

Grateful to us! Four personal stories

Applications, needs. Reports.

Children were running somewhere in the background, a cat passed by. There were meals somewhere, some conversations. Everything gradually merges into one stream. Now, the twentieth day without days off, my startup mode has kicked off. A hackathon that is working for one result.

Its name is 'After the Victory'.

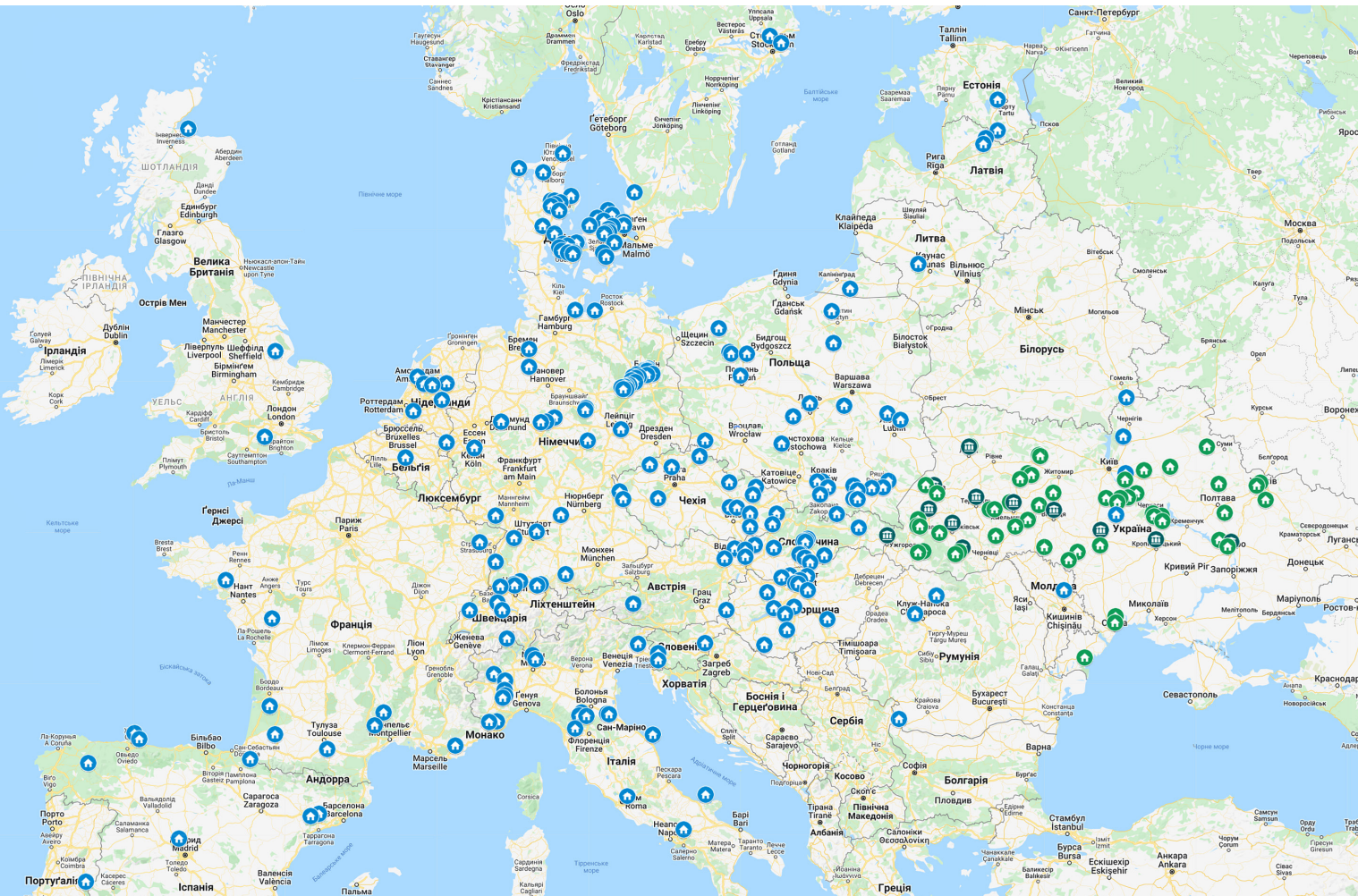
I did not go out yesterday. I did not have time. Too many calls and tasks. I am even a little jealous of volunteers who do some real physical work. My life now is completely boring and unremarkable.

