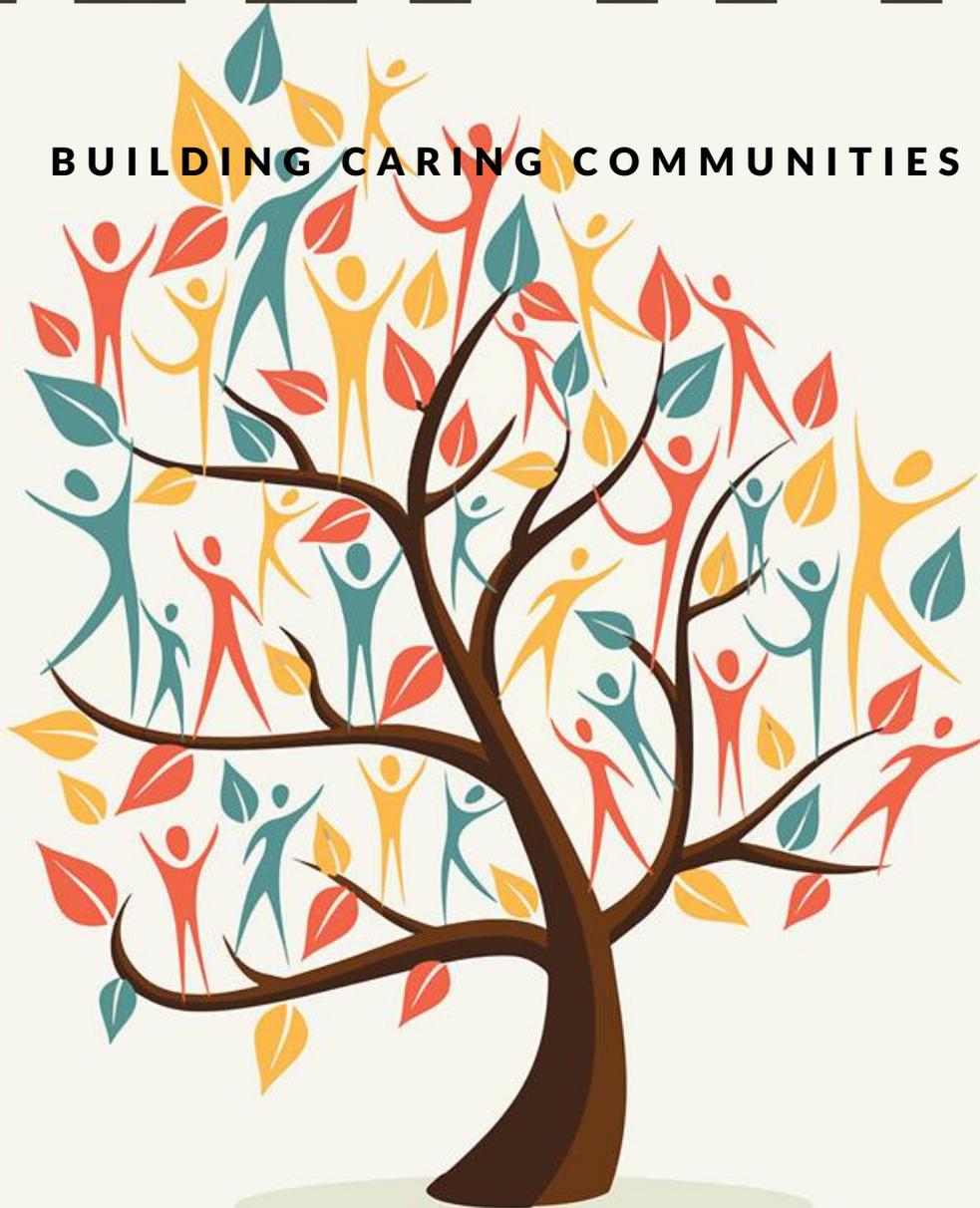


2018 SPECIAL EDITION

# HELPIFIC

**BUILDING CARING COMMUNITIES**



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OF HELP**

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YORKSHIRE**

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Helpific is a web-based support environment that connects people who need assistance in independent living with local volunteers and paid help. Our platform is a person-to-person solution that helps to create stronger communities. ([www.helpific.com](http://www.helpific.com))

With this special edition in magazine format we would like to share our joy and experience along the journey of the Helpific platform.

*Keiu Roosimägi, Triin Üksväärav and Zsolt Bugarszki  
founders*



## BEHIND EVERY SMART DIGITAL PRODUCT THERE IS PERSONAL STORY

*by Keiu Roosimägi, Helpific Estonia*



*Keiu Roosimägi*

Recently, I participated in Startup Academy's workshop. One of the topics was how to create startup-related news and how important it is for startups who are focused on entering or expanding into new markets. As Co-Founder of an impact organization (social enterprise) I am already involved with solving other people's problems, changing the world and bringing in new tech solutions, but in the workshop, the focus was not on the problems in the world, or in the community, but on the inner self only.

Beside my everyday work in Claudius Law Office, Helpific, Estonian Sharing Economy Association and different disabled people organizations, I had to battle for decades with Neurofibromatosis, but also with cancer. While working for different disabled people organizations, I saw how our members need different kind of help - household tasks, transport, personal assistant etc., and I knew that through an innovative web platform they could get that help from the community, in a fast, secure, and comfortable way. I had to change my own attitude and habits of thinking too. The courage to ask for help, and the courage to accept offered help is nothing what makes you miserable, less capable or is something shameful. Also, let's face it - even when we have many friends and family members and as much as they want to support us - they have their daily lives - school, work, and family responsibilities. Things need to be done in a timely manner. They cannot wait until I am healthy enough to do them on my own. I need help shopping, and carrying food, today. Not two weeks from now. My home doesn't stop getting dirty and the dishes don't wash themselves. Community can help here and trust me - people in your community desire to help. Needing help may be temporary, or long-term, but I want you to know - it is absolutely okay to ask for help, to offer help, and accept the help offered.

