Sapere Aude

VILNIUS TECH
Vilnius Gediminas Technical University

2025 No. 4,
December (XXXVII)

Sapere Aude

VILNIUS TECH
university publication
December 2025,
No. 4, (XXXVII)
ISSN 2029-4999

ISSN 2029-4999
9 772029 499004

Dear readers,

the value of **unity** is an inseparable part of VILNIUS TECH, connecting not only people, their accumulated knowledge, and applied technologies, but also the research as well as real-world solutions that have an impact on Lithuania and the world.

I believe that 2025 perfectly illustrates the importance of unity within the university community that goes beyond just interpersonal connections. It is the ability to create meaningful partnerships, to widely open doors to new opportunities, and to boldly share daring ideas.

Through all our combined efforts, VILNIUS TECH has further established itself in international science and innovation arenas. It strengthened collaboration with world-class universities and business partners, brought together researchers and students from Lithuania and around the world. This led to real solutions that help address today's and tomorrow's challenges.

Equally important is that **unity** can be clearly visible among the members of our community–they create an open, creativity- and science-driven environment, providing everyone with the opportunity to discover themselves in the fields of science and technology. After all, connections between people drive the fastest progress.

As we enter the New Year, I wish the entire VILNIUS TECH community to boldly generate new ideas, contribute to the implementation of projects, and learn from those who inspire growth.

May unity become our strength in shaping the future!

Inspiring stories –
Editor-in-Chief Neda

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Neda Černiauskaitė

DESIGNER
Arūnas Aleksandravičius

PHOTOGRAPHY
Simas Bernotas

COVER PAGE
Andrius Pucėta
Student of the Architecture study program

EDITORIAL STAFF
Vilniaus Gedimino technikos universitetas
Viešosios komunikacijos direkcija
Saulėtekio al. 11
10223 Vilnius
Phone (8 5) 274 9936
Email press@vilniustech.lt

PRINTING
UAB „Baltijos kopija", Kareivių g. 13B
09109 Vilnius

Circulation – 600 copies.

Content

Rector's message

Dear All,

The greatest strength, success, and inspiration of this past year have been you. During this festive season, I wish you joy in celebrating your own achievements as well as those of others, our joint projencts, and the challenges we have overcome together.

This year, with the drastic reforms shaking the education sector, has been an intense one. Yet, we pulled together, supporting one another and putting all our efforts into attracting students. And here we are rightfully celebrating the growth in student numbers, especially among young people from Lithuania, while internationalization has still remained one of our most distinctive qualities. Across all levels, from Vilnius to Klaipeda, we now have 9,500 students!

Throughout the year, we have continued to systematically develop frameworks that will support the focused advancement of the university's research activities: from research planning and the structured

growth of researchers' careers to a modern equipment management ecosystem and a new research information infrastructure - all of which contribute to the country's scientific diplomacy.

We are working with partners to establish a national Artificial Intelligence center, the so-called "AI Factory," which will bring together advanced computing infrastructure, data, talent, research, and business. This will be another contribution to the country's digital transformation. We are also participating in other strategic national and international initiatives focused on sustainability, cybersecurity, autonomous systems, and the development of advanced technologies. Our collaboration with leading global and regional partners continues–from MIT to NORDTEK and the "Security Code" initiatives.

More and more of our experts are visible in the public sphere, sharing insights, responding to changes, and creating added value where it matters most to today's society–in the fields of security, defense, disinformation, and AI. I am grateful that you are true innovators and the voices of VILNIUS TECH.

This year, we have made progress in infrastructure improvement projects and campus development: we began construction of the Maritime Engineering and Renewable Energy Competence Center in Klaipeda, continued modernizing laboratory buildings and dormitories, and are setting up the Digital Defense Competence Center.

We have grown in every sense: over the past few years, our salaries have increased by 1.5 times, and as of this October, the updated variable pay system has come into effect, reaching €6 million per year. Employee well-being has also benefited from the financial advantages provided by the MELP system.

The university is growing and changing, and none of this would be possible without your commitment, professionalism, loyalty, and belief in our mission. THANK YOU!

A special year is approaching for our community as next year we will celebrate the University's honorable 70th anniversary–and I invite each of you to feel like hosts of this jubilee. Initiate ideas, bring the community together, dedicate your projects and activities to the anniversary year, and spread the word to alumni and friends.

May the coming year be full of research and inventions!

Rector Romualdas Kliukas

More and more of our experts are visible in the public sphere, sharing insights, responding to changes, and creating added value where it matters most to society today–in the fields of security, defense, disinformation, and AI. I am grateful that you are true innovators and the voices of VILNIUS TECH.

Rector Romualdas Kliukas

9.5 thousand

students study at VILNIUS TECH

1.5 times

the increase in the salaries of VILNIUS TECH employees has occurred over the last couple of years

€ 6 million

per year was reached by the renewed variable component of the salary

Vice-Rector for Strategic Partnerships, Assoc. Prof. Dr. A. Meskenas: "Building partnerships is meaningful work"

In today's world, VILNIUS TECH is not just an educational institution – it is a bridge connecting people, ideas, and opportunities. Collaboration at the university means the ability to work together with students, researchers, business representatives, and international partners. Here, not only is new knowledge acquired and fresh ideas born, but innovative projects are also implemented, creating added value for society.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Adas Meskenas, Vice-Rector for Strategic Partnerships, shares why collaboration is one of the most important aspects of the university's activities.

– What does connectedness mean when collaborating with business and international partners?

For us, connectedness means not only building relationships but also co-creating. The university brings together research, studies, business, and society into a single ecosystem where innovations are developed and pressing challenges are addressed. This is evident in joint R&D&I projects (Research, Development, Experimental Development, and Innovation) with Lithuanian companies, double-degree programs with foreign universities, and partnerships that allow students as well as researchers to operate on a global scale.

– How can the university act as a bridge between Lithuanian businesses and foreign innovation ecosystems?

The university is a natural bridge as we have international networks,

> **For us, connectedness means not only building relationships but also co-creating. The university brings together research, studies, business, and society into a single ecosystem where innovations are developed and pressing challenges are addressed.**
>
> Assoc. Prof. Dr. Adas Meskenas

expertise, and infrastructure that allow Lithuanian businesses to access global innovations. By conducting joint research, organizing international conferences, and establishing competence centers, we can connect local companies with partners abroad, help them participate in European research programs, and attract talent.

– How does VILNIUS TECH select and develop strategic international partners? What criteria are most important today?

The selection of strategic international partners is based on creating long-term value. The key criteria include research excellence, quality of education, and alignment of values. Partnerships should strengthen both sides and create real opportunities for students, researchers, and society.

– How does the university contribute to the international visibility and competitiveness of Lithuanian businesses?

VILNIUS TECH contributes to the international visibility and competitiveness of Lithuanian businesses through the dissemination of science and innovation, involving companies in international projects, and developing talent. This enables businesses not only to reach new markets but also to create products that meet global standards.

– How do international alliances transform students' experiences, both academically and professionally?

The ATHENA (Advanced Technology Higher Education Network Alliance) alliance provides VILNIUS TECH students with opportunities to integrate into the European higher education area by offering joint study programs and micro-credentials recognized across Europe.

Joint lectures and intensive courses with international faculty enrich the curriculum. By working on real projects in innovative laboratories, students gain practical skills in digital and green transformation. The alliance also organizes international career fairs, discussions, and "Alumni Talks," enhancing students' international exposure and its value in the job market.

– How can the university help Lithuanian students become competitive in the global talent market?

The university helps Lithuanian students become competitive in the global market through international study programs, the development of foreign language and cultural competencies, and project-based activities with global partners.

– What will the VILNIUS TECH international partner network look like in 10 years?

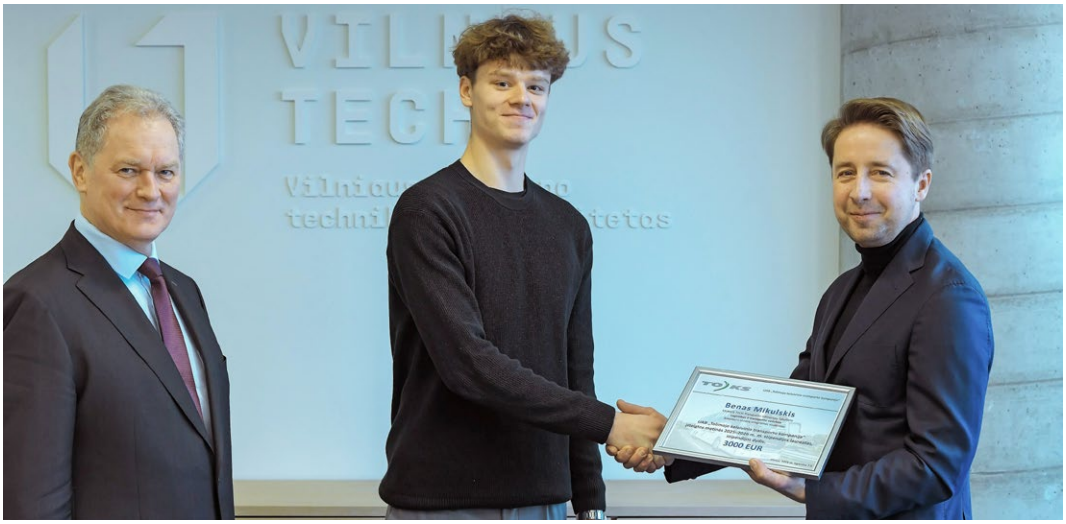
In 10 years, VILNIUS TECH's international partner network will be a dynamic ecosystem, encompassing not only universities but also technology centers, startups, and industry leaders.

VILNIUS TECH will become an international hub, connecting ideas and talent from around the world.

– You are actively working in the field of partnerships. What inspires you the most in this work?

The greatest motivation is the opportunity to build bridges between ideas and people. When I see that our partnerships open up new opportunities for our students and researchers, and allow businesses to discover something new through the university, I realize that we are doing meaningful work.

> **In 10 years, VILNIUS TECH's international partner network will be a dynamic ecosystem, encompassing not only universities but also technology centers, startups, and industry leaders.**
>
> Assoc. Prof. Dr. Adas Meskenas



TOKS director: responsible business invests in future talent

Lithuania is a small country, but in the field of transport and logistics it has the potential to become one of the strongest in the world. This is the conviction of Valentinas Belousovas, general director of UAB Tolimojo keleivinio transporto kompanija (TOKS), whose passenger bus company this year signed a sponsorship agreement with VILNIUS TECH.

This partnership established a scholarship for the best student of the Faculty of Transport Engineering in the Logistics and Transport Management study program. We talk with the director about the meaning of patronage, the importance of nurturing young talent, the future of this sector, connectivity and a value that links the university with business.

The 3000 Eur annual scholarship established by TOKS this year went to first year Logistics and Transport Management program student Benas Mikulskis. The laureate was selected based on entrance exam results. The company intends to continue collaborating with the faculty: from 2026 the TOKS scholarship will be awarded to the best student of the program which will be based on academic performance.

