

Bonds of Care: Rethinking Labour in Arts & Health

CARE: Culture for Mental Health
+ Mental Health Arts Festival RYŠIAI 2026

Across Europe, the cultural sector is facing declining funding while being asked to play an expanding role in public health, social cohesion, and democratic participation. Cultural initiatives—whether artistic, grassroots, or institutional—are increasingly working in partnership with health and social care sectors, while researchers continue to demonstrate the value of these collaborations. Yet cultural labour remains precarious, under-resourced, and often invisible. The people who make cross-sector projects possible frequently work within unstable conditions, balancing multiple expectations with limited structural support.

Bonds of Care: Rethinking Labour in Arts & Health in Vilnius responds to the 2026 theme of Mental Health Arts Festival RYŠIAI (BONDS): **LABOUR**. The conference explores labour across the cultural, health, and social sectors, asking **what makes transdisciplinary collaboration possible**.

What makes arts & health collaborations sustainable? What barriers remain? What recommendations are emerging at the EU level, and how can NGOs, institutions, and policymakers strengthen support in Lithuania? Ultimately, the conference highlights both the complexity and the value of cross-sector collaboration.

The event language is English.

Date: June 4–5, 2026

Venue: Contemporary Art Centre (CAC), Vokiečių g. 2, Vilnius

Organisers and funders

The conference is co-produced by the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture and [Mental Health Arts Festival RYŠIAI \(BONDS\)](#) in the framework of the [CARE: Culture for Mental Health](#) project. Co-funded by the EU.

Essential schedule

DAY 1 – June 4 (9:00 – 17:30)

9:00 – 9:30

Registration & coffee

9:30 – 9:40

Welcome and introduction notes

9:40 – 11:00

Policy Focus: Report launch:

*'Culture and Health. Time to Act.' EU
Expert Group Findings + Panel discussion:
Time to Act & Taking the policy into reality*

11:00 – 11:30

Coffee & Movement break

11:30 – 12:45

Case studies: Culture as Labour of Care |
*Multiple Lithuanian and international Arts
& Health practices bringing reflections
on transdisciplinary labour, and a call for
solidarity.*

12:45 – 13:45

Lunch + Speed dating:

*Lunch provided by Pirmas Blynas, a social
restaurant, run by people with disabilities*

13:45 – 15:15

Presentations + Circle Discussions |

*Labour Imaginaries: Care, Culture, and the
Invisible*

15:15 – 16:00

Group Photo, Coffee & Rest Break

16:00 – 16:15

Closing Remarks of the First Day

16:15 – 17:30

Dance Performance and

a Circle Conversation: *Adrian Carlo Bibiano
- this blame was never meant for me*

DAY 2 — JUNE 5 (09:00–14:20)

09:00 – 09:30

Coffee and Welcome

09:30 – 10:50

Talks & Performative Presentations:

Practices of Culture as Labour of Care

10:50 – 11:20

Rest & Coffee Break

11:20 – 12:50

Workshops:

*Valuing Care Labour in Culture | 3 parallel
workshops*

12:50 – 13:00

Wrap up and what's next

12:50 – 13:30

Closing performance:

*Dr. Helen Anahita Wilson - Anuvāram
Jugalbandī (for the time beings) - solo
version*

13:20–14:20

Lunch at Pirmas Blynas,
Savičiaus g. 15, Vilnius

Programme

DAY 1 - JUNE 4 (9:00 - 17:30)

9:00 – 9:30

Registration & coffee

9:30 – 9:40

Welcome and introduction notes

9:40 – 11:00

Policy Focus

- **Report launch:** *'Culture and Health. Time to Act.'*
EU Expert Group Findings

Edith Wolf Perez - Culture and Health advocate, journalist specialising in culture, cultural policies and dance, co-founder of Arts for Health Austria, co-chair of the OMC Culture for Health group.

- **Panel discussion:** Time to Act & Taking the policy into reality

This panel explores how cross-sector collaboration between culture, health, and social care can become sustainable action in Lithuania, with perspectives from local and international experts and practitioners.

Participants:

- *Edith Wolf Perez* - Culture and Health advocate, journalist specialising in culture, cultural policies and dance, co-founder of Arts for Health Austria, co-chair of the OMC Culture for Health group.
- *Ingrida Grincevičiūtė* - Mental Health Unit Advisor at the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania.
- *Eglė Saudargaitė* - Head of the Strategic Decisions Support Group of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, Lithuania's representative in the EU OMC group on Culture and Health.
- *Kamilė Čelutkaitė* - Head of Creative Europe Desk Lithuania.
- *Ieva Petkutė* - Independent researcher and educator; director, Socialiniai meno projektai (NGO); founder and president, Dementia Lithuania.
- *Inga Surgunte* - Chair of Culture and Health Latvia, head of the Museums on Prescription programme in Cēsis Municipality, Scientific Assistant at the Latvian Academy of Culture leading the WITAC Culture and Health education programme, and Latvia's representative in the EU OMC group on Culture and Health.

Moderated by:

Karolina Zakarauskaitė - Founder and Curator of Mental Health Arts Festival Bonds, working across Arts & Health, disability advocacy, and the Health Humanities.

11:00 – 11:30

Coffee & Movement break (led by A. Carlo Bibiano)

Programme

DAY 1 - JUNE 4 (9:00 - 17:30)

11:30 - 12:45

Case Studies: Culture as Labour of Care

Local and international Arts & Health practices - reflections on transdisciplinary labour, and a call for solidarity.

