



# Human Stories

**British Council Europe: celebrating  
our community**

Working together to shape a better world

[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

## 'If not me, who? If not now, when?'

Meet Neriman Safa, a trailblazing [Women in STEM](#) scholar supported by the British Council. Hailing from a small border city in eastern Turkey, Neriman's journey to pursue her academic dreams in the UK is a testament to her resilience and determination. Through the STEM scholarship, she's breaking barriers and inspiring others in her community to strive for excellence in STEM fields.

'Growing up in a small border city in eastern Turkey, my life took shape among the challenges faced by my mother, who never had the opportunity to go to school and remained unaware of women's rights. Despite this, my childhood passion for science inspired me to defy societal expectations and live authentically as a woman who can pursue her dreams. Being a 'Women in STEM' means 'Freedom'. This freedom exceeds my academic pursuits; it has catalysed a transformation in my life, breaking societal barriers and changing perceptions in a male-dominated community. My father is proud of my achievements and sees what women can achieve, too.

However, there are challenges in Turkey, such as insufficient support for STEM fields, making it challenging for me to pursue my academic journey. Therefore, I decided to study in the UK, driven by the aspiration to break barriers, challenge stereotypes, and contribute to a more inclusive and diverse scientific community. The UK experience has been unique, with welcoming surroundings, cutting-edge technology, and a commitment to eco-friendliness, which has improved both my research capabilities and well-being.

I have been granted an exceptional opportunity to pursue my master's degree here, and this will undoubtedly be a milestone in my journey towards a PhD.

I encourage women in STEM to work hard and have strong self-belief in pursuing their dreams despite the challenges. I face similar difficulties daily, but I believe it's worthwhile. I'm confident these efforts will lead to positive outcomes, adding meaning to life. I see how many people's lives I have touched in a butterfly effect, which brings me great joy. In conclusion, I draw inspiration from Emma Watson's UN speech: "*If not me, who? If not now, when?*"





## Changemakers Unite: A Journey of Impact and Collaboration

**Merili Ginter's engagement with the British Council in Estonia, particularly through its People to People programme, has been remarkable. Her involvement in projects such as the [Changemakers Academy](#) ignited her passion for social leadership, setting her on a path of extraordinary achievement. Beyond her interactions with the organisation, Merili's impact has resonated widely, earning her recognition as one of Estonia's most influential young individuals, ranked #14 in the country. With achievements including authoring three books, founding three companies, and mentoring hundreds, she now leads Impact Day, the Baltics' largest sustainability festival. Here, she reflects on her journey, sharing how she turned her passion into a way of life.**

'Thanks to the People to People programme I found the passion for my life: impact entrepreneurship. Through the Changemakers Academy project, I first heard about this and developed the network that has enabled me to start now with Impact Day.'

As I have been working on one or another project under the People to People programme for over five years, it has developed more skills than I could mention here! One of the most valuable competencies I have acquired is self-analysis, because with this I have been able to learn from other experiences and truly understand what I can do.

Apart from that, I have also built very good friendships and colleagues thanks to the programme, including the co-founders of Impact Day -who are my best friends too, and my life partner.

As Impact Day is about making sustainability sexy, which means making acting for impact a norm, not a 'nice to have', I would encourage new generations to find the right people to be with and work to change other people's lives. Alone you can go fast, but together you can go farther. And with the right people, the sky's the limit!'



## Bridging Creativity: Cultural Collaboration Across Borders

**Step into the world of cross-border creativity, where the Cultural Bridge programme fosters collaborations between the UK and Germany. Among its dynamic partnerships, ENTER—a cooperation between Creative Black Country (CBC) from England and Kulturvilla Nellie from Germany—stands as a testament to the diverse projects funded by Cultural Bridge. The 2024-2025 programme marks its third year of facilitating artistic exchanges between the UK and Germany.**

With a total of 72 organisations supported through 42 awards and 35 partnerships since 2021, Cultural Bridge is fostering collaborations to create a movement of artistic unity across borders. The programme celebrates bilateral artistic partnerships between the UK and Germany through the collaboration between the British Council, Arts Council England, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Creative Scotland, Fonds Soziokultur, Goethe-Institut London and Wales Arts International / Arts Council of Wales.