I desire that we all could respect each other - different beliefs, skin color, age, sexual orientation etc. We are all human and this is what should identify us, nothing else. Audrey Hepburn said that "as you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself, the other for helping others". We can all not only start today, but NOW.



*Helpific Estonia*

Raising awareness actually helps me, too - to inspire myself. My work for the community has given me a lot of new experience and knowledge, brought many interesting people to my life and opportunities to evolve at a personal level as well as as an entrepreneur. To contribute in your community means offering your time, energy or skills out of your free will – voluntary or earning extra money as it is today already possible in Helpific Estonia and soon in other countries too.

Helpific is an impact company, shaping the future of the social welfare system, bringing digital transformation into the social sector - mobilizing resources in local communities, increasing the social capital of individuals with disabilities & mental health problems and using for this possibilities of sharing economy and ICT (information and communications technology). But please – these are just the smart terms, right?

To shape the New Future, Citizens of The Future - we have to get rid of all box systems. When we talk about our own personal stories, we see and feel – we are not so different from each other as we have imagined. But systems in our own head might be obstacles to see it. As Audrey said - you have two hands, usually. Use them!- Greetings from Tallinn



*Helpific Estonia*

# PEOPLE OF HELPIFIC



## Ingrid

"Hello, I would like to find a person in Tallinn who is willing to bring me to the seaside (by car) and park and help me to conquer agoras and anemophobia. This person should do nothing but be a security guard. I have difficulty moving around in the city (in high places and windy areas like the seaside) I have not been to the seas for 4 years. "



## Ágnes

"My 16-year-old smiley, disabled son needs help in a summer camp. The camp team will be there as well. During the last 1-2 days of the camp I would try to relax somewhere in Debrecen (Hungary) so I will be close. Everything is needed for help, dressing, eating, etc."

## Dominika

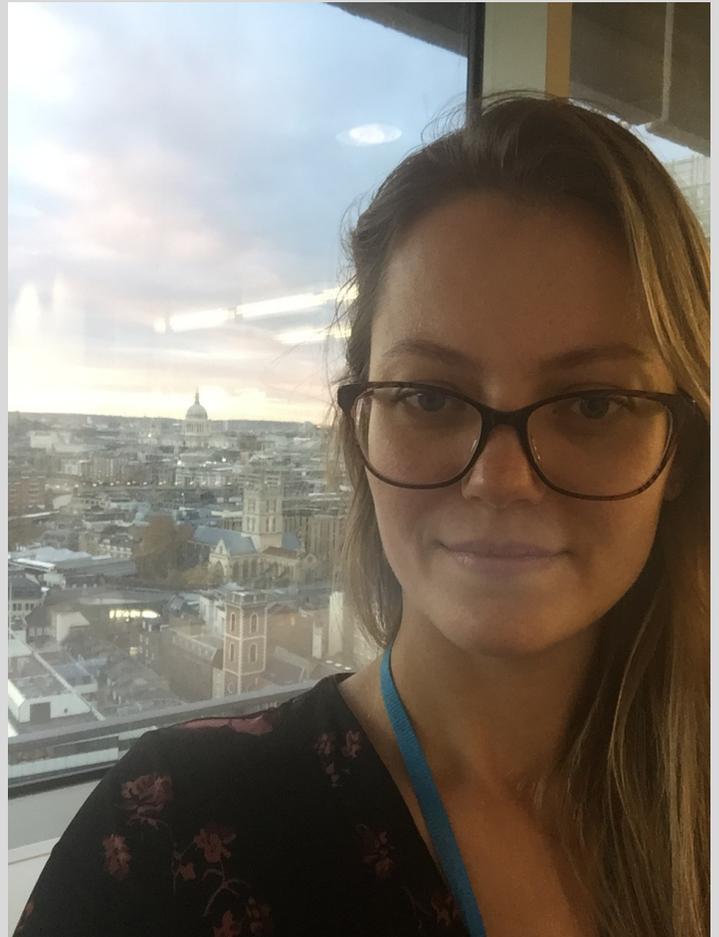
"I'm an almost 18 years old hungarian student. I speak English very well (I think), and I'm trying to speak Russian, but I'm afraid it isn't my cup of tea. But one of my goals is to get a Russian language exam, and I would like to practice for the oral part of the exam. So if you are a "Russian speaker" and you would like to talk with a "Hungarian speaker", let's write to me! I hope we will chat one day."

# A CHRISTMAS IN YORKSHIRE

by *Kata Vikuk, Helpific UK*

I spent my first Christmas in the UK six years ago. I worked as a live-in carer back then and the family of one of my clients invited me for dinner. (I wasn't overstepping professional boundaries as I was on duty with the client anyway.)

The travelling around Yorkshire that came with the job was amazing and most of my clients were lovely old ladies. I took the job as it seemed like a great opportunity to practice my English and travel the countryside, while also saving money as being on placement meant free food and free accommodation. My job was to move in with people who needed support in their everyday activities, for a couple of weeks or sometimes a month. Only for a short period of time, while their regular carer was away.



