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## Short introduction by Kaarina Williams

Dear supporters of the Baltic Sea Youth cooperation,

The year 2020 was challenging in many ways and all generations had to change habits, well-known routines and adjust to the new circumstances.

In our region, the Baltic Sea Region, a lot has changed during this year. Moreover, while we were deprived from many things, we found new ways to get together and strengthen our ties. We learned to value travelling without borders, the possibility to meet and exchange visions, as well as exchange programs in schools and universities a lot more. Even though we have been physically apart, we have developed new ways to meet, to talk and to learn together. One crucial thing we all learned is that not even closed borders will ever divide us again.

Already in the beginning of 2020, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) along with many partners in the region founded the new Baltic Sea Youth Platform, kindly funded by Erasmus+, a project to empower young people in our region.

It is one out of many great examples of what has been achieved since the launch of the very first Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue in 2014. The Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue (BSYD) is a well-known brand and a tool for fostering political education, debate, and exchange among young people in the region, kindly financed by the German Federal Foreign Office. Once a year, up to 25 young visionaries meet at a destination in the Baltic Sea Region, to discuss a timely topic of Baltic Sea Region policy-making.

We, at the CBSS, know how important it is to give a stage to the next generation of region builders and we knew that in 2020 this is even

more important. No generation can be left behind. Therefore, we organized the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue 2020 in a different format.

We decided to launch a competition to showcase the vision and talent of young people in and for our region.

The “Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue 2020 – let’s create a sustainable future together”, encompassed competitions in creative writing, graphic design or developing of a project idea. Within five weeks during November and December 2020, young people between 18 and 30 years handed in essays on “overcoming borders”, chapters of a children’s book on sustainable development, posters on youth cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region and project ideas on a broad variety of urgent societal issues.

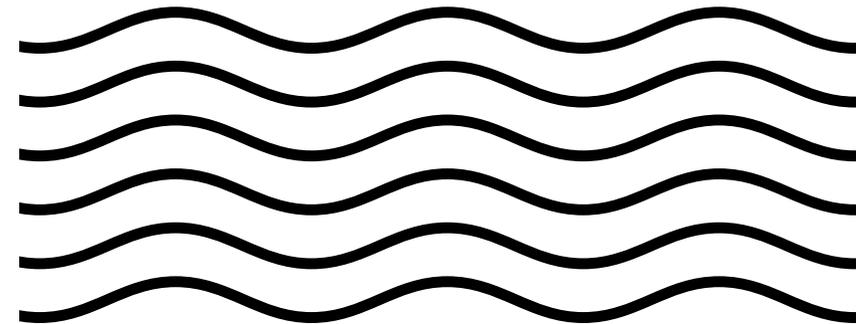
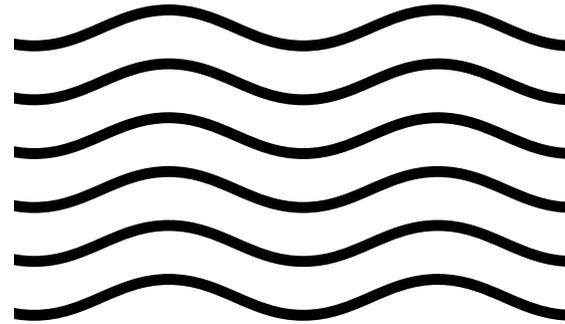
With more than 50 submissions in total, the three renowned juries consisting of Baltic Sea wide experts had to make very hard choices to filter the best work out of all the fantastic ideas. It was amazing how creative and engaged all the entries were – how positive and numerous the response to this competition was. The number and quality of all the submissions overwhelmed us. The participation was quite balanced and equally distributed among gender, age, and background.

With this brochure, we want to pay tribute and thank all the participants, organisers, funders and jury members for being part of this extraordinary Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue 2020. What you can read and see here is a selection of the top-ranking entries. We want to show the fantastic artwork produced and make it visible to the whole Baltic Sea Region.

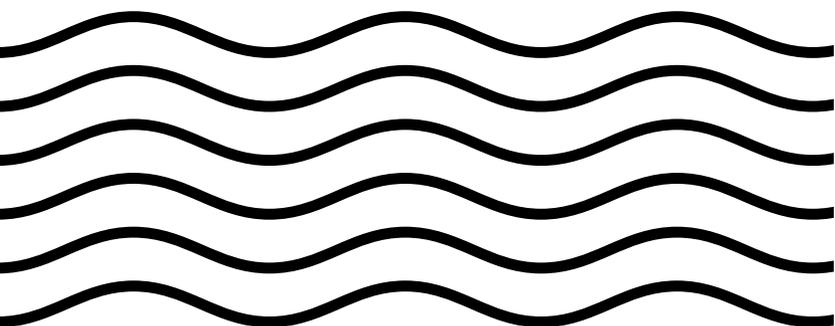
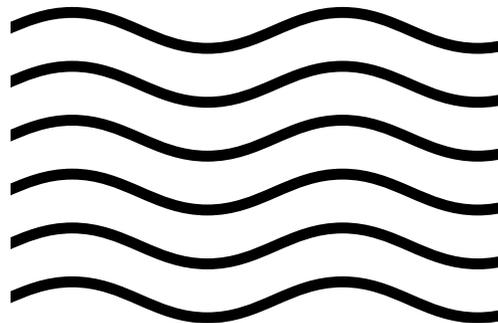
We strongly believe that by listening to the young people’s voices and their artistic expression as in this project, we contribute to building a sustainable future for the Baltic Sea region by empowering youth as future region-builders and building a strong regional identity.

We wish you enjoyable moments with this booklet!

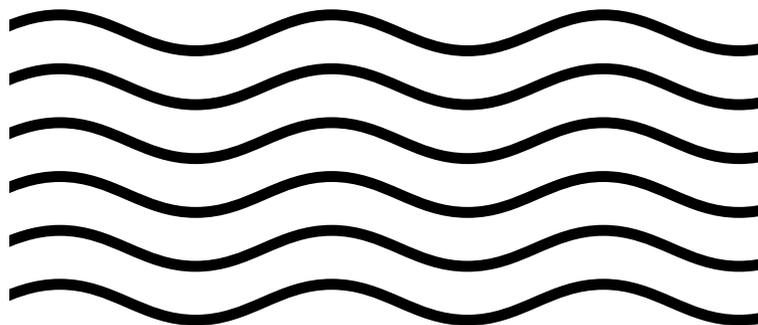
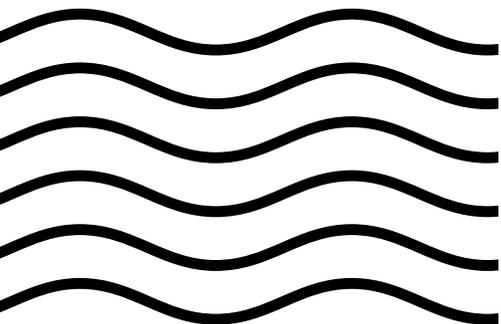
Kaarina Williams, Aline Mayr and the BSYD 2020 Team



