

2023 ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONTEST (FORMS 9–10)

PAIR DISCUSSION – 1

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*The discussion should take up to **5 minutes**.*

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- *comment on the events / people described in the text;*
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LRT receives international recognition as reliable media

LRT became the first public media organisation in the region to be awarded the internationally recognised JTI (the Journalism Trust Initiative) certificate.

“LRT has always been committed to maintaining high standards of honesty and reliability. A few years ago, LRT created the Code of Ethics of Journalists of LRT, and last year we adopted LRT's Editorial Policy. But we have no intention of stopping, and we are constantly improving our quality. That is why last year LRT joined the Journalism Trust Initiative, which provides international standards and enables media outlets to apply these standards in their own practice,” said Monika Garbačiauskaitė-Budrienė, director general of LRT.

LRT was evaluated based on a number of criteria, such as the accuracy of their news content, taking responsibility for the sources they use and following journalistic principles. As a result of meeting these standards, LRT was granted the JTI certificate. The JTI standards also include requirements for the organisation to ensure social guarantees for journalists, to have transparent recruitment guidelines, to ensure equal opportunities, to have a safety policy and to fulfil other obligations to its employees.

JTI standards were developed in 2019. Currently, more than 500 media outlets around the world are participating in the Journalism Trust Initiative at various stages of the process, with public service broadcasting organizations, such as France Télévisions, RTE News in Ireland, the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation SWI, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation CBC News/Radio-Canada being JTI certified.

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For the third year in a row, more Lithuanians come back to their home country than leave it

Net migration of Lithuanian citizens is positive for a third consecutive year, meaning that more Lithuanians are returning to the country than leaving it, the latest data from the Migration Department showed on Friday. Overall, most Lithuanians return from the United Kingdom, Norway and Germany. The Russian invasion of Ukraine, which started a year ago, has also affected the emigration of Lithuanians both from Russia and Ukraine.

Last year, a total of 14,352 Lithuanian citizens returned home and 12,697 left the country, according to the statistics available to the Migration Department from the country's Population Register. The last negative net migration of Lithuanian citizens was recorded in 2019 when 24,510 Lithuanian citizens left the country and 20,412 arrived.

Last year, the total number of permanent residents in Lithuania increased by 54,000 to 2,860,000. The Lithuanian government is taking an attempt to implement various measures to encourage the return of emigrants and to improve the overall quality of life in the country. These include initiatives to create more job opportunities, improve social services and provide financial incentives for returning citizens.

The positive trend in net migration can also help to address demographic challenges that Lithuania has been facing in recent years, such as an aging population and declining birth rates. With more Lithuanians returning to the country, the government can hope to address these challenges and promote sustainable long-term growth for the country.

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How is global warming changing nature in Lithuania?

The climate and nature tend to change over many years. But global warming means that these changes are happening much faster than they should. How is nature in Lithuania changing and how will it look a few decades from now?

“I still remember what nature was like 40 years ago. We used to have 300 bird species, and now we have 404 or 405. Some birds just visit Lithuania, but there are already some that live here permanently, even though we had no idea that they could live here,” says nature photographer Marius Čepulis.

As Lithuania’s climate changes, some plant species will inevitably become extinct. Some animals will also start migrating as the climate becomes unfavourable to them. The freed-up space in nature in Lithuania will be occupied by new species of plants and animals that will arrive from abroad. This process is already underway. Besides that, the effects of climate change on nature are exacerbated by humans. People used to and are going on bringing invasive plant species to Lithuania that can now spread more easily because of the warming climate.

“Nature can cope with the worst disasters. It is very flexible, driven by a survival mechanism. Climate change teaches us one more lesson – nature will adapt to it in one way or another. The question is whether we, humans, will be able to successfully adapt to climate change”, says climatologist Gintarė Klimienė.

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Lithuania could be set to be Europe's deeptech hotspot

Data from Innovation Agency Lithuania shows that Lithuania came in second in the EU with a quarter of students choosing STEM academic disciplines. Lithuania also ranks second among OECD* countries with 49% of women in science.

"We have very strong universities in life sciences. The development of technologies and institutional know-how greatly contributes to the growth of the deeptech sector. We have quite a lot of core competencies within Lithuania not only in molecular biology technologies but also within the AI sector in life sciences — two core areas are diagnostics of diseases from images like radiology or protein and molecule library development," says Juozas Nainys, Chief Executive Officer at Droplet Genomics.

"The generous public funding opportunities are a driver for deeptech in Lithuania," says Roberta Rudokienė, head of Startup Lithuania. Startup Lithuania is the country's national startup ecosystem facilitator which helps Lithuanian startups at all stages of their development — from idea implementation to their international promotion. It is backed by Innovation Agency Lithuania, the official public agency responsible for the promotion of innovation in the country.

Andrius Šlekys, head of business development at Lithuanian laser microfabrication development, says that the government should focus on encouraging the best startups to grow. "Talented people who're not afraid to work hard, who have good educational qualifications and experience and don't choose the easy path of working at established firms and come back to Lithuania, roll up their sleeves and build," says Šlekys.