*Kata Vikuk*

Everyone I worked for had great support from their family and from their friends but they were in advanced stages of their illness, such as dementia or multiple sclerosis, and needed intense support in their everyday life. Soon it turned out that this job was not as easy as it first might have seemed and I felt very isolated so I quit after less than a year. That experience made me really appreciate the hardships of dealing with life from the perspective of a person living with disabilities.

I now work in mental health research and manage participant recruitment in studies on different topics from severe mental illness to health psychology studies into long term physical conditions. I am in daily contact with all sorts of people having all sorts of struggles in managing their everyday activities. This, on top of my job 6 years ago has given me an incredibly unique insight into what it is like to live life being isolated by the limitations of our physical abilities and mental health issues.

Just around Christmas, in 2015, a friend of mine from Tallinn asked me whether I would be interested in joining a social start-up that offers an online platform where people with disabilities can find volunteers from nearby to get help with everyday activities.

Given my earlier experiences, I thought it could be an amazing thing to work on and immediately started building a version of Helpific in UK. I was pregnant at that time too, so this seemed like a great thing to do while on maternity leave. Little did I know about sleep deprivation and dealing with an infant with having no family support around. Apart from my partner, of course, who was and still is an amazing supporter (and harsh critic) of my work. But as much as he can be there for me, he has got his own work and studies to deal with.

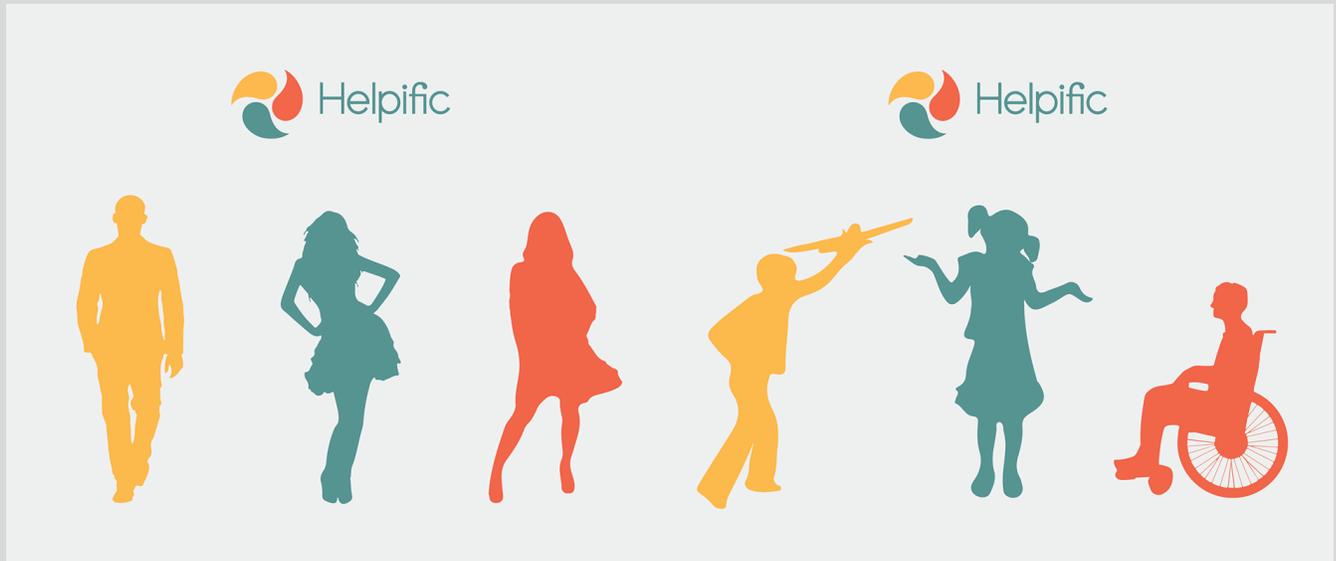
I remember attending business meetings with my baby strapped on to my chest thinking, this is the real work-life balance. Unfortunately, I had to go back to work full time after my maternity leave ended. In my day job I am not allowed to bring my baby, let alone the bouncy toddler he had become to the office, so it is hard to juggle between work, being a mommy and working on Helpific UK. The progress has been slow in the UK but we have achieved a few things. Approaching Christmas 2018, we managed to establish contacts with a couple of well-known universities, we are currently preparing talks with NHS professionals, the social media presence is growing and this year the very first help request from UK was posted on the online platform.



*Kata Vikuk*

We took Helpific UK to a hackathon in June which gave us the idea of how to make the platform safer for vulnerable people and we started working hard on developing a security layer for Helpific while an app is being developed for a better user experience. I am looking forward to the new challenges 2019 might have in store for us.

## PEOPLE OF HELPIFIC



### *Tanya*

Tanya (a thirty-nine-year-old lady from Kiev, Ukraine) posted a cheerful help offer that she was ready to meet persons who needed accompanying in leisure time, going out at times, having a cup of coffee and a nice conversation. Igor, a young gentleman with severe physical disabilities, answered her offer and the first meeting occurred with the help of volunteering social work students from Kiev State University.

### *Eszter*

Eszter (a 22 year old lady using a wheelchair) posted a help request on the Helpific platform explaining that she wanted to go to a rock concert in Kaposvár, Hungary. She needed a person to accompany her, helping in an area where she was not familiar with the environment and accessibility. A young lady, interested in the same concert, responded to her request, offering her company during the concert.

### *Aul*

Aul (a 42 year old visually impaired woman from Tallinn, Estonia) needed help in her household and kept in touch with eight different people on the Helpific platform who occasionally went over to her place to fix things or help with packing and cleaning. However, the relationship between them was not restricted to this help only. Aul has good computer skills and she started to help her new 'friends' by installing software on their laptops, solving technical problems or teaching them new skills.