1st place  
GUSTĒ MERGIŪNAITĒ

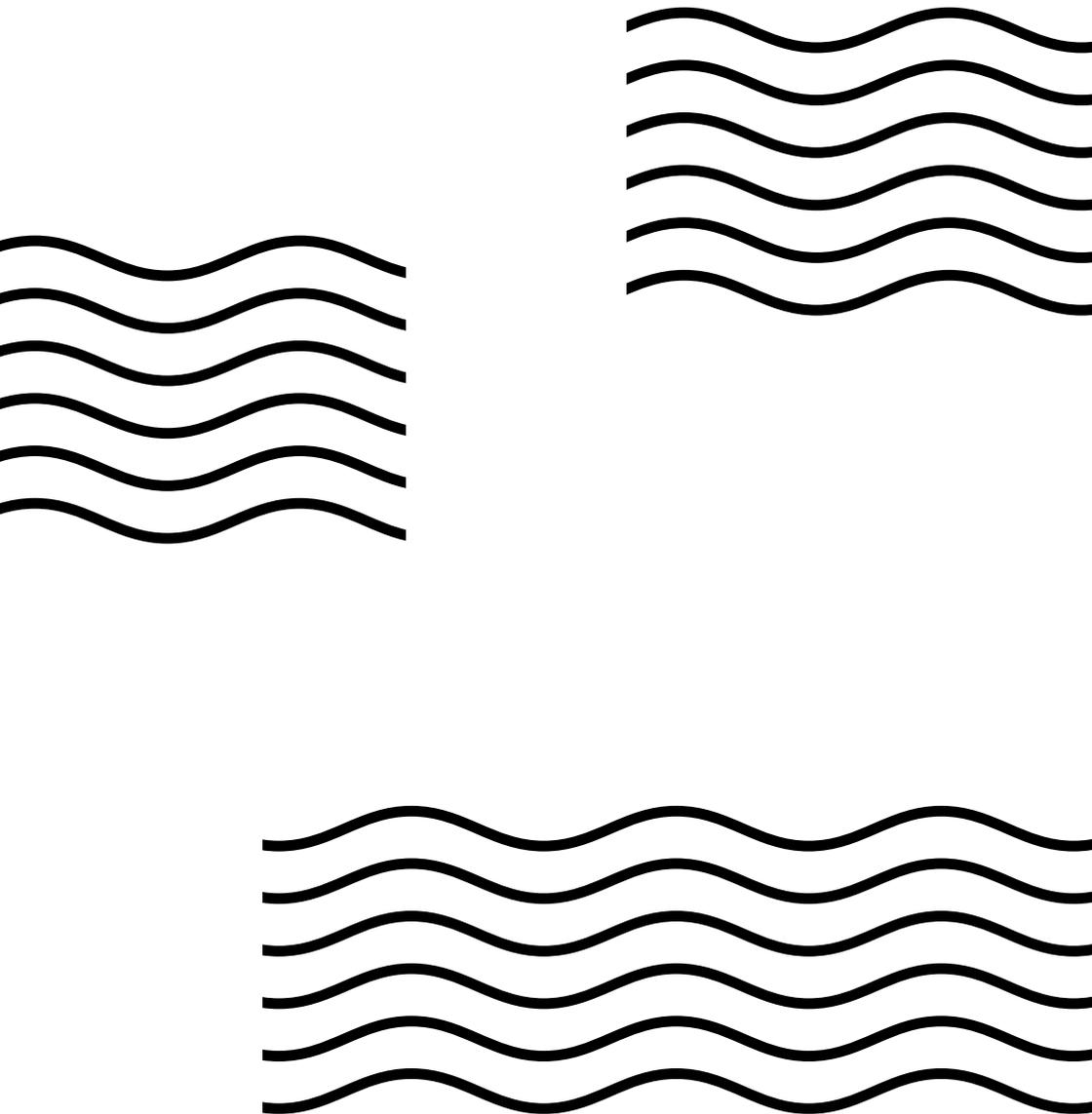


2nd place  
**GRETA RADZEVIČIŪTĖ**



3rd place  
ANIA WÓJCIK

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# WOULD YOU CARE MORE

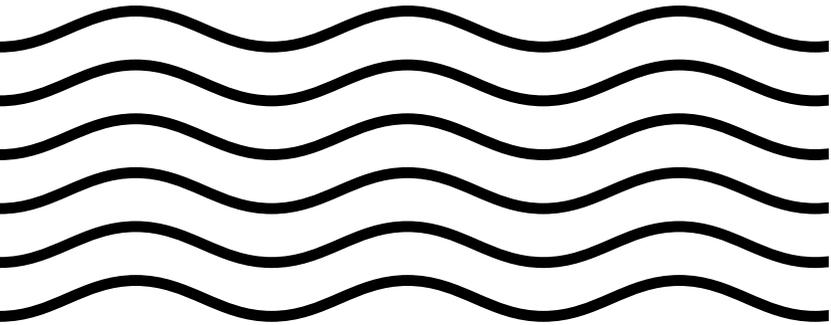
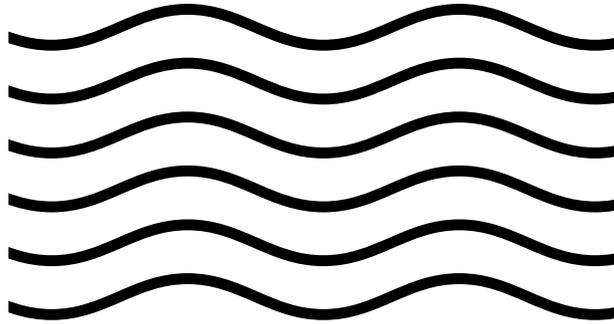
IF WE WERE CLOSER

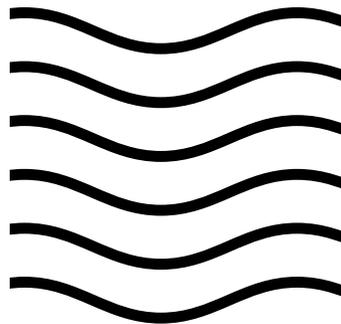
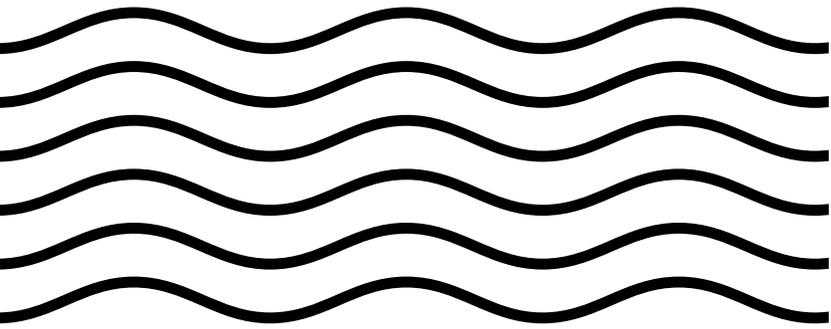


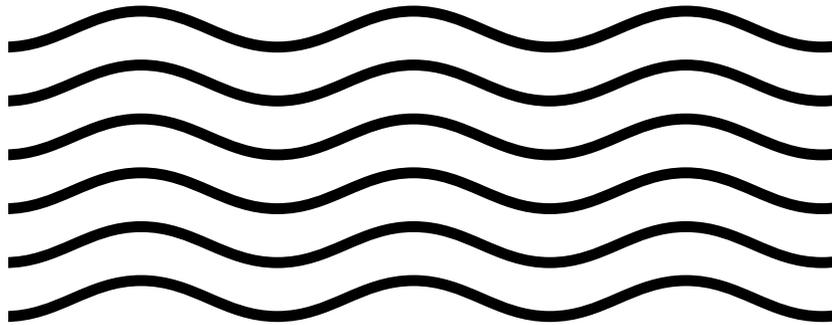
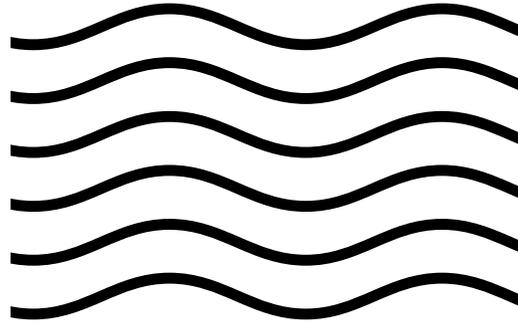
\*There are only 500 harbour porpoises left in Baltic Sea. Due to coastal areas of habitat they often get entangled in fishing nets. They are critically endangered. If you want the next generation to enjoy them in the sea we need to act now and provide new safety measures that could protect their habitats.

ALEX NAEME  
LARSEN

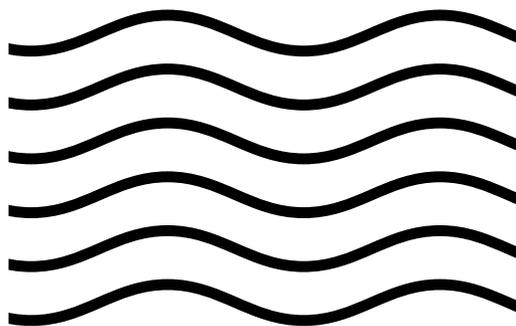
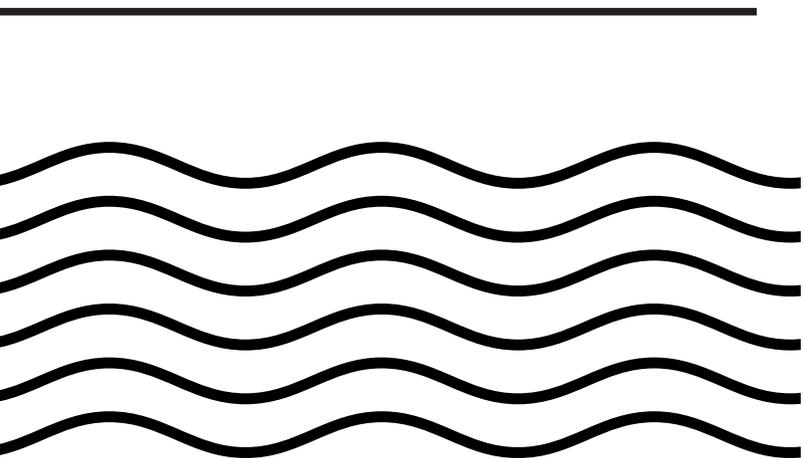
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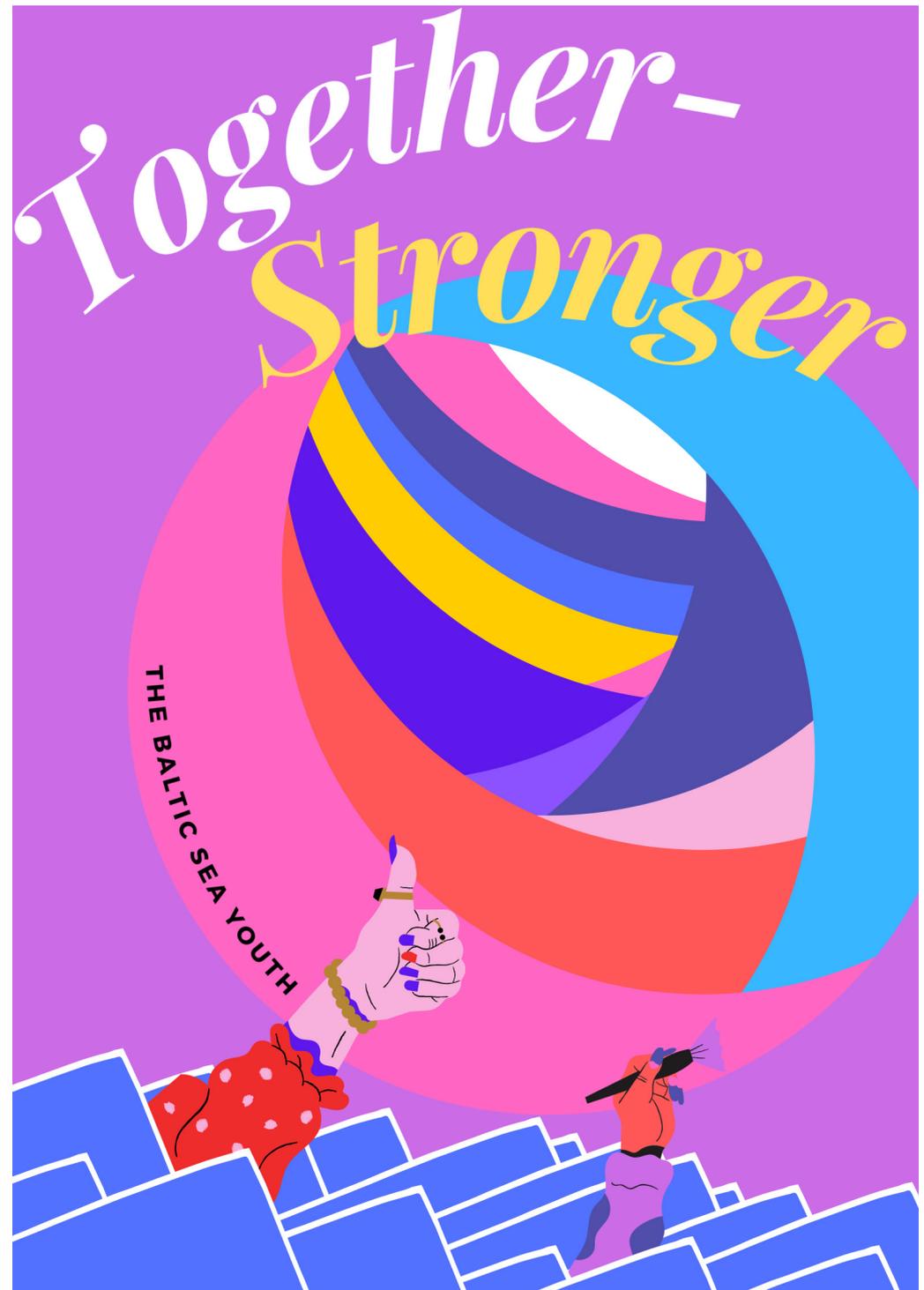
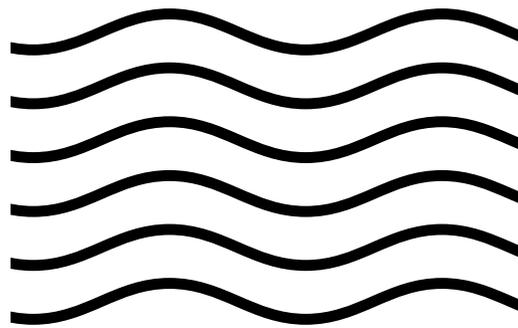
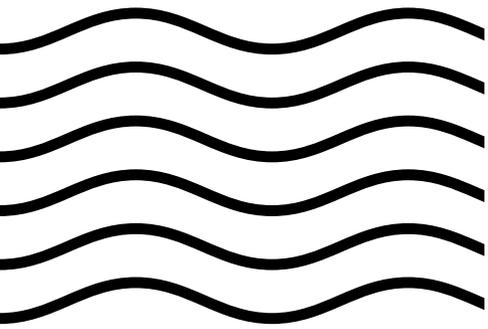






