

PORTAL: A Bridge to Unity Connects Two Countries

On the 26th of May Lithuania's capital, Vilnius and Lublin in Poland became the first two cities to connect through PORTAL. This visual bridge, is a new wave community accelerator, aiming to bring people of different cultures together and encouraging them to rethink the feeling and meaning of unity.

For the first time, different countries, cities and its' people have such a way to connect in real-time. PORTAL is an invitation to expand our circle of compassion, to experience different cultures, and to embrace the world surrounding you. PORTAL brings a new approach to unity, especially important in times like these when we are being separated by extremely viral polarizing ideas and narratives.

As the author and the initiator of the project, Vilnius-based Benediktas Gylys Foundation says, it's time to transcend the sense of separation and to become the pioneers of a united planet.

'Humanity is facing a lot of potentially deadly challenges, be it social polarization, climate change, or economic issues. Though if we look closely, it's not a lack of brilliant scientists, activists or leaders, knowledge, or technology that cause these challenges. It's tribalism, lack of empathy, and a secluded perception of the world, which is often limited to our national borders. That's why we've decided to bring the idea of PORTAL to life – it is a bridge to unity, an invitation to rise above prejudices, above the disagreements that belong to the past, it's an invitation to rise above the illusion of *us* and *them*', says Benediktas Gylys, the president of Benediktas Gylys Foundation and the author of the PORTAL idea.

Ringaile Papartyte, the Executive Director of Benediktas Gylys Foundation, notes that it took 5 years for the team of the project to finally arrive at the first destinations of PORTAL and they are extremely thankful to Lublin for the bravery of becoming the first partner city and also the pioneer of unity.

'PORTAL reminds us that we must not allow the pandemic to suspend contacts between neighbors, undermine solidarity and international cooperation. We want to return to direct cooperation between schools, cultural institutions, local authorities from Vilnius and other European partner cities as soon as possible. By participating in the project, we want to recall and emphasize the historical role of cities in building a space of freedom and tolerance', says Krzysztof Stanowski, Director of the International Cooperation Centre, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland.

PORTAL

Part of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VILNIUS TEC) LinkMenų fabrikas, the technical heart of the project, chose the circle, a well-known and recognized sci-fi symbol for this visual 'bridge'. Resembling the wheel of time, PORTAL allows a person to 'travel' and experience reality on the other side of this 'bridge'. The form, minimal design, and aesthetics of the PORTAL shape the image of a future city.

'The PORTAL from the very beginning was an impressive and exciting project. From the initial idea to the creation of an interactive bridge connecting cities, it was a complex task that needed different knowledge and technologies. From design, 3D modeling to digital content development and logistic challenges – a project like this requires a broad and multifunctional team. When diverse people succeed in working together and reach the synchrony – then such meaningful projects are born. And this is just another example of what the united people can achieve', says Adas Meskenas, the director of VILNIUS TECH Creativity and innovation centre 'LinkMenų fabrikas'.

The project is not a simple *one-timer*, the organizers plan to connect the world by dozens of PORTALS in the near future. The aim is to involve communities and encourage a public movement that would create social experiments, unexpected reactions, and most important – the unity of different cultures and its' people in the long run.

The PORTAL: <https://bit.ly/3bZJzzH>.

About the PORTAL team:

Since 2013 Lithuania based Benediktas Gylys Foundation brings projects supporting science, innovation, and creativity to life.

A part of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VGTU) LinkMenų fabrikas is a creativity and innovation center gathering a team of true Lithuanian makers.

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More about the PORTAL:

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