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European digital nomads (EDIN)

**LAZDIJAI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY (LITHUANIA)  
REGIONAL REPORT**



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## 1. Executive Summary

This report provides information about the current situation in the territory of one of the EDIN project partners – Lazdijai District Municipality – and the possibilities to attract digital nomads to this region. Some parts of the report provide information about the situation of the Republic of Lithuania as a region, since the concept of digital nomads is a relatively new concept in the country, therefore this phenomenon needs to be examined in a broader context (for example, legal regulation is not separately regulated in the municipality, therefore the report describes the regulation in the country).

## 2. General Context

### **The State of Digital Nomadism in Lithuania.**

Lithuania's adoption of digital nomadism has accelerated in recent years, spurred by the global pandemic, which pushed many workers and companies to adopt remote work on a massive scale. The country's tech infrastructure, affordable living, and rich cultural heritage have become increasingly important factors in drawing digital nomads. Biggest cities like Vilnius, Kaunas, and Klaipėda are at the heart of this transformation, with their modern coworking spaces, extensive internet connectivity, and welcoming startup ecosystems, still, this type of working (digital nomadism) needs more attention and incentives in Lithuania and Lazdijai District Municipality .

### **Key Factors Driving the Digital Nomad Movement in Lithuania:**

- **Digital Infrastructure:** Lithuania boasts some of the best internet connectivity in Europe, with high-speed broadband widely available across the country. The country's tech infrastructure is robust, and its government has prioritized digitalization in public services and governance.
- **Affordable Cost of Living:** Compared to other European countries, the cost of living in Lithuania is relatively low, making it an attractive destination for digital nomads. This affordability extends to housing, dining, and entertainment, allowing digital nomads to live comfortably without sacrificing quality.
- **Business-Friendly Environment:** Lithuania has a strong entrepreneurial culture and is known for being business-friendly. The country's regulatory environment, particularly for freelancers and startups, is simple and transparent. Moreover, Lithuania is part of the European Union, offering access to a vast market for digital nomads from outside the EU.

### **Profiles of Digital Nomads in Lithuania.**

Digital nomads in Lithuania come from diverse backgrounds and professional fields, but there are several common characteristics that define this growing group.

- **Age and Demographics:** Most digital nomads in Lithuania are aged between 25 and 45, with a significant proportion being millennials and Generation Z workers. This demographic is tech-savvy, values flexibility in work and lifestyle, and is highly mobile, seeking both professional and personal growth through travel. However, the community also includes older remote workers, especially those nearing retirement who are looking for affordable, vibrant places to live.
- **Industries and Professions:** The majority of digital nomads in Lithuania work in technology-related fields, including software development, IT services, and digital marketing. Other common professions include freelance writing, graphic design, consultancy, and online teaching. Many are entrepreneurs running small online businesses or startups. Digital nomads tend to work in knowledge-intensive professions that can be performed on a laptop, allowing them to move freely between locations. The main types of digital nomads in Lithuania can be broadly categorized into:
  - a) **Tech Professionals:** Software developers, engineers, and IT specialists who can work remotely from anywhere with a strong internet connection.
  - b) **Creative Professionals:** Designers, writers, photographers, and artists who seek inspiration from Lithuania's cultural richness and vibrant cities.
  - c) **Entrepreneurs and Startups:** Individuals building businesses or managing remote teams across multiple countries.
  - d) **Freelancers and Consultants:** Experts offering services in marketing, finance, law, and consulting.
- **Work and lifestyle preferences:** Digital nomads in Lithuania often prioritize work-life balance and flexibility. They typically work remotely for international clients, either through freelance platforms or as employees of companies that offer remote positions. Many digital nomads seek a community environment, which is why coworking spaces and networking events play an important role in their lifestyle. They are also attracted to Lithuania's vibrant arts scene, its proximity to nature, and the wide variety of recreational activities available in the country, from hiking and biking in national parks to exploring the medieval history of cities like Vilnius.

- **Origins:** Digital nomads in Lithuania come from a variety of countries, but there is a notable presence of individuals from Western Europe, as well as North America. This reflects the appeal of Lithuania as an affordable and accessible European destination. Additionally, the country's proximity to Poland, Latvia, and other EU countries makes it an easy and attractive base for regional travel. Also, it is important to note that it would be rational to consider as digital nomads not only foreigners, but also citizens living in the same country, but in other regions, who could come to work to the particular region seasonally or for a limited time.

### **Digital nomad marketing campaign**

The campaign organized by the country's state institution to attract digital nomads to Lithuania has recently started. One part of the campaign is aimed at countries that have a simplified visa regime for entry to Lithuania. Detailed information is published on a special website [workinlithuania.com](http://workinlithuania.com): [Digital nomads - Work in Lithuania](#). The aim of the second part of the marketing campaign is to attract digital nomads living in southern EU countries, for whom a warming climate and growing tourist flows may be a factor encouraging them to migrate elsewhere. A special page has been created for this purpose, which contains suggestions what to do when you arrive in Lithuania - from co-working spaces to leisure and events: <https://workinlithuania.com/browse-real-summer/>

### 3. Legal Framework

Lazdijai District Municipality has general legal acts and requirements for digital nomads, as in the whole of Lithuania. It should be noted that the work and residence of digital nomads in the country is not separately regulated, they are subject to general requirements for work and residence of foreigners in the country.

Unfortunately, Lithuania does not currently offer a **Digital Nomad Visa**, unlike [some other European and world countries](#).

#### Conditions and documents required to live and work in Lithuania:

##### 1. If person wants to come to the Lithuania for less than 3 months:

If person intend to stay in Lithuania for **up to 90 days** in any **180-day period**, it is sufficient to have Schengen visa (if person is not subject to visa-free regime).

##### 1.1. To visit Lithuania for a short time (less than 90 days), person may enter:

- under the visa-free regime if he is subject to the visa-free regime;
- with a valid Schengen visa if he is not covered by the visa-free regime.

If person is not a citizen of a Member State of the European Union but have a European Union residence card issued by one of the Member States of the European Union, person may enter the Republic of Lithuania and stay without a visa for a period not exceeding 90 days within 180 days period;

If person has a residence permit or national visa issued by another Schengen State, person has the right to enter and stay without a visa in Lithuania during the period of validity of the residence permit or national visa, but stay in Lithuania and other Schengen states may not exceed 90 days within 180 days period.