V. Belousovas says that since very beginning the investment fund management group "Zabolis Partners", which controls TOKS, has considered patronage, cooperation with universities, and the development of young talent as a natural continuation of its ideas.

"For any business that wants to remain competitive in this rapidly changing world, it is essential to invest in the young generation. We operate in the transport sector and choose to invest in young people interested in this field because this domain is highly promising – one of the few in which a small country like Lithuania can become a global leader," the interlocutor states.

According to him, the best form of partnership is the one that creates value for all stakeholders: business, higher education institutions, students, and the state.

"The most suitable partnership forms can be discussed separately in each individual case. In this case we chose to contribute to the development of young specialists and believe that this will be beneficial to all. At another higher education institution our group manages an endowment fund – this is a differ-

ent form of cooperation, which also creates value," V. Belousovas says.

GROWING FUTURE LEADERS

Connectivity – one of the strategic values of VILNIUS TECH – is defined by the university as the synergy between different technologies, disciplines, social groups, and the application of solutions. Connectivity enables a constant search for cooperation opportunities and common touchpoints, encourages full involvement, and promotes the creation of a diverse, multicultural environment. In business today it also means much more than physical routes – it is the interaction and partnership of ideas, knowledge, people, experiences, and different sectors. Speaking about this connection, V. Belousovas emphasizes that close cooperation between business and the academic community enables the growth of a generation of transport specialists who strive for innovation and are ready for the future.

"I myself studied for ten years, and my first higher education institution was VILNIUS TECH. So when we began considering the possibility of creating a TOKS scholarship, the decision was influenced not only by promising study directions but also by sentiments and trust in this university," V. Belousovas shares.

He stresses that the benefit of patronage is not only financial.

"During my bachelor studies I received a scholarship established by a foreign company and had the opportunity to prepare my final thesis in Finland.

This broadened my horizons, allowed me to become familiar with the global transport field, and contributed greatly to who I am today. So from my own experience I know how important support is for a young person, including financial support. Not only because it gives more time for studies but also because it builds self confidence, a wider perspective, and new opportunities. Every young person who believes in themselves and sees their future in Lithuania's transport market is the greatest asset, because future leaders grow from curious young people," the TOKS director says.

LIVING IN THE RHYTHM OF CHANGE

The passenger transport sector in Lithuania and around the world, according to the director, is experiencing a period of technological and geopolitical change, so equally intense change can be expected in the near future.

"We can form an opinion about the most important future changes in the transport sector by watching the recording of the latest Tesla shareholders meeting. It highlights accelerating urbanization, which is increasing the demand for convenient, sustainable, and comfortable public transport," V. Belousovas says.

Another strong vector is the energy transformation.

"In transport, electric vehicles are rapidly replacing vehicles using fossil fuels, creating strong competition between China and Western markets. Robotization of vehicles is also spreading quickly. All changes taking place in the sector are in one way or another connected with these areas," the TOKS director notes.

All these processes create a new reality in which challenges will not be lacking throughout the coming decade.

"The biggest challenge in the next 5–10 years will be the ability to adapt to market changes in time and wisely use constantly evolving technologies in order to increase passenger comfort and business efficiency," V. Belousovas believes.

WORK, LEARN, AND CREATE

Describing what kind of leaders today's and tomorrow's dynamic transport sector needs, V. Belousovas stresses that they must be ready not only to adapt to changes but also to initiate them.

"Today's leaders need more than drive; they need knowledge from many different areas. I studied in three higher education institutions. This experience allows me not only to choose the best solutions but also to be able to forecast. I think this is important for leaders," V. Belousovas emphasizes.

According to the TOKS director, future logistics and transport professionals will enter a dynamic as well as very interesting field where decisions must be made quickly and with all possible circumstances in mind. He notes that the transport sector currently lacks qualified, growth oriented, and change motivated specialists from various areas.

"But this is the case everywhere; the transport sector is not exceptional in this reagard," V. Belousovas admits.

He says that listing the competencies most needed for students that enter the labor market would be difficult, but he highlights several essential traits important for everybody: curiosity, willingness to work, learn, and create.

"It is difficult to speak about the entire labor market, even though I represent a group of companies with large investments in different sectors. In our companies we await young people who want to create the future of Lithuania together. So during your studies gather knowledge, and after finishing them join the teams of our companies," the director wishes.

Professor Dr. Algis Mickunas: “Life begins when you understand that you only have one”

“My calling is to teach,” says the world’s most widely known philosopher of Lithuanian origin, author of several dozen books, and VILNIUS TECH Honorary Doctor, Prof. Dr. Algis Mickunas. The 92-year-old professor, who has educated hundreds of scholars, is a true inspiration, proving that listening to the voice of your heart is one of the best decisions a person can make: through his faith and love, he connects people of different generations, nationalities, religions, and worldviews all over the world.

Living in the United States and lecturing in many countries, Ohio University professor Dr. A. Mickunas is also well known to the VILNIUS TECH community – he comes almost every year to teach students of the Faculty of Creative Industries.

This year, after presenting a lecture cycle titled "Communication and Creative Imagination," the professor also found time for an inspiring conversation, during which he shared thoughts about a teacher's duty and ability to create togetherness, the courage to live, and the unexpected events that often turn out to be life's greatest gifts.

– Professor, you have taught many generations of students. How would you describe today's youth? What interests them, and what no longer does?

Everything depends on the teacher. Sometimes fellow professors complain that students are bad – they want nothing, they are uninterested, they do not read, nothing matters to them. Then I ask – and what would the students say about you? They would say the same.

We should not say that students are lazy or do not listen, but rather understand how to communicate with them and how to speak so that they would listen.

– It seems that you do not face such problems – your students are attentive listeners. How do you manage to build such a connection and unite different generations?

The most important thing is dialogue. I succeed because I always listen to students – when you show interest in them, they want to talk. I have trained more than 100 professors, and I communicated with all of them day and night, no matter what. I am open even after lectures – instead of running off, we go to a cafe, and we keep talking and discussing.

Also, I am not afraid to be wrong, because we all make mistakes, and I am not afraid of being corrected. Not only students learn – I always learn too, we learn from each other. That is part of my work.

Still, many people, especially young ones, are afraid to discuss, ask questions, or share their thoughts, because they do not want to sound foolish or naive and be criticized.

I do not criticize students and do not tell them they have not learned something, understood something incorrectly, or are thinking wrongly. When a student writes or says something, I praise them, emphasize that it is very important and meaningful, and encourage them to consider how the topic could be developed further.

When I go to another country, I first ask people how they live, how they think, what their traditions are, what they eat, and so on. When you understand their world, powerful dialogue emerges.

– You travel a great deal – Lithuania is just one of many countries where you share your knowledge, experience, and wisdom. Do you notice big differences between young people in different countries, or are they, regardless of nationality, citizenship, religion, or culture, interested and concerned about similar universal human things?

First, we must understand that we are all human, regardless of how others describe us or how we describe them. We must avoid ethnocentrism, racism, even religious barriers, and avoid assuming that if others think differently, we cannot understand one another. When we acknowledge that we are the same despite differences in skin color, language, or anything else, communication becomes easy. And we need to speak, because none of us are absolute bearers of truth or perfect sages.

It seems you truly enjoy and believe in what you do. This is relevant to many people who, when choosing a profession, struggle between two poles – whether to choose a well-paid, promising job that may not bring joy, or a beloved, interesting field that may not guarantee financial comfort. These things do not always align.

The main rule is that if your career matches your life's passion, you will never work.

– And do you work?

I am a teacher. I do not work at all, and I want nothing more than to read, learn, talk, and share. People ask me: "How much do you earn?" I do not care (laughs). Being a philosophy lecturer is my pleasure, and they even pay me for it.

– Today's consumer society often focuses on tangible, material things – money, objects, achievements, titles – but at the same time longs for a sense of meaning. What is meaning to you personally?

And what will you do with all those riches? For me, meaning is to be a teacher and to keep learning without stopping. At the moment I am very interested in astronomy and space, so I constantly talk with astronomers, and I share what I learn with students. I do not own anything valuable myself, but the world is very interesting, so I want to open it and share it.

The best researcher must also be the best teacher – he must share what he discovers, not just sit in his laboratory. I often say that a teacher

is like a mountain climber who leads people into the mountains: he does not climb over them but lifts them higher above himself. That is my duty and goal – to teach, to lead, and to elevate others. That brings me joy.

For example, I always try to lift my doctoral students higher. When I write a book or an article, I encourage them to contribute so that their names appear next to mine – it helps their careers. Now I supervise doctoral students from VILNIUS TECH – I will contribute to their work and advise on how to publish it.

Also, about five years ago, with students from Pasvalys' Petro Vileisis Gymnasium, we created a youth group – my archive was established in the M. Katiliskis Library, a philosophy center was founded, together with the students we started organizing conferences. They prepare presentations on certain themes, and later we discuss them. We will edit and publish all five conference sets of presentations, nearly 60 in total, which are supposed to make students feel that we matter. This book, with the participation of several Pasvalys students and teachers, will be presented at the Book Fair.

– It is clear that you have found your calling. How did you manage to do that?

I found it without searching. I had a friend in Chicago who attended school in the evenings and what was I supposed to do at that time? I walked around.

One evening, while walking, I saw a university and went inside. They offered open lectures – languages, sociology, philosophy. I thought – why not, and signed up for it, even though I had long finished engineering studies and was already working. One semester passed – interesting; another semester came – even more interesting. I studied for pleasure, out of curiosity, without any goal, until I earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy. Then I received an invitation to study for a master's degree in Germany. I thought I would return to engineering after studying there, but then I was offered a PhD scholarship in the US.

– What do you think ultimately determines the direction of our lives – fate, randomness, circumstances, or our own decisions?

Many things influence your fate, but you can refuse them. I was an engineer with a promising career ahead. Before that, I could have had a good career in the army, where I was offered to stay. I was 19 then, and at 39 I would have retired and could have done whatever I wanted. But I decided to explore the world and maybe find another career path. This happened by accident when I walked into the university – if I had crossed the street instead, I would not have entered. Life is a surprise, full of unexpected events and opportunities.

– Still, the fear of taking a risk, making a wrong decision, and not being able to turn back troubles many people. Is it worth giving up interesting adventures and sticking to a strict life plan?

In that case you become very narrow – you have nothing and see nothing except that plan. It will not come true anyway, because the environment and relationships with others influence us.

– On the other hand, adventures bring a lot of uncertainty, which sometimes brings pleasant excitement, sometimes anxiety. At the moment, due to various global problems and unstable geopolitical situations, anxiety is especially high. How would you advise dealing with uncertainty? How do we accept it?

We must understand that events that seem terrible now eventually exhaust themselves. Everything passes in time.

There is a Zen story. A young man asks his father to buy him a horse. The father says: "Oh child, you do not need one." The son insists. What can the father do – he buys it. The young man is happy and the father is happy that the son likes it. He asks a Zen master: "Isn't this good?" The master replies: "We will see."

Things go well, the young man rides the horse, but one day he falls and breaks his leg. The father says: "Oh, how bad that I bought the horse, now my child broke his leg." The Zen master says: "We will see."