In the second year of their Cultural Bridge partnership, Creative Black Country (CBC) and Kulturvilla Nellie aim to amplify the conversation on climate change, particularly with young voices, with their joint programme ENTER. This collaboration involves reciprocal visits, with Kulturvilla Nellie exploring CBC's climate change ideas in The Black Country and CBC reciprocating the visit in Lörrach.

CBC, active since 2014 in Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, and Wolverhampton, emphasises co-design and asset-based approaches, fostering a rich network of community engagement. Kulturvilla Nellie, located in Lörrach, Germany, champions democratic culture through diverse events, including concerts and Poetry Slams. Together, they represent a harmonious blend of creative forces committed to making culture accessible to all.

'We are excited to have the opportunity to develop our ideas together, continue conversations about our creative practice and places and find interesting meeting points', says Parminder Dosanjh on behalf of Creative Black Country and Kulturvilla Nellie.





## Vision to Action: Nurturing Georgia's Creative Spirit

**Embark on a transformative journey with Elene Toidze, fueled by her partnership with the British Council since 2016. From overcoming skepticism to fostering global collaborations, Elene's dedication has propelled Georgia's creative landscape forward. Through British Council partnerships, she has deepened her expertise, expanded networks, and contributed significantly to Georgia's creative ecosystem. Join us as we explore Elene's inspiring journey of empowerment and innovation, driven by her commitment to harnessing creativity for positive change.**

‘My journey with the British Council started around 2016 when the concept of Creative Industries was just beginning to take root in Georgia. I worked at the Ministry of Culture, laying the groundwork for our cultural policy and strategies in this exciting field. The journey ignited a fire in me, a drive to support the development of creative industries, believing in their power to propel societal and economic progress.

Despite general scepticism about the economic value of creativity, I passionately sought resources for sectoral research. Finally, at Creative Georgia, I initiated a study mapping the creative landscape in Georgia, identifying challenges, opportunities, and the sector's impact on jobs and economic growth.

The British Council became more than a professional support system; it became a partner that resonated with my mission. Together, we worked on unlocking the potential of creative industries, and their guidance, resources, and connections aligned seamlessly with my vision.

Moreover, my collaboration with the British Council influenced my approach to promoting inclusivity in the sector, thanks to insightful activities and exchanges. Engaging experiences at the Creative Industries Forum in Istanbul and the BEYOND Conference in London broadened my perspective on the global creative economy, offering valuable insights and connections.

The connections formed during these events extended beyond networking; they became vital relationships with like-minded professionals globally. Now, as the Director of Creative Clusters' Alliance, I leverage these connections to advocate for the growth of Creative Industries in Georgia and beyond.

Reflecting on my journey, the British Council has been more than a facilitator of professional growth; it's an ally in staying true to my passion for leveraging creativity as a force for positive change. Working closely with them, I've gained the tools, insights, and connections needed to make a real impact in the creative sector in Georgia. With the continued support of the British Council, we are pushing the boundaries, making a difference in our creative community and beyond.’