The section includes presentations by MO Museum's 'be neriMO' initiative; 'Savas muziejus' at the Lithuanian National Art Gallery; Socialiniai meno projektai - development of dementia-friendly museums network; Mental Health Arts Festival RYŠIAI; Kauno kamerinis teatras 'Serpantino laboratorija'; Social Prescription in Lithuania; Cluj Cultural Centre (Romania) projects for wellbeing; BOZAR Centre for Fine Arts' (Belgium) Relaxed Guided Tours; Latvian Academy of Culture - Inclusive Wellbeing Through Arts and Culture in the Baltics, and others.

12:45 - 13:45

Lunch + Speed Dating

Lunch provided by Pirmas Blynas, a social restaurant, run by people with disabilities.

13:45 - 15:15

Presentations + Circle Discussions:

Labour Imaginaries: Care, Culture, and the Invisible.

- **Žygmantas Menčenkovas** - a philosopher and educator whose work critically engages with questions of disability, and social justice.
Invisible Art, Invisible Artists, and Invisible Disability
- **Dr. Inga Truskauskaitė** - psychologist, trauma therapist, researcher, associate professor at Vilnius University's Institute of Psychology
Holding Safe Space: Trauma-Informed Arts for Health Practice
- Circle discussion: All the participants in groups.

15:15 - 16:00

Group Photo, Coffee & Rest Break

16:00 - 16:15

Closing Remarks of the First Day

16:00 - 16:15

Dance Performance and a Circle Conversation

- **Adrian Carlo Bibiano** - *this blame was never meant for me*

'this blame was never meant for me' is a sensitive and visual narrative about lived traumatic experiences, imposed guilt, and the memory of the body. Through the language of movement, the work reveals how experiences of violence become inscribed in our bodies and shape our relationship with ourselves and the world around us.

Programme

DAY 2 — JUNE 5 (09:00–14:30)

9:00 – 9:30

Coffee & welcome

9:30 - 10:50

Talks & Performative Presentations:

Practices of Culture as Labour of Care

- **Ieva Rižė (35 min)** - interdisciplinary artist, cultural worker, and a 2nd year PhD candidate in Vilnius Academy of Arts, research topic: Burnout as a Sport in an Achievement Society. Multi-functionality. *Invisible Art, Praxis based presentation "imagine GOAT talking VII"*
- **Dr. Gražina Bielousova (30 min)** - a sociologist working at the intersections of race, religion, and gender and an assistant professor of sociology at Vytautas Magnus University.
Care(ss)ing: The Priceless Labor of Love in the Family and Beyond.
- **Keynote: Dr. Helen Anahita Wilson (45 min)** - an award-winning composer, sound artist, and researcher. As a Wellcome Trust Early Career Fellow at King's College London, her work explores how sound and music can express bodily experience, health, and illness in ways that go beyond words.
On music, time, and the labour of care

10:50–11:20

Rest & Coffee Break

11:20–12:50

Workshops:

Valuing Care Labour in Culture

Participants register to one of the following on the day of the event:

- Holding Space, Holding Ourselves: Self-care and Safeguarding when working with vulnerable audiences in Arts and Health
Katy Geertsen, ARTS for HEALTH AUSTRIA.
- Cultural workers' rights, labour conditions, and collective organising
Agnė Bagdžiūnaitė, Lithuanian Art Workers' Union.
- Remaining Well and Sustaining Wellbeing in Cultural Work
Mahir Namur, European Festivals Association.

12:50 - 13:00

Wrap Up & What's Next

13:00 - 13:30

Closing performance

Dr. Helen Anahita Wilson - *Anuvāram Jugalbandī (for the time beings) - solo version*

13:30–14:30

Lunch at Pirmas Blynas,
Savičiaus g. 15, Vilnius

Event Moderators:

- **Karolina Zakarauskaitė** - Founder and Curator of Mental Health Arts Festival Bonds, working across Arts for Health, disability advocacy, and the Health Humanities
- **Krista Petäjäjärvi** - Head of Secretariat, Northern Dimension Partnership for Culture-Bond

Practical information:

The conference will take place at the Contemporary Art Centre (CAC), Vokiečių g. 2, Vilnius.

Getting there:

The venue is conveniently located in the city centre and can be easily reached from Vilnius International Airport, as well as from the Railway and Bus Stations, by public transport, taxi, or on foot. The CAC is within walking distance of the Railway and Bus Stations, and we warmly encourage walking if weather conditions allow.

Approximate travel times:

- From Vilnius International Airport: 20–30 minutes
- From the Railway and Bus Stations: 15 minutes on foot

Limited on-street parking is available in the surrounding area. Please note that we are unable to recommend specific parking options, as availability and traffic conditions in the city centre may vary.

On site:

Conference registration will be located on the first floor near the main entrance and will open at 9:00. Please follow the on-site signage upon arrival.

The venue is wheelchair accessible and includes an accessible entrance, elevator, restroom facilities, and step-free access throughout the main conference areas. If you require any additional accessibility support, please contact us in advance at hello@rysiaifest.lt.

Catering:

We are delighted that coffee breaks and lunch will be provided by Pirmas Blynas — a social restaurant and the first restaurant in the Baltic States primarily staffed by employees with disabilities.

- On Thursday, all meals will be served at the Contemporary Art Centre.
- On Friday, lunch will take place at Pirmas blynas, Savičiaus g. 15, Vilnius.

Vegetarian options will be available, and we will do our best to accommodate additional dietary needs.

For any questions during the event, our team will be happy to assist you at the registration desk.

Organizers:

**Northern
Dimension
Partnership
on Culture**



Supported by:



ŠMC



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