A war begins. Young men are drafted, but this young man does not have to go because his leg is broken. The father says: "Oh, how good we bought the horse, how good that he broke his leg, now he will not go to war." The Zen master says: "We will see." So you can predict nothing in life, and maybe you should not try.

– From what you've said, it seems that life requires openness and courage to follow its flow. Do you also avoid planning and simply follow curiosity and your heart?

I go where the world leads me. Everything is interesting, everything brings joy. I do not know how to be angry. If I try to get angry, I end up being angry at myself – I say, you fool, what are you doing? Why jump and get angry... As we used to say in the village – you cannot jump higher than your belly button. Besides, we all have two lives: the second life begins when you understand that we only have one.

V. Skaraitis and K. Vanagas/ BFL photo

Prof. habil. Dr. G. Kaklauskas' Journey: From Mathematics Olympiads to the Title of Emeritus

The path of Prof. habil. Dr. Gintaris Kaklauskas, of the Department of Reinforced Concrete Structures and Geotechnics, into civil engineering began back in school–mathematics and geometry became not only favorite subjects but also the foundation for creative thinking.

The example set by his parents, especially his mother–a civil engineer–helped him choose the direction to move towards. Today, after more than four decades of academic work, the professor shares his insights on the changes at VILNIUS TECH, the principles of creativity in science, and what motivates him to achieve his goals.

– What is the path into engineering and the construction sector like?

I have always enjoyed the natural sciences at school, especially mathematics and geometry. I liked thinking, searching for solutions, and creating new things. I often solved problems prepared for competitions and participated in them regularly. As a teenager, I didn't like memorizing things, yet in school, that was often required. In the upper grades, my math teacher frequently asked us to memorize formulas, even though I could easily derive them myself. I would rebel, refuse to memorize, and argue that rote learning stifles creativity. For these words, my teacher would lower my grades. The need for mem-

orization, however, decreased significantly at university, where the focus was mainly on thinking and creative exploration.

My parents' example also played an important role in choosing my profession as they both were engineers. My mother was a civil engineer and since I had a special connection with her I often saw her working - at the Urban Construction Design Institute in Vilnius, where she worked as a designer and sometimes at home. I saw how her colleagues respected her as a professional in her field and that she was happy with her choice of profession. I believe these two aspects shaped my own decision to study civil engineering at the then Vilnius Institute of Civil Engineering.

– What does the title of Emeritus at VILNIUS TECH mean to you?

The title of Emeritus is a recognition of loyalty to the university and a continuation of one's commitments.

Humans are naturally attached beings. Just as our loved ones or our homeland matter to us, we naturally form an emotional connection with our colleagues, the organization we work for, and its history. After graduating, I have worked at the university for over 43 years, except for a few years spent abroad on internships. My professional life has been intense, and I still take joy in it today. Loyalty has always been a value for me, even though it may not seem obvious to everyone nowadays. Upon reaching a certain age, the question naturally arises–what will I do next?

Even as a teenager, I planned my future, set goals, and pursued them. I hold a firm belief that both the body and the mind need daily exercise. I have long known that I wanted to continue my academic career for as long as possible. As a professor and senior researcher, I value scientific work, collaboration with colleagues in Lithuania and abroad as well as the opportunity to pass on my experience to the next generation–to mentor future scientists. I will be able to continue these activities as an Emeritus.

Moreover, Emeritus status provides more freedom to engage in what truly brings me joy. At present, I constantly feel a subconscious ticking counter measuring annual scientific output, even though, in reality, novelty–not the number of publications–is what truly matters in science. Unfortunately, many researchers today are enslaved to mere metrics. I hope that as an Emeritus, I will be able to devote myself even more fully to creative exploration.

– How has VILNIUS TECH changed over the years?

I began my scientific career during the Soviet era. Lithuania was under occupation, Soviet ideology prevailed, the occupiers' language was imposed, various restrictions were in place, and the system was autocratic. It's easy to imagine that, over the decades I have worked at the university, there have been truly many changes. I would like to focus primarily on studies, science, and the academic community.

Studies. In my opinion, civil engineering studies at the then Vilnius Institute of Civil Engineering were genuinely high-quality. Our course alone had 14 groups. At that time, students generally did not work and could dedicate their full attention to their studies. I had many excellent lecturers–they were true professionals in their fields.

Science. I will start with doctoral students (then called aspirants). During the Soviet period, competition for doctoral studies was enormous. Only a few departments trained scientific doctors (then called "candidates of science"), so only the very best graduates were admitted to doctoral programs. Many had the opportunity to test their scientific abilities in the Young Scientists' Society, which actively organized conferences and various competitions. The activity of young scientists at that time was significantly higher than it is today.

The high attractiveness of the scientific profession during the Soviet era was largely due to high salaries. An associate professor earned almost four times more than an engineer, a full professor six times more, and an academician up to eight times more. Doctoral students were motivated–they worked not only on weekdays but also in the evenings, on weekends, and during their holidays. However, the system did not encourage scientists to publish their work. Associate professors, for instance, in five years only needed to prepare two publications in local journals. Almost no one wrote for Western journals, let alone top-tier ones. There were no opportunities for internships, teaching, or participation in conferences abroad. We also lacked the modern experimental equipment that is available to us today.

– What motivates you to pursue your goals?

I'll answer briefly: my aim is to be happy.

We are all very different by nature and upbringing. We have inner needs, and our happiness often depends on whether these needs are met. Some people in life seek as little stress as possible and are con-

tent with a secondary role. Others are happy only when they achieve significant results in their professional life. I belong to this latter group. That is why it has always been essential for me to have a goal and pursue it–whether in sports or professional activities. If a day ever comes when I no longer have ambitions in science, I am sure I will find a new field in which I want to grow rapidly.

In pursuing goals, I like to live intentionally: exercising daily, taking cold showers, and eating healthily. I greatly value recognition from loved ones and colleagues–it gives meaning to my professional work. I also care deeply about the well-being of society.

I spent a year on an internship at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign in the United States. I was the first VILNIUS TECH scholar to receive the prestigious Fulbright fellowship. I was offered a permanent position there, but even in the wealthiest country in the world, I saw so many unhappy people that I realized I would never feel truly at home there. I have always wanted to live in Lithuania and work at my *Alma Mater*.

– What creative principles have you applied or do you apply in your scientific work?

Creativity is a set of abilities that allows one to generate and successfully implement new ideas. In my scientific work, I rely on several fundamental principles of creativity:

Original perspective and courage. One of the most important traits of a creator is having a distinctive and original viewpoint. Such a person must not simply follow the majority's opinion but form their own values. This requires strong inner confidence and, most importantly, courage. New ideas always face resistance–opponents usually outnumber supporters, and their number often correlates directly with the originality of the idea. There is always the risk of being wrong. If a new concept published in a prestigious journal is later disproven, it can severely damage a scientist's reputation–the bolder the hypothesis and the higher the journal, the greater the potential harm. Therefore, courage is an essential quality of a creator.

The value of "not knowing." When creating something new, we rely on our existing knowledge, but I firmly believe that knowing too much can hinder creativity. The more you know about a topic, the lower the chance of developing a genuinely new theory.

When tackling an ambitious theoretical model, I consciously avoid delving too deeply into existing methods–this is one of my creative rules. Paradoxically, the doctoral requirement to start with a literature review does not suit all creators. Of course, once a model is developed, a comprehensive analysis and comparison are necessary. Still, I worry that artificial intelligence might suppress creativity–after all, it's so easy to ask and instantly get an answer instead of searching for it yourself.

Tolerance and flexible thinking. Another crucial aspect of creativity is the ability to remain open to various assumptions.

A rigid researcher will rush to dismiss a hypothesis that could be entirely rational. I believe that a creator, in defending a new idea, often represents a minority, therefore, one should also be tolerant of other minorities and unconventional approaches. Flexible thinking helps avoid premature rejection and discover what initially seems unusual or inconvenient.

Intrinsic motivation and idealism. Inner motivation, passion, emotion, and the joy of creation are the driving forces that allow one to pursue results persistently. I believe that true scientists are idealists–they are driven by ideas, not material gain.

However, maintaining this idealistic tone requires support from loved ones, as it provides meaning and inner strength.

Work intensity and endurance. The search for solutions is continuous–from morning to evening, sometimes at night, for weeks or months, on weekends, and even during holidays. During these moments, one can become almost obsessed, the sleep gets disrupted.

Physical and mental endurance are essential for creative work. Sports, walks, working in the park, at an airport, or on a plane allow one to step back from routine and focus completely. It is often in these moments that the subconscious mind offers a solution–a flash of insight, the moment of illumination when a new idea is born.

Creativity as detective work. Scientific creativity reminds me of a detective's work: you examine the first segment of a chain, look for connections, generate assumptions, test and reject them, formulate new hypotheses, and test again. After analyzing one segment, you move to the next. Gradually, a model or theory emerges. Unfortunately, in 99 out of 100 cases, the model turns out too complex or inaccurate, and you must start over. Creativity in scientific work requires patience, perseverance, and consistent improvement, which, although often invisible, ultimately leads to a qualitative leap.

A New Era of Communication: AI, Vision and Language Models in the Lithuanian Language

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming society's relationship with technology and everyday life. From speech recognition to vision and language models, the new AI systems offer the ability not only to automate processes but also to expand how humans interact with digital systems. However, in the context of smaller languages such as Lithuanian, significant challenges arise: certain types of data are lacking, the language contains numerous grammatical and semantic nuances, and it receives limited attention on an international scale.

Tautvydas Kvietkauskas, a lecturer in the Department of Information Systems at VILNIUS TECH, who conducted a study on the prospects of vision and language models for the Lithuanian language using AI technologies, emphasizes that the principle of connectivity between the academic community, business, and government institutions is essential for ensuring the dissemination of innovations and the effectiveness of AI solutions in Lithuania.

– Could you tell us more about the research you are conducting?

My research is still in the early stages of development. During my bachelor's and master's studies, I focused on image recognition, but in my PhD, I wanted to deepen my knowledge in a similar, yet somewhat different, field. After consulting with my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pavel Stefanovic from the Department of Information Systems, I decided to address issues related to the use of vision-language models in the Lithuanian language.

Currently, in the world of AI, it is already common that yesterday's news may become technologically outdated by today. What I studied this week may become technologically irrelevant in six months. Lithuanian language, however, will always remain relevant with any AI technologies.

– How can vision and language models change the way Lithuanian-speaking members of society interact with digital systems?

Around 2022, when the global boom in AI awareness and usage began, English language naturally served as an intermediary between the end user and AI, for example, ChatGPT. Over the past three years, it has become possible not only to chat but also to listen and speak in Lithuanian with AI. However, in global-level projects, correct Lithuanian is very rarely considered. Issues with Lithuanian grammar, punctuation, and word stress frequently arise. In the future, Lithuanian-speaking users should not need to rely on additional language translators at all.

Digital systems based on vision and language models would allow users to upload a photo and verbally ask for a description in Lithuanian, and the system would provide it.