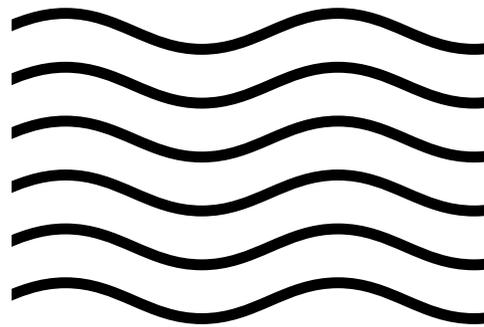
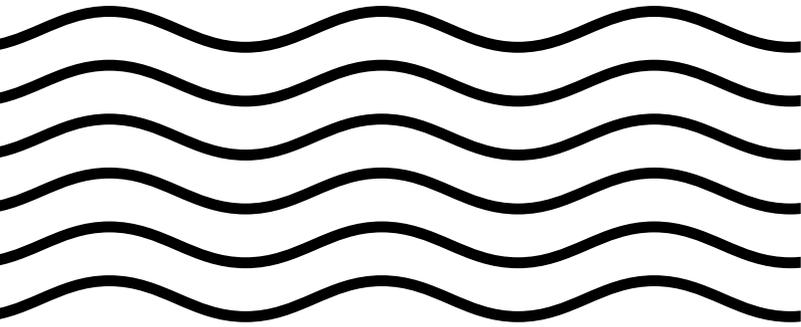
DANILA  
ROENKO





STEFĀNIJA  
STEPIŅA

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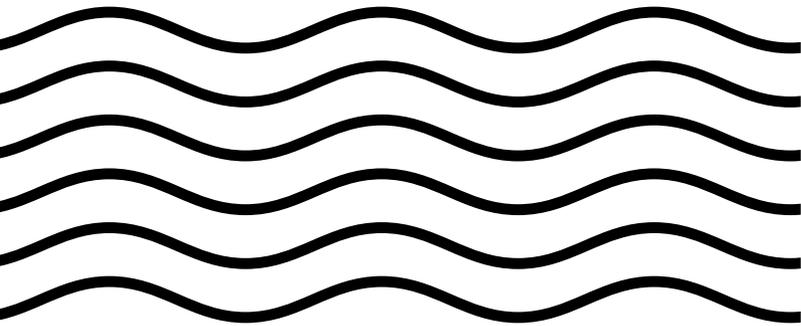


Baltic Sea  
Youth  
Dialogue



**ALYONA  
TRAFIMOVA**

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## 1st place LA MAR - BY ALISE ILENA

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My sea is hissing and sparkling – at least this is how colorful environmental posters, stuck on the walls all around the city, say, reminding us we should all get involved in saving our herring. And I am sure we do have to save herring, and that the sea, its presence in our lives and its preservation is a base for our feeling of balance, belonging and home. This is a story about and for the sea – a big friend for people like me, who breathe sea air from the very beginning.

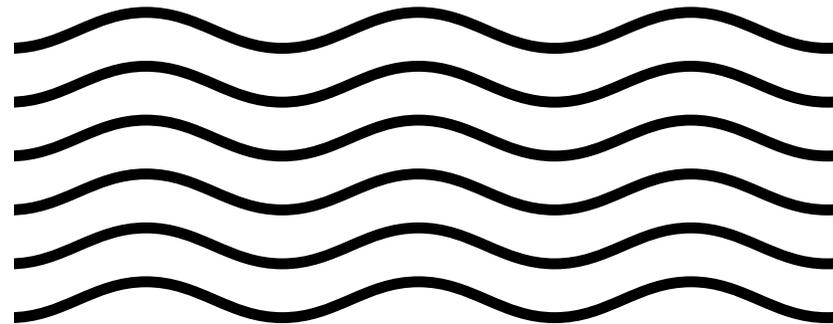
Our sea, for some, might not seem perfect – not only it hisses and sparkles, but it is also icy cold most of the time, but this fact doesn't stop my family and me from swimming in its waters from April till late October. We realised once that it's not fair to our sea to wait till it gets warm – if you want the sea to be warm, there are warm seas out there, but you must accept your own sea as it is – with loud seagulls above the water and crows at the beach, who keep trying to sneak your treats, prepared for the picnic, with pine cones that somehow get in the sand occasionally and cause pain if stepped on, but also together with their pine tree mothers create this chilly spicy smell you always remember, even if far from home.

I know everyone's sea is different all around the world, I know it from many books about the sea on my bookshelf and from stories my grandmother used to tell me about mysterious undines and courageous pirates and poor fishermen, full of hope. I broke my leg a couple of autumns ago and had to stay at the hospital, and the girl I liked very much brought me her favourite book: "I've read it like seven times" she said, "you will also like it for sure" she said. It was Ernest Hemingway's "Old man and the sea" and I did like it, not just because I liked the girl. I remember how the fishman was explaining why his fellow old fishman friends refer to the sea as "el mar", as if the sea was her, a woman: "He always thought of the sea as 'la mar' which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her." I liked this idea, but I also knew it was a case for some other, warm and faraway sea – because I knew that mine, our sea, was obviously a boy: shaggy, edgy and unpredictable,

but always very young.

I know what I'm saying: we live by the sea when it's summer, and don't want to miss a bit from it, so we find at least half an hour every day to visit an old – I mean young friend, no matter what the weather is like. Maybe, when you have to spend hours by car to get there, you won't be excited to go to the sea on a stormy day or in a foggy morning, let's say, at 6am. And if you only know the sea based on your summer vacation experience, then you can think too well of it, too. For the half of the year, when we live in a crumbling wooden house many kilometers away from the big city, I see sea every day: in the heat, when there are children playing on the beach and bouncy inflatable balls fly back and forth but the sand is covered with a mosaic of once colorful sunburned towels; right after the rain, when there is no one else at the coast, in a thunderstorm, when the water is black and looks angry and in November, when it is prickly and starts to cover with ice.

And when the season is over and we go back to the city, I would sometimes have a dream about the sea, and then in the morning I would dress up warmly and go to the shore. It is easy to do: takes twenty minutes by trolleybus No. 22, I sit by the window and look at the old church, an abandoned shoemaker's workshop (they used to fix ladies' heels here and could sharpen some tools if you needed at times I haven't been born and didn't live in this city), dark grey parks, a school and a bakery. Then I get to the train station, which smells like tur and custard buns at the same time, pay about 1.20 euro for the ticket, now it is 20 more minutes by train – and there I am. It is not summer anymore, but it is still it, my sea, always there, when needed.



Even today I vividly remember running across the hot sand, the salty air stroking through my hair while my parents were struggling to set up a blanket and look after their two very energetic kids, aged five and six, at once. Together with my younger brother I basically grew up visiting the beaches of the Baltic Sea in the North of Germany every summer. The last opportunity I got to see the places that had basically witnessed me growing older had been before the lockdown - when breathing without fabric covering my face had yet to seem like a piece of freedom.

Back in June I turned eighteen and instead of going swimming I stayed home. The familiar feeling of sunscreen sticking to my skin faded, just like the sea itself is nowadays.

I started to wonder how many times I will be able to visit the shore, shushing away the seagulls which tried to attack the ice cream cone in my hand. Or complaining about the never-ending amount of sand we would drag home after every single trip. In our shoes, underneath the carpet, in some corner months later, we would always find more. Little six-year-old me was convinced that the beaches and the water wouldn't end anywhere.

But nothing lasts forever. A desert can run out of sand, an ocean can run out of water, a human can run out of days to live. Time changes everything and sometimes our existence is to blame.

It's us who leave broken bottles behind, who throw smoked cigarettes away. While the Baltic Sea witnessed me becoming an adult, I had to watch it turning into a trash dump for more and more people. My personal wonderland got dirtied, not only literally, but practically. And whenever I found myself picking up the signs of mistreatment to reduce the danger of injuries, I wanted to clench my hands into fists despite them being filled with shattered glass. The sea might not feel the pain, I certainly do. The day I couldn't celebrate my birthday at this special place I realised that the virus threatens our existence, but rewards nature with a break that was long overdue.

Suddenly I found it much easier to stay put in my room because our unintelligent species is forced to stop from ruining our very own resources. The elements that keep us alive. You don't have to like swimming to understand that the water functions as a storage for carbon dioxide. Yet we don't seem to grasp its importance for our existence.

„Do you know what happens when you boil water for too long?“ My mom had once asked me this questions during a car ride that I had gotten bored on years ago. She told me I had nodded and had explained how the water would disappear. Right, it disappears. That is the easy way to describe the outcome of climate change, if we continue to walk in our tracks.

The virus is our opportunity - We need to seize it. Once we have control over the pandemic with a vaccine, the horrors of lockdowns and self-isolation will vanish soon enough. At this very moment we are running out of time, not because our ecosystems are dying, but because we are.

On top of that, studies show that six out of ten kids can't properly swim in Germany since no one has taught them. Most of them have not seen a real ocean in their lives so far - Why do schools still have to teach elementary school students about the functions of an ecosystem, instead of actually visiting them? When I was their age I confidently let the waves rock my body while my parents, who had shown me how to use my limbs in order not to sink, were watching from nearby. Nothing has been able to compare to the sensation of floating on the soft surface like I was a weightless snowflake dancing through the air.

We are born with a limited, but unknown amount of days on our life account. In this way we reassemble the grains of sand at the coast, seemingly endless in number and ending somewhere nevertheless. There is no reason to miss out on opportunities.

Humans come and go, the Baltic Sea has remained ever since. Let's protect all these wonderful spots that should be surrounded by laughter, not pain or cruelty.

