional lecturers. Experienced chefs also share practical culinary tricks, teaching participants how to prepare delicious and healthier meals using the ingredients from the EPLSAF support basket.

For more information about “Maisto Bankas” Academy, click **here**.

- **Community Awareness Campaigns**

Interested in raising awareness for an important cause or movement? Community awareness campaigns are a great way to do just that! Today, we have many community awareness campaigns, promoting sustainability, and encouraging others to adopt a more environmentally-friendly lifestyle. Here's an example of a successful sustainability awareness campaign in Kaunas!

The Final Four Sustainability Initiative

During the 2023 Turkish Airlines EuroLeague Final Four in Kaunas, Euroleague Basketball launched two impactful sustainability initiatives focused on sustainable mobility, education, and raising awareness about emissions. These initiatives were developed through a collaboration between Euroleague Basketball and the Lithuanian app #walk15.

Reforestation Campaign

The first initiative was a reforestation campaign, setting a goal of planting 15,000 trees. It was estimated that this quantity of trees would absorb over 100 tons of CO2 annually. Additionally, the selected tree species support the needs of the local wildlife, enhancing biodiversity in Kaunas. To kickstart the campaign, Euroleague and its partner #walk15 successfully planted 10,000 trees in the Dubravos Forest.



Image

Walking Challenge

The second initiative was a walking challenge held over the Final Four weekend, from May 18 to May 21. Participants took part both individually and in teams to walk the most steps over the weekend. The goal was to promote sustainable mobility by encouraging participants to walk and use public transportation, rather than driving a vehicle.

The walking challenge also contributed to the planting of more trees. On May 21st, the first 5,735 trees from the Final Four Walking Challenge were planted during a community celebration named the “Final Four Steps Forest”. The initiative exceeded its expectations with 7,332 participants walking a total of 229,417,951 steps during the Final Four weekend.

Needless to say, The Final Four Sustainability initiative was a great success. By utilizing Lithuania’s passion for basketball, Euroleague Basketball were able to successfully promote a more active and sustainable lifestyle and engage the public in a meaningful environmental initiative.



Image

- **Plogging: A Simple, yet Effective Global Initiative**

While many community awareness initiatives are often limited to specific locations, one initiative has transcended its local origins to become a global movement - accessible to everyone, everywhere, and at any time.

What is Plogging?

Plogging is a term that combines “jogging” with the Swedish word “plocka upp”, meaning “to pick up”. Plogging refers to the act of picking up litter while jogging outside; however it can also be done during any form of outdoor exercise, such as skating, cycling, walking, etc.

The plogging movement was founded by Erik Ahlström in 2016 after he moved to Stockholm and became surprised by the amount of litter he came across while cycling to work daily. So, he decided to make a change and began plogging during his free time.



Image

The simplicity and instant effectiveness of this initiative quickly gained attention from environmentalists and fitness enthusiasts alike. As news of this clean-up movement spread through the media, more people began to take part globally. The first official “plogga” (plogging event) was hosted in Stockholm in 2016, and by 2019, plogging had finally reached Kaunas!

Plogging in Kaunas

In 2019, the Citadele Kaunas marathon thought up a creative solution to reduce the amount of litter left behind after the event by incorporating the plogging initiative into the marathon.

After marathons and other major running events, cities are often left littered with single-use plastics and other trash. However, the organizers of the 2019 Citadele Kaunas marathon decided to change that. The day after the marathon, two groups of runners agreed to run 21 kilometres in total (around 10-11 kilometres per person) to collect any trash left behind after the event.

This initiative not only resulted in cleaner streets but also inspired others. Following the success of the Kaunas plogging event, the organizers of the Danske Bank Vilnius marathon decided to launch a similar initiative. The “Eko bėgimas” (“Eco-run”) was a free running event, encouraging people to clean up the streets of Vilnius as they ran.



Image

If you're interested in participating in future plogging events in Lithuania, check out the "Plogging in Lithuania" Facebook group!

The Final Four Sustainability Initiative and the Plogging Movement prove that community awareness campaigns can take many forms. They also demonstrate that starting a successful sustainability movement only requires one person. So, if you have a great idea for a community awareness campaign, go for it!

5. Sources and additional info

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