For people with visual impairments, these systems could accurately and in real time describe surrounding objects, even the distances to them.

– The models analyzed in your research combine vision and language. Where do you see their greatest breakthrough occurring over the next five years?

Much has already been developed or applied: in some areas, Lithuanian works better, in others worse, but the technologies are already in use.

The biggest breakthrough, in fact, is expected in the field of robotics. I believe that over the next five years, we will see Lithuanian-speaking robots more often: their eyes will see the environment and they will describe in Lithuanian what they perceive around them.

The AI "brains" have already been created and function quite well–for example, the well-known ChatGPT. Now, all that remains is to give it a body.

– What are the main challenges when trying to apply AI models to smaller-population languages, such as Lithuanian?

The biggest challenge is not the AI models themselves, but the data. Without high-quality data, good model performance cannot be expected. Based on experience and available sources, there is certainly not much data in Lithuanian. In order to achieve good results it would require millions, and sometimes even billions, of photos, sentences, words, or audio recordings in Lithuanian.

Moreover, the language of a small country has its own grammatical and semantic nuances, figurative meanings, or different word senses depending on the context of a sentence–for example, the word *kasa*.

English is the most widely spoken language in the world, so resources in English are abundant, while data for other countries, especially smaller ones, are much more limited, and attention given to them is restricted.

– How is the value of connectivity reflected in your academic work?

I enjoy sharing my experience and receiving constructive feedback, and I always seek advice from colleagues. I share the knowledge with students, who often provide new insights or allow me to view problems from a different perspective.

With bachelor's and master's students, whose theses I supervise, I consult on technologies, data, or strategy, as their research topics are closely related to the field I am analyzing.

The comparative study of language and vision models was conducted in collaboration with employees of the company Neurotechnology, taking their advice into account. I am also grateful to my colleagues at the VILNIUS TECH Dig-

> **The greatest potential for connectivity lies in data collection and management. Since AI is fundamentally based on data, a lack of data directly limits the quality of AI outcomes.**
>
> Tautvydas Kvietkauskas

ital Defense Competence Center for providing access to university resources during my research.

– Where do you see the greatest potential for connectivity between academic research, business, and government institutions in the field of AI in Lithuania?

The greatest potential for connectivity lies in data collection and management. Since AI is fundamentally based on data, a lack of data directly limits the quality of AI outcomes.

The government possesses large amounts of data, such as documents, images, or geographic information system maps, but innovative solutions are lacking. The academic community could propose such solutions, but financial resources are needed. Businesses could provide the necessary funding and, by collaborating with government institutions as well as the academic community, implement solutions not only in Lithuania but also internationally.

– AI models are increasingly being integrated into everyday life. How can we create connections between people's trust and the transparency of technology?

Trust arises when fear is absent. As long as people fear that AI will take their jobs, trust will remain low. However, it is important to remember that this was also the case during all industrial revolutions, and ultimately people retrained, leading to the creation of new professions.

Regarding technological transparency, it is important for people to understand how AI works, why a particular answer is given, and where the data comes from. AI systems should clearly explain the basis of their decisions–providing information about data sources and how the model was trained.

AACSB Accreditation: A Strategic VILNIUS TECH step toward the global level of business studies

Seeking international recognition and the highest quality of studies, the VILNIUS TECH Faculty of Business Management (VVF) is taking an important step – it is striving for AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) accreditation.

This is not only a sign of quality showing that the university meets global standards in management and business studies, but also a strategic move that strengthens internationalization, student attractiveness, and academic reputation.

"The main motivation behind the decision to pursue AACSB accreditation is the aim to ensure international recognition of the quality of studies, management, and scientific activity. It is not enough to be good – others must be able to see and acknowledge it. Through consistent work we matured to take this important step. AACSB is considered the highest global quality standard for management and business studies, which is why universities that hold this accreditation rank among the top 6–7 percent of business schools worldwide. For the faculty, this is a crucial guarantee of internationalization, attractiveness to students, and quality for business partners," emphasizes VVF Dean Prof. Dr. Vida Davidaviciene.

"AACSB standards place significant attention on strategic management, learning success, scientific leadership, and societal impact. This directly aligns with the university's strategic goals. The accreditation serves as a tool that helps implement VILNIUS TECH's long-term goal – to become a regional leader in engineering and management innovation," the professor explains.

According to Dr. Davidaviciene, the accreditation process is a consistent, multi-stage pathway designed to evaluate how well the university's Faculty of Business meets the highest global quality standards. This is not a sprint but rather a marathon, typically lasting from 5 to 7 years.

The dean explains that the process begins with AACSB member-

> **Successful AACSB accreditation would fundamentally transform the face of VILNIUS TECH, especially VVF, which would become one of the few technical university units holding this highest-level business school recognition in the Baltic region.**
>
> Prof. Dr. Vida Davidaviciene.

ship (Educational Member) – a necessary condition for starting the accreditation journey. The next step is deciding how individual programs or a unit will be accredited (Unit Application). VVF is currently in this stage and hopes for a successful outcome. Only then does the main work begin – submitting the Eligibility Application, where the university formally declares its intention to seek accreditation and explains how its structure, mission, and strategy align with AACSB goals. If the application is approved, the Initial Self Evaluation Phase begins. During this period, the institution, together with an assigned AACSB mentor, analyzes its activities according to five main standards: mission and strategy, student outcomes, faculty competence, research quality, and impact on the business community. Next comes the Self-Evaluation Report, a comprehensive document proving how the university meets each AACSB standard.

"This is one of the most important stages, requiring close involvement of the faculty, administration, and academic community. During this time, teaching methods, study program content, research directions, and staff evaluation systems often need to be reviewed. After preparing the self-evaluation, an international expert team arrives for a Peer Review Team Visit. They meet with administration, lecturers, students, and business partners to assess whether the information in the documents matches reality," the dean says.

According to her, if the results are positive, the AACSB Board decides to grant accreditation. But the work does not end there – every five years all accredited faculties must submit a Continuous Improvement Review as proof of ongoing development.

The most challenging part of the process, according to Dr. Davidaviciene, is not the formal documents but the internal cultural shift. AACSB requires not only to demonstrate achievements but also embed a systematic approach to quality, societal impact, and strategic planning. In other words, it is not merely a sign on the door but a deeply rooted principle of continuous improvement within the organization.

The AACSB accreditation process is a refinement journey – from self-understanding to international recognition.

"It is natural that an accreditation process of this scale comes with challenges. A frequent issue is the lack of qualitative data analysis and evidence. In other words, it is not enough to claim that students acquire competencies – clear, empirically supported data must be provided. Another challenge is ensuring that faculty qualifications and research output meet AACSB requirements. AACSB emphasizes research impact, relevance, and connection to practice. Therefore it is important not only to encourage publications in high-level journals but also to expand researchers' competencies by organizing training about AACSB standards and international-level research development," the professor explains.

Another important aspect is insufficient communication within the academic community. If lecturers, administration, and students do not share a common understanding of the accreditation goals, the process loses momentum. Thus it is essential to ensure clear and regular information flow – from internal seminars to open discussion forums. Equally important is understanding that AACSB accreditation is not an exam, but a process of cultivating organizational culture. Every challenge becomes an opportunity to strengthen data analytics, raise academic quality, and foster a shared sense of responsibility for the university's future.

When speaking about the actual benefits of accreditation, the dean notes that it will offer students better exchange and career opportunities, stronger teaching quality, and improved learning outcomes. As a result, the recognition and value of the diploma will increase significantly. For lecturers, opportunities to engage in international networks directly related to social sciences (business management, economics, and financial management) will expand, academic and scientific networking will improve, and the additional access to AACSB resources and best practice examples will open up. AACSB provides empirical data showing that accredited schools more often achieve better results in teaching and research.

"Successful AACSB accreditation would fundamentally transform the face of VILNIUS TECH, especially VVF, which would become one of the few technical university units holding this highest-level business school recognition in the Baltic region. This would send a clear signal to the international academic and business community: engineering logic and managerial competence operate here as one system. This recognition would also strengthen VILNIUS TECH's reputation as an interdisciplinary university where business, technology, and engineering competencies merge into one integrated system. Such synergy aligns with the needs of the modern economy – where an engineer must think strategically, and a manager must understand technological processes," the dean says.

The construction of the New LJA Competence Center in Klaipeda begins: the only building of its kind in the country

In Klaipeda, on the grounds of VILNIUS TECH Lithuanian Maritime Academy (LJA), a symbolic time capsule containing a letter to future generations has been placed. This marks the beginning of construction on a new Competence Center for Marine Engineering and Renewable Energy. The 1500 sq. m facility to be built on I. Kanto Street will become the first infrastructure and innovation hub of its kind in Lithuania – a place where the sea, science, and innovation meet.

In Klaipeda, on the grounds of VILNIUS TECH Lithuanian Maritime Academy (LJA), a symbolic time capsule containing a letter to future generations has been placed. This marks the beginning of construction on a new Competence Center for Marine Engineering and Renewable Energy. The 1500 sq. m facility to be built on I. Kanto Street will become the first infrastructure and innovation hub of its kind in Lithuania – a place where the sea, science, and innovation meet.

The ceremony of burying the time capsule and signing the letter to future generations was attended by the Mayor of Klaipeda Arvydas Vaitkus, VILNIUS TECH Rector Prof. Dr. Romualdas Kliukas, UAB "Versina" Development Director Vytautas Banys, Director of the Lithuanian Maritime Academy Dr. Justas Zaglinskis, and other university community members, partners, and guests.

In 2026, the unique VILNIUS TECH Lithuanian Maritime Academy competence center will unite the worlds of marine engineering, renewable energy, and modern training.

This project is an important step for Klaipeda: over time, it will strengthen the city's economic potential, attract investment, and create new opportunities for local youth and businesses.

"Klaipeda has always been and will remain the heart of Lithuanian maritime, while the Lithuanian Maritime Academy is a source of pride for this city. Thanks to this higher education institution, we show once again that step by step we are becoming a capital of innovation. It is crucial for the city that this institution grows, modernizes, and remains a strong regional center of science and innovation as well as a modern place that trains highly qualified maritime specialists," said Klaipeda Mayor Arvydas Vaitkus.

The expanding LJA infrastructure is significant not only locally but also internationally: the advanced competence center strengthens Lithuania's position as a hub of high-level regional marine engineering technologies and innovation.

VILNIUS TECH Rector Prof. Dr. Romualdas Kliukas emphasized that the modernization of LJA is extremely important for business, science and studies: state-of-the-art learning conditions will prepare the next generation of professionals in the maritime and engineering industries.

"Today we are not merely starting construction – we are creating the future and new opportunities for the upcoming generation of engineers, the people who will shape Lithuania's energy and maritime future. The production and use of wind, solar, and hydrogen energy are the future, and our center's laboratories will provide all the advanced conditions needed to explore and acquire these crucial, in-demand competencies," shared Rector Prof. Dr. Romualdas Kliukas.