## 3rd place NETTIE - BY ANIA WÓJCIK

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Created in cooperation with Tess Hudson, marine biologist involved in rescue action in Iceland

*[OPENING ILLUSTRATION – Nettie + her mom, other whales in the distance, tropical landscape in the distance, main focus on underwater big whale and smaller whale]*

Based on real story, Book by Ania & Tess

*Nettie is a story for early readers.*

*It's a story about a whale who got entangled in a fishing net.*

*It's a story about overcoming life changing problems.*

*It's a story that goes through 5 stages of grief and sends a message, bringing up many underwater problems of our times.*

Nettie was born in tropical waters of south atlantic ocean where she was learning everything she from her mom. She knew that the faster she learns the sooner she will start her big journey to the north like every Humpback whale does.

- I'm so proud of you Nettie! You are ready to go - said her mom with a little glazed eyes.

And so... excited Nettie joyfully started her very first journey.

*[1. FIRST ILLUSTRATION – bigger Nettie jumping out of water, her mom at the surface – swimming away]*

She would swim and swim, exploring the ocean, admiring the vast underwater world full of gazers. cool looking fish and all kinds of weird looking creatures.

- Hi, Albert! Looking good with that shell – said Nettie to her good friend Crab Albert.

*[2. SECOND ILLUSTRATION – Nettie in the ocean surrounded by cool stuff and crab somewhere]*

She would come to the surface every now and then to take some fresh air. She would always greet the birds if she see them.

- Hello Nettie! - said Barbara, the northern gannet flying same direction as Nettie was swimming. *[3. THIRD ILLUSTRATION – Smiling Nettie at the surface, Gannet above her looking at her, more birds in the distance?]*

*[4. FOURTH ILLUSTRATION – Big tail and the net, focus on the tail & net]*

Suddenly Nettie felt she couldn't swim so freely. She looked around and noticed something very heavy around her tail and flippers. She struggled and struggled to shake it off but nothing seem to help and she was feeling it's dragging her down in the ocean.

How this could have happened? - thought Nettie feeling lots of anxiety

*[5. FIFTH ILLUSTRATION – Zoom in for sad Nettie face, dark water around, Net in the front layer of the picture – Expression of Nettie realising how bad the situation is] [Stage 1 - Denial]*

Nettie was very scared. She was trying and trying to shake it off but it only made things worse. She looked around and could see other animals swimming away from her scared of her rapid movements.

- Why this had to happen to me? - she thought in anger.

*[6. SIXTH ILLUSTRATION – Shocked crab Albert at the bottom of the ocean and big Nettie in the background covered in Net ] [Stage 2 – Anger, Blaming]*

Nettie reached the bottom of the sea. She was so tired of fighting and the net felt so heavy. She looked down and there was Albert, her good friend was so concerned about her.

- It's all humans. How can they be so careless about us. I will never be nice to any human again.

[7. SEVENTH ILLUSTRATION – Sad crab Albert trying to cut net around Nettie with no success]

[Stage 2 – Anger]

- Let me help you Nettie! I will do all I can to get you free – said Albert  
- You're way to small Albert – said Nettie and pushed Albert away  
Albert became very sad with Nettie reaction but he knew she's very stressed and he should support her anyway. He climbed on a rock and screamed after her:

- I'm sure you will find a way to get free! Swim to the surface and ask birds for help.

[8. EIGHTH ILLUSTRATION – Nettie aiming for the surface] [Stage 3 – Bargaining]

Nettie was very upset but she decided to take Albert's advice.

- Why did I swam that way? I could have taken another path and this wouldn't have happend to me.

She swam and swam using all her strength until finally she gasped for fresh air at the surface.

[9. NINTH ILLUSTRATION – Surprised Gannet Barbara looking down at Nettie, sky with other birds in the distance and the open ocean, top view on entangled Nettie down there]

- Oh no! what happened Nettie? Are you ok? - No, could you try to take it off me?

[10. TENTH ILLUSTRATION – Barbara trying to pull the net with her beak, no success]

So Barbara aimed down for Nettie with her full speed trying to take the net away. She tried and tried, flying up and down, diving deep and shallow, but she wasn't strong enough to pull the net out of Nettie.

- I'm so sorry Nettie, I'm too small. Maybe someone in the water could help you – said Barbara Nettie just looked down with her big sad eyes, she took a deep breath and went for another dive.

[11. ELEVENTH ILLUSTRATION – Nettie diving deep, the water in the bottom of the page gets darker, the top of the page brings light and shows diving birds behind her]

[Stage 4 – Depression]

She struggled on without knowing when or if she ever feels better. She knew she may not survive this. She used to be so cheerful and careless, now it felt impossible to be ever happy again.

[12. TWELVETH ILLUSTRATION – Turtle Arnar – but we don't know yet it's him, a dark silhouette is approaching Nettie, it doesn't look like just a turtle cause he has a straw in his nose and some trash attached to it]

[Stage 5 – Acceptance]

Suddenly in the darkness of water she notices a weird looking shadow. She was feeling so heavy and moving so slowly, whatever it was she didn't care anymore. The shadow was getting closer and closer and eventually spoke:

- Hello! How are you? It looks like you've got into big trouble here. Are you in pain? – asked the shadow

- Yes it hurts so much. I don't know if I can carry it any more.

- But what's your choice? - asked the shadow and continued to slowly getting closer

- What's my choice? I don't want a life like that. I want to go back to how it was before.

[13. THIRTEENTH ILLUSTRATION – Zoom at turtle Arnar, he has a straw in his nose and some trash around it, lots of scars on his back, he's been through a lot. ]

[Stage 5 – Acceptance]

- Life surprises us sometimes with things we can't control. It may seem like end of the world but you'll see it's not. Those things make us stronger. You just have to keep on swimming and have hope for the best. - said Turtle Arnar

and added - I wish you best Nettie. Look how far you've swam already, it will get better.

*[14. FOURTEENTH ILLUSTRATION – Swimming Nettie through two book pages, landscape in the distance]*

So Nettie continued her journey to the north. She was so determined to live and even though the net was causing her pain, she refused to give up. She kept on swimming staying close to the surface. Eventually she noticed a landscape in the distance – Iceland, finally.

She noticed she's getting lots of attention from passing boats so she decided stay at the surface and observe. One human was yelling a lot. She couldn't understand what is it about so she continued to swim being followed by the boat.

*[15. FIFTEENTH ILLUSTRATION – Nettie under water, the boat and hands above the water]*

- Joi, we need to turn the boat. We have to approach it from the other side. - said voice at the surface.

Suddenly Nettie was surrounded by boats and voices. Someone jumped into the water. She was very confused and tried to swim away but they were keep blocking her way. She felt lighter. She realised one of the humans cut a piece of the rope on her tail.

All of the sudden she felt free. She swam to the surface and heard cheering voices from the boats. Humans were happy.

*[16. SIXTEENTH ILLUSTRATION – Free Nettie Jumping out of the water]*

- They helped me – she thought.

She realised she's finally free and she was so happy she jumped out of the water. It felt so great! She did that again and again and decided she will always come back to place that made her so happy.

*[CLOSING ILLUSTRATION – FACTS ABOUT WHALES & OCEAN PROBLEMS]*

*Humpback whale – Humpback whales are mammals that live in the oceans all over the world. They can grow up to 17 meters and weight up to 40 tones.*

*Map – These whales are migratory species that spend summers in tropical waters where they breed and teach young whales how to sing and survive, and winters in cold waters of the north where they go to look for food.*

*Eating whale / whale with an open mouth – These are baleen whales, this means they don't have teeth, instead of teeth they have baleen plates that look a bit like a very big toothbrush in their mouth and it works as a filter system to separate food from water.*

*Krill & Grapefruit – Humpback whales feed on Plankton, Krill & Small fish. Due to size of their throat they cannot swallow thing that is bigger than a grapefruit.*

*Surface Blow – Whales are deep divers but they have lungs just like us and they have to come to the surface to breathe.*

*Net – Fishing nets are one of the greatest dangers for whales. They can get caught in the net and get very hurt or even die. Lots of people around the world are trying to help solve that problem however whales can be very stressed when that happens. If you ever see a whale that is in trouble, don't try to help him by yourself, call the coast guards or whale friendly institution that will know how to help without stressing the animal more.*

*Turtle, Crab & Gannet – Whales are not the only ones in need of attention. Pollution in the seas has never been higher and lots of animals get in trouble because of that.*

# PHOCO AND NOISY MONSTERS - BY JOHANNA SONNENBERG

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Do you know the big monsters that cross the Baltic Sea every day? Phoco knows them all too well. He is a little porpoise and lives with his family in the Baltic Sea. Their home is a small bay. They call it Piano Bay, because it is one of the rare places in the Baltic Sea where you do not need to cover your ears. There are no big monsters in the Piano Bay, but outside they are regularly seen on the sea surface. Their appearance is not the most frightening. What Phoco really is afraid of is their terrible noise. If he gets too close to them, he loses his coordination and he does not know where up and down is. His ears are even more important for his sense of orientation than his eyes. But still he sometimes tries to get close to a monster because he is very curious. His parents told him that the monsters were created by humans and that they are called ships. The humans use them to transport food from one country to another or to get toys, electronics and even cars from far away. Often the products are shipped halfway around the world. Phoco cannot even imagine such a long distance. He has never left the Baltic Sea. His parents also told him that some humans spend their holidays on one of those ships. Phoco can understand this even less. He does not like the monsters. Nevertheless, he wants to find out whether his parents told him the truth.

One day Phoco swam with a friend outside the Piano Bay. They did not have to wait long before they heard the loud sound of a ship's engine approaching. They decided to get closer and have a look at the ship. They swam so close to the ship that they could barely bear the noise. Then they jumped out of the water again and again and tried to see what the ship was transporting. Phoco's friend was a bit wild and little by little he came closer to the ship. Whenever he jumped out of the water, the noise of the ship was bearable. But as soon as he was out of breath and stopped jumping, his ears began to hurt badly and he lost his orientation. Fortunately, Phoco saw his friend tumbling through the water. He bravely swam in his direction, even though he had to stand the noise. When he reached him, he felt his ears were

about to burst, but he held on and brought his friend back to safety. This was a great shock for both of them and so they swam right back to the safe Piano Bay. After a few hours their ears recovered and slowly they could hear normally again. Then they talked about what they had seen. "I have seen a lot of colorful containers on the ship. What do you think is inside them?" said Phoco. His friend answered: "I think I could see an imprint of red, yellow and green round fruits." Phoco remembered a conversation between his parents. They were talking about the strange nature of some humans. They want to eat the same food all year round, like apples in spring or strawberries in winter. "Maybe, there are apples inside them. I think apples can be red, yellow and green. I know from my parents that apples can only be harvested in autumn near the Baltic Sea. But humans export them from all over the world so they can eat them the whole year. And it is the same with many other foods. Probably there was food in the other containers as well". Their curiosity was for the time being satisfied and the shock was still there. They decided to avoid every ship, even if they could not find out what it was transporting.