* The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

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A new program to teach students how to start their own businesses launches in Lithuania

A leader in economic and entrepreneurship education programs “Lithuanian Junior Achievement”, together with Marius Jakulis Jason (MJJ) foundation will implement a new entrepreneurship project in Lithuania – “Class X”. In the first stage of the project, as many as 100 10th and 11th grade students from schools in Alytus, Jonava and Šiauliai will participate and create their own business ideas.

In the first classes, entrepreneurship and financial literacy education students, with the help of economic and entrepreneurship teachers, will create as many as 15 innovative business ideas. The project will also involve professional business mentors who will share their experiences, practical advice and insights with students.

“Class X” is an initiative to highlight the cultural change in education. Inventive problem-solving, a mindset that is open for opportunities, persistence in achieving goals and confidence in one’s ability to act – those are the X factors for a successful career in the 21st century. In “Class X” we will teach all of these skills as we will have a friendly space for students to learn from each other, share their discoveries and lessons learned,” rejoices Andželika Rusteikienė, the Head of “Lithuanian Junior Achievement”.

At the end of the project, representatives of the most successful young business teams will participate in a camp for young leaders during which they will meet entrepreneurs, visit innovative companies and participate in additional leadership competence development programs.

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Lithuania makes it to top 20 happiest countries in the world

Finland has been named the happiest country in the world for the sixth year in a row. Lithuania, meanwhile, has made it to the top 20 for the first time, according to the World Happiness Report published on Monday.

The report is compiled annually based on the surveys conducted by the Gallup Institute. This year, the happiest Finns are followed by Denmark, Iceland, Israel, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and New Zealand. Lithuania, ranked 20th, made it to the top for the first time, pushing France to the 21st place. The Baltic country has steadily risen from 52nd place in 2017. Estonia (ranked 31st) and Latvia (41st) are also climbing up the list.

“It’s essentially the same story that’s playing out in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe,” John Helliwell, one of the authors of the World Happiness Report, was quoted by CNN. “Countries in these regions probably have normalised after the post-1990 transition and are feeling more solid in their new identity”, he added.

According to researchers, people’s happiness ratings have remained resilient despite the Covid-19 pandemic, with global averages for 2020-2022 as high as they were before the pandemic in 2017-2019. The report, which is a publication of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, draws on global survey data from people in more than 150 countries. Countries are ranked on happiness based on their average life evaluations over the three preceding years.

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A dune opens up in southern Lithuania

Dzūkija National Park (DNP) features the largest mass of continental dunes in Lithuania. To preserve the unique continental dunes, the authorities have established four geomorphological reserves at the DNP. However, almost all of the dunes in Dzūkija are forested. Now, part of the forest will be cut down to open up at least one continental dune. According to the DNP, this will also help preserve endangered species, as well as help foster tourism.

“It was a desire to open up the dunes not only to biodiversity, but also to their knowledge so that visitors could see their vast expanse and their expressiveness when driving by,” DNP director Eimutis Gudelevičius told LRT TV. “Eighty-seven percent of the DNP is forested [and] these dunes have disappeared in these forests,” Gudelevičius added.

According to the head of Dzūkija National Park, the park will start building tourist stands and other infrastructure once the trees are removed. The clearing will also allow visitors “to see the processes of the mainland dunes”, added Gudelevičius.

According to Dr. Mindaugas Lapelė, a biologist specialising in biomedical sciences, the dunes will help preserve species, including lizards and snakes. “These open spaces were very favourable for those southern species that are found nowhere else in Lithuania,” said Lapelė. “There are species listed in the Red Book that we are responsible for preserving, and those areas are getting smaller and smaller.”

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Kėdainiai set to welcome Pon.Bike bicycle factory

Don't be surprised if your future favourite bicycle will be made in Lithuania — the world's largest bicycle manufacturer Pon.Bike with headquarters in the Netherlands is building a new factory in Kėdainiai. 450,000 bicycles will be produced here every year. The new factory will assemble bikes by various world-famous brands including Gazelle, Kalkhoff, Focus and Urban Arrow.

This is Pon.Bike's eighth and most modern factory. The company's other factories are located in the Netherlands, Germany, the U.S. and Brazil. Other possible sites for the investment were Poland and Portugal, but in the end Lithuania was chosen as the best site for the new factory.

Pon.Bike is setting up its operations in the 130-hectare Kėdainiai Free Economic Zone (FEZ). By the end of the third quarter of 2024, the company will employ around 300 people, mainly in the areas of bicycle assembling, frame painting, and warehouse logistics. Afterwards the number of employees is expected to grow and reach 600.

Pon.Bike was founded in 2011 after acquiring Royal Dutch Gazelle, the leading high-quality bicycle manufacturer in the Netherlands. Since then, Pon.Bike has been building a range of premium bicycle brands around the world. Pon.Bike has a strong commitment to sustainability and takes measures to reduce its environmental impact. For example, it uses sustainable materials in its products and has a zero-waste policy in its production facilities. The company also supports various initiatives to promote cycling and improve cycling infrastructure, such as the development of bike-sharing programs and the construction of bike paths.