> **Today we are not merely starting construction — we are creating the future and new opportunities for the upcoming generation of engineers, the people who will shape Lithuania's energy and maritime future.**
>
> Prof. Dr. Romualdas Kliukas

The Competence Center for Marine Engineering and Renewable Energy will be unique in many ways – in its infrastructure, its functions, and its architecture. It will be built by the construction services company UAB "Versina."

"The construction of this center is technically complex, combining non-standard architectural solutions with specialized infrastructure – from a pool with a wave generator to training zones for working at heights and laboratory spaces. Our task is to ensure that all structural and engineering systems operate in harmony and that the building reliably serves future specialists for many years," said UAB "Versina" Development Director Vytautas Banys.

MEETING THE GROWING DEMAND FOR INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED SPECIALISTS

The construction of the Competence Center emerged from the shared goal of the university, the city, and the state. Altogether they aim to strengthen Lithuania's maritime competencies and open new opportunities.

According to Director of the Lithuanian Maritime Academy Dr. Justas Zaglinskis, expanding and improving LJA infrastructure aims not only to increase the academy's attractiveness to future students, scientists, and researchers, but also to meet the demand for internationally recognized specialists.

The center will train highly qualified seafarers and specialists for the maritime industry and offshore wind turbine maintenance. This field is experiencing rapidly growing demand as Lithuania prepares for the construction of an offshore wind farm in its exclusive economic zone.

"The significance of this project is clear – the Lithuanian Maritime Academy, already strong in training maritime sector specialists, is further strengthening its capabilities, expanding its services, and reinforcing its position beyond the Baltic region, all across Europe," said Dr. Zaglinskis.

The Competence Center will cover 1500 sq. m and, with its distinctive architectural form, will integrate harmoniously into the historic New Town of Klaipeda. The building will house administrative, specialized training, and auxiliary facilities.

Two main features of the facility will be a five-lane, 25-meter pool with a wave generator and a training area for working at heights. These and other training spaces will be equipped with advanced technologies enabling the delivery of GWO, OPITO HUET, and SOLAS courses, evacuation training from ferries, and other practical training programs for seafarers and maritime industry specialists. Two virtual reality (VR) simulators have also been acquired: one for height-training and another for ship bridge simulation, featuring artificial intelligence functionality.

Researchers and students will also be able to work with laboratory equipment related to wind, solar, and hydrogen energy production and use. The new center is also expected to include a testing area for unmanned vehicles.

"The new infrastructure and equipment will be intensively used both in studies and in training activities. They will allow us to improve the quality and conditions of study programs and training courses, expand our offerings, and ensure the development of maritime sector specialists based on modern technologies in Lithuania. Combined with

our ongoing scientific and project activities, this infrastructure will, I believe, deliver significant results and new opportunities," said LJA Director Dr. Zaglinskis.

The building is expected to cost around 5.5 million euros, with an additional 800 thousand euros allocated for equipment purchases. The project "Improving the quality, efficiency, and international competitiveness of training high-qualification water-transport specialists by reorganizing the Lithuanian Maritime Academy and merging it into Vilnius Gediminas Technical University" is funded by the European Union Recovery and Resilience Facility (EGADP), with additional investment from VILNIUS TECH.

VILNIUS TECH continues investing in infrastructure renewal – improving study, research, work, and living conditions. This spring also the construction of a new building for the Antanas Gustaitis Aviation Institute (AGAI) began: the modern 840 sq. m extension will house facilities for research, studies, and administration by 2026.

Renovation of dormitories and laboratories at the Institute of Building Materials is also underway, as is the establishment of a Digital Defense Competence Center. There are ongoing preparations for the renovation of the Environmental Engineering Faculty's outdoor spaces and the amphitheater.

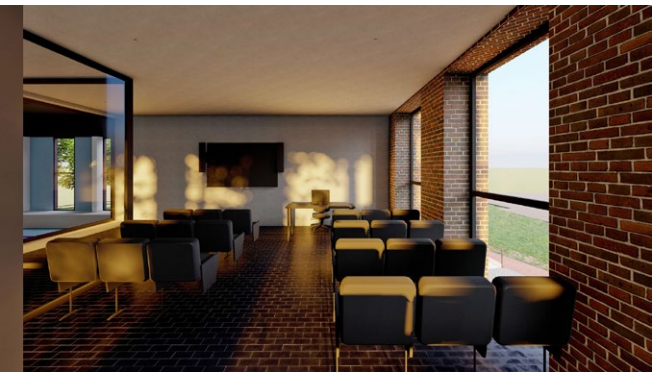
Soon, renovation of the laboratory building of the Faculty of Fundamental Sciences will commence – the largest in the Sauletekis university campus.

€ 5.5

million will be the cost of the building's construction.

25 meter pool

will be equipped with a wave generator and a high-altitude training area



How are connectivity and scientific research shaping the future of Lithuania's industry?

Climate change is not just about pollution and CO_2 emissions. It is a complex, interdisciplinary problem encompassing water ecosystems, biogeochemical cycles, chemical substances, and more. For many members of society, these processes are invisible, yet scientific research shows that their impact is long-lasting.

In Lithuania, as well as around the world, finding solutions requires not only advanced technologies but also close collaboration–from university laboratories to industrial companies.

Simon Barsteiga, Director of the Competence Center for Smart and Climate-Neutral Manufacturing Processes, Materials, and Technologies, discusses how connectivity and innovation can help Lithuania advance along the path of sustainable production.

– Which aspect of climate change is not yet sufficiently visible to the public but is already causing concern based on scientific research?

One of the climate change issues that is still not sufficiently visible to the public, although scientific research clearly shows a rapidly increasing risk, is changes in freshwater ecosystems as well as disruptions in biogeochemical cycles. According to the Planetary Boundaries framework, these processes (freshwater change, biogeochem-

ical flows) have already exceeded safe limits both globally and in Lithuania. In Lithuania, 36% of surface water bodies meet good ecological status, while 64% fail to meet these criteria. Eutrophication–the increase in the biological productivity of water bodies–is one of the most pressing and difficult-to-manage problems in the Baltic Sea region. Eutrophication is caused by excessive or unbalanced amounts of biogenic substances, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus compounds, which enter the water bodies.

Although public attention is mostly focused on CO_2 emissions (rightly so, as they are directly linked to global temperature rise), less is said about how water pollution, nitrogen and phosphorus imbalance, microplastics, and the abundance of novel chemical substances (Novel Entities) are rapidly altering ecosystem functions. These substances are found in soil, water, and biological chains, meaning they can permeate the entire food system. Consequently, over the next few decades, serious irreversible impacts on both ecosystems and human health as well as reproduction will be caused.

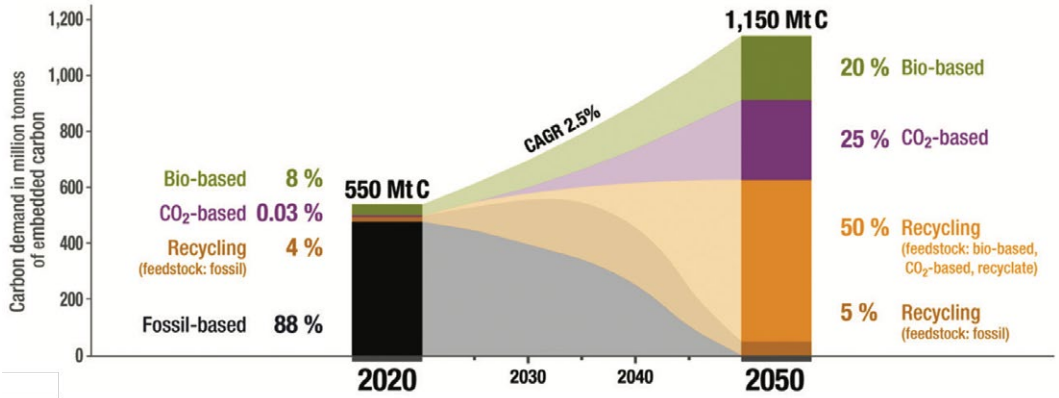
– What research are you currently conducting that could truly change the direction of sustainability in Lithuania's industry?

The global chemical and materials industry is shifting from a fossil-based to a circular carbon approach. In this transformation, biochemical, thermochemical, electrochemical, and advanced separation and CO_2 utilization technologies will play a decisive role. By employing these technologies, it will be possible to develop various material conversions, work with synthetic materials, and mineralize construction materials. We aim for the university and researchers to devote significant attention to these areas.

Currently, the Institute of Mechanical Sciences at the Faculty of Mechanics is developing waste gasification and synthetic gas technologies, while the Institute of Construction Materials at the Faculty of Civil Engineering is preparing to focus on CO_2 capture and utilization (CCU) research. It is also developing advanced absorbent materials for water purification. These directions are interconnected and thus hold potential for further synergy.

My role is to connect teams and competencies into a single value chain, highlight long-term directions, and ensure that research can be

> **If we want to prioritize complex topics, we need to change faster. Small, isolated projects that do not create links between fields or lead to broader systemic outcomes naturally lose their value–these types of solutions are increasingly implemented directly by industry.**
>
> Simonas Barsteiga



applied in industry. This interdisciplinary model allows us to develop solutions that not only reduce emissions and the demand for fossil resources but also address historical water and waste pollution.

– One of VILNIUS TECH's core values–connectivity–emphasizes links between different fields. How is this reflected in the activities of the Competence Center for Smart and Climate-Neutral Manufacturing Processes, Materials, and Technologies?

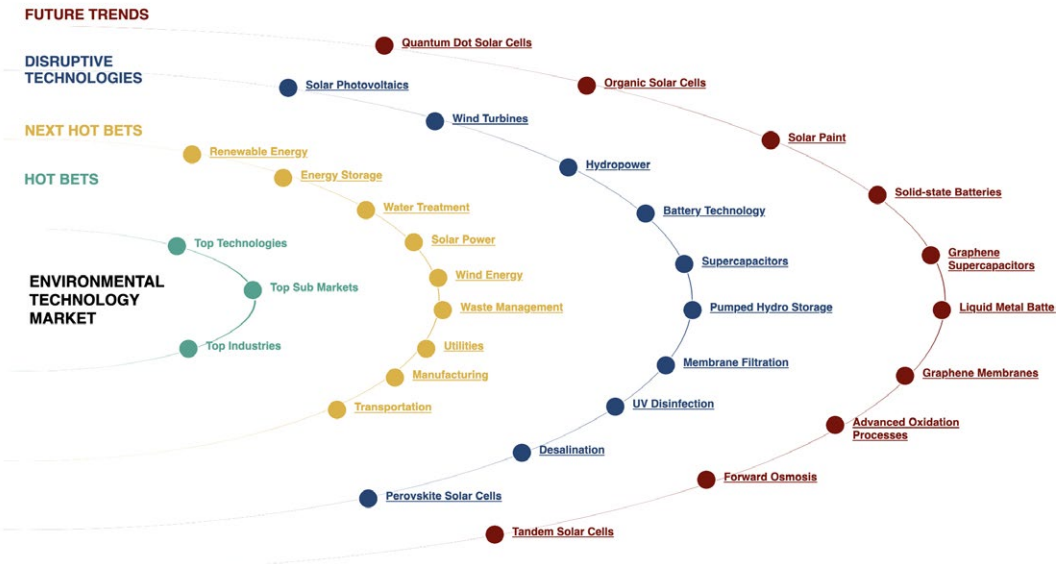
At the center, connectivity is both the main driver and guiding principle of our work. The challenges of climate change extend beyond disciplinary boundaries, so I aim to structure projects in a way that forces different teams to operate within a single value chain. The results of one group become the assumptions or experimental data for another, and a problem in one discipline becomes the solution space for another. This model prevents teams from staying within their comfort zones and creates genuine interdisciplinary dynamics rather than just its imitation.