In the evening Phoco went to sleep and he still had to think about the ships and how dangerous they are. When he fell asleep, he dreamed of a better world for himself and his family, a world with several national parks, island of peace and quietness, where no noisy monsters are ever seen. The porpoises and other sea creatures live there in peace. Every little porpoise in the world has a place where he or she can play without having to fear the big monsters. Some ships still cross the Baltic Sea, but there are fewer and they are less noisy. Humans have developed quieter engines and an old technique, sailing, is increasingly being used again. Sailboats use the energy of the wind to move forward and therefore do not need engines. In addition, more local food and products are consumed, so less shipping is required.

The next time you are at the sea, you can check if there is a good playground and home for porpoises. Look around, do you see any big monsters in the water? If you go swimming and there are not many waves, you can put your ear in the water. Is it loud or quiet under water? Do you hear a ship engine?

# AN UNPLEASANT TOPIC FOR ME - BY RINALDS ONCKULIS

As a Latvian, I'd think that my country's territory is apart from Sweden and Poland as well as the many other European countries. Although our territories may be geographically separated, there is something in nature that we can relate to, that we have in common. The sandy shore, blue waves, and the never-ending vastness. The Baltic sea. For a traveler, it may seem like a pond. But for a child, it is an ocean. Of course, the Baltic sea is important, but which little spot of nature isn't?

And yet there are more widely known seas. The Mediterranean, which witnessed the birth of democracy on its belly. And transferred ideas of the first philosophers all over its basin. This sea saw empires rise and fall but still laid unmoved from the slightest human touch. The Baltic sea isn't as fierce for explorers as the Bering sea neither as attractive to tourists as the Black sea. It isn't like the Caribbean which greeted Europeans just 500 years ago. For generations, Caribbean underwent the scourge of pirates, then the rise of enlightenment on its corally back. Whole populations, even civilizations came and went but the seas remained still. Seas would always ferociously shake our tiny ships and wet the bones of every sailor who would dare to enter tempestuous waters.

Confucius has said that "The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones." Centuries flew by one after another until humans became so enlightened they could re-move mountains using the most wondrous tools. Without even touching a single stone. As a population we do so many things that seas have to resolve and endure only by themselves. That is why we shouldn't forget the Aral sea. This is an example of what can happen when we kindly take benefits one by one. Just like stones. Suddenly it's too late to realize we have grabbed one benefit too much. We have gradually moved a mountain which we didn't want to move! Don't misunderstand! We aren't thieves! Certainly not pirates! But we would talk to the sea. If only we could... We certainly would! But the sea doesn't speak English. Nor it speaks any of the human languages. Too bad... Only if we could speak the language of nature... Or at least read nature. But wait! This is

exactly what we have been doing for the whole era of our species! We have been reading nature. And we are doing the same with the Baltic sea. Let's take a look... What is it saying? Hm... Not a sentence. Not a single word. Is it silenced? Of course not. It's still moving. Great! That means – not dead... yet. But what is that You hear by the beach? Those are screams! Soundless screams of dying fish and organisms. Is the sea breathing? If hushed gasps for air is what You call breathing.

But these are easy words to come from someone who lives far away from the sea. Someone, who only visits it rarely as a distant relative. A tourist of the sea. Extremely comfortable and pleasing. Only I tend to forget that I am dependent on the sea. As well as every one of us. Everyone who breathes oxygen, consumes food and drinks water. But what could we possibly do? Clog every sewer pipe? Give up all the plastic? Forbid fishermen to do their work? Use only bicycles? Start a project to clean the beaches? Try out more ecological products? Read about issues related to the wellbeing of the Baltic sea? Talk to friends about our attitudes? Take photos at the seashore because our children may never see it as beautiful as we did? Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, Roger Scruton – many philosophers have talked about the morale of humans. But what is moral to an average man with many other smaller problems to solve every day? What is in it for him? If it's necessary to act in order to help the sea, why isn't everyone doing it? If it's for everyone's own and common good?

After reading this essay, even if You managed to follow it until the very end, I just want to say that I don't judge Your opinion. You definitely have Your own feelings and statement. You may think that this is too big for You, too abstract. On the other hand, You may believe that I haven't touched an essential point in this topic. I understand. But the single thing I am asking You – don't shy away from thinking about this. Even if You don't care about changing Your habits or lifestyle, always remember the Baltic sea. How beautiful it is. And how many generations before us have sensed, loved, enjoyed, and feared it the same way. And hopefully, more than just a few generations will also meet it with their own eyes after us. Always anew. Always for the first time. Just promise me that You will always love the Baltic sea. Even as a murky swamp. Even as a fishless desert. Even as a disturbance to Your comfort. Even as a place where You go to have a good time and to not think about anything.

# TIM AND A SECRET OF THE BALTIC SEA - BY VLADYSLAV MYRONIUK

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This is a story of ten-year-old boy about his adventure on the Baltic Sea coast.

Tim's parents were farmers and there was always enough work to do in the summer. In a country-side were not many children of Tim's age, often they were busy and cannot play together. Besides, Tim was satisfied with a companionship of three-year-old terrier, named Jack. In spare time and in fair weather, Tim accompanied by Jack walked to the Sea where liked to while along the coast. The Sea was not far away, a path to it passed through a hill covered with centuries-old pine forest. Through tree trunks a boundless blue horizon opened up. The Sea seemed majestic, mysterious, and enigmatic. Each while at the seaside was unforgettable and full of new discoveries. Even when Tim was sad, the Sea brought him calmness and serenity. Love to nature and curiosity in his heart was growing day by day.

Over time, Tim learned to distinguish birds' voices and even cries of seagulls that seemed similar, sounded different. Typical walk turned into high, when Tim saw swans tacking between the waves. They always seemed to him majestic, proud conquerors of water. Sometimes, Tim thought that by wiggling of heads, swans invite to join their adventure in the marine waters. Among other creatures, Tim wished to meet seals, he knew a lot about them, but had never seen in real life. Jack was delighted of walks in Tim's company. Together they liked to run on the endless sandy expanses, and to search for the Sea gifts, brought by waves to the shore.

One day, on a walk, a stick that Tim was playing with Jack broke into pieces... To the boy's surprise, a small amber stone fell out. Tim knew that amber couldn't be found there, then it might be magic, the boy thought. Picking up the sunny amber stone, Tim decided return it to the Sea. "The Sea, Sea, majestic and amazing, I return this gift to you. In return, please, give me an opportunity to understand my friend, Jack!" - the boy shouted and throw the amber to the Sea. After waiting

couple of minutes, he continued his walk in frustration. An eel that lived nearby heard the boy's desire. It found the sinking amber, picked it up and carried to the Heart of Sea. When the eel reached the right place, it released the amber to the deep sea bottom, where the Heart of Sea was placed, and at the same time conveyed the boy's words. On the way to home, the wind suddenly rose up; the beach was covering a light mist. Tim felt uncomfortable, and Jack was visibly nervous. Soon Tim heard a soft voice somewhere nearby, at his feet. "Tim, Tim it is Me, Jack!" - the dog happily said. Tim was very happy his wish had come true, and it couldn't had been otherwise, because I believed in it so much. The boy rejoiced. Soon a deep voice cut through the fog. "Tim, this is the Sea, I gave you what you had asked for. I'm dying Tim and only you can help me, I don't have the strength anymore. Find a way, Tim, find it..." - the voice of Sea drawled. The weather had noticeably improved. The boy was shocked and stood silently on the seashore.

When Tim got home, he could not understand Jack anymore. "Was it really a dream? Tim thought. I don't understand Jack at all. When his work-weary parents returned to home, Tim told them his story. Dolefully, but they did not believe him, and referred his words to the son's rich imagination. Tim was disappointed.

On the next day, Tim picked up Jack again and went to the Sea shore. They had soaked their feet into the warm marine water. Sudden voice disturbed the silence. "My friend, dear Tim, your wish has come true, do everything in your power to save the Sea," - Jack hopefully said. Tim realized, a secret to Jack's ability to speak is in the marine water. Jack accompanied the boy everywhere and to the end, they were best friends. Tim made his goal to help the Sea at all costs.

A long time had passed since then. Tim became a scientist and an activist. He managed to find a cure, the Sea had asked for. Scientific methods developed by Tim and joint efforts done by all residents saved the Sea. "How Tim does know that?" - an inquisitive Reader will ask. On a quiet evening, Tim and his daughter Linea were by the Sea. Suddenly, an unusually beautiful glow appeared over the waves, and somewhere in the depths, the Sea said it loudly "Thank you, Tim!" Tears of happiness appeared on Tim's eyes. He did it. He found the way to save the Sea.

This story has been told to us, By Linea, daughter of Tim.

# SEA PROTECTOR HENRIK - BY MARILI KRANACH

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Nowadays it isn't known to many, but dragons used to rule the world. Usually the word "dragon" makes one think of fire breathing beasts with gigantic wings. Kind of like volcanoes with wings. In reality dragons were large water creatures that had no hostile intent in them whatsoever and they rarely even showed themselves above water. The most famous dragon in this day and age is called the Loch Ness "monster," although that isn't the nicest way to refer to someone. She actually goes by Nessie.

This specific story centers around a young water dragon named Henrik, who resided deep in the depths of the Baltic Sea. His day to day life was usually spent sleeping and when he wasn't doing that, he was fishing. That was quite easy to do too, just open your mouth as wide as you can and they'll just come swimming in. So you can imagine the surprise when Henrik woke up one morning and did his usual breakfast routine, but his mouth remained empty. "That's odd," he thought and decided to give it a go once more. Yet again his stomach remained unfilled. That's when he decided to stretch his legs for the first time in centuries and go check out what was happening above water.

After a couple of strokes he made it to shore and he didn't like what he saw, not one bit. The sea was looking absolutely rough and unkept. In addition to that, there were boatloads of fishermen, who were taking even the smallest of fish for themselves. All of the cods, herrings and even sprats were being targeted. Obviously Henrik needed to know what had happened to the sea he knew and loved, so he decided to go and talk to the men. With only a small portion of his actual body peeking out of the sea, Henrik had a resemblance to a Viking ship without a mast. That may also be the reason why the fishermen weren't as freaked out by him as they should've. Henrik steered over to the men and made some small talk, because he heard that it's a polite thing to do. After a couple of minutes of friendly banter about weather and how things are going, the dragon plucked up the courage and asked about what they were doing. To which it turned out that all of the men were

actually competing against each other to see who could catch the most fish, because fish equaled food and money. And it wasn't like there was any absolute need for all of those resources. Food could also be grown or found in the forest. Money could be made in multiple different ways from selling things to working for someone. Yet for some reason, the fishermen had taken interest in destroying the sea, fish by fish.