**1.2. To stay in Lithuania longer than Schengen visa is valid**, person can request an extension of the Schengen visa. The period of validity of Schengen visa and/or the duration of stay may be extended if person submit:

- evidence of **force majeure or humanitarian reasons** as to why you cannot leave the Republic of Lithuania until the expiry of the Schengen visa or the end of the length of stay authorised by the visa;
- evidence of **important personal reasons** justifying the extension of the validity of the Schengen visa or duration of stay.

Permit for seasonal work issued to a person by the Employment Service for **up to 90 days** or an extended seasonal work permit if the total period does not exceed **90 days**, or person apply for a new or extended seasonal work permit. A person must submit the necessary documents and to pay a fee (EUR 30).

Person must apply to the Migration Department if he is legally present in Lithuania, for the extension of the Schengen visa.

(Source: <https://www.migracija.lt/stay-less-than-3-months>)

## **2. To stay for more than 3 months in Lithuania:**

If person intend to stay for more than 90 days within 180 days, he must acquire:

- **national visa** (different requirements apply depending on whether a person comes to work as seasonal worker or is seconded to work in Lithuania)
- or **temporary residence permit** (different requirements apply depending on:
  - person is a highly skilled employee ;
  - person is a citizen of Ukraine, intend to work and do not need an assessment by the Employment Service regarding compliance with the needs of the Lithuanian labour market ;
  - person is a permanent employee of an EU company;
  - person intend to work under an employment contract and my profession is not on the shortage occupations list ;
  - person have completed my studies in Lithuania and intend to work

- person intend to work under an employment contract and my profession is on the shortage occupations list
- person is an intra-corporate transferee (Directive 2014/66/EU)
- person intend to work as a teacher under an employment contract
- person intend to work as a researcher under an employment contract )

If a person intend to work as a seasonal or posted worker, he can obtain a national visa. In other cases, he should opt for a temporary residence permit. Temporary residence permits are usually issued for 2 years, for highly qualified workers – for 3 years, and can usually be renewed later.

Different requirements also apply depending on:

- Person is a citizen of Australia, Japan, United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, New Zealand, South Korea
- Person is coming under a major project investment agreement (Article 15 (7) (6) of the Investment Law)
- Person is arriving under an investment agreement which lays down special investment and business conditions (Article 13 (1) (3) and (4) of the Investment Law).
- Person is participating in international operations, exercises and other events, or is a dependent of such a person (Article 12 of the Law on International Operations, Military Exercises and Cooperation Events)

### **3. Blue Card**

The Blue Card in Lithuania is the same as the temporary residence permit which certifies that you can live and work in this country legally. This kind of temporary residence is specifically designed for highly qualified non-EU citizens.

Blue Card “Roadmaps” are published on website <https://workinlithuania.com/eu-blue-card/>.

### 3.1. Advantages of having a Blue Card:

- Start working right away: You can begin working as soon as your application is accepted and being processed in MIGRIS (when the status says *prašymas priimtas*)
- No need for Employment Service approval
- Longer validity: The Blue Card is valid for up to three years
- Family benefits: You can bring your family members, and their residence permits will be issued for the same period as yours. You can submit all the documents together at the same time
- Easier process to change jobs or employers: You can change your position within the same company without government approval or starting a separate application process.

### 3.2. General requirements for obtaining a Blue Card

- **Work contract:** You need a work contract with a Lithuanian company
- **Employment period:** The work contract should be for at least 6 months
- **Education or experience:** You should have higher education in the relevant field or at least five years of relevant work experience within the last 7 years. For IT specialists, three years of relevant work experience is sufficient. If you do not have a higher education diploma, your future employer needs to contact the Ministry of the Economy and Innovation to obtain a certificate confirming the suitability of your qualifications
- **Salary:** Your salary should be at least 1.5 times the [average monthly salary for the last calendar year](#) in Lithuania (currently around €3,033). Alternatively, if your position is on the list of high value-adding professions with a shortage of workers in Lithuania, the salary requirement is at least 1.2 times the average monthly salary (around €2,427). If you are a Managing Director of a company registered in your salary should be 1.5x the average monthly gross salary for the last calendar year in Lithuania (~€3,033)

**3.3. To start the application process**, a person should fill out the online application form and upload digital copies of the required documents. Submit your application through the Lithuanian Migration Information System ([MIGRIS](#)).

After submitting your e-application via MIGRIS, you'll need to schedule an appointment to provide your biometric data. You have three options for this:

1. At the VFS Global Application Centre abroad
2. At the Migration Department in Lithuania

### 3.4. Documents needed:

- A valid **passport**
- Employers' **mediation letter**, stating a company's commitment to employ a person with a certain profession and to pay him/her a salary that meets the requirements.
- A **commitment to [declare place of residence in Lithuania](#)**
- Criminal background **certificate** (required only if person has criminal convictions).  
Otherwise - affirmation that person was not convicted.

### 3.5. Paying public fees.

The [fee](#) for the acceptance and review of your application is €160 (general procedure) or €320 (fast track).

### 3.6. Blue Card issuance/withdrawal process.

Once you've submitted your biometrics, you'll need to wait for the decision. You can track the progress of your application through your personal MIGRIS account. The application processing period is from 15 days to 1 month (application process through [VFS Global](#) may take from 1 to 2 months). Notifications about the decision will be sent to your MIGRIS account and email.

Once your application is approved, you can collect your temporary residence permit. You can choose to pick it up at a Migration Department office in Lithuania (if you have the opportunity to legally enter Lithuania / be legally in Lithuania) or at an external service provider's office while abroad (it may take longer to receive your permit if you choose to collect it while abroad).

To renew a Blue Card, a person has to submit an application and all required documents before current permit expires, 4 months or less before the expiration date. (Source: <https://www.migracija.lt/as-esu-aukstos-kvalifikacijos-darbuotojas>).

## 4. Territory

Lithuania (officially The Republic of Lithuania) is a country in Northern Europe, on the southeastern coast of the Baltic Sea. The area is 65,300 km<sup>2</sup>. Lithuania is one of the Baltic states. At the beginning of 2024, Lithuania had a population of 3 million.

Municipalities in Lithuania (for analysis purposes) is divided into 4 clusters according to the type of municipality, population and other parameters.

