

## NEWSLETTER (JANUARY–APRIL 2020)

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Jurbarkas town inhabitants commemorated International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp: visited the Jurbarkas Genocide Victims Cemetery, lighted candles, and placed memorial stones; participated in the global campaign "We remember" at the Synagogue Square Memorial.

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On January 24-26, the Jurbarkas Region Municipal Institutions presented Jurbarkas Region in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, the largest Baltic states international tourism exhibition "ADVENTUR 2020", inviting everyone to "Healthy - Travel Slowly!", also "On the Path of Paradise" to get health, peace, fortitude and other wealth of our land. The exhibition was attended not only by representatives from the Baltic region, but also from Italy, Iceland, Japan, Cyprus, Croatia, Cuba, Nepal, Sakartwell, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Ukraine and other countries.

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In January - February Jurbarkas District Municipal Public Library organized an exhibition of the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre "Children of the Wolf": by bread road from East Prussia to Lithuania" to commemorate the common history and culture of Lithuanian and German peoples.

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On 2-4 February Skirmantas Mockevičius, the Mayor of Jurbarkas Municipality, along with other mayors of the Republic of Lithuania, travelled to Brussels (Belgium) to meet the Deputy Director General for Regional and Urban Development of the European Commission **Normunds Popens**, Head of European Commission Communication **Pia Ahrenkilde-Hansen**, Vice-Chairman of the Development Committee **Jan Olbrycht** and other official officers. European Union 2021–2027 regional policy was discussed. The Mayor of the municipality Skirmantas Mockevičius presented the project "Taurage +" of the municipalities of Taurage region (Jurbarkas is one of the 4 municipalities of the region).

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From 16 February 2020 until 11 March Lithuanian-language days are held throughout the world where Lithuanians live. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> time campaign, which aims to increase the prestige and dissemination of the Lithuanian language, to strengthen the motivation to learn the language and to mobilize communities. The institutions of Jurbarkas district are also very actively and willingly involved in the activities of preservation of the Lithuanian language and raising the prestige of the Lithuanian language. In 2020, during the Lithuanian Language Days in Jurbarkas, more than 60 different events dedicated to the mother tongue will take place.

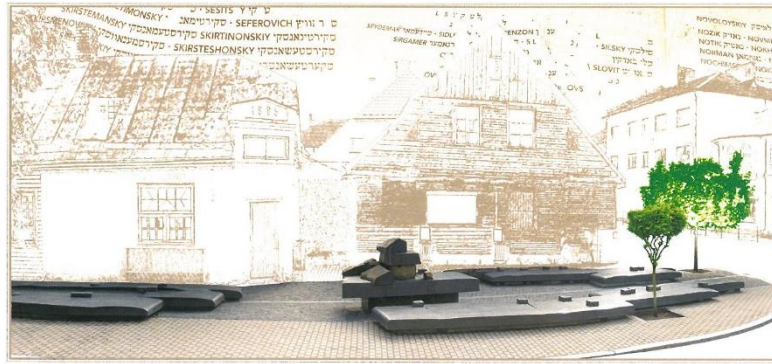
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On 8 February Andrius Palionis, Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, paid tribute of the National contest "Land Gold" to the winners of Jurbarkas district : Jurbarkas District Municipal Public Library (for the "Library Otherwise" project), the Jurbarkas Evangelical Lutheran Parish Deaconry "Jurbarkas Consonance" (for the project of "Youth occupation and Recreation Camp in Smalininkai ") and "Graneda" LTD (for the "Graneda" project, expansion of activities and creation of added value through efficient use of local resources").