Henrik knew that things could not continue that way. The sea would become empty from fish! So he told the men about how their carelessness towards the sea was affecting it. By throwing their trash into the water, because there were no trash cans nearby, it made its way into the poor fish, who mistook it for food. The rest of it either made it back to the beach, where no one bothered to pick it up, because it wasn't their job, or bundled up with the other pieces of garbage to make small island like piles. And the overfishing was just cruel. If things continued that way, there would be no fish in the future. But of course simple words meant nothing to the greedy men, so Henrik had to come up with a plan. Although calling it a prank would be more suitable. What if all the fish, who were still thriving in the sea, would go and hide in the depths for a couple of days, just to show the fishermen the life without them.

After the peaceful couple of days, Henrik returned to the shore to see only a few boats left. Only the utmost desperate still tried. The dragon went up to one of the boats and asked the man inside about what had happened. He talked about how one day the fish just disappeared and one by one men stopped coming to sea. There were theories amongst men that maybe they had offended the fish somehow and they left or maybe they actually did manage to catch all that there was. Although the man himself was hopeful and even decided to try and clean the sea to make amends with the fish because he missed seeing them swim around and in all honesty, having rotten fish for dinner wasn't one of his favourites. Henrik thanked the man for the conversation and swam away, holding back a smirk, from knowing that his plan had worked.

Having made it home, the dragon released the fish back into the sea little by little, so the fishermen wouldn't get any more dumb ideas. After a bit of time the Baltic sea was back to its former glory. Full of many different creatures. Even the beaches looked more kept. Maybe Henrik's words did make their way through the thick skulls of the fishermen or maybe it's just the good work of that one man.

# BALTICA -A PLACE, A SEA, A HOME - POEM BY LOVA EVEBORN

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She was born  
Thousands of years ago  
The ice melted, letting her grow  
The land raised and slowly she became the one she is today  
It was a remarkable childhood

She matured and started to make friends  
Cod, seaweed and clam  
They all got used to her  
Seeing all parts of her personality

Sweet but a little salty  
Nourishing but at times smothering  
Warm but also chilly

Her friends  
They are depending on her  
Trusting her to provide  
Them a home

They are many and diverse  
Mussel, sitting still and taking it all in  
Porpoise, keen to play  
Shrimp, not making much of a fuss  
Algae, loving the sun  
Jellyfish, just going with the flow  
Flatfish, master of hide and seek  
Just to mention, a few of her friends

Now she's aging prematurely  
Under so much pressure  
From us humans  
It's hard for her to stay in a good shape

When constantly being  
Pushed over the edge

If you also had, to take care other people's garbage  
If you also had, unwanted guests stomping into your house  
If you also had, neighbours being way too loud  
If you also had, the temperature to rise over your preference  
If you also had, to see your friends get exploited

Never getting to rest from it all  
You wouldn't be in your best state

She needs all her friends  
If they disappear, she will become worse  
They are keeping her in a good state  
Supporting her and taking care of things  
Not allowing someone to spread out on behalf of someone else

She's not good at making new friends  
It normally takes some time before they get used to her  
It's a risk, that she will change to a worse version of herself  
Then not as many would want to be her friend

So please  
Be kind to Baltica  
She is a wonderful friend  
She gives you energy, food and experiences  
So let her be herself

Hear her  
Feel her  
See her

Be her friend  
And she will be yours,  
Baltica

# BALTIC SEA BELONGS TO ALL AND NEITHER OF US - BY BRIGITA MEDNE

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*Surround me with your wind and sand  
Come closer and sing your songs  
Show me your strength  
I want to see the storm  
Sit near I need to hear your breath  
The one I know from birth<sup>1</sup>*

I am one of many privileged people having had the opportunity to grow up close to the sea. An hour to the gulf of Riga, around three hours to the “real” Baltic Sea. I am also the first generation fully enjoying the miracle of open borders —counted the islands off the coast of Sweden, had the most horizon-opening breakfasts looking at the history-encompassing waves in Suomenlinna, enjoyed the chills watching how my foreign friends dip their bodies into the freezing clamps of the Baltic Sea in autumn.

Whenever travelling somewhere, I search for water – rivers, lakes, or the sea, if I am lucky. And when travelling around the region, I often wonder what unites me with other people around the Baltic Sea. Values? I am often ashamed by some things around the region and in my own country — violations of human rights, inequality, unsustainable practices, lack of involvement, the list goes on. History? Yes, there are long strides of history that unite parts of the region, but it can also be too much of pain and power struggle to base cooperation on. But the sea could and should be the pattern knitting us all together in effort to be better at taking care of it. The sea is this constant magic of power, peace, connectivity. Something that we have the privilege and duty to take care of.

The sea belongs to neither of us. It can give us the sunsets – yes. It can gift us the calming music of wind, the connection of water and skies, the sand between our toes – yes. But it is not a machine to produce endless amounts of cod for us. It is not a bin for the fishing nets to be dumped in. It is not a bowl to put all our poison from agriculture and

sewage in and not to expect it to have hangover from all the waste. From early childhood I was taught that “Visas upes plūst uz jūru” (All rivers flow to the sea). But do I think about that when washing dishes and laundry?

The sewage is not the only problem. We are tiptoeing around the fact that a significant part of the problem is our horrifying consumption of meat and unsustainable practices of getting that to our plates. Are we scared to let go of that mystical image of a cave person needing to eat meat for their survival? Can we be honest enough to replace the images of happy cows gazing on vast meadows in children books currently? Can we be brave enough to reduce the consumption ourselves and to consciously think about the impact our activities have on the people around us?

It is not as gloomy as it might seem (and not as dark as the dead zones of the sea?) but we must make constant decisions and changes. As often one of the solutions seems to be education. While the distinction between the gulf and the sea was deeply embedded in my mind from the geography lessons, the state that the sea is in and the concept of dead zones escaped my mind up until an embarrassingly short time ago. And I don't think it's only me — we are slowly learning how to say no to plastic straws and bags, but do we know that, how and why the is dying? And I am not talking only about the education for the children here. There have to be regular and accessible educational opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds that not only provides the opportunity to gain knowledge but also empowers them to make sustainable and strong decisions.

As often said regarding other topics, we generally must climb off the crooked path of imaginary development built on skulls and bones of living species and ecosystems. Listening to scientists more closely, translating their thoughts and spreading them, joining in, boycotting unsustainable practices, holding the enterprises responsible for their actions, slowing down the victory walk of the meat industry, donating to and volunteering at organisations that work towards this and other sustainable causes, decreasing consumption and so much more. Thinking, doubting, taking small steps but constantly reflecting and supporting each other. Educators, policy makers, change-makers — we all must keep in mind the impact of our actions and put our money where our mouth is. Involving diverse perspectives in our decision-

making processes, opening those up for sustainable inputs, specifically involving but not limited to children and young people.

Baltic Sea doesn't belong to kids. It would be like entertaining ourselves with a fluffy pet our whole lives, playing with it, then torturing, nearly killing it and then giving it to the children — “empowering” them to be responsible for the animal. It is a common image to fall in with the debate around climate appreciating the people striking all around the world. Yes, it is incredibly important to involve us in decision-making and sharing the joys and duties taking care of our planet. But together! So often, when recognising that young people are also in charge of this planet, the whole weight of responsibility falls on their shoulders. I do not want the children to have that suffocating ownership. I would love for them to be able to carelessly build sandcastles, and, yes, be a part of every decision we make as much as possible.

Baltic Sea belongs to all of us. It might be dead. And we killed it. Now – do we resuscitate?

*Speak to me I want to know the truth  
How ships sail and who lives in your woods  
Take me back to the start  
I want to picture all this in my heart*

<sup>1</sup> *Human Tetris – Baltic Sea. Released October 22, 2009.*

## OUR HEALTH IS ON FIRE - BY ALMA NORDENSTAM

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We are amidst a collective suicide. Death is tripping around the corner waiting to enclose us. The clouds we blame and name on the pandemic. The absorbing fog.

In some months our problems will dissipate. By governments and health experts we are promised it will pass away with the rapid, world-breaking record development of a new vaccine. It is short and sweet. Vacc-ine. Vac-cines. Vacineees. Inject 8 billion people and our problems will dissipate. Virus fought. Health crisis fought. Or so we thought.

A couple of weeks back, Denmark closed their mink industry behind as a new string had found its ground in the four-legged creatures that we slaughter for fashion. The virus had mutated at the protein the vaccine targets. Amidst a moment time, we could have a new epidemic where the vaccine would be as useful as a needle in a haystack.

Behind the fog of the new pandemic shimmers crippling crisis that we have forgone amidst the new crisis.

Earlier this year, we had enormous areas of forests in Amazonas losing ground. Collapsing. Clouds moved across the world. In the Baltic Forest Region, we have 116,550 km<sup>2</sup> of our land covered in the magical forests that lights us up, enwraps our carbon dioxide and cleanse our air. Or so we think. Each day, we give rise to enhanced opportunities for the forests to join forces and let the fire loose. The smoke licks our lungs and punctuates our alveoli. Devours our intestines in silence. Burns us.

I catch myself in the ocean, breathing heavily and sneezing black snot, reflecting my outer appearance amidst the red flames behind me. Ocean catches me when words are empty. The mirror tells the truth through silence. Our arguably largest mirror - the arctic - will soon be history. For the past decades, the ice has shrunk 3.74 million km<sup>2</sup>. Steadily faded away. Evaporated. The ice melts away houses, land areas and forces us to remodel the way coasts look. To find ways to protect our capitals, Helsinki, Stockholm, Copenhagen and the hundreds of cities along the coasts of our countries. Land rise fought. Land crisis fought. Or so we thought.

In the crystal-clear water hides secrets the ice has protected us from for centuries. Traces from earlier pandemics that are enveloped in the crystals. Enemies that fog us. Closes borders. Breaks us. Spanish flu is one. In 2012, the innocent life of a 12-year old was eaten up from traces that had migrated from the ocean. For millions of years, the arctic has been a steady piece to come back to. Reliable. Now it is dripping enemies into the innocent waves that keep our lands warm and relinquishes the lethal coldness from Northern streams.

We ignore the untouchable.

But the unseen won't fade away. It cripples our existence and before we know it we are amidst uncontrolled chaos. This year's pandemic forced us to close down. Set cities at a halt. Pause. Rethink our existence together. Join in solidarity for each of us to fight our new enemy. We can. When the crisis tickles our eyes and death tolls collapse faster than we can count we act.

Soon our mission to fight covid19 will be a forgone memory. We will find our ways back to a daily rhythm where each breath outside our homes is not a risk. Where we no longer are forced to choose between freedom and health risks. Between meeting your old childhood friend or your parents. The brightness is beautiful.