- Cluster of large city municipalities. This cluster includes 6 out of 60 Lithuanian municipalities.
- Cluster of urbanized municipalities. This cluster includes 12 out of 60 Lithuanian municipalities.
- **Cluster of rural municipalities.** This cluster includes 38 Lithuanian municipalities. This cluster also includes the Lazdijai District Municipality .
- Cluster of resort municipalities. This cluster includes 4 Lithuanian municipalities.



2 picture. **Map of the Municipalities of the Republic of Lithuania**

Lazdijai District Municipality is located in the southwestern part of Alytus County and borders two foreign countries – Belarus and Poland. Lazdijai District Municipality covers an area of 130,938.7 ha. This region attracts with its beautiful landscapes and natural nature untouched by industry. A large part of the territory (42,976.15 ha) is covered by forests. Also, a large part of the municipality's territory is covered by the Veisiejai and Meteliai regional parks (environmentally protected areas). Lazdijai District is home to more than 150 lakes, including the third largest lake in Lithuania. A significant part of land is used in agriculture.

## 4.1 Demographics

The population of Lazdijai District Municipality is 18.5 thousand inhabitants (population density – 13.5 inhabitants per 1 square kilometer). The population of the municipality is rapidly decreasing. This is due to the increasing scale of emigration and low birth rate. Low birth rate, changes in family structure (the number of families with only one parent is increasing), and the aging of the population lead to an increase in social problems. Low population density highlights a common demographic challenge faced by rural areas in Lithuania. Younger people are opting to move to urban centers for better job opportunities, contributing to an imbalanced demographic structure, where the elderly outnumber the younger working-age population. The median age in Lazdijai is higher than the national average, with a growing share of the population over the age of 60. As of recent data, approximately 30% of the population is over 60 years old, which places significant pressure on local healthcare and social services.

One of the most critical issues facing Lazdijai District Municipality is the ongoing out-migration of young people. This phenomenon, often referred to as brain drain, is a significant factor contributing to the district's demographic decline. Young people, particularly those with higher education, are leaving rural areas like Lazdijai in search of better employment opportunities, better living conditions, and access to education and culture in larger cities. This migration trend has been a long-standing issue in Lithuania (and in Lazdijai District), especially after the country joined the European Union in 2004, which facilitated the movement of people to other EU countries. The departure of young, skilled individuals has created a skills gap in the local labor market. Many local businesses (municipal institutions also) face difficulties in attracting younger

workers who are willing to remain in the district. This has a direct impact on the economic vitality of the region, as young people are a critical part of the workforce needed to drive local development.

While out-migration is a key concern, there are some positive trends related to in-migration to rural areas, including Lazdijai. Although this is a much smaller phenomenon, urban-to-rural migration has been slowly gaining traction, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, as remote work and the digital economy create new opportunities for people to live outside of major urban centers. The rise of remote work has made it easier for people to relocate to quieter, more affordable rural areas, including Lazdijai. The appeal of Lithuania's rural areas lies in their low cost of living, clean environment, and slower pace of life, which are attractive to people seeking an alternative to crowded cities. This shift in work patterns presents an opportunity for Lazdijai to attract a new generation of residents who can live and work remotely, without having to be tied to larger urban areas.

There have been various initiatives at the local and national levels aimed at revitalizing rural areas like Lazdijai. These include rural development programs, investment in local infrastructure, and efforts to promote agriculture, eco-tourism, and sustainable development. Such initiatives aim to make rural life more attractive to young people and families, which may help mitigate out-migration and support the sustainable development of the region.

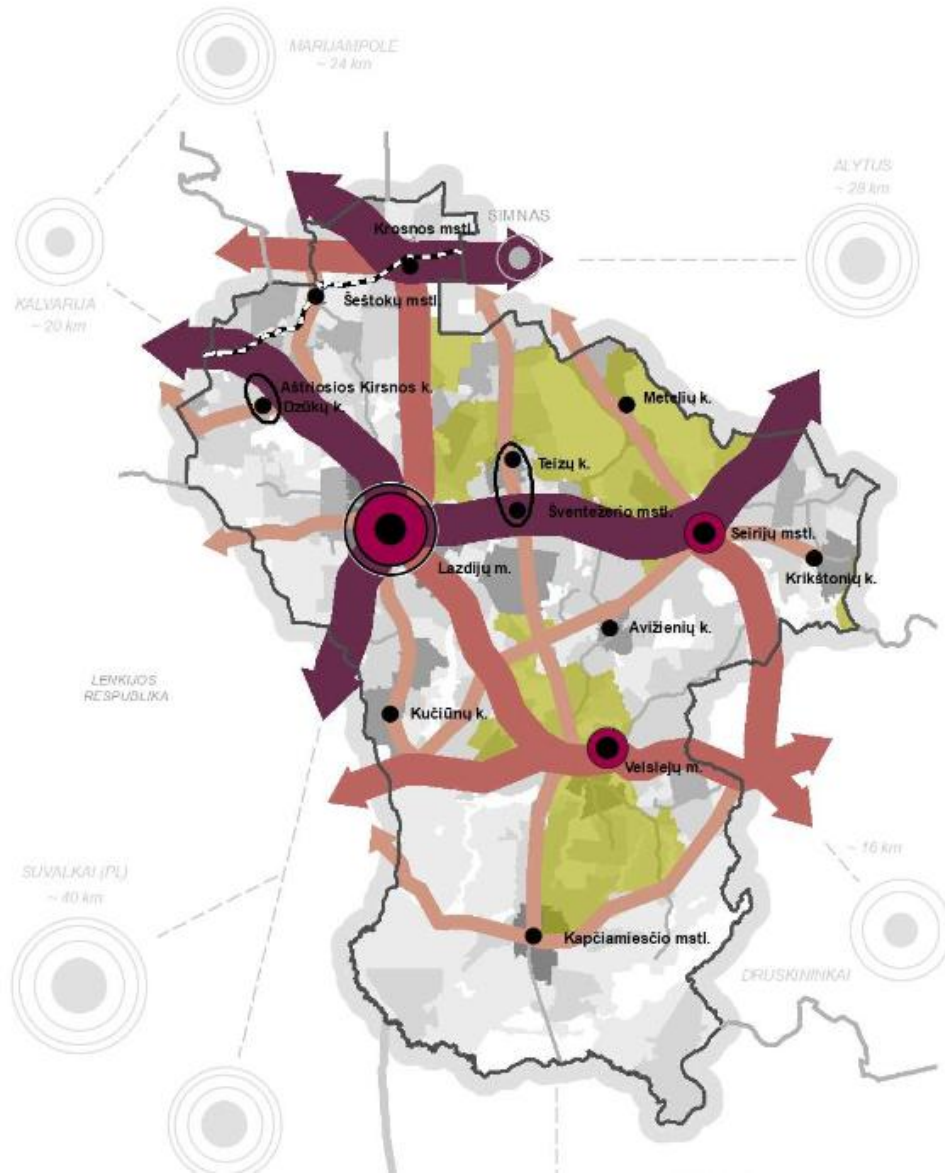
## 4.2 Functional Areas

Having assessed the aspects of urban structure optimization (as well as demographic changes and trends in the district), the General Plan of the Lazdijai District Municipality provides that the urban structure in the territory of the municipality consists of the following urban centers:

- The main urban center - Lazdijai city (according to the General Plan of the Republic of Lithuania, Lazdijai is classified as a category B local center, which is planned to strengthen functional ties with urban centers of the same and higher level, based on its available potential) - plays an important role in the municipality and, together with other urban centers of a higher level, supports the vitality of the region. This urban center must

concentrate higher education, health, culture and other exclusive services that are in demand and unique not only in the Lazdijai District Municipality, but also in the region. Service opportunities and jobs of the appropriate level are being formed.

- Supplementary urban centers – Veisiejai city and Seirijai town are distinguished as actively operating in the municipal level structure – concentrating part of the public services of the main center and supplementing them with certain unique activities, satisfying the needs of residents of territories further from the main urban center for relatively less frequent use of services. It should be noted that the aim is to grant the status of a resort area to Veisiejai city and its surrounding territories.
- Other local urban centers – Krosna town, Šeštokai town, Aštrioji Kirsna village, Šventežeris town, Meteliai village, Krikštoniai village, Avižieniai village, Kapčiamiestis town, Kučiūnai village. These urban centers concentrate functions to ensure essential services, to maintain the quality of life of residents. When forming the diversity of services, it is important to assess the age composition of the residents of these residential areas and their surroundings, their respective needs, and to provide mobile services. Some of these centers (for example, Meteliai and Kapčiamiestis) are characterized by extremely abundant natural resources and attractive landscapes, and therefore would be attractive places to establish work and living spaces for digital nomads.



2 picture. General Plan of the Lazdijai District Municipality

### 4.3 Occupation of Spaces

Lazdijai District Municipality, like many rural areas, has a number of abandoned or underutilized spaces that could be repurposed to attract digital nomads. These spaces, whether former schools, old industrial buildings, or unused houses, represent an untapped resource for revitalizing the region while fostering a vibrant community for remote workers. By reimagining these spaces, Lazdijai can create attractive hubs for digital nomads, blending modern amenities with the area's rich natural and cultural heritage.

Abandoned spaces in the municipality mostly are public buildings (like the schools, libraries, buildings of the border guard service). These buildings and spaces can be restructured to co-working hubs with high-speed internet, meeting rooms, and collaborative workspaces.

Several places and unused buildings in the municipality could be particularly attractive for adapting them for digital nomads to work and live:

- Old school building in Meteliai village. The village is located between two lakes, this area is very popular tourist destination.
- Two unused buildings in Kapčiamiestis town (one of them is closed school). The town is a popular tourist destination also, located in a beautiful landscape, surrounded by forests, lakes and rivers.
- An abandoned complex of buildings of the border guard service near Lazdijai city, on Galadusys lake shore (this lake is located between Lithuania and Poland).
- Building in the center of Lazdijai city, which is in a process of renovation. The building houses several state and municipal institutions, sports facilities, co-working spaces are being developed there.

Repurposed buildings can also provide accommodation options for digital nomads. Old and (or) abandoned buildings can be renovated into comfortable, cost-effective living spaces with the essential amenities for long-term stays. Additionally, creating tiny villages or eco-friendly lodgings would cater to nomads who prioritize sustainability and privacy. Offering both short-term and long-term rental options would allow digital nomads to stay in Lazdijai for varying durations, encouraging them to explore the area or even settle down for extended periods. Accommodations should not only be functional but also reflect the local culture and community. For example, incorporating elements of local architecture and heritage into the design can create a sense of connection to the area. Renovation projects should incorporate green building practices, such as energy-efficient designs, solar power, rainwater collection systems, and the use of eco-friendly materials. This will not only attract environmentally conscious digital nomads but also help preserve the natural beauty of the region.

Through careful planning, collaboration with the local community, and a focus on sustainability, Lazdijai can turn its abandoned spaces into a thriving digital nomads destination.

#### **4.4 Urban-Rural Link**

Lazdijai District Municipality is quite sparsely populated (low population density), a large part of the population lives in their own homes in small settlements or villages, therefore convenient transportation is very important. The transportation system consists of 8 state roads, which carry the highest traffic. The most important directions of travel by road transport are the following: from smaller settlements of the municipality to the district center - the city of Lazdijai and back, transportation with other, smaller towns of the district and transportation with the centers of other municipalities (Alytus, Marijampolė, Druskininkai). From the city of Lazdijai to the Lithuanian-Polish border is only about 8 km, to the city of Suwalki - about 50 km, to Vilnius - about 150 km, to Kaunas - about 110 km, to the city of Alytus, the center of the Alytus region - 45 km, to Marijampole and Druskininkai - also about 50 km, so the connection with larger cities is good and this is one of the features of the municipality's attractions. Lazdijai District Municipality borders on two neighboring countries - Poland and Belarus.

29 local regular bus routes have been established in the municipality (this indicator is one of the highest among the municipalities in the region). The average travel time by public transport on all routes is about 50 minutes. Buses in the municipality since 2023. carry all passengers free of charge,

Number of registered passenger cars per 1 thousand residents (652 units) in the municipality is the largest in the region and has been increasing in recent years (the same trend is observed at the regional level).

Since 2023, as part of the project, Lazdijai District Municipality has purchased three eight-seater electric cars and installed two charging stations, developed a mobile application and established a call center. The goal is to replace part of the polluting public transport and eliminate mobility deserts in the district. The on-demand services and door-to-door movement system will cover three transport zones – the largest districts of the district (Lazdijai, Seirijai, Veisiejai), as this allows you to conveniently connect trips throughout the district. The maximum travel distance that can be

booked is 35 km., the service is provided on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. People have the opportunity to book trips and track the trip in real time. Every resident of the district can book a service for a trip from their home to their destination in the Lazdijai District via the website, mobile application and call center. The system has an algorithm that organizes the distribution of reservations for routes. It is possible to pay for the trip on the website and in the mobile application, but so far all trips are free of charge for residents. Most often, residents go to medical institutions and pharmacies.