> **We should strive to develop our systemic thinking and interdisciplinary skills—learning from nature. We must be critical of existing systems and structures that force us to operate linearly.**
>
> Simonas Barsteiga

If we want to prioritize complex topics, we need to change faster. Small, isolated projects that do not create links between fields or lead to broader systemic outcomes naturally lose their value–these types of solutions are increasingly implemented directly by industry. Only projects that integrate different competencies and enable the development of end-to-end solutions can truly drive breakthroughs in sustainability. This is the goal we must set for ourselves and others.

– How do you create an ecosystem that connects researchers, students, companies, and technology developers?

INTERCONNECTED ECOSYSTEM OF ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY MARKET



We do this by implementing projects, building relationships, and learning from mistakes, successes, and failures. I believe the most important connection is trust. Until we establish mutual trust, the links will remain weak.

– Which projects today do you consider to be examples that demonstrated accelerated innovation achieved through the connectivity between institutions?

The most prominent global example of how connectivity accelerates innovation is CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research).

CERN is unique in that no single country, university, or company, acting alone, could achieve such progress. Only connectivity–sharing laboratories, experiments, data, and talent–allows innovations to be developed several times faster than they would in any isolated structure.

– What skills are most needed today for young people who want to contribute to the development of climate-neutral industry?

Scientist Barry Commoner stated: "The first rule of ecology: everything is connected." To work for the benefit of nature, we must recognize connections and systems. If we do not consider the consequences of our actions and work in a linear manner, we will not create a climate-neutral industry. We should strive to develop our systemic thinking and interdisciplinary skills–learning from nature. We must be critical of existing systems and structures that force us to operate linearly. It is also important to understand that only by working in a team can we achieve exceptional results. Regardless of the skills we possess, the most important one is the ability to work collaboratively. I am convinced that the future belongs to strong teams–could be a group of 10 or 20 people, who will be able to accomplish what a group of 200 achieves today.

– Looking ahead to 2040, what would be your optimistic yet realistic scenario–can Lithuania become a regional leader in climate-neutral manufacturing technologies?

It certainly can, but we need to define the direction we are heading. I believe in the global transition of the chemical and materials industry from a fossil-based to a circular carbon model.

In this transformation, biochemical, thermochemical, electrochemical, and advanced separation and CO_2 utilization technologies will play a decisive role. They will enable various material conversions, work with synthetic materials, and mineralize construction materials.

I would like these areas to receive serious attention from the university and researchers, ultimately forming a solid foundation for a climate-neutral manufacturing technology industry.

INTERCONNECTED ECOSYSTEM OF WASTE MANAGEMENT MARKET

Student Union President E. Borkovski: "2025 Was a Year of Change and Community"

The year 2025 was a year of significant changes and new initiatives for the VILNIUS TECH Student Union. The organization made important strides in both its internal structure and community engagement.

All of this has helped the Student Union become not only more united but also stronger than ever. Equally important, these developments demonstrated once again that connectivity and active involvement can transform the study environment. More on this from the Student Union President, Ervin Borkovski.

– How would you describe the past year for the VILNIUS TECH Student Union? What was it like?

Last year was quite eventful for the VILNIUS TECH Student Union– we amended the organization's statutes, joined the Vilnius Youth Organizations Union "Round Table," began the integration process with the Lithuanian Maritime Academy, and started establishing faculty-level student councils within the academy.

Another significant change was the integration of international students into student representation: we successfully included international students in the curator program, selected contact persons for nearly all academic groups of international students, and for the first time held Representative Training sessions. Participants included student representatives in the Senate, Study Program Committees, and academic groups, with many international students among them. We also established International Student Affairs Committees within faculty student councils.

– What were the main goals for this year? How successfully were they achieved?

We set several key goals for the year: to ensure an equitable student representative model that includes international students, actively contribute to developing international opportunities for students, increase study flexibility, and improve the competent leadership program, i.e., the training process for future Student Union volunteers. Some of these goals have already been achieved, some are still in progress, and others require ongoing and repeated effort. Naturally, we encountered certain challenges, but for our team, they are not obstacles–they are opportunities to grow and improve.

– How does the Student Union connect all students–from freshmen to those in their final year?

The Student Union acts as a network of people from various faculties, study programs, courses, and levels. With such a broad network, we can quickly and efficiently share information about changes in study processes, initiatives, or provide feedback.

Of course, communication can sometimes be challenging, but we try to identify these issues and encourage students themselves to participate in solving certain matters. We are proud that, when addressing particularly important issues, such as mandatory lecture attendance or dormitory space shortages, students actively and proactively voice their opinions. To gather student feedback, we organize meetings with different representatives and conduct surveys. We use this data to make informed decisions on various matters.

– How did you strengthen connections between students from different faculties this year?

It's important to remember that a student's daily life is not only about studying. Sometimes students need to relax and meet friends they haven't seen in a long time. We have already established traditional events, such as SA VVF "Manage Days" and SA AGAI "Kylam," which attract students from all faculties.

– How do you balance continuity with introducing new initiatives?

Every year, when preparing the activity plan, we review both the Student Union's and the university's internal processes, study quality assurance mechanisms, communication channels, and initiatives. We evaluate whether previously applied methods worked. When we notice shortcomings, we proactively implement new solutions. This is a continuous process, and its main tool for maintaining balance is critical evaluation of decisions.

The Student Union acts as a network of people from various faculties, study programs, courses, and levels. With such a broad network, we can quickly and efficiently share information about changes in study processes, initiatives, or provide feedback.

Ervin Borkovski

– How does the current generation of Student Union members differ from previous ones?

It is difficult to assess previous generations of Student Union members accurately, as we were not part of them. However, we sometimes notice clear differences. In our view, the current generation focuses more on improving the study process and student representation, rather than on students' social life.

It is also worth mentioning that this generation of student representatives, like the students themselves, has many more activities–they dedicate more attention to studies, career growth, work, or extracurricular activities beyond the Union. After the COVID-19 pandemic, we adapted to a hybrid and more digitalized representation process.

– How do you manage to unite different generations and perspectives into one cohesive team?

The foundation of a united team is constructive discussion among members. We all come from different backgrounds and join the Union with different values and perspectives, but as a team, we must decide which values unite us. Once this is established, completing tasks and making decisions becomes faster and easier.

We try to find unity based on shared values, which allows us to set goals that everyone works together to achieve.

– What are the plans for the Student Union next year?

Next year promises many changes: elections for a new president and faculty council chairs according to updated regulations. We are also actively preparing for the upcoming University Council and Rector elections. Finally, we aim to assist the newly established faculty student council at the Lithuanian Maritime Academy, providing necessary support and advice.

– If you had to summarize, why was this year special in terms of connectivity?

This year was exceptional in terms of connectivity. The challenges we faced, both as a Union and as individuals, required a lot of inner strength. Even though some members decided to leave the Union, those who remained have developed a closer bond than ever before.

ESN VILNIUS TECH President **Hatice Kubra Kaya: “Small steps bring major changes”**

Internationality, community spirit, and openness – the values ingrained in the activities of the VILNIUS TECH Erasmus Student Network (ESN VILNIUS TECH) as well as the story of its president, Hatice Kubra Kaya.

After arriving in Lithuania to study, she quickly realized that the university could become more than just a place of learning it could serve as a school of life – a place where different cultures meet, where new connections spark initiatives that change the world. Her journey in the ESN VILNIUS TECH community began in 2023, when she joined the team organizing the university’s Orientation Days. At the time, she did not yet know that this step would become the beginning of a journey full of inspiration, responsibility, and belief.

Today, H. K. Kaya not only leads the ESN VILNIUS TECH organization but also inspires other students to

confidently pursue their goals, foster international dialogue, and build a community that provides home, regardless of nationality, language, or culture.

"A few weeks after the first university event that I helped to organize, Turkey and Syria were struck by a devastating earthquake. Wanting to help those affected, I contacted my friend who was a member of ESN and suggested holding a charity event. Working together with the ESN VILNIUS TECH team, we managed to turn the idea into reality – with the help of students and with support from Turkish families living in Vilnius, we organized a Turkish food fair and successfully raised more than one thousand euros. This experience taught me a lot – about teamwork, initiative, and how people unite for a common cause. That was when I realized that ESN VILNIUS TECH is not just an organization – it is a community where people support each other and create real change. This is what encouraged me to officially join ESN VILNIUS TECH," recalls H. K. Kaya.

The VILNIUS TECH student says she gains energy from being around people. Equally important is that working with international students inspires her: it is a great opportunity for everyone to learn from each other – from different cultures and viewpoints.

"We all grow up with different understandings of the world. Interacting with people from different countries helped me understand the real meaning of respect. Working with international students made me more open and empathetic; I learned to see situations through another person's eyes. Another wonderful thing is the friendships I have made. I feel as if I have a home in almost any corner of the world. When traveling, I always know that somewhere there is a friend who will welcome me if needed," notes the ESN VILNIUS TECH President.

H. K. Kaya points out that being part of ESN VILNIUS TECH means having a family. As a foreign student who came to Vilnius without close relatives, she faced challenges adapting to a new environment and culture. However, joining the ESN VILNIUS TECH community gave her something special – a family united not by blood, but by shared experiences, support, and sincerity.

"In ESN VILNIUS TECH I met people I can rely on. I am sure they will help me whether I find myself in a difficult situation or simply want someone after a long day to join me for a cup of coffee. Being part of the organization helped me settle in Vilnius. Together with the ESN VILNIUS TECH members, we celebrate each other's achievements, support one another in times of difficulty, and create memories that will remain long after graduation. This community showed me the true strength of human connection," says H. K. Kaya.

ESN VILNIUS TECH organizes various events, but according to the president, cultural evenings and international dinners are the most appreciated among students. They bring together people from different countries and provide an opportunity to share their culture and other important aspects of life.

"VILNIUS TECH students are thoughtful and value what others do for them. After each event, I receive messages of thanks – students are happy to have the opportunity to meet others and learn from them. I think this is what they value most about the organization, since we are all volunteers. By putting our hearts into every event and expecting nothing in return, we receive sincere appreciation. This brings us the most joy," says the VILNIUS TECH student.

> **VILNIUS TECH students are thoughtful and value what others do for them. After each event, I receive messages of thanks – students are happy to have the opportunity to meet others and learn from them.**
>
> Hatice Kubra Kaya

According to the president, diversity is what embodies the ESN VILNIUS TECH spirit best. This organization is a home to many different members, volunteers, and above all, students. Many international students come from various countries, having left their homes behind to start a new life in Lithuania. During their studies, ESN VILNIUS TECH becomes their home – a place where they can join a community and find a family.