# BUILDING CARING COMMUNITIES

*by Zsolt Bugarszki, Helpific Estonia*

Participating on "Enable" Hackathon in 2014 November in Tallinn was a great experience for me. Originally, I registered to the event only because I wanted to see how the creative start-up ecosystem of Estonia works. As a lecturer, researcher and developer of Tallinn University, I wanted to check how I can improve my courses with new methods.

But being there, the entire atmosphere, the great ideas and lots of enthusiastic people from very different fields pulled me in and I joined the idea of Keiu Roosimägi to establish a platform where vulnerable people can find help in their neighbourhood. Over the last four years, Helpific has made great progress in Estonia, Ukraine, Hungary and Croatia, and we hope for similar progress in the UK, the Netherlands and in Romania for 2019.



*Working on the Helpific platform during the Enable Hackathon in 2014*

Introducing the fascinating sharing economy model and relying on modern information and communication technology (ICT) can be a relevant solution to the continuous lack of public resources in the welfare system in many countries. The sharing economy is a hybrid market model and social phenomenon which refers to peer-to-peer based sharing of access to goods and services using modern information technology. Sharing economy is not only successful in market oriented business models but also represents a new approach in welfare, providing a unique opportunity to empower individuals and communities.

We realized, that when we talk about the activities that the Helpific platform promotes, we are struggling with the language. Most of us describe the help that Helpific members provide to each other as volunteer work but we think this is not the best term to describe it. People using the Helpific platform are not exactly doing volunteer work. We prefer informal help, small favors between neighbors, friends and community members on a peer-to-peer basis instead of formalized voluntary activities.



*Zsolt Bugarszki*

When we asked people about this kind of informal help, for example when they give a ride to someone or buy groceries for a neighbor, respondents react as follows:

"Of course, I do this, but I do not consider it as volunteer work."

What do we call this act when the term "volunteer work" seems to be rather misleading. Friendship? Neighborhood? Citizenship?

We maintain an ongoing discussion at Helpific on how to define the small, informal help people are providing to each other without any formal or organizational framework, simply as ordinary people on a peer-to-peer level.

## PEOPLE OF HELPIFIC INTERVIEW WITH TOM RÜÜTEL

Tom Rüütel, who has been using the Helpific platform since it was founded, had a moment to sit down with us to answer a couple questions about his experience with Helpific helpers.



*Tom Rüütel*

**In your experience, what kind of help request receives the most answers? Were there any requests that you didn't manage to find help with on Helpific?**

Actually I don't have any requests that weren't responded to. People are willing to help, but many of the Helpific users do not want to commit to long term help, which means they want to help once or twice. But as you know, I've found a helper for the gym, which lasted about 6 months and then personal assistance for 2 weeks (daily and paid).

**When you phrase a new help request, what is the most important information that you mention in the published request?**

When I phrase a request I really don't put the exact address, this I give when helpers respond. Secondly, I try to make it short and simple, I describe all of the things that I need help in. Like shoes, jacket, closing the door etc. I also mention how much time I think it will take so people then see that they can do that good deed in a little amount of time.

How do you check out the people who offer help to you? What strategy do you follow to make a decision about who you trust and who not to let into your life?

First of all I will wait for the answer and usually I pick the first one who contacted me, but I will keep contact with the others also because many of them are ok to help me on another day. Second thing is picture. Picture is really important so you know who you are talking to. I also pay attention to their written response to my help request. Lastly, maybe the most important-My inner feeling.

Is there anything Helpific needs to improve to make the matchmaking faster, better or more secure?

I really liked when I saw family names, so I had a chance to look on Facebook etc. Maybe there should be a FB link for a users profile when they are writing each other. Of course, the things that are in the process of being developed like feedback and an identification system.

How Helpific could be better? When more people are using it! :)



*Tom Rützel*

# EVERYTHING IS VERY SIMPLE YOU JUST NEED A FRIEND CLOSE TO YOU

by *Andrei Capitanu-Hategan, Helpific Romania*

My name is Andrei, I am from Sibiu, Romania and since July 2018 I've been a member of the Helpific Romania team. I joined this project because it is a great idea that wants to build up a better and stronger community.

I am 31, and I suffer from genetic disease which affects my sight. You may think this is the worst thing that could have happened, but in time you get used to the idea. I realized that life goes on, and I wanted to demonstrate to people that any disability can be changed into an ability.



*Andrei Capitanu-Hategan*

As Helpific is saying also, everything is very simple; you just need a friend close to you. Based on this last year together with my best friend we biked across Carpathian Mountains and went to a music festival in Transylvania. The bike used was a tandem bike and we pedalled 400km in 3 days.

We have a Facebook page called Doi la Pedale where we posted updates and photos about our trip and our training. In the end we managed to raise money and buy a tandem bike for the highschool from Cluj-Napoca where children with visual impairments are studying.

This year, I was part of another very nice project called Doi in Alergare where together with another good friend we raised money for an NGO that helps people with mental health problems. In this project we had to run a semi-marathon.

Also this year in October, I participated and finished a Duathlon where I had to run 5km, biked for 20 km and run again for 2 km. In this race, I participated with my friend from the previous project who guided me while running and drove the tandem bike in the race.

After the feedback received from this project I have decided to continue with this kind of project and try to help the community and change people's understanding.



*Bike tour across the Carpatian Mountain*

# HELPIFIC ROMANIA

by Kata Egyed, *Helpific Romania*



*Kata Egyed*

*Photo: Chițu Margareta Adela*

Kata is social worker working in the Romanian child protection system. Also, she is a Hungarian girl, living in Romania, in a city, Miercurea Ciuc, where Hungarians are in the majority, but also living in minority. She has seen many cases when a problem was resolved by community engagement.