In order to accommodate digital travelers, it is especially important to ensure good connectivity with higher-level urban centers, which concentrate higher-level, relatively less frequently used services. The sustainable development of functional connections determines favorable conditions for social, economic and ecological well-being and the formation of a high quality of life for people.

## 5. Economy

### 5.1. State of Play

Lazdijai District Municipality belongs to one of the economically weakest regions in the country - the Alytus region. According to preliminary data in 2021, according to gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, at the prices of that time, the Alytus region was in 8th place out of 10. Due to the small amount of industry, the GDP generated by the municipality is relatively small, this trend has remained for many years.

The number of economic entities registered and operating in the municipality has increased in recent years (459 units in 2023). The number of enterprises in the municipality has also increased (356 units in 2023). Very small (0–4 employees) enterprises dominate. Wholesale and retail trade, car repair, and other service businesses predominate in the municipality.

In 2024, 2,204 farmers registered their farms in the municipality, working on 21,559.61 ha of land. The average size of a farmer's farm is 9.78 hectares.

The monthly gross wage in the municipality has been growing in recent years, but still remains lower than the average for Alytus County and Lithuania (in 2023 it reached 1,422.4 EUR (in municipality), compared to 2013,8 EUR (in Lithuania)). This fact can be assessed in two ways: on the one hand, relatively cheaper labor could be an attractive factor for investors, but low income of the population reduces overall consumption and complicates the creation of business, especially in the service sector.

The share of unemployed people in the number of able-bodied persons in Lazdijai District Municipality amounted to 9.3 percent. (national indicator - 9.1 percent). At the beginning of 2024, only 11 vacancies were registered by employers in Lazdijai District Municipality .

An employment increase program is implemented annually in the municipality. The goal of the program is to help individuals restore work skills, become part of the active labor market, and reduce social exclusion or improve their social situation by increasing their employment. During

the implementation of the program, services are provided to about 100 people annually. Long-term unemployed are consulted, and various social services are provided to them. Targeted services were purchased and provided from the Program funds: transportation with escort and assistance services, individual psychological consultations, training on motivational topics, financial literacy, social (accompanying assistance, counseling, information, etc.) services, addiction treatment and counseling services, and dentist services.

During the implementation of another measure of this program, temporary jobs are organized, because the need for them in the municipality is great (the unemployed are temporarily employed for a period of several months). The purpose of the program measure is to create opportunities for the unemployed to establish themselves in the labor market and earn the necessary funds for living, to promote work motivation, social and work skills. Every year, about 50 people participate in this program measure.

Conditions for attracting large investments are created and improved in the municipality. Attracting investors and potential projects are associated with the Mockava terminal, which is the only territory equipped with specialized infrastructure with the possibility of using railway tracks of both standards (Russian and European), and with nearby land plots belonging to the municipality. However, attracting large investments due to the lack of qualified labor in the Lazdijai District would only partially solve the problems of high unemployment. Great attention must be constantly paid to the development of small and medium-sized businesses, attracting highly qualified businesses. It is in the small and medium-sized business segment that the largest number of jobs in the municipality can be effectively created. About 74 percent of the municipality's residents live in rural areas in the Lazdijai District, therefore small and medium-sized businesses must be encouraged not only in the district center - the city of Lazdijai, but also in smaller towns in the district.

## **5.2 Post-Pandemic Resilience**

Lazdijai District Municipality , a region known for its agricultural landscape and close-knit communities, like many regions globally, faced significant challenges during the COVID-19

pandemic. The local economy, primarily driven by agriculture, retail, tourism, and small-scale manufacturing, was severely impacted by restrictions and the broader economic slowdown. However, the district's resilience during and after the pandemic underscores the adaptability and determination of its people, businesses, and local government.

### **Government Support and Local Policy Responses**

The municipality of Lazdijai, in collaboration with national government programs, introduced a variety of support measures aimed at mitigating the economic impact of the pandemic. Local authorities were proactive in ensuring that the district's businesses could access financial support, such as subsidies, tax deferrals, and low-interest loans. These efforts were particularly crucial for SMEs, which form the backbone of Lazdijai economy.

Moreover, the district government facilitated the digitization of services for businesses and residents, helping them access government aid and navigate the regulatory landscape more effectively. In some cases, this meant assisting businesses in creating an online presence or adopting e-commerce platforms to reach new customers.

At the same time, the local government prioritized public health measures, ensuring that businesses could operate safely and avoid further lockdowns. This helped restore consumer confidence in local retail and hospitality sectors.

### **Adaptation of Tourism**

The tourism sector in Lazdijai was hit particularly hard by the pandemic, but it also demonstrated remarkable resilience. Local tourism operators quickly pivoted by focusing on domestic tourism, creating new opportunities for local residents to explore the area's natural beauty. With the relaxation of travel restrictions, cross-border tourism began to recover, but the focus on promoting local experiences ensured a steadier flow of visitors even during uncertain times.

In the long term, there is potential for the development of sustainable tourism in Lazdijai, with a focus on eco-tourism and rural tourism, capitalizing on the region's natural resources and proximity to the border. By developing new attractions, festivals, and outdoor activities, Lazdijai

can tap into emerging travel trends, which have increasingly favored small-scale, nature-oriented experiences post-pandemic.

### **5.3 Perspective of the Economic Development**

Lazdijai faces an aging population, which poses long-term challenges for the labor market and social services. Addressing this demographic shift will require investments in healthcare, housing, and services for the elderly, as well as strategies to retain and attract younger people to the region. The agricultural sector, while resilient, must continue to innovate to meet the demands of a rapidly changing global market. This includes further embracing sustainable practices, increasing digital literacy among farmers, and diversifying product offerings to minimize risks associated with price volatility or global disruptions.

Finally, the tourism sector must continue to adapt to changing consumer preferences. While domestic tourism is expected to remain strong, Lazdijai will need to create new attractions and experiences to stay competitive within the broader Lithuanian tourism market.