## Shaping Tomorrow: Youth Advocacy in Mental Health

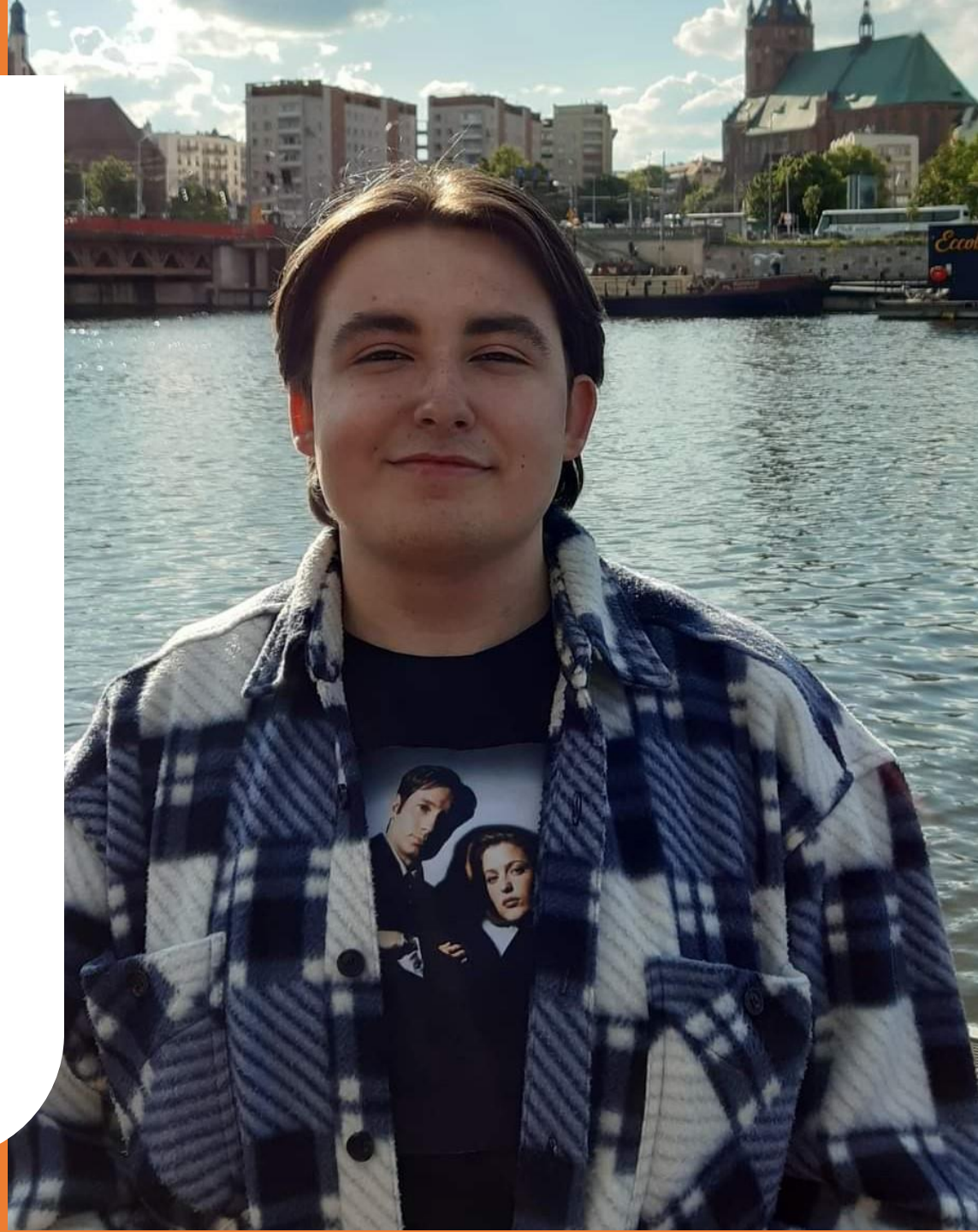
**Meet Wojciech Szumiło, a 20-year-old social activist from Poland. Currently pursuing law studies at the University of Szczecin and engaged with the GrowSPACE Foundation, Wojciech aspires to advocate for human rights as a future prosecutor or attorney.**

Collaborating with the British Council through the GrowSPACE Foundation introduced Wojciech to the enlightening Stronger Together workshop for young activists.

‘I really enjoyed the training and workshops. British Council ensured very good and skilled experts, who taught me how to organise my projects so that they meet the real needs of the target group. They also showed me how to deal with delays and moments of doubt concerning an arising project’, Wojciech reflects.

Inspired by the workshop, Wojciech spearheaded a project centred on addressing mental health challenges. ‘Unfortunately, in Europe and also Poland, we are fighting a huge epidemic of mental health issues. In Poland, the availability of psychologists is minimal, and people can’t afford to visit a doctor privately. For the whole country, there are merely several hundreds of psychiatrists for children and youth. My project aimed to equip young people with the basic knowledge of dealing with their own emotions and show them what to consider when it comes to choosing a psychologist or a therapist. The participants also received small leaflets containing exercises for the event of a panic attack. The project’s main purpose was to gather five postulates of what young people expect from the city government, their schools and adults regarding their mental health.’

The British Council backed Wojciech’s project with financial support and provided valuable assistance every step of the way. ‘There was also substantive support, as, during the project, I knew that I could constantly count for help. I knew that I would get an answer to every question asked. This was really mentally uplifting.’





# Share your stories with us

**British Council Europe: celebrating our  
community**  
Working together to shape a better world

[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)