Working with international students made me more open and empathetic; I learned to see situations through another person's eyes.

Hatice Kubra Kaya

"In ESN VILNIUS TECH we strive to ensure that every member has the opportunity to express their opinion and share their ideas. When making decisions, giving feedback, or planning activities, we listen to everyone in order to achieve strong results. When organizing events, we want them to be open to all – not only international but also local students. I learned most about Lithuanian traditions at ESN VILNIUS TECH events after meeting Lithuanians there. Just as important is that the organization's social projects coordinator encourages cultural exchanges, language evenings, and trips around Lithuania – all of this helps students meet, share, and build closer connections," says H. K. Kaya.

She also notes that serving as president is not easy. Leading an organization and a team that organizes numerous events requires a lot of patience. Since ESN members come from different cultures, different perspectives often emerge during decision-making. H. K. Kaya emphasizes that over time she learned to respect these differences and understand that diversity is the organization's greatest strength. Ideas that some might overlook can become the key to a more creative solution for others.

"Leading a multicultural team helped me understand the true value of diversity. A team is not only about different nationalities but also different viewpoints and different ways of communicating as well as solving problems. This experience taught me to listen actively and communicate clearly so that every voice is heard and understood.

I realized that leadership is not about having all the answers but about creating an environment that builds confidence to share their ideas. Most importantly, I learned to adapt my leadership style to different personalities and cultures to encourage cooperation, trust, and respect. Working in such an environment helps me grow as a leader and as a person who values creativity, unity, and shared goals," says the ESN VILNIUS TECH President.

ESN VILNIUS TECH plays an important role in strengthening the university's international reputation. The organization constantly strives to represent the university in the best possible way – participating in international events and projects. Recently, H. K. Kaya was selected to give a presentation and represented Lithuania at the 80th United Nations General Assembly in New York. At the event, she represented VILNIUS TECH by introducing the university and its values on the international stage.

"Everything we do together with the team is closely connected to the university's mission – creating a brighter future for a new generation. We use every opportunity that ESN VILNIUS TECH provides and strive to show that the university is open, diverse, and international. Being part of ESN VILNIUS TECH means promoting cultural exchange among students and spreading the university's values and opportunities around the world. I am grateful to the university for the support it provides to students. It allows us to represent the university and strengthen its name internationally," shares ESN VILNIUS TECH President H. K. Kaya.

Leading a multicultural team helped me understand the true value of diversity. A team is not only about different nationalities but also different viewpoints and different ways of communicating as well as solving problems.

Hatice Kubra Kaya

From an architecture student to a cultural attache.

The story of Adele Dovydaviciute

University studies are not only lectures and exams – it also provides the first opportunities to get to know the professional world, make connections, and discover your direction. Sometimes an unexpected meeting or a completed project can determine the further course of a career.

Photographer Olga Posaškova

The story of the Lithuanian cultural attache in Brussels – VILNIUS TECH alumna and architect Adele Dovydaviciute – is a great example of how connections made during studies, creative initiative, and active participation in cultural life can become a solid foundation for achieving professional recognition.

– How did your studies shape your professional path?

In my second year of studies, I met Andre Baldisiute, the founder of the then studio "Andre Baldi architecture and urbanism". She taught me the course on designing a single-family house, and then a creative connection was formed between us. Soon A. Baldisiute invited me to join her team as an assistant. That is how my professional path began – while still studying, gaining practical experience, I entered the real world of architecture.

At that time I did not yet understand how valuable this beginning was. But today I see that this early contact with real projects laid the foundation for my entire career. The combination of both study fields was also important: after finishing my bachelor's studies, I felt a lack of theoretical knowledge in the history of architecture, and the master's program allowed me to fill this gap. It helped me develop critical thinking, and gain a broader understanding of contexts.

I particularly remember the course on exhibition architecture and the topics of heritage protection – my master's thesis research on modernist architecture and its preservation later became a strong foundation for when working with heritage objects and when creating the "Open House Vilnius" program.

– What importance did the cooperation and the connections made at the university have for your career in the cultural sector?

Connections in the fields of culture and architecture were essential. It was precisely the creation of connections that helped shape my professional path. After working at Andre Baldisiute's studio, I met VILNIUS TECH Architecture Department professor Rolandas Palekas; for several years we worked together on competitions and larger-scale projects. Later, for a decade, I worked in the "Processoffice" studio, where I designed public, cultural, and educational buildings, exhibitions, and displays, as well as heritage sites. My architectural and heritage studies proved highly valuable, giving me an understanding of context and historical layering.

While still a student, I became involved in the activities of the Architecture Fund, which incorporated everything from modernist excursions to the Traveling Architecture Workshops and the "Open House Vilnius" festival. After some time, I also became its director.

At the same time, I contributed to the creation of the Lithuanian pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale, "The Swamp School". These experiences intertwine – it is sometimes difficult to trace what influenced what, but it was active participation in architecture and cultural life that created the environment for growth. All this naturally led to my current position – the role of cultural attache.

One of the most important recent projects I worked on was the seven-year adaptation of the Kaunas Town Hall building for the functions of the Kaunas City Museum and the creation of the museum's exhibition. This project was announced as the Architecture Work of the Year by the Lithuanian Association of Artists.

– How would you define your mission in Brussels?

My mission in Brussels is to create and implement the cultural program for Lithuania's presidency of the Council of the European Union, and to build long-term connections between the cultural fields of Lithuania and Belgium – among institutions, organizations, and creators. In this work, I see not only the task of implementing a project, but also the role of a representative of cultural diplomacy – to represent Lithuanian creators, their ideas, and

Today I see that this early contact with real projects laid the foundation for my entire career. The combination of both study fields was also important: after finishing my bachelor's studies, I felt a lack of theoretical knowledge in the history of architecture, and the master's program allowed me to fill this gap.

Adele Dovydaviciute

> **I believe that culture is the foundation of everything – it shapes our thinking, connects people, and allows us to reflect both personal and historical experiences.**
>
> Adele Dovydaviciute

values, to introduce our country through the language of culture.

It is important for me not only to organize events but also to build sustainable cooperative relationships that last longer than a single project or occasion.

I aim here to help Lithuanian culture be more visible and accessible to experience – as a creative, open, and meaningful part of European culture.

– What place does Lithuanian culture occupy in the European context? How can it be strengthened further?

Lithuanian culture raises the bar of all European culture and holds a very strong position. Living in Lithuania, we do not always realize how much we have achieved. In recent years, Lithuanian artists and creators have received significant international awards, they participate in prestigious events, and this happens in various fields – from film, dance, opera to contemporary art.

It is also important that not only contemporary creators but also artists of earlier periods are becoming more recognized – this helps us better understand the development of our culture, historical experiences, and their reflections today. Our current achievements arise from these experiences – from the history that we are able to reflect through creativity.

– What new partnerships or projects do you plan to implement in the coming years?

The cultural program is currently being coordinated – I am talking with representatives of the Lithuanian cultural field, organizing information, trying to hear their expectations and wishes. At the same time, I am actively getting acquainted with figures of the Belgian cultural scene: creators, curators, heads of institutions.

One of the most enjoyable moments of this work is when during conversations connections begin to emerge between ideas I recently discussed with Lithuanian creators. Then an invisible web slowly forms, through which ideas and creative links flow. For these links to truly become projects, a lot of work is needed, but that initial energy gives the most motivation. I try to plant seeds and water them; I hope that soon they will sprout and later bear fruit.

Ultimately, it is in this process that the meaning of creative diplomacy is most revealed – the ability to connect ideas, people, and cultures so that new stories and long-lasting partnerships are born from these encounters.

– How do you plan to reach young creators and encourage their international cooperation?

I try to maintain contact with organizations that bring together creators from different fields – among them the Architecture Fund and creative industries platforms, which are especially active in gathering young artists. It is important to me that young creators have real opportunities to join international projects, residencies, and exchange programs. Such contacts help not only professional growth but also learning to operate in a broader context.

– What does it mean to you to represent Lithuania in the field of culture?

For me it is extremely important work and a great responsibility. I believe that culture is the foundation of everything – it shapes our thinking, connects people, and allows us to reflect both personal and historical experiences. I approach this work with great enthusiasm and sense of responsibility – it is a significant challenge both professionally and personally.

– How can young people contribute to the visibility of Lithuanian culture in Europe?

The most important thing is to seek connections, friendships, and creative partnerships. Opportunities are often closer than they seem. Acting in a broader context than one's own country allows one to better understand oneself, others, and to find inspiration in unexpected situations.

Courage and self-belief are needed – everything else falls into place. The most important thing is not visibility itself, but the courage to create, to remain authentic, and to search for one's own voice.

Ten years of connectivity: The path of the Transport Engineering Faculty Alumni and Friends Club

The VILNIUS TECH Faculty of Transport Engineering (TIF) Alumni and Friends Club is one of the university's most active alumni communities. The club has been operating since 2015, when on February 18 the faculty held the first alumni meeting and elected the club's first chairman, Vytenis Pecia.

At that time, the club coordinator became the TIF Vice-Dean for Alumni and Partnerships, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Giedrius Garbincius. According to him, the main idea behind the club is to bring the faculty's alumni together into a community that is interested and motivated to take part in professionally and socially broadening activities, while also contributing to the development of the university and the faculty.

"The Alumni and Friends Club cover a wide range of activities: sharing professional experience, organizing lectures and seminars, encouraging students, expanding networks, implementing cultural, scientific, and business projects, as well as organizing interesting trips and excursions. By participating in the club's activities, alumni can interact with the faculty's friends, have a good time, and discuss current developments in the transport sector," the Vice-Dean explains.

According to Dr. Garbincius, monthly meetings of different themes are organized in order to to meet the needs of all club members that include the entire TIF community as well as alumni from other faculties. Activities are arranged by seasons–from the beginning to the end of the academic year. The opening of a new season, the Christmas party, the club's anniversary, and the end-of-season celebration have already become traditions. About ten events are organized each year, including discussions with distinguished guests, company visits, and excursions.

The associate professor notes that it is equally important that the Alumni and Friends Club maintains strong ties between the university and its graduates. This format allows members to renew connections, contribute to developing the faculty's teaching base, sign sponsorship agreements, deliver lectures, or provide scholarships for students. Alumni are involved in evaluating and improving study programs, which helps ensure that they meet market needs.

> **The future of the club depends on the energy and enthusiasm of its members: the more actively faculty alumni and vice-deans participate in club life by inviting others to events, and initiating projects, the more vibrant and connected the community will be.**
>
> Assoc. Prof. Dr. Giedrius Garbincius

"One of the university's values–connectivity–is reflected in the club's activities through community spirit, shared events, and initiatives that bring closer together the club members, alumni from other faculties, and the entire university community. This creates long-term personal and professional relationships that often evolve into joint projects," the Vice-Dean notes.