Tourism is a strategically important sector of the municipality and is relatively well developed (there are over 50 various rural recreation homes, campsites, and campgrounds in the district; the rural tourism business attracts many tourists). A large part of the municipality's territory is covered by protected areas. One of the opportunities for tourism development in the municipality is the development of niche tourism, which is underdeveloped in Lithuania. This type of tourism includes golf courses, hippodromes, small airfields, and other similar open-type sports and recreational infrastructure. The municipality has perhaps the most modern hippodrome in Lithuania (near the city of Lazdijai), which creates excellent opportunities for developing niche tourism, attracting not only Lithuanian but also foreign tourists to the district. It is worth developing the conference tourism sector. The municipality should also create better conditions for developing the most popular type of individual tourism in Europe - auto tourism.

It is also planned to obtain the status of a resort area for one of the district territories (Veisiejai city and surrounding areas).

One of the most important investment attraction projects in the Lazdijai District Municipality is the formation of an industrial zone to the northwest of Lazdijai. The industrial zone stretches along the railway line between Šeštokai and Mockava. In this industrial zone, the activities of loading, warehousing and logistics companies are being carried out and planned to expand. The development of this industrial zone, together with the activities of the Mockava terminal, would allow creating additional jobs and developing small and medium-sized businesses providing service services to companies located in this zone. In the long term, this could significantly contribute to reducing the unemployment rate in the municipality.

The municipality's development vision until 2027 is set out in the Lazdijai District Municipality 's 2021–2027 Strategic Development Plan – "Lazdijai District – a border pearl, where nature and traditions inspire sustainable living, innovative work, and active recreation!"

To achieve the municipality's vision, three strategic development goals have been set for the municipality:

- Ensure sustainable development of business, rural areas, and agriculture, increase employment;
- Improve and develop an attractive living environment;
- Ensure the development and quality of education, culture, tourism, and sports, social security, healthcare, and improve the quality of public services.

## 6. Future perspective

### 6.1 Quality of Life

As the phenomenon of digital nomadism continues to grow, more people are choosing to live and work remotely from different parts of the world. Lithuania, with its affordable living costs, robust digital infrastructure, and natural beauty, has increasingly attracted digital nomads to both urban and rural areas. Lazdijai District Municipality, a rural region in the southern part of the country, is no exception to this global trend. However, with the influx of digital nomads, there are concerns regarding the impact on the local community's quality of life, particularly in terms of rising housing prices, shifting local economies, and the potential dilution of the area's authenticity. While digital nomads bring numerous benefits to the local economy and society, such as increased spending and new talent influx, there is a need to carefully manage their presence to ensure that local community's quality of life is preserved.

#### 1. Key aspects of quality of life that may be affected:

##### 1.1. Housing and rising prices

As more digital nomads seek accommodation in rural areas like Lazdijai, demand for housing can increase. While the district is still relatively affordable compared to urban centers, an uptick in demand could lead to higher rents and property prices, making it more difficult for local residents to afford housing. This could exacerbate the existing affordability issues for long-term residents, particularly in smaller towns and rural areas where housing markets are less dynamic.

##### 1.2. Inflation of local prices and services

An increase in demand for goods and services brought by digital nomads could lead to inflation of local prices. For instance, the increased presence of foreign residents might drive up prices in cafes, restaurants, and retail businesses that cater to digital nomads. This may not be immediately noticeable but could impact the affordability of everyday services for local families, particularly those on lower incomes or fixed wages.

### 1.3. Cultural and social impact

Digital nomads tend to be mobile and transient, and their presence can impact the authenticity of the local culture. In rural areas, where traditions and local customs are deeply ingrained, the influx of outsiders may create a sense of cultural dilution. Nomads, especially those coming from different cultural backgrounds, might not always engage with or integrate into the local community, leading to a separation between locals and newcomers. This can affect the social fabric of rural areas, as long-standing traditions and ways of life may be overshadowed by new, globalized influences.

## 2. Mitigating the possible negative impact:

### 2.1 Encouraging local business development

While digital nomads may increase demand for certain services, their presence also offers an opportunity to **stimulate local businesses**. The municipality can create a **supportive ecosystem** for small businesses to cater to both locals and remote workers. For example:

- **Promoting local products:** Supporting local artisans, farmers, and manufacturers by encouraging the sale of regional products, including food, crafts, and other goods, in markets that cater to both residents and digital nomads.
- **Developing co-working spaces:** By investing in the development of shared office spaces or co-working hubs, the municipality can provide facilities for digital nomads that are separate from the general local economy. This would prevent inflation of local services and create a dedicated space for remote workers to operate.

### 2.2 Promoting cultural exchange and engagement with local communities

One way to integrate digital nomads into the local community is to foster a **mutual exchange of cultures**. This can be achieved by:

- **Organizing community events:** Hosting events such as cultural festivals, workshops, and local market days where both locals and nomads can participate and learn from each other.

This would help digital nomads connect with the history, traditions, and culture of Lazdijai, while locals would benefit from the international perspectives brought by the newcomers.

- **Encouraging language learning:** Offering language courses or informal language exchange programs where locals and digital nomads can learn each other's languages. This fosters mutual understanding and a sense of belonging for both groups.
- **Collaborating with local schools:** Digital nomads could be invited to give lectures or share their skills with local students, helping to foster education and innovation within the district.

### 2.3. Balancing Digital Nomadism and Local Needs

- **Inclusive planning:** Local governments can ensure that policies related to the housing market, local services, and cultural preservation involve the input of both local residents and digital nomads. This participatory approach will ensure that all groups have a say in the development of their community.
- **Strengthening local identity:** By celebrating local traditions, customs, and values, Lazdijai can retain its unique cultural identity while embracing global influences brought by digital nomads.
- **Long-term strategic vision:** Establishing a **long-term vision for rural development** that incorporates the digital nomad phenomenon as part of the broader growth strategy, ensuring that the community remains resilient, sustainable, and culturally vibrant.

## 6.2 Territorial Marketing

To create a smart specialization strategy tailored to Lazdijai, it is essential to focus on the district's existing assets, capabilities, and opportunities that can be developed to attract digital nomads. Smart specialization requires a deep understanding of local strengths, as well as the types of digital nomads, entrepreneurs, and creators that are most likely to be attracted to the region.