A good example of this is when Kata with 2 friends started a journey in Romania. The distance was not so big between the two cities, but they chose to hitchhike instead of traveling by car, or train. If you come to Romania you will see a lot of hitchhikers. It is very wide spread because it is for gratis or is cheaper than using other forms of traveling. They had asked for help by standing at the side of the road, showing with their hands the direction of the way they wanted to go. They had to trust in someone who they did not know, and did not have any information about. Asking for help is not a shame, but is not easy to trust in someone and ask for.

In the summer of 2018, Romania was introduced the Helpific Romania platform which tries to improve the independent life of disabled people. Andrei and Kata were involved in this project understanding the importance of supporting vulnerable people. They saw a new service for persons in need. The lack of investment in social services leads to a reduction in the quality of life of Romanian citizens, leaving them feeling excluded.

In Romania, law no. 448/2006 is directed to the protection and promotion of rights of people with disabilities. It includes the rights and obligations of people with disabilities for a better life of social integration and social inclusion. A person with a disability has a monthly benefit, monthly personal complementary budget regardless of income. The person who has care of the disabled person also has a right to this benefit. The amount depends on an individual's assessed disability. Social services for disabled people are insufficient, not adapted to their recovery and inclusion needs.

The financial support is difficult to get, or it is not enough, and the available social services are not enough. Social services can be private or public, but the legislation is so strict that for an NGO it is not easy to get license, accreditation and to stay "alive".

## PEOPLE OF HELPIFIC

### ARKO

Arko (a 35 year old man from Keila, Estonia) started by offering web design and computer related services for a reasonable price. Arko suffers from mental health problems; his health condition and social phobia are obstacles to him taking a regular job, but as a web designer working from his home office, Helpific has helped him to establish a revenue stream. In his case, Helpific became a potential market place where he could find new customers for himself.



*Helpific picnic in Tallinn, Estonia*

### MAARJA

Maarja (32 years old woman from Tallinn, Estonia) offers help in shopping and cleaning on a regular basis and she has accompanied a blind man when he went out. Maarja has requested help in practicing the Korean language and when she needed to set up her new bathroom tools. She regularly seeks help for disabled people on their behalf.

### JEAN

Jean (30 years old French man living in Tallinn, Estonia) is a chef who offers his skills cooking for people in need, doing shopping for or with them, clean, iron, repair, being a handyman or teacher.

## GREETINGS FROM UKRAINE

*by Antonina Petrovic, Margarita Rudska and Ruslana Marchenko*

Hello everyone! Greetings of the Season and best wishes for the New Year and a Merry Christmas! In this Christmas edition, we would like to introduce you to our Ukrainian Helpific team. To introduce those, who are hidden behind the veil of social networks.

Currently Helpific-Ukraine team consists of three people who are in different parts of the world; the project coordinator Antonina (Finland), Ruslana (USA) and Margarita (Ukraine).

We would like to present you with the short stories of our team members.

My name is Antonina. I got to know about the project Helpific when I was doing post-doctoral research at Tallinn University, Estonia. I met one of the co-founders of the project – Zsolt Bugarszki. We decided to start this project in Ukraine, considering that such social projects didn't exist at that time in Ukraine.



*Antonina Petrovic*

I am currently on maternity leave with my 9-month old baby. When I have a break during my child's sleep (mostly at night ☺), I work on the project development, prepare documentation, translations for the project, and contact potential partners. Before I gave birth, I was teaching at Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University (Kyiv, Ukraine) and defended my Ph.D. thesis a few years ago. I believe that the Helpific project has a very powerful potential in Ukraine. In recent years, our society has come to a completely different level of social consciousness, and projects like this help to solve many current problems in society. I believe that Helpific will aid us in realizing the need for active community development.



*Ruslana Marchenko*

My name is Ruslana and I've been a part of Helpific since 2016. I first found out about the project when Zsolt presented it at our university. I was asked to be an interpreter for the event, but when I heard what Helpific was all about, I had to join in and help start it in Ukraine.

For the next few years, until the end of my fourth year of university, I worked on developing Helpific in Ukraine along with the rest of our team. For our country the idea was very new, so we faced some difficulties along the way. There are people who are skeptical about what we do, but there are also people who understand the importance of Helpific. We're not giving up because we know that the platform will be useful for a lot of people.

Last summer, I graduated from university and I'm now working in a day care in the USA. However, I am still a part of Helpific Ukraine and help develop the platform from a distance. I hope that in the future even more people will join the platform in Ukraine, and that it is as successful as it can be.

My name is Margarita. I've been on the Helpific team since 2018. I graduated from the Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University in 2016. At the moment, I am working at Caritas Kyiv on a UNHCR project for self-employment of refugees. I am preparing to become a mother.



*Margarita Rudska*

I'm taking the position of social media management and PR in the Helpific project. I'm searching for organizations and projects from the same area as Helpific. Today, the topic of inclusion is very important for our country and society needs to be informed about it. It is very important to highlight the information about this issue, about people with disabilities, their lives, needs, and especially about the need to support them and to help in self-fulfillment in the modern environment. Despite the fact that our country creates more comfortable living conditions for people with disabilities, there remain a large number of issues that can be solved only by society, and not by the state. It depends on each of us.

## PEOPLE OF HELPIFIC

### MERLE

Merle has personal helpers, but sometimes the unexpected can occur. She feels that the Helpific platform is very useful to get instant help. “It is great shopping with Helen – she has a good eye for what might fit me and I trust her on that. She is also easy to talk to and we have found we have lots of common interests. I like hanging out with her”.



