

LET'S SAVE THE BALTIC SEA!



*Hiking expedition
around the **Baltic Sea**
2024*



LET'S
save
the baltic
SEA

UŽ
SVARIAI
LIETUVA

PROBLEM: The Baltic Sea is among the TOP 5 most polluted seas in the world.

The Baltic Sea has one of the largest dead zones in the world. These areas develop because of pollution and have very low amounts of oxygen, that is why in such zones animals and plants that humanity depend on have disappeared.

The culprit behind these vast, empty areas is the main issue of the Baltic Sea: eutrophication, or the excess of phosphorus and nitrogen in the water. This causes algae to rapidly reproduce, resulting in algal blooms. As these algal blooms occur, the water becomes less transparent and the amount of oxygen in the water diminishes.

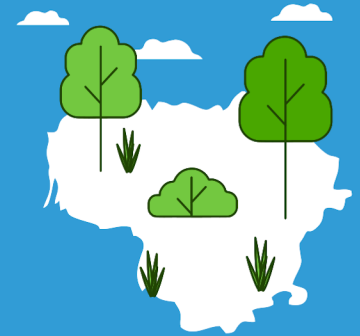
An estimated 96% of the Baltic Sea is affected by this threatening phenomenon.

Why is there an excess of elements that cause harmful algal blooms in the sea? Human activities play an important role here. The amount of nitrogen entering the central part of the Baltic Sea from the territory of Lithuania almost doubles the maximum allowed limit, and pollution has been increasing recently.

A lot of it comes from unsustainable agriculture. The sea is also contaminated by industrial companies that discharge industrial wastewater into rivers. However, a significant part of the pollution is formed of domestic wastewater coming from toilets, baths, washing machines, dishwashing and handwashing - everything ends up in the Baltic Sea.

Together with coastlines covered in cigarette butts, bottle caps, plastic bags and other litter, this pollution is not the best way to show our gratefulness to the sea for all that it provides us.

But we have an opportunity to make amends.



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

The area covered by dead zones in the Baltic Sea is larger than the territory of Lithuania?

The Baltic Sea in numbers:

Surrounded by 9 countries, which have a total of 95 million inhabitants.

250 rivers flow into it.

200 ports are in operation.

Almost 1/5 of the world's cargo is transported through it.

Around 2,000 vessels navigate through it at the same time.

IDEA: LET'S SAVE THE BALTIC SEA!

We seek to educate the public about pollution in the Baltic Sea, that is why we are organizing a one-year hiking expedition around its coastline - „Let's save the Baltic Sea!“

The purpose of the expedition is to develop a culture of marine conservation, to inform the public about the state of our aquatic ecosystems, the impact of human activity on the sea, and to introduce ways to halt marine biodiversity loss and pollution.

A team of scientists, ecologists, activists and representatives of non-governmental environmental organizations will travel around the Baltic Sea together with **Giedrius Bučas**, initiator of the 2020 harmony hiking expedition around our country "For a clean Lithuania!", winner of the President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus prize for environmental protection .



During the expedition, various educational events and discussions will take place in Lithuania and in the countries that will be visited.



On our way, we will look into the state of the Baltic Sea: its biodiversity, invasive species, commercial fish resources, eutrophication, seabed disturbance, pollutants, litter and underwater noise. The information obtained will serve for further research projects and decision making.



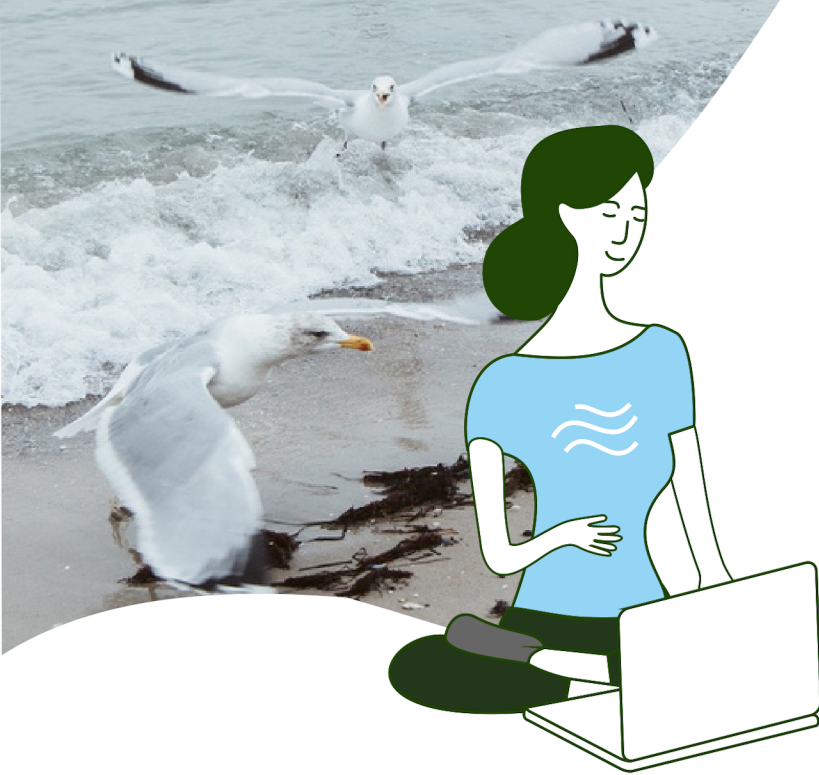
Expedition summary:

- Duration: 1 year.
- Countries visited: 8.
- Distance walked: ~ 7000 km.
- Joined by organizations from the Baltic Sea countries.
- Involving residents of the Baltic Sea countries.



Giedrius Bučas:

"We want to become a link that brings people closer to the sea, develop a culture of marine conservation, encourage interest in the environment and complement knowledge about the areas of influence of human activities."



TIMELINE

2023 m.

Preparation for the expedition.

A permanent expedition team formed, with tasks and responsibilities for each member.

Various events in Lithuania and partner countries.

During the events, we will talk about marine pollution problems, highlight ways how each of us can contribute to reducing it, and what can be done now in order to make changes in this century and leave a cleaner sea for future generations.

The events, as well as the expedition itself, will involve scientists, ecologists, activists and non-governmental environmental organizations.

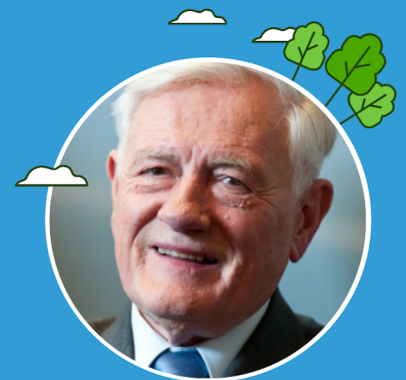
One of the first ones to reply to our call and join us is the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE).

2024 m.

Preliminary beginning of the expedition in February.

We will travel around the Baltic Sea in a clockwise direction. During some sections of the route we will invite local communities, schoolchildren, and everyone who cares about a clean environment to join us.

End of the expedition in December 2024.



Patrons of the expedition:

President of the Republic of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus.

The Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania

The Baltic Sea is our common heritage

The sea heals us physically and spiritually, providing gifts without asking for anything in return.

It is a treasure that belongs to all of us. Let's keep the Baltic Sea alive and clean for the future generations!

ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS

The **NGO "Už švarią Lietuvą"** (eng. "For a clean Lithuania!") is a social initiative that develops ideas of sustainable consumption and upcycled design, and focuses on creating a cleaner and healthier environment. **Giedrius Bučas** is the founder of the organization.

Our vision is a harmonious and clean world - clean in every sense.

Key activities:

Giedrius Bučas regularly participates in seminars and conferences, and is invited to various events on the topic of Necology, where he often implements an artistic idea - creating art installations from waste.

In June 2019, Giedrius traveled and collected litter around Kaunas. Together with volunteers supporting the idea, they walked around 100 km in 6 days. In September, the MO Museum (Vilnius, Lithuania) presented an art installation "The Waterfall of Values", made of trash collected during the hikes, at the entrance to the museum.

In October 2019, a social-arts campaign "(In)visible Baltic Sands" was organized, during which sand was sifted and investigated on Klaipėda beach.

In August-October 2020, Giedrius walked around Lithuania in the expedition "For a clean Lithuania!". On their way, participants collected litter found on their way while engaging with local communities. They hiked a total of 1363 km and collected 1133 kg of trash, which gave birth to an art installation "The Consumption Puzzle".

In 2022, the organization joined the Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters charter under the European Commission.

In 2023, the initiative "Waterfront Research" was launched. The goal of the project is to clean riverbanks with schoolchildren, examine collected trash and draw conclusions on how each of us can reduce river pollution.

During 7 years of activity, Giedrius Bučas has discussed pollution issues with more than 6000 children throughout Lithuania.



The Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania has put forward the **National Water Development Plan for 2022-2027**.

Among its goals:

- Achieve and/or maintain a good state of the Baltic Sea;
- Reduce eutrophication / the entry of nutrients that promote algal blooms into the Baltic Sea;
- Reduce the entry and impact of hazardous substances.