### Key Sectors for Specialization

Lazdijai, with its rural charm, proximity to Poland, and natural beauty, has several potential sectors where it can build its smart specialization strategy:

- **Sustainability and Eco-Tourism:** The rich natural environment, forests, and lakes in Lazdijai offer opportunities for **eco-tourism, sustainable living, and green technology**. Digital nomads interested in a sustainable lifestyle will find appeal in the area's unspoiled nature and environmental initiatives. Lazdijai can position itself as a hub for sustainable innovation, where remote workers can contribute to eco-projects and sustainable tourism businesses, while also enjoying the local landscape.
- **Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage:** Lazdijai local culture, including folk traditions, crafts, and regional art, can be developed into a distinctive offering for creators, artists, and digital content producers. Promoting creative industries such as digital art, music production, and traditional craftsmanship can appeal to digital nomads who are involved in creative work. Supporting artistic expression alongside modern digital platforms could attract a niche group of digital nomads interested in blending heritage with innovation.
- **Technology and Digital Economy:** Although Lazdijai is a rural district, the global demand for remote work in tech-related fields provides an opportunity for the municipality to develop digital infrastructure and technology-based services. With Lithuania's strong reputation in the IT sector, Lazdijai could target digital nomads who are tech professionals by offering **co-working spaces, high-speed internet, and digital infrastructure** that enables remote work. The municipality can attract both start-ups and established tech entrepreneurs seeking a quiet place to work, while providing access to global networks.

## 1. Building Local Infrastructure to Support Digital Nomads

Smart specialization is not just about promoting sectors but also about creating an environment that enables innovation and entrepreneurship. This requires investment in the right infrastructure, both digital and physical. Lazdijai needs to focus on:

- **Co-working spaces and incubators** for entrepreneurs and creators.
- **Reliable internet and digital connectivity** to support remote work.
- **Affordable housing and flexible accommodation** options that cater to both short-term stays and long-term residents.

- **Support for start-ups** and innovation through **business incubators, mentorship programs, and networking events.**

## 2. Messaging and Positioning Lazdijai as a Digital Nomad Hub

In order to attract digital nomads, entrepreneurs, and creators, municipality must clearly communicate what makes the district unique, both to potential remote workers and to the broader global community. We could focus on **Key Messages to Attract Digital Nomads** to position itself as an attractive destination for digital nomads and entrepreneurs, for example – **“Work from Nature, Live in Tranquility”**: Lazdijai can offer a unique blend of rural beauty, quiet surroundings, and affordable living, giving opportunity for digital nomads to **disconnect from urban noise** while staying connected through high-quality digital infrastructure.

## 3. Targeting Digital Nomads with Specific Profiles

To craft a compelling message, Lazdijai must also tailor its marketing efforts toward the types of digital nomads most likely to be attracted to rural areas. These could include:

- **Tech professionals** seeking a serene environment for focused work and affordable living.
- **Creatives and digital entrepreneurs** looking for an environment where they can blend their craft with local culture.
- **Sustainability advocates and eco-conscious individuals** who want to live and work in a green, natural setting.

## 4. The Need for a Strategy to Regulate and Manage Digital Nomadism

While the benefits of attracting digital nomads are evident, the phenomenon must be managed carefully to prevent negative consequences, such as rising living costs, social inequality, or the erosion of local culture. Lazdijai must adopt a **strategy to regulate and order the digital nomad phenomenon.**

## 5. Regulating Housing and Infrastructure Demand

Lazdijai must ensure that the demand for housing and infrastructure from digital nomads does not rise up prices and create shortages for local residents. This can be achieved by:

- **Implementing zoning regulations** to ensure that new housing developments cater to both locals and newcomers, maintaining a balance between long-term residents and temporary occupants.
- **Encouraging sustainable tourism** and temporary accommodation that do not compete with the needs of the local community. For example, creating a system for short-term rentals that is aligned with local housing needs can help mitigate potential price increases.

## 6. Creating a Supportive Business Ecosystem

A key part of the strategy should involve **supporting local businesses** and integrating digital nomads into the broader economy. This can include:

- **Developing incubators** for small businesses and start-ups that cater to both digital nomads and the local community.
- **Promoting local entrepreneurship** by providing access to business mentorship, seed funding, and networking opportunities.
- **Fostering collaboration** between digital nomads and local businesses, particularly in creative industries, technology, and sustainability.

## 7. Cultural and Social Integration

To avoid the risk of cultural fragmentation, Lazdijai should foster **cultural exchange** between digital nomads and the local community. Initiatives might include:

- **Community events** that encourage digital nomads to engage with local traditions, festivals, and social causes.
- **Language and cultural programs** to facilitate understanding and integration between locals and newcomers.

## 6.3 Talent Attraction

Digital nomads, often highly educated and specialized in various fields, could bring a wealth of expertise, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit that can significantly benefit the local economy and quality of life in Lazdijai District Municipality . However, attracting digital nomads is not enough. To truly capitalize on the value of this talent, municipality is planning to develop strategies that harness their knowledge and integrate it into the local ecosystem, fostering innovation and collaboration between the nomads and the local community, businesses. Lazdijai District Municipality can benefit from the skills of digital nomads in several ways:

- **Innovation and knowledge transfer:** Digital nomads often possess advanced knowledge in emerging fields like IT, AI, data science, and digital marketing. By involving them in local initiatives, their expertise can catalyze innovation in local businesses and organizations.
- **Entrepreneurial spirit:** Many digital nomads are self-employed or entrepreneurs themselves. Their experiences with building and managing businesses can provide mentorship and networking opportunities for local entrepreneurs.
- **Global networks and partnerships:** The international connections digital nomads bring can create opportunities for Lazdijai businesses to access global markets, form partnerships, and engage in international collaborations.

## Strategies for Capitalizing on Digital Nomads' Talent

### 1. Building Collaborative Ecosystems

One of the most effective ways to capitalize on the knowledge and skills of digital nomads is by fostering collaboration between remote workers and the local community, creating an ecosystem that encourages **knowledge exchange**, **joint ventures**, and **mentorship programs**. This can be achieved by:

- **Co-working Spaces:** The establishment of modern co-working spaces can serve as physical hubs where digital nomads and local entrepreneurs can meet, collaborate, and share expertise. These spaces should be designed to promote interaction and creativity,

offering not only office space but also opportunities for community-building, workshops, and networking events.

- **Innovation Hubs and Business Incubators:** Lazdijai can create or support local innovation hubs or business incubators that serve as platforms for digital nomads to work with local start-ups, SMEs, and other entrepreneurs. These hubs can provide access to business mentoring, seed funding, and training, encouraging **sharing of ideas** between nomads and residents.
- **Skill-Sharing Programs:** Local entrepreneurs and digital nomads can engage in **skill-sharing programs**, where nomads offer workshops on digital marketing, coding, or other specialized fields, and locals teach their unique skills related to the region's culture, crafts, agriculture, or traditional trades. These exchanges can foster a sense of community and help the local population develop new skills.