On the one hand, we as a team do a lot. But we are just like office clerks without offices. I have a whole family diaspora of such. Nomenclaturers. Probably we have it from our great-grandparents. Calls, lists, spreadsheets, income and expenses, a rise again at 5:00, the first online meeting of the team at 10:00.

Barley porridge with pickles

These days, you do not notice what you eat. But then, late in the evening, the association came to me. I remembered that taste.

It was in Kyiv, at Borshchahivka. There were five of us in a rented apartment. There was no work. And I used to go around the market looking for something to eat on a budget.



I found a wholesaler of cereals. I saw the prices and thought it was great! The whole next month I cooked only porridge, and my neighbors made fun of me. They ate dumplings and pasta. They also said that I was already old and I was due to retire. Because I was the oldest migrant worker among them. I was 35. Now that city is being shelled and my place is quiet.

Banderovets (derived from the name of Stepan Bandera (1909—1959), a Ukrainian nationalist)

I have an acquaintance from that old time. She is from Russia. Sometimes we chat about personal things. About daughters. They have the same name.

And then the war started and she wrote to me that it was a “preventive action”. Of course I exploded. And then she said that I had never before called her a piece of shit. Although in fact I called that way the news she read.

The other day she dropped me a video about some gays in the Ukrainian army and asked my opinion on that and what if my kids would become gay. I answered that we do not have such concerns. I have a lot of LGBT friends. And that adults, even if they are my children, have the right to decide how and with whom to sleep. And now there are too many deaths around to make it such a big deal.

Then she said I am aggressive and watch too much news, that I mix personal life with global. Of course, I said that we have such a phenomenon as a national idea, and we are all one now.

And then I remembered that it was in this team that my colleagues called me Banderovets. It was a Russian-Ukrainian project. And I was the only one from the Western Ukraine. This was our last chat... In those old times, everyone dreamed of success, Thailand and a white yacht. And we worked with various risky gray schemes.

I made a decision then — to live a modest life without fear and suspicion. To not go out into the world via VPN, to be on the white list, not the gray one. I started to develop my first ecovillage project and became interested in eco-activism. I got engaged in education and community service.

An autograph on a pack of matches

Late in the evening I turned on the news to see what was happening in my country. Zelensky was on TV, he addressed the US Senate. They applauded him, as they did in the European Parliament and the House of Lords.

I remember how I met Zelensky for the first time in my life. It was in the 2000s, at our railway station. The weather was gray and wet. They were tired and sleepy. I approached them and said that I was a fan. There was one Russian comedy battle show on TV that we watched, and their team were the winners from Ukraine.

They got tense at first, but then Zelensky came to me and started a conversation. He told me about their corporate party at Bukovel. And I said that my young wife would never believe that I talked to him like this, at the train station. I needed some confirmation, so I asked him for an autograph. We searched for a pen for a while, but I did not have a piece of paper. I found a matchbox in my pocket. And he signed it.

Then this matchbox for a long time could be seen on the sideboard in our living room. Because at that time he was a national female sex symbol in black leather pants. As then became Vynnyk (a famous Ukrainian singer), and now Arestovych (a Ukrainian presidential adviser).

And now he is not a comedian at all, he is on the white list. He has put our country on the white list. We are recognized by the whole civilized world. We could not even dream of such a serendipity. We deserve it now, after our heroic actions.

I have always wanted nothing but authenticity, even in times of gray business schemes. When I started actively traveling across Europe a few years ago, my old colleagues had been living in Thailand for a long time already. One of them asked: "So now Europe allows you to come in?" I said: "Yes..."

Grateful to us!

Yesterday I had a meeting with our focalizers. These are the coordinators of our European ecovillage map. They are helping people settle in the ecovillages now. There were representatives from Poland, Germany, Switzerland and Denmark. We exchanged our experiences, our thoughts on how we could help Ukrainians who are now escaping the war and are forced to stay in different parts of Europe. What can we do to make them feel protected?

These European people are now my friends. They respect us very much. I have known some of them for several years and have been to more than one gathering. And I do not have to look like a cool, respectable man to them. I am as I am, I am one of them.

And I understand that they are ready to accept me with all my incorrect English expressions, with my imperfections, intricate ideas. I am a bit of a crazy dude to them. But they supported my idea of a green corridor. They picked it up. Right in the first days. They collected and dropped the first 2,000 euros. And then more and more...

And they do not care who I used to be before. How I am dressed. It is important to them that I am and my family are safe. They support me and all of us very sincerely.

— Thank you!

No! — Stefan smiles, — There is no "you". We are all one here. Thank us!