### HELEN

Helen has been a support person to a number of people with special needs. Since Helen has experienced being a person in need herself, she knows the true value of helping. She met with Merle, who is bright and cheerful, through Helpific. “I am glad that I can now give back even a bit of what I have received. I also like to meet with new and exciting people. Accompanying Merle is more like hanging out with a friend – we have lots to talk about and time always flies by very quickly”.

# THE SMALL CIRCLES OF HELP

by *Álmos Szalay, Helpific Hungary*

## Contradictions

There is no species that shows as much ambivalence as humans do. Especially in those features that are so contradictory yet really determine our mind and consciousness. Motifs that have so uniquely made successful humanity's own way among other species. All this in an environment where our collective consciousness was subjected to a series of traumas, strange and hostile. In an environment where we have never, and ever been "a natural habitat". Man was in a losing position. There was not enough space left on Earth, and today there is no area where you can feel safe without all kinds of defenses, clothing, drugs, and community. The biblical story of the expulsion is based on very real community experiences.



*Álmos Szalay*

For the basic survival of man, he drew two layers of wall around himself: culture and society. This helped him in the jungle, ice age, desert, metropolis, and space. Our culture, technology, philosophy and the close proximity of each other, do as the acrobat does with his hanging fellow artist, hold us back from death.

Can not we find out whether it's right or wrong to help? In fact: is it right or wrong to trust each other? Is it right or wrong to be together? Are we stripping someone of the desire to live, and persevere for survival when we help? Or do we give these things to people when we let them know that they are not alone in their trouble?

If we invite and integrate everyone regardless of their abilities and destinies, will our community be weakened? Are fellow citizens with disabilities, illness, mental and physical problems valuable members of society? The obvious answer is not clear to everyone, however astonishing. Everyone has a role on the stage, like it or not. The great dictatorships of the 20th century did not quite think so, as many groups of people found themselves unworthy on grounds of race, or class. These dictatorships were not right, and we have rightfully proven them cowardly and destroyed them.

Vilmos Csányi, the famous Hungarian atheist ethologist, was asked what he thought about God? According to his response, "God" was born when, well before the beginnings of written history, people living in the sparsely populated world of humans have realized that there is something that was before them and there will be after them. The memory of the community, it's past and future, it's customs, it's beliefs, it's common thought is more than one person, individual, and more than the community itself. This intangible thing has always been, is now and will be. From this recognition, there has been a long journey to the emergence of religions, but it reflects a deep and common source of experience that we have in the past- ultimately stuck in the idea of "we have something bigger" above us.

## **The mission of Helpific**

Helpific built it's home upon a simple and old idea: everyone needs people around them. , Everyone needs something, and everyone has something that at least one person needs. That is why this initiative is not just about bringing together two demands, but about creating an opportunity that lies in the encounter. This is the possibility when two people can give something by themselves to each other. And that's why it is not a charity or alms.

Of course, we did not invent anything new with this, but we did not intend to. We have just asked a question: Do we still need to cling? To live in a living environment where we belong to somewhere where we are more than just individuals.

Helpific sees a little better world than the one it was born in. It has a vision, and this vision is not built on air. The survival of mankind is the living proof that we have built this vision on something that is in ourselves.

## The small circles of help

Imagine a part of town within a city district. Not too large an area. Are you familiar with the area? Not as much as you would think, right? They see and know the small public square, beyond the corner the nursery, the doctor's office, and by name the pharmacist - the elder one. The younger, who arrived two months ago, you don't know. You do not know the shop assistant in the grocery store at the corner, however you say hi to each other every day. You see familiar faces. Are they living here or working here? Who knows? Then there is the tram stop, the familiar faces of the bus stop. Who are these people? And who are you among them? It's not a large area, but it's as alien as if it were in the middle of a forest. And you have been living here for years.

Who would you ask for a painkiller if you did not find one after you turned the apartment upside down? Who would you ask for a ladder if the kitchen bulb goes out? When your first perfect cherry pie is finished, apart from your loved ones, who would you give a slice to? If you didn't have the money, who would you expect to help?

And who are the ones who can count on you in the trouble? Are you alone?

Human settlement were established based on this connectedness and embeddedness. However, the cities of our present day have become the islands of solitude for individuals while we have the same desire for warmth, love and security - a social, interpersonal protective net.

One of the benefits of Helpific is to bring together people living close to each other. It creates a moment between two people: the help seeker can experience safety, can feel that he/she is not alone while the helper experiences the feeling of trust and the same feeling, they are not alone. The recipient of the aid has something the former helper needs. Two people have already found each other. A flickering light in the darkness. Imagine the lights coming on in the darkness as connections are made, one by one.

Lights responding to each other.

That is our dream.

## Special thanks to give to Janella Gowryluk!

"While I haven't been on the team long, I'm very excited to see the Helpific platform flourish in Canada! My name is Janella and my job is to edit our publications. I am honoured to be a part of seeing Helpific bridge the gap between languages."

## HELLO FROM CROATIA

by Radmila Stojanovic Babic, Helpific Croatia

Our team consists of three *Croatific* and *creatific* members: Ada, Dalibor and Zvezdana. We started piloting the Helpific project in Croatia in July 2017. The project was officially presented to the public in December 2017 and we have been promoting it ever since. We have promoted it on the local radio, television, library, to students of social work, in the public transport and also in the health centers in Zagreb.



*Helpific Croatia*

We wish you all Merry Christmas & Happy and prosperous New Year!