## 2. Encouraging Local Collaboration with Global Networks

Lazdijai can use its position as a destination for digital nomads to facilitate **global-local collaborations**. Digital nomads often have strong international networks that can benefit local businesses by connecting them with international markets, partners, and investors. To capitalize on these connections, Lazdijai can:

- **Facilitate Networking Events:** Hosting events such as **digital nomad meetups, tech conferences**, and **entrepreneurial forums** can help local businesses connect with global networks. These events could be physical or virtual, ensuring that local entrepreneurs gain exposure to international trends and new business opportunities.
- **Cross-Border Partnerships:** Lazdijai can facilitate cross-border partnerships, especially with nearby regions such as Poland, where nomads often come from, as well as other European Union member states. By leveraging digital nomads' international ties, Lazdijai can increase its exposure to global markets and foster partnerships that contribute to long-term regional development.

### 3. Promoting Entrepreneurial Initiatives and Startups

Digital nomads are often self-employed or involved in small-scale entrepreneurial activities. By supporting this entrepreneurial spirit, Lazdijai can generate a dynamic local economy and encourage the growth of new businesses. Initiatives to promote entrepreneurship could include:

- **Local Start-up Support Programs:** Lazdijai can offer incentives for digital nomads to start businesses locally, such as tax breaks, grants, or access to affordable office space. Additionally, creating a **start-up accelerator program** where nomads can mentor local entrepreneurs and vice versa can help stimulate local innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Creating an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem:** Lazdijai should focus on creating an **entrepreneurial ecosystem** that not only supports start-ups but also nurtures them with networking events, workshops, and collaborations. This ecosystem can facilitate the growth of businesses that leverage digital tools and technologies, such as e-commerce, tech development, and digital marketing.

### 4. Promoting Knowledge Transfer to Local Education and Institutions

One of the key ways to capitalize on the knowledge of digital nomads is to **facilitate knowledge transfer** to local educational institutions and community centers. This can help upskill the local workforce, increase employability, and foster innovation in various sectors. Programs could include:

- **Mentorship programs:** Local students, entrepreneurs, and professionals can benefit from mentorship by digital nomads with experience in different industries. By pairing nomads with local talent, Lazdijai can provide valuable learning opportunities that enhance the skills of the local population.
- **Workshops and training programs:** Lazdijai can organize workshops led by digital nomads, focusing on relevant skills such as coding, digital marketing, content creation, or business management. These workshops could be tailored to different groups, including students, job seekers, and existing entrepreneurs.
- **Collaboration with professional career center:** Collaborating with local career center (“Verslo ir svetingumo profesinės karjeros centras” (VESK)) to incorporate **real-world, global perspectives** from digital nomads into the academic curriculum can enrich local

education programs. Nomads could contribute as guest lecturers, project mentors, or advisors for projects, adding practical knowledge to the theoretical framework.

## 5. Incorporating Local Community Involvement

For the successful integration of digital nomads into the local economy, it is crucial that **local residents actively participate** in the opportunities and innovations brought by remote workers. Rather than viewing digital nomads as outsiders, the local community should be seen as co-creators in the process of economic revitalization.

- **Empowering Local Entrepreneurs:** local entrepreneurs can benefit from collaborating with digital nomads by incorporating new technologies and innovative business practices. By supporting locals to adopt **digital tools**, Lazdijai can help traditional businesses scale up and improve efficiency. For example, small farmers could partner with digital nomads who have expertise in e-commerce or marketing to reach broader markets, or local artisans could collaborate with creative professionals to enhance the branding and distribution of their products.
- **Fostering Inclusivity and Cultural Exchange:** Lazdijai must ensure that **local residents feel engaged and included** in the transformations happening within their community. This can be achieved through **cultural and social events**: hosting social gatherings, cultural festivals, and exhibitions where digital nomads and locals can interact in informal settings. These events provide opportunities for mutual learning, fostering cross-cultural understanding and strengthening the local sense of community.

## 7. Conclusions and proposals

The Digital Nomads phenomenon provides to Lazdijai District Municipality a unique opportunity to activate the local economy and integrate new skills and knowledge into the community. Municipality can unlock significant economic growth while enriching the local community. To achieve this, Lazdijai hoping to create a favorable conditions for nomads, including collaborative ecosystems, entrepreneurial initiatives, community involvement, necessary policy instruments, where both digital nomads and locals can thrive together, exchange ideas, and contribute to a dynamic and sustainable economy. By doing so, Lazdijai could position itself as a model for rural regions embracing digital nomadism as a means to drive innovation, economic development, and social cohesion.

## ANNEX. Good Practices

Although the concept of digital nomad is relatively new in the region, there are examples of good practices in Lithuania. A few of them are listed below:

- **"[Spiečius](#)" - Co-Working Spaces offered by spaces offered by state organization**  
"Spiečius" is a network of co-working spaces created by Lithuania's Innovation Agency (*Inovacijų Agentūra*). Designed to support entrepreneurs, start-ups, and remote workers, these spaces provide flexible work environments equipped with modern facilities. "Spiečius" centers, located in 14 regions of the country, aim to foster innovation, collaboration, and growth by offering access to mentorship, networking opportunities, and resources. It contributes to Lithuania's entrepreneurial ecosystem, making it an attractive location for digital nomads and business development across various sectors.
- **"[Tech Zity](#)" - a private initiative offering modern office, event spaces and conditions to built creative communities**  
Tech Zity is a network of innovative workspaces created for Lithuania's startup and creative industries community. This privately funded initiative transforms unique and charismatic buildings into vibrant spaces for work, creativity, and leisure.  
One of the locations of Tech Zity is [Tech Spa](#) – a multi-functional complex featuring over 40 workspaces, 40+ beds in modern rooms, two kitchens for cooking and dining, and a spacious terrace. Located in the Lithuanian resort town of Druskininkai – by the lake in the city center – it offers an excellent environment for both teams and individual travelers to work, relax, connect, strengthen relationships, and find inspiration. Tech Spa is in the neighboring Lazdijai municipality – it is just 40 minutes from Lazdijai's center and less than two hours from the capital city, Vilnius.