Beauty blinds us. Amidst the light the crippling crisis will continue. Toxins in the Baltic Sea cleanses the clear blue water to a dark and sticky moss along the coasts, viruses sheds silently from the Arctic and the crippling planet that is out of balance, millions of us will soon be refugees and our home towns will be history to my grandchildren, our lungs continue to inhale devils that engulf our pertinent organs and sipper complications that impedes our daily lives.

We cannot afford to ignore the untouchable. The unseen won't fade away. It cripples our existence and before we know it we are amidst uncontrolled chaos.

Let us make covid19 our calling for systematic change. For acknowledging the health emergency that has been unraveled in silence for decades. We broke records to find a vaccine that will open borders, let us breathe again, and break the silence. This is the beginning. Please.

Our health is on fire.

## LITTLE BOY'S WISH - BY LIISA NURME

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One summer night little boy's aunty asked him to come to the seaside with her. She liked to watch the sunset. The little boy liked the sunsets as well, but in truth, he was more interested in finding the wonderous wish-granting fish. He wanted to ask for a new bike. The old one didn't look very nice any more.

It was a long walk to the seaside, but the wish made it worth it. The walk seemed endless, but at least the sun was still hanging low over the horizon. There was plenty of time to look for the wonderous fish.

The little boy ran to the water's edge and called quietly to the waves: "Can you hear me wonder fish?". The child listened carefully, but all he could hear was the quiet humming of the waves. He called again, little louder this time: "Please come out, wonder fish, I have a wish to ask!". Little boy waited for a second and then added: "A bike. My wish is to get a new bike."

He waited a long time now, but there was still no sign of the magical creature. Little boy's mood dropped. It wasn't fair! How could the greedy fairy tale fisherman have caught the fish so easily, but when he, the little boy asked nicely, the fish didn't even show he's face.

The child frowned to the sea which was guilty of hiding the wonder fish and went looking for he's aunty. It didn't take him long to find her. She was sitting on a fallen tree, her stair fixed to some shapeless object half-buried in the sand.

"Aunty," called the little boy, "I waited and waited, but the fish...". Suddenly the little boy saw auntie's face and the words faded on his lips. Aunty was sad! This was confusing. He had never seen aunty sad nor angry, she was the best of all the women, always smiling and ready to play. What could possibly sadden her on this beautiful beach?

Little boy placed he's little hand to auntie's big hand and asked in a small voice: "Why are you sad?" Aunty looked up, suddenly pulled out of her thoughts. The sadness was whipped away, but there was still certain wistfulness in her eyes. She pointed to the ground where an

empty lemonade bottle was sticking out of the sand.

“What do you think is it in the right place?” asked she. The little boy thought about it for a second and then shook his head. Lemonade bottles belonged to parties and picnics and to trash bins when they got empty. But they didn’t belong here, to this nice beach.

Auntie smiled in approval. “You are right, honey. This is not the right place for a lemonade bottle, but someone has left it here and that makes me sad.”

The little boy laughed. “Silly aunty,” he said, “let’s just pick it up and throw it into the trash bin on our way back. You really shouldn’t be so sad over such a small thing.” The child hoped this would cheer auntie right up, but instead she sighed. Auntie’s face had grown very serious.

“This is not so easy. Squint eyes and you will see that there are countless pieces of trash here all around us.” Looking carefully, the little boy did spot a broken plastic fork nearby. Further, he saw a plastic bag and even one whole wooden fruit box. Auntie had been right. The setting sun painted the beach red. Suddenly the beach looked more taunting than cosy.

“Is this trash very bad?” asked the little boy. Auntie nodded. “Yes, very bad indeed. Birds, animals and sea creatures may eat the smaller pieces. This is painful and makes them sick.”

“This is horrible!” shouted child angrily. “Good that they can’t hurt themselves with bigger things like this bottle.”

Auntie picked it up and poked the bottle into her bag. “They can’t exactly eat it, but some animals get trapped inside bigger pieces of trash and may even die.”

“No!” cried the little boy. “We can’t just let the small animals die and get hurt! This way even the wonder fish might get caught inside some trash and then I can never get my wish.” The little boy ran to the fruit box, picked it up and lined the box with the plastic bag. He started collecting the trash from the ground, one-piece quickly followed by another.

“Be careful and call me if you see anything sharp,” warned auntie. She knew that they couldn’t clean the whole beach even if the day would just be starting. But then again, nothing stopped them from coming back tomorrow and then the next day and the day after. When the little boy looked up this time, he saw auntie smiling again. She was stooping over the ground, picking trash at a turbo speed as it seemed.

They worked until it got too dark. Little boy’s box was full and so was auntie’s bag. There was still a lot to be done, but knowing they had helped, if even just a little, made them grin.

“Shall we go for now?” asked auntie.

“Just give me a minute,” answered the little boy and ran again to the sea’s edge.

“Wonder fish, I changed my mind. I don’t actually need a new bike, but I do need you to make some magic so humans wouldn’t bring trash to beaches anymore.” Then he hurried back to his auntie.

“Done!” he said. “Now wonder fish will help others to understand that it’s bad to leave the trash to the beach.” They headed home. Little boy’s wish wasn’t very likely to come true. After all, it takes more than just one magical fish to make people see that leaving trash behind really is bad for the animals and even for us. But if a child could realise that, there was hope that the sea and the beach would one day get clean again.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN ONE'S LIFE - BY MARIA PRYDS FREDERIKSEN

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*"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge"*, these are words by Albert Einstein, a man whose influence and worldwide recognition can not be underestimated. But how can these words be translated to the learning of common knowledge around the countries in the Baltic Sea Region? Well, by having great teachers who instill the importance of common knowledge about the world surrounding them in future generations.

It can be said that the majority of the Danish students only know of one aspect of the Baltic states: the students might know the legend of the Danish flag which fell from the sky during a battle in Estonia in 1219. If you ask me, today's youth do not learn enough about our Baltic neighbours. From my 19 year long life, I have spent about 14 years of those in school. However, I have not learnt much about the Baltic region itself, its history or culture unless it was in a Danish context - and I am sure I am not the only one.

Now, as a substitute teacher, I often play a certain game with the students where they must name a country, an animal as well as a girl name and a boy name all starting with the same letter, as fast as possible. Depending on how many students will say the same answer, they can either receive 0, 5 or 10 points. Let me use the letter "B" to demonstrate. During the game I could write: Belgium, bee, Bella and Benjamin. However, when the letter "L" has been used, and a child has answered "Latvia", I have, on way too many occasions, had children come up to me and question whether or not "Latvia" was in fact a real country, or if their classmate was cheating during the game. To be honest, I did not know what reaction would be appropriate. Now, this essay should not be seen as a critique of the entire youth of Europe, or bashing those whose favorite subject is not history or social studies. However, it should be seen as food for thought.

My high school English teacher had one specific term she treasured

more than anything when writing an analysis or an essay. That word was "world knowledge". Though "world knowledge" is not an actual professional and technical term, she cherished the importance of having basic knowledge of the world both concerning the literate and historical aspect, as well as a geographical one. "World knowledge" could be anything, for example a comparison to an Ernest Hemingway novel, the historical significance of the British Empire or the importance of the strong relations between Denmark and the Baltic countries.

Maybe that is what we need? For more teachers to hold on to the importance of, what my teacher would call, "world knowledge" and thereby encourage the youth to engage in the society around them. In other words, what we need might be more "Baltic Sea knowledge"

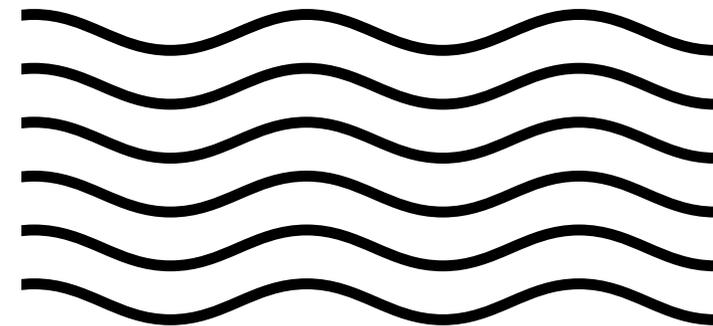
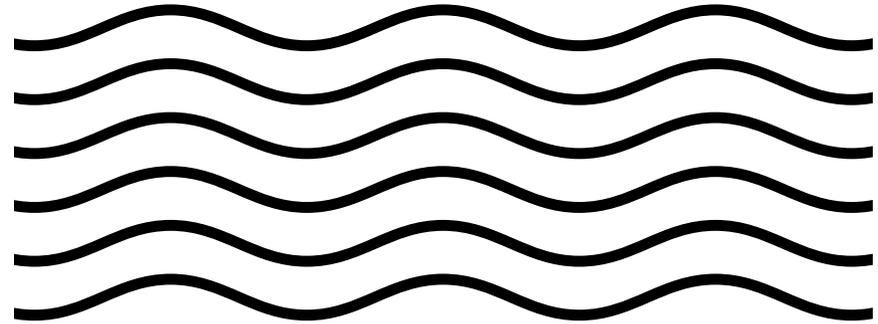
The three main objectives in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is to save the sea, increase prosperity and connect the region. It is not enough to achieve just one out of three of these objectives. We should work towards a time where all of these objectives have become reality. However, these objectives can not be achieved or passed onto future generations, if one generation does not have any knowledge of the region the generation is supposed to connect with. How will businesses and international connections across the countries in the Baltic Sea Region blossom, if we do not have a mutual understanding of one another? Of course, it is important that our schooling system does not get stuck in the past and still keeps up with the modern world. What was considered common knowledge in the 1950's might not fully apply to our current society, but the significance of our history and the essential changes made during this time, should not be underestimated.

To be able to put things into perspective is a useful and great skill to acquire, and it can be used in all different kinds of situations and on different occasions - one might even say that it is required to get through life. Personally, I believe common knowledge, to a certain extent, is needed to open one's own horizon.

Now, do not get me wrong, I do not expect all children to study the effects of Urho Kekkonen's time as the longest serving president of Finland, but I do expect some sort of knowledge of Finland as a country. This could be achieved in various ways, but the main initiative would be to include more about our Baltic neighbours in the national curriculum. Another initiative could be an "upgrade" of the Ministry

of Nordic Cooperation, as its significance has a tendency to be undervalued, to create a Ministry whose focus is solely on the Baltic Sea Region.

Today, I am grateful for my teacher's love for "world knowledge" and for the fact that my parents instilled the belief in me that knowing what happens in the world around you, especially in the Baltic Sea Region, actually matters. Common knowledge is a useful set of tools needed to navigate the world we live in - let us make sure, it is passed onto future generations. In making sure this happens, one thing is certain: a good teacher with good learning methods and an open mind truly makes the difference.