Our community presently consists of 700 followers on Facebook and 300 active users.

All of us are employed in the Association for Psychosocial Support 'Susret' in Zagreb that provides community-based living services for people with mental health problems. The idea of Helpific fit well in Susret's mission – promoting recovery in the community for people with mental health challenges.

From our experience, people with disabilities are in danger of social exclusion, therefore Helpific is a great way for establishing and strengthening social networks.

Our team has recognized the potential of such a platform and was excited to see up growth of registered users and followers.

For the next year we hope to broaden the reach of Helpific in other parts of Croatia and help people connect, support and match.

# KNOWLEDGE IS POWER: HELPIFIC NETHERLANDS RESEARCH GROUPS

by Remko Witmer, Helpific Netherlands



*Remko Witmer, the founder and chairman of Helpific NL. He has high hopes for nice outcomes of the two researches!*

In June 2018 Helpific Netherlands (NL) was officially founded as a non-profit organization. Through the first months it was hard to find an opening at welfare organizations and local governments. Helpific NL already cooperated with Saxion University in Enschede.

Saxion-lecturer Pim Stegen proved to be a valuable source of knowledge and experience on the field of welfare and entrepreneurship. He came with the idea and plan to let Saxion students conduct research for Helpific NL. In September, two research groups officially started their cooperation with Helpific NL. The first research group is formed by Eva Keijzer and Renske van der Veen. They are both Social Work students, specializing in Welfare. They will do their research about how Helpific could contribute to welfare organizations and their clients. They will focus on the municipality of Enschede, Netherlands. Enschede is a municipality of about 160 000 citizens, so it is a representative group to investigate. How will Helpific fit into all the existing volunteering projects and government-funded welfare services?

*Renske van der Veen and Eva Keijzer with Zsolt Bugarszki in Utrecht at the conference of the European Platform for Rehabilitation*



The second research group is a team of three: Kelly Brok, Sven Binnendijk and Nienke Morshuis. They also study Social Work, but then specializing in long term care.

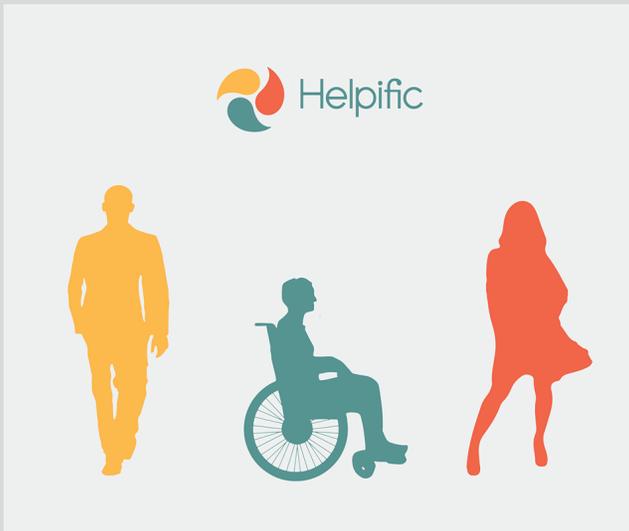
In September they started their research. They want to find out if Helpific can contribute to the quality of life for people with a mental disability. They will interview the clients and staff of several locations of the organization 'J.P. van den Bent'. They provide semi-independent homes for people with a mental disability. In January 2019 they are hoping to know if the target group can benefit from using Helpific as a help seeker and/or as a volunteer.

Below you see the three happy team members! From left to right: Nienke, Kelly and Sven.



# PEOPLE OF HELPIFIC

*the story of Juci and Bori from Hungary*



Juci and Bori met months ago using the Helpific platform. We conducted a brief interview with them asking them to share their experiences.

## **How did you decide to make a request for help?**

Juci: When I decided to start my life independently, I needed help on a day-to-day basis, even if it was only in the morning for 1 hour. I soon realized that I could not really choose between many platforms. On this site, I like to ask for help much more than just open on Facebook. I feel that people are somewhat filtered here.

## **Did you have any difficulty using the platform? (registration, publication of request for help, exchange of messages, etc.)**

Juci: I did not have any difficulty, but right now that I was re-writing, I realized that I would be happy if you did not have to make a specific day, you could have frequency-expressors and that I could edit the text later, because I forgot to mention that I live in the 8th district of Budapest.

## **What did you ask for help with? When someone replied, how did you decide to trust in and accept the offered help?**

Juci: Everything went smoothly with Bori. I asked for help in the morning (shower, dressing). First we met in a mall and we talked.

## **What kind of experience was the encounter?**

Juci: She was nice, cute, reliable, it was a good experience, we have met at least once a week after the first meeting and she has become a sure point in my life, an individual who leaves a mark. I always look forward to meeting her. :)

## **What do you advise others who are also planning to make a request for help on the Helpific platform?**

Juci: If I should give advice, I think I would say. Cautiously, but with optimistic confidence, believe that there are many "Bori" in the world.

### Why did you decide to sign up for the site?

Bori: I have had so much selfless help from my surroundings in my everyday life, which can honestly touch me. Once a cashier guy bought me a tram ticket in Paris, and for many years I took extra lessons in math from a classmate's Mother for totally free. When I am in a trouble there has always been a helping hand. However, these things can not always be returned to the person who gives it, so you have to look for the opportunity.

### Did you have any difficulty using the platform? (registration, announcement of offerings, exchange of messages, etc.)

Bori: No, although I did not like to write messages within the system, we quickly switched to another device.

### How did you decide to answer the help request?

Bori: Juci needed help, and I had some free mornings. I wanted to help someone and I was confident that I could do what she asked.

