

## Report – Lithuania April 2022



On Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> April we arrived in Vilnius, Lithuania. Vilnius is the capital city of Lithuania, from there we travelled to Šiauliai. Šiauliai is a fourth largest city in Lithuania. Its name derives from the word *Saulė*, which is a Lithuanian word for Sun. It is named after a Sun Battle that took place nearby.

### Šiauliai

Šiauliai was frequently ravaged by fire, and it sustained heavy damage in both World Wars I and II. Although little of the historic old city remains, the reconstructed 1634 Church of SS. Peter and Paul serves as a focal point of the historic district.

After World War II, Šiauliai was rebuilt and re-emerged as an industrial centre, producing leather goods.

Šiauliai has now

grown into a thriving metropolis, with a good collection of restaurants, some surprisingly excellent museums and cultural attractions.

The official language of Lithuania is Lithuanian. Russian, Polish, Belarusian, Ukrainian, and other languages are spoken in the larger cities.

### Education

The purpose of this mobility was to visit a local arts school; Šiauliai Saulius Sondeckis Arts Gymnasium. The school is an advanced state art school, based on a culture of agreement and values in the community, effectively implementing the content of education in modern educational environments.

On arrival, we were welcomed by a group of children who performed a lovely dance and played beautiful music for us.



We were then given a tour around the school from Loreta and a group of children who were proud to show us their incredible school. We were amazed to see the creative and different art and music lessons being taught. What stood strong from walking around the school, was their passion for art and music. We also saw the importance they put on internationalism which is integrated into the school's curriculum and policy.

Similar to us, they have many exchange programmes and international partnerships in place with many schools from around the globe. These projects were showcased throughout the school, displaying their trophies and flags which showed their past and present eTwinning work.



Over the few days, we worked together, where we visited digital art museums. These visits provided us with an insight into different technology and software to aid in teaching digital creativity. We very much enjoyed experiencing digital art using the virtual reality head-sets and gaining an insight into the projects the school has created, using the technology.







## Takeover event

We were lucky enough to be present for their takeover event! The takeover event took place in an art gallery, near to the school. Members of staff, students and parents were all welcomed. The takeover showcased children's astounding art work throughout the gallery, following remarkable music performances. Children then led us into

an auditorium, where we watched a series of short, creative animated videos that children had produced. The takeover represented the hard work students and their teachers put into the art, performances and videos. It was an absolute delight to have witnessed such an astounding takeover.



## Educational visits

We visited M.K. Čiurlionis Museum of Arts in Kaunas. The museum exhibits and the works of the painter and musician Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875–1911). Here, we got to learn about a famous artist and musician. We were also fortunate enough to watch a virtual reality film "Trails of Angels", the winner of prestigious international and national competitions. The film is a work by Kristina Buožytė and Vitalijus Žukas, dedicated to the creations of the artist, composer, and pioneer of abstract art.



## **Cultural visits**

Šiauliai is a gateway to the Hill of Crosses, just northeast. We were lucky to visit the Hill of Crosses, a place of pilgrimage. The site was established in the 19th century as a symbol of resistance to Russian rule. It now includes more than 100,000 crosses.



During our visit to Lithuania, Loreta and her team also took us to the Curonian Spit. The Curonian Spit is a 98-kilometre long, thin, curved

sand-dune spit that separates the Curonian Lagoon from the Baltic Sea coast. Its southern portion lies within Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia, and it's northern within south-western

Klaipėda County, Lithuania. We visited the local amber gallery, where we learned about customs of people's way of life, which reflects in the jewellery they exhibit.



## **The IMPACT of this visit**

Our visit to the school focussed on digital creativity and art. Loreta focussed our attention on upskilling staff and pupils in learning how to develop creative thinking skills, including creating within a digital context. We believe this visit was invaluable to all teachers. This visit focussed on the following themes:

- A better understanding of creative thinking techniques, not only to use with the children in school, but also to take home and use outside of a work setting
- Increased opportunities for professional development
- Continuing CPD - increasing a teachers' toolkit of skills
- Impact on teachers adopting collaborative and innovative practices
- Greater confidence in the teaching of arts-based subject