

# **B i e d r i ( F e l l o w s )**

## **Context**

There are plenty of students who do not feel as a part of their school community, they have a lack of motivation towards learning. We believe that the root cause is the fact that they haven't found their specific niche. Also, what is often forgotten – living in a fast changing world, students not only have to develop hard skills but soft skills as well. From our teams' perspective, the best solution for promoting a combination of theoretical knowledge, flexibility, ability to work in a team leadership, time management and communication skills is *interest related education*. Our new education system "Skola2030" includes it as one of the directions as well. Seeking the solution in countries like USA, we aim to popularize creation of like-minded clubs in Latvia.

When it comes to interest groups and student clubs, many problems have to be faced – the toughest one being accessibility as there is a narrow choice of extra-curricular activities in small towns. Also it is difficult to find fellow thinkers and there is a lack of knowledge for leading a group of like-minded people.

## **Benefits**

Many of us, secondary school students, would like to take part in some kind of interest club (for example, discussions, genealogy, cooking etc. – everyone has something they are passionate about). That is why we introduce a game-changer – the "Biedri" mobile application. It is a solution for all of the previously mentioned issues and even more.

The app is meant for those who are passionate about their hobby or interest field. It's also well-suited for students who want to do something but are not sure: what exactly? We support lifelong education and one of the possible features is the allowance of adult participation in the app.

## **Impact**

By providing a platform for students to explore and engage in their passions, the app contributes to student participation in social life.

- a. Participation in interest clubs boosts personal development, enhancing skills such as leadership, communication, teamwork, and time management.
- b. The formation and thriving of interest clubs create a sense of community within schools and towns, creating positive relationships between students.

- c. Giving students tools for self-expression and collaboration contributes to the overall empowerment of local communities.
- d. The app improves the network between different educational institutions.
- e. As the app gains traction, it has the potential to catalyse a cultural shift in how students approach learning, highlighting personal interests and soft skill development.
- f. A successful implementation may influence the Ministry of Education, encouraging the integration of interest-related education within formal curricula.

### **Innovativeness**

The first thought is that students should just be connecting with other club members using a Facebook Group or Instagram page. But Social Media algorithms are often limiting the exposure, affecting user privacy and even diminishing a group's identity. The “Biedri” app cuts through the noise and keeps you connected with other members. The app is meant for registered users. In “*Biedri*” it is possible to create a page for your club and show your field of work (description, goal, location etc.). A new user sees recommended clubs and can easily join them. The club leaders can manage the members and adjust the clubs description. There is also a map of all existing clubs, so the student can see clubs nearby. The mobile app functions as an instrument for communication between club members by introducing a group chat. Future goal for “*Biedri*” is providing tips, for example, in leadership, communication, work organisation as well as online lectures with professional coaches.

### **Transferability**

Our teams’ created mobile app “Biedri” is a platform for creating, leading and joining clubs of like-minded people. Therefore the idea may be used for a big variety of educational niches – specific areas of their study field. Science, languages, ecology, maths, programming, history, politics, cooking – the list goes on. We believe that our idea is a tool that helps to develop communication, leadership and organizational skills as well as gain theoretical knowledge by exchanging thoughts with the mates, accomplishing projects and doing research work. All the mentioned impact of “Biedri” app is beneficial in every sphere of life and education. The platform is a universal tool that can be used for every field of life.

### **Sustainability**

When launching a new project it is important to focus on just one particular auditory. Originally “Biedri” app is meant for students, however, we aim to gradually expand the app's features and accessibility, making it suitable for a broader audience.

It seems to us that the best solution for implementation of the app is to create a partnership with the local schools of our town. Regular updates and feature enhancements based on user feedback would ensure that the app remains relevant and responsive to evolving educational needs. If the pilot project is successful, it may be launched in the whole country.

At all costs it should be a free tool for self-development that is accessible to every student. For providing a safer environment, the users should be verified. To achieve this goal, in the future it is aimed to cooperate with “E-klase” (Latvia's electronic school management system). It is clear that advertising of the app will be needed, for example, in the social media.

The furthest goal is that the “Biedri” app becomes a universally recognized tool for student engagement and interest-related education, potentially extending its reach globally.

### **Team work**

Regarding team work, we should mention that the current work process has to be well organised. In our team the Project Manager is Henrijs Kravals ([henrijskravals98@gmail.com](mailto:henrijskravals98@gmail.com)), also responsible for the linking of Front-end and Back-end. The main Designer is Rihards Fokins ([rihards.fokins@gmail.com](mailto:rihards.fokins@gmail.com)), also responsible for Front-end. The Back-end programmer is Deivids Krastiņš ([deividsk22@gmail.com](mailto:deividsk22@gmail.com)). The Sociologist is Evelīna Gateža ([evelinagateza@inbox.lv](mailto:evelinagateza@inbox.lv)), also responsible for inventing and representing our ideas. The Front-end programmer is Monta Poškus ([montux36@gmail.com](mailto:montux36@gmail.com)), also responsible for QA Testing.

In the future we need more specific roles for money management, attraction of investors, connecting with educational institutions and coaches as well as accounting the overall work. Currently we are secondary school students of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. We can completely involve in the implementation of our idea in the educational system. Even more, we get higher education in different spheres – computer science, engineering and economics.

Link to solution code on GitHub: <https://github.com/kenryhval/BiedriApp>

Link to presentation video on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Db4KUuu4Dxs>