### How was the first encounter?

Obviously at the beginning we had to tune together but soon became friends and we both got a lot from the other.

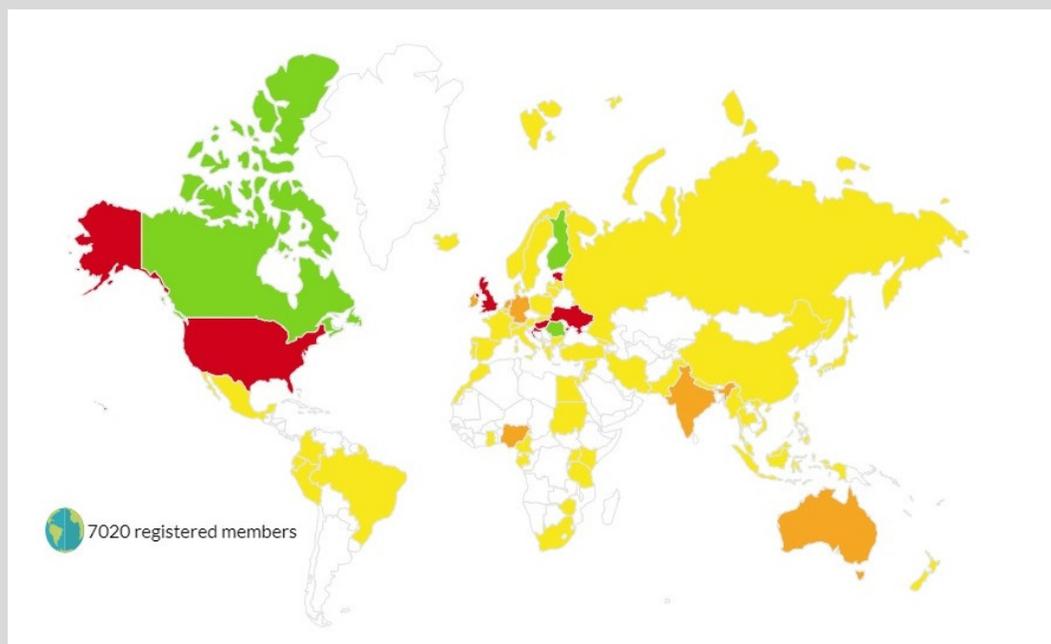
### What do you advise others who are also planning to offer their help on the Helpific platform?

Do not hesitate. The most common objection is "I do not have time," but if we just observe how much time we're wasting on our smartphone, we realize that this does not stand up. Anyway, it's good to be good! :)

## HELPIFIC WORLD

By December 2018, there are 7020 registered members on the Helpific platform. Since 2015, people like Juci and Bori has posted more than 700 help requests and help offers. Helpific has local teams in:

- Estonia
- Croatia
- Ukraine
- Hungary
- Romania
- Netherlands
- UK
- Canada



# INNOVATION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

by *Katrily Lepik, Helpific Estonia*



*Katrily Lepik*

My name is Katrily, and I am the newest proud member of Helpific's Estonian team. One thing that surely describes me most accurately is that I cannot stand still. I need movement in life, and am a relentless opponent of the status quo. There is always something new to be discovered or something old to be improved. And there is nothing I am more annoyed by than wasted potential.

I am studying for a Master's degree in Administration and Government at Tallinn University and hope to become a valuable member in the Helpific community.

CoSIE project is a Horizon2020 program of the European Union to highlight co-creation as an innovative way of social service design. Estonia participates in this project with a pilot of social hackathons in Vorumaa county.

The role of Helpific is to be a catalyst for developing public services with innovate, ICT (communications and information technology) based solutions, and, if necessary, offer our platform for mobilizing community resources to develop services / products.

We believe that, in cooperation with various sectors, including communities, it is possible to create a new era for service innovation in Võru County, Estonia, and to increase the quality of services, while emphasizing the importance of citizens' involvement in the design and development of services.

## OUR DEVELOPERS

### **Anton Anikin, Estonia**

My whole career has been designing and writing systems for different financial institutions.

After joining Helpific I could understand what problems people facing in life. I did not know that using computers for some of us is very, very hard. I was surprised that most systems are not accessible.

I have found, Helpific is not just another system, Helpific is a community of people who believe that they can improve the world. Our team believes that social entrepreneurship has a future and we can break the stigmas in our culture.



*Anton Anikin*



*Aleksandra Varnaeva*

### **Aleksandra Varnaeva, Russia**

My name is Aleksandra. I'm from Saint Petersburg, Russia. I worked as a graphic and interaction designer for some years after I graduated as an industrial designer. My goal is to bring Helpific to a new level. We want to make it known and used by a wider audience, and for some countries it would be a new way of solving a problem of vulnerable people's social life.

## OUR DEVELOPERS

### **Imre Lindi, Hungary**

During my previous jobs, I helped people to learn IT technologies. Now I can combine these things and I can help people with the technology with IT solutions. This is my mission. I want to make a better system to help everyone.

Nowadays I am working on Helpific, we have a lot of idea to grow the platform and create a very popular application.

I started to work as a webmaster and I try to make the best decisions for Helpific.



*Imre Lindi*



*Mert Nesvat*

### **Mert Nesvat, Turkey**

When I was a child, I read a book called New Atlantis from Francis Bacon. Almost immediately, I was intrigued by the idea of a society which helps each other; trying to improve each other's lives by using science, technology and their unique skills. I believe Helpific is gathering around these good people. It is not as big as Facebook or Twitter, but more welcoming and open- And I'm very happy to be a part of it.