# 1st place

## FENJA NEUMANN – BONANZA

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Among the Baltic states, many countries have already taken tremendous steps towards becoming more sustainable and climate-friendly over the past quarter-century. The natural environment and infrastructure of the Baltic sea region offers favorable conditions that facilitated the development of renewable energy sources such as (offshore) windparks, solar energy, biogas, and hydropower. Energy is something we need for survival in modern society, making it an essential good, just like food. Besides our energy sources, we slowly begin to question our food chains and it becomes to higher importance to us that our dishes are produced locally.

But what about the other essential good that accompanies us every day of our lives – Clothing? How (un)sustainable is our textile consumption, and how can we reduce environmental threats with a local concept that is applicable to a variety of towns and cities within and beyond the Baltic sea region?

### Conquering the Consumption Culture

The textile industry is one of the strongest economic contributors globally, however, the environmental consequences are detrimental. Pollution, energy consumption, CO<sub>2</sub>- emission, and the generation of waste have a cost that is not yet reflected on the price tags in the stores. Recent reports show that in Germany alone, we dump 4.7 kilograms of textiles per person and year, amounting to 391.752 tons for the entire country, of which only ten percent get a last chance as a second-hand item. Almost 25 percent of the textile waste is being burned, creating considerable CO<sub>2</sub>- emissions, and more than 50 percent eventually ends up on landfills, that are especially harmful for the environment. Even more shocking, around 230 million textile items of German clothing stores are not being sold at all, ending up on trash burning facilities, or being flogged off to other EU-countries.

What happens when we finally had enough? When the endless

masses of fabric, acrid artificial smells, and inappropriately cheap or ridiculously expensive prices make us feel sick each time we enter a clothes store? We have become consumption conscious, and thoughts about unfair labour in the textile industry, environmental pollution and the epic waste of resources make us ill.

### When Enough is Enough!

*Bonanza - Share to Care* represents a community-driven concept with the mission to enhance sustainable consumption through a local space for sharing second-hand clothing. Bonanza can be translated to 'source of luck' or 'a situation which creates a sudden increase in wealth, good fortune'. The name represents the value of our old textile treasures, as well as the bright and lucky future Bonanza aims to create by moving towards a sustainable approach to textile consumption. Bonanza is all about Sharing – clothes, values, mission, knowledge, care, friendship – The list is endless and certainly not limited to materialistic aspects. By sharing, we Care: For our own conscious consumption, the environment, a sustainable future, and the sharing community.

### Mission:

Sharing Community - establishing a community that collectively cares for the environment by sharing second-hand clothing.

Environmental Care - reducing the environmental burden of textile (over) consumption.

Circular Economy - moving towards a sustainable future by enhancing a circular economy.

### The Concept

Bonanza unites sharing and sustainable consumption in a unique community-based concept. Individuals can participate on three basic levels: Donations, Memberships, and Sharing Events.

### Location

Bonanza will be launched as a pilot project in the hanseatic town

of Greifswald, located on the shores of our beautiful Baltic sea. Greifswald, as university town, has about 55.000 inhabitants with over 10.000 students, building a large network of people who are engaged in sustainability-related initiatives. This year, Greifswald was nominated for the national sustainability award (Deutscher Nachhaltigkeitspreis), proving optimal conditions to test Bonanza's concept. These factors, and the centrality of Greifswald, are favorable preconditions for building a community and make the Share to Care concept easier to implement compared to bigger cities, where people have to travel longer routes to reach the location. However, thinking in a greater context the Bonanza concept will be tested, improved, and further developed in Greifswald with the goal to become applicable on a broader scale. Therefore, we aim to rent a location, ideally in the center of Greifswald with the approximate size of 80 - 100 m<sup>2</sup> with the potential to expand.

### **From Local to Global**

The Bonanza community is all about sharing. The "Share to Care" approach is not limited to exchanging textiles. The concept of Bonanza is meant to be spread around the globe. And with it the goals, values, the community, and our expertise. The Bonanza in Greifswald is a pilot project, meant to be replicated in other towns and cities within and beyond the Baltic Sea region, adapted to their specific infrastructure while following the concept Bonanza – Share to Care association.

If you have any questions about the Bonanza concept, please Email me at [bonanzasharingcommunity@gmail.com](mailto:bonanzasharingcommunity@gmail.com) for further information.

## **2nd place**

# **DENISS AKMAIKIN AND ANASTASIJA DMITRIJEVA - BALTIC SEA SDGS STUDIES**

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### **Problem**

The 7th target of the 4th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is the following:

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Not all representatives of the younger generation are aware of the SDGs concept. However, in order to accomplish the SDGs, all generations must be included in the process of achieving them. Due to this, education and awareness raising is really important. Based on personal experience of our team, we assume that in some Baltic Sea Region countries there is a lack of integration of sustainable development goals to the educational process (e.g., Russia, Latvia) compared to other states (e.g., Finland, Sweden). The SDG Report 2019 through the SDG Index has illustrated country performance on the 17 SDGs. It can be seen, that countries of Baltic Sea Region occupy different positions in this rating. For instance, the most successful are Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Norway, Estonia and the least successful are Poland, Lithuania, Russia. Thus, there are differences in approaches to the achievement of SDGs and in the success of these approaches.

### **Solution**

We consider that the key pillars of the SDGs concept should be

distributed among young people in order to reinforce and improve the achievement of SDGs. All the Baltic Sea Region countries have something to share about SDGs; its experience of achievement, the new knowledge and current problems related to this concept. We suggest creating a web platform with free online courses from the best Baltic Sea Region universities, where the young people could find out more about SDGs. These courses may cover the issues of human rights, inequalities, climate change, peace, well-being and etc.

#### **Expected results or why should this project be implemented?**

- The project will educate young people; the generation from which our future depends on.
- The project will engage young people to the achievement of sustainable development goals.
- The project will contribute to the building of BSR identity, image as the region the most successful in achieving SDGs.
- The project will help to define the interests of young people; what to study, in which university to study etc.
- The BSR universities will gain an additional tool to attract new students. The project will be useful for other countries where the success in achieving SDGs is lower.

## **3rd place SIMON LIGHTFOOT – MY MARE BALTICUM**

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“East Sea, West Sea, My Sea”

Dear jurors of the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue. My name is Simon Lightfoot, named after the fisherman Simon Peter, the son of John. I'm a 25-year-old Finnish-English man from Finland. I come from the Island of Suomenlinna (Sveaborg), a sea fortress located off Finland's capital, Helsinki.

I'd like to start off by sharing some of my, and my family's memories from life on the island. The island where my mother grew up, only to return once again, some decades later, with her own family. My earliest memories are from the little lagoon situated in front of my childhood home. I remember the distinct smell of the sea there, the gentle sound of the waves coming through our windows, my father's boat moored at the jetty in front of the house, swaying to and fro as the cruise ships sailed past just 100 metres away. That's where my life began.

The sea with its unrestricted horizons has always represented a feeling of openness, endless possibilities and adventure. Contrary to what the city people often thought, the sea meant freedom to me, a way forward. The further I looked, the further my imagination flew. I'm not sure when I first begun to realise the sorry state of our beloved Baltic Sea is in. Not long after those aforementioned first memories, I recall seeing floating bits of Styrofoam, the rainbow colours caused by combustible oil on the water, plastic bottles gleaming under the summer sun. It felt strange and wrong, but it was “normal” as it was so commonplace. Perhaps I didn't fully understand what had caused the changes. My mother told me that her father, my Grandfather, used to fish around the island weekly. So, it didn't make sense to me why the fish I had caught just two decades later should be any less edible. Little did I know that between my mother's childhood in the late 60's and my own in the 90's, a lot had changed.

## Stuck in between seas and its realities

We often went on family holidays to Pärnu in Estonia, a coastal beach town, along the Bay of Riga. My picture and understanding of the Baltic Sea gained depth. Unlike Suomenlinna, which is built on hard grey granite skerries, Pärnu, with its golden sandy beach was from another world. Although it wasn't. The same plastic Styrofoam and oil stains floated alike. The harsh reality came one step closer to the young boy I was back then.

After establishing a solid connection with Estonia, my mother went on to buy a summer cottage on the island of Saaremaa some years later. Once again, my Baltic reality gained a fundamental shift in understanding. The beaches there were different. This time they were empty, even though they were so beautiful. The towers along the beaches brought a hint. They were sniper towers from the Soviet times. I went on to find out that the sniper towers were there so that people trying to flee the island of Saaremaa, or perhaps just going for a swim or casting their fishing nets, ran at risk of being shot. Shock and horror: this was nothing like my experiences at home. The people there were not allowed to fall in love with the sea. The sea represented a wall to them. A wall of death. – Quite different to my own experiences.

## Hoisting the sails

After finishing my compulsory military service at Finland's biggest naval base, Upinniemi, I started a new chapter in my life alongside my Baltic Sea experiences. Once again one of the ships that had swayed my father's boat all those years ago took me to Estonia. Although this time on a journey I'm still on. I went to study at the University of Tartu. It was the first time that I had lived inland, away from my sea. It felt strange, although the river flowing through the university town, Emajõgi (Embach), brought comfort; and after the realisation that the river ends up in the Baltic Sea, it felt familiar again.

I longed for the sea. I went on my Erasmus exchange to the Hansaetic town of Greifswald (Autumn 2019). My journey there took me by car, once again past my home island with a ship, this time to Stockholm, from Stockholm to Malmö for the night and from there on to Sweden's seaport Trelleborg – and from there by ship to Germany's Sassnitz, on

the island of Rügen, not far from Greifswald. Once again, the Baltic Sea had taken me on an adventure. All this within the boundaries of the bountiful Baltic Sea.

## My idea

In order for the Baltic Sea nations and their peoples to get a better understanding of and connection to their sea, they need to be more in touch with it. Thus, I'd like to propose the establishment of a Baltic Sustainable Way. A route along the shores of the Baltic Sea, ready for the era of sustainable energy, where cars, cyclists and walkers alike, could stop by various locations along the Baltic coast to charge their electric vehicles (cars), their devices (cars, cyclists and walkers) or even camp overnight at these locations provided by the following:

At these locations, energy could be generated in front of people's eyes, e.g. an offshore wind turbine or other sustainable energy generation method, then fed into a grid scale battery, and from there, discharged to either cars or any other device that travellers might want to charge. This would be free of charge, motivating people to discover their sea and their coastal neighbours, raising generations to protect the fragile environment of the Baltic Sea. All this would promote the three priority areas of the Council of the Baltic States not to mention other sustainability goals. In addition, this would promote entrepreneurship and employment (service providers), as well as enhance our love for the Baltic Sea through a fun and sustainable way of discovery:

**the Baltic Sustainable Way!**

Yours sincerely,  
Simon Lightfoot





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