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On 16 February during the solemn commemoration of the Day of the Restoration of the State of Lithuania, Skirmantas Mockevičius, the Mayor of Jurbarkas District Municipality, presented the "Crystal Lilies" awards to 8 nominees. To **David Zundelovitch**, living in Israel, a sculptor, creator of the Jurbarkas Synagogue Square Memorial dedicated to the commemoration of the Jurbarkas Jewish Community and the Wooden Jurbarkas Synagogue, was awarded the nomination "For Active Promotion of Jurbarkas Land in Lithuania in the Field of Science, Education, Art, Politics, Business, Sports or Other Important Sphere of Society". As the sculptor was unable to attend the ceremony, this honourable award was presented to sculptor's children and memorial co-authors **Greg Zundelovitch** and **Anna Zundelovitch**.



(Jurbarkas District Municipality issued a postcard for the Jurbarkas Synagogue Square Memorial in July 2019)

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On 18-22 February the Mayor of Jurbarkas Municipality Skirmantas Mockevičius participated in Tel Aviv (Israel) in the MUNI EXPO 2020 municipal conference. A group of Lithuanian municipal leaders met with the president of the Association of Israeli Municipalities to discuss municipal cooperation. The delegation also visited the Lithuanian Liaison Office for Palestine, where a cooperation agreement between the Association of Local Authorities of Lithuania and the Association of Palestinian Municipalities was signed. There was a visit to Bethlehem at the invitation of the Bethlehem Municipality.

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This year we are commemorating the 30th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuania's independence. The same anniversary is celebrated by Jurbarkas district self-government. On April 18, 1990 the first meeting of the Jurbarkas District Municipal Council, elected in free elections, took place.

For the overall quarantine and the preservation of human health in April 2020, Jurbarkas District Municipality could not organize a public event dedicated to the historical date. However, at the initiative of the municipality, this jubilee anniversary was sincerely mentioned in the Internet space and in the district media, the difficult start of the restored state and the people of the Jurbarkas region at that time, who bravely created the foundations of independent self-government, were remembered.

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The Government of the Republic of Lithuania, taking into account the unfavourable epidemic situation of COVID-19 (coronavirus infection) in Lithuania and in the world, from March 16, 2020 declared quarantine throughout the state. On April 22, 2020 this quarantine was extended until May 11. Jurbarkas district municipality actively reacts to the situation and effectively solves the problems according to its capabilities. The extreme situation required mobilization, immediate reorganization of work, remote communication with visitors, keep meetings and conferences of politicians and heads of institutions and specialists. Some specialists started working from home. The meetings of the municipal council are broadcasted directly on the social network “Facebook” and receive a lot of public interest.

Human service, catering, trade and other institutions operating in the municipality did not work for a month. The students were taught remotely. Some institutions have offered new services, such as sewing protective face masks, offering those who wish to listen to the press during a telephone conversation or an excerpt of a desired piece of fiction ...

This global crisis has greatly changed the plans of the municipality. Decisions had to be made on the cancellation of cultural and sporting events and changes in international cooperation activities. At the beginning of May, there will be no traditional business days, which were very often attended by guests from Latvia, Poland, Moldova, Russia and Germany. This year, the 24th youth camp of Jurbarkas and Laakdal (Belgium) was to take place in Jurbarkas, funding has already been allocated, but for the current situation it is being negotiated to transfer the event and its funding to 2021. It is likely that the traditional Jurbarkas region festival will not take place at the end of August either. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the cooperation with Crailsheim (Germany), many events were planned this year to promote German culture. It is a pity, but plans must be changed.

In April, the Mayor of the Municipality asked how the quarantine has affected partners abroad, how the problems are being solved in Belgium, Poland, Moldova and Germany. During the press conference, Jurbarkas region society was presented the information about the situation in Berlin, Crailsheim and Laakdal. It is observed that the problem is common to all countries and the methods of protection are very similar. Everyone's opinion is the same - one of the most important means of protection is as much as possible communication in the Internet space, less direct meetings with other people, because the walls of the home can really help ...

*The information was prepared by Antanas Gvildys, the Chief Specialist of the Documents and Public Relations Department of the Municipal Administration.*

*The information was translated into English by the translator Vilijana Urbietienė.*