He says that when leading the club, the most important thing is to ensure that every member who joins the Alumni and Friends Club gains knowledge, meets new people, has a good time, and has the opportunity to contribute to the preparation of future transport specialists. According to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Giedrius Garbincius, challenges do occur while holding a leadership role, though they are usually small–for example, changing meeting dates or addressing low member engagement. In such situations, enthusiasm, patience, and creativity are especially helpful.

"The future of the club depends on the energy and enthusiasm of its members: the more actively faculty alumni and vice-deans participate in club life by inviting others to events, and initiating projects, the more vibrant and connected the community will be. I encourage all VILNIUS TECH alumni who hesitate to join the club to come to events and try to feel the sense of belonging with other graduates. It means new connections, interesting projects, the opportunity to expand knowledge, take part in practical activities, and inspire yourself as well as others for new professional adventures," says Assoc. Prof. Dr. G. Garbincius.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. G. Garbincius (on the left) became the coordinator of the Alumni and Friends Club of the VILNIUS TECH Faculty of Transport Engineering

VILNIUS TECH alumna Paulina Draugelyte: **“Everything is possible if we sincerely strive for it”**

Space related dreams of VILNIUS TECH Antanas Gustaitis Aviation Institute (AGAI) Aeronautical and Space Engineering program alumna Paulina Draugelyte were developing step by step – from an inspiring lecturer, a successfully implemented project, and an unexpectedly discovered opportunity.

Her determination, curiosity, and consistent interest in space technologies opened the doors to one of the most prestigious science centers in the world – the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Her journey – from the first year of studies to working in the United States (USA) at the Ames Research Center – reveals the importance of technological knowledge and how a person can be encouraged to grow by their environment, support, and desire to achieve more.

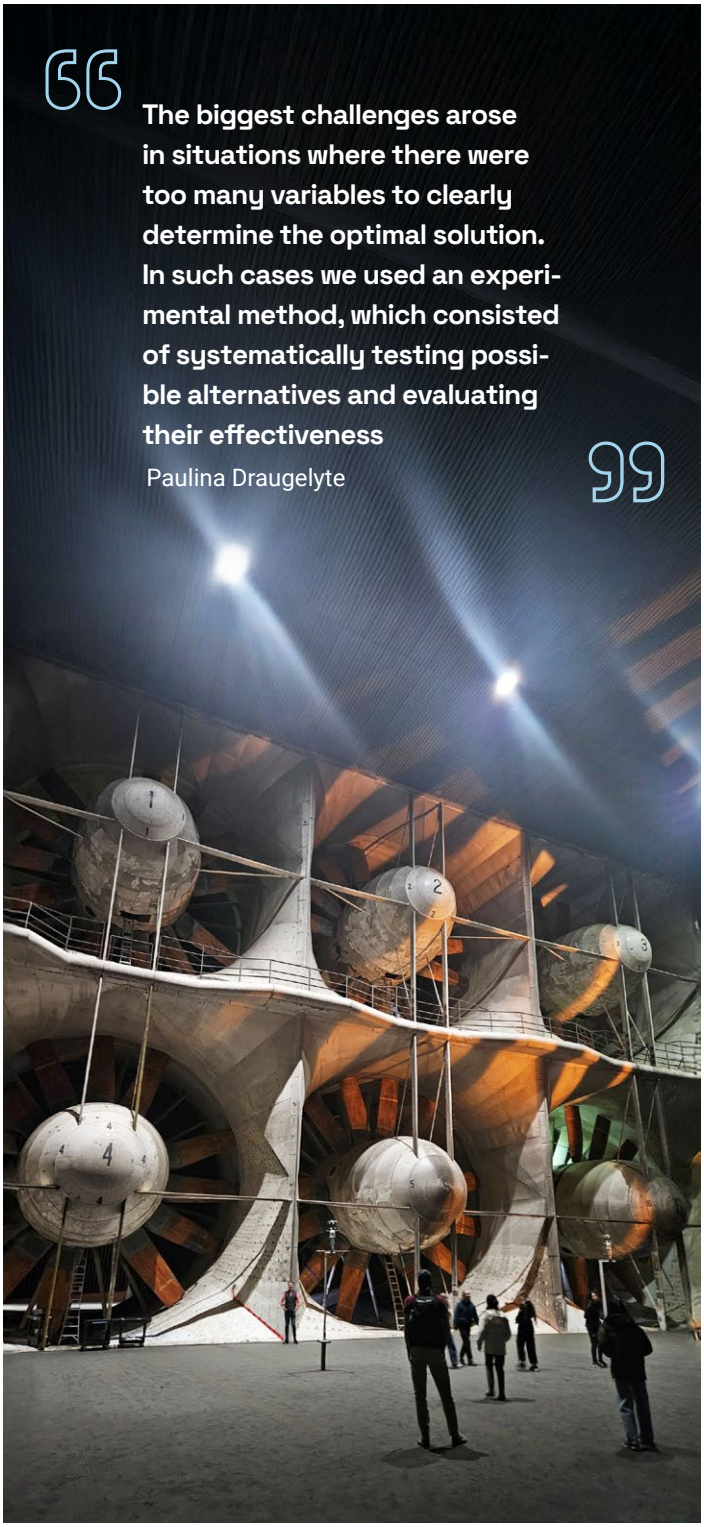
P. Draugelyte says that she learned about the opportunity to intern at NASA when on their website the Research Council of Lithuania announced a competition for international internships in the USA in the spring and summer of 2025.

“While studying the Micro Satellite Engineering course in my first year, the pioneer of Lithuanian space

technologies, Assoc. Prof. Laurynas Maciulis from the Department of Aeronautical Engineering, became an inspiring figure for me. So when AGAI vice-dean Laurynas Sisovas announced the European Space Agency (ESA) satellite communication systems training courses, I did not hesitate for a moment and, supported by these people, submitted my application. After successfully completing the training, I also participated in the Micro Satellite Engineering summer school organized by ESA, where my interest in space research only grew bigger. Then one experience after another led me to my NASA application. When I found out that I was accepted for the NASA internship, I could not believe it until I actually sat on the plane," the VILNIUS TECH alumna recalls.

She says that during her internship in the USA she worked at NASA's Ames Research Center, in the Aviation Operations Management Division. This unit is responsible for analyzing aviation operations, planning, and optimizing safety while developing advanced air traffic management (ATM) solutions. The main research includes integrating unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) into the national airspace (NAS), improving the safety of piloted and autonomous flights as well as supporting real-time decision making. Part of the activities is carried out at the NASA-owned Moffett Federal Airfield.

"My main task was to contribute to transforming NASA infrastructure into modern research and flight training bases for unmanned aircraft systems (UAS). I worked closely with NASA specialists – scientists, engineers, pilots, and project managers. Together we created standardized operating procedures, new sys-



tems, system integration processes, flight preparation and execution requirements.

I also contributed to planning scientific missions and took part in operations while observing the entire project cycle – from the initial idea to the implementation of real missions. These initiatives included programs such as Smart Mobility, FireSense, ACERO, UTM, ATM-X, PAAV, and others," the VILNIUS TECH alumna explains.

P. Draugelyte notes that during the NASA internship she gained practical experience in project management and decision making, which helped to improve her engineering skills by analyzing data collected during tests of unmanned aircraft and rover payloads.

It is also important to note that NASA constantly organizes scientific lectures and excursions – this allowed her to deepen her knowledge in advanced aeronautics and space technologies.

"The biggest challenges arose in situations where there were too many variables to clearly determine the optimal solution. In such cases we used an experimental method, which consisted of systematically testing possible alternatives and evaluating their effectiveness," she says.

The VILNIUS TECH alumna advises students who want to participate in prestigious internships such as NASA to be active and boldly seek international experiences. In today's world there are many opportunities worth taking. The most important thing is to spot them and keep improving yourself.

> **When I found out that I was accepted for the NASA internship, I could not believe it until I actually sat on the plane.**
>
> Paulina Draugelyte

At the moment, together with colleagues from Politecnico di Milano, P. Draugelyte is developing a start-up in the space sector. She is responsible for the technological vision and strategy, which involves overseeing product development, system architecture, technological solution choices and integration. This helps to ensure that technological goals match business strategy and contribute to investment and partnership decisions.


VILNIUS TECH
Business
Talent
GRAVITY
2026 04 16
Career day

Student Experience Using the PBL Method: From a Real Urban Problem to a Professional Solution

VILNIUS TECH implements a Problem-Based Learning (PBL) strategy. This learning approach is based on solving real problems, teamwork, and practical application of knowledge. Here, students become active participants: they investigate, plan, and make decisions themselves. This type of learning develops critical thinking, creativity, argumentation, communication, and teamwork skills–abilities highly valued today in both business and the public sector.

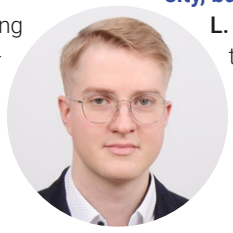
VILNIUS TECH students have applied this method in practice: Livija Romanovska, a master's student in Real Estate Management, carried out the project "Revitalization of Built Environment in the Naujamiestis Area", while Gvidas Marušauskas, a master's student in Construction Technology and Management, conducted the project "Residential Environment Renewal and Decision Support Systems in Construction".

– Which real-world problem did you choose to solve and why?

L. Romanovska: We chose a real problem–the renewal of a specific area–considering sustainable development principles. To implement a solution, we developed three different concepts for the area and comprehensively evaluated them using a pre-defined set of criteria.

This solution was chosen because, in real situations, area planning always has several possible alternatives. Only by evaluating each against clear criteria (ecological, social, economic) we can determine which concept is the most sustainable, feasible, and practically implementable. The ARAS multi-criteria evaluation method allowed us to objectively compare alternatives and make a well-founded, professional decision.

G. Marusauskas During the PBL project, we selected an abandoned area in Naujamiestis, Vilnius, for which we proposed three different concepts. Finally, based on expert evaluations and the ARAS multi-criteria evaluation method, we selected the most suitable concept.



– What value, in your opinion, does the project create for the university, business, and society?

L. Romanovska: I believe this project provides real value to everyone. For the university, it represents a step toward modern, student-cen-

tered learning, where practical solutions are implemented and real situations analyzed.

For the business sector, it can be a source of useful ideas, as we created concepts that can be practically applied.

For society, it offers the opportunity to have more sustainable, better-planned, and user-friendly spaces in the future.

G. Marusauskas This project allows students to meet peers from other study programs, hear their opinions, and form new connections. It fosters closer relationships among students at the university and improves communication and teamwork skills. The knowledge and skills gained are useful both in future business and society.

– How do you think the PBL method differs from traditional study formats?

L. Romanovska: I think PBL differs from traditional studies in that we are not passive listeners, but active participants. This type of learning encourages active thinking, creativity, and collaboration with group members. We gained not only theoretical knowledge but also the opportunity to apply it practically to solve real problems. It creates a completely different engagement–you feel that you learn not for an exam, but for understanding.

G. Marusauskas PBL differs because learning is based on solving real problems and teamwork, rather than just listening to lectures and completing assignments. Instead of passively receiving knowledge, students plan, research, make decisions, and report on outcomes themselves. It is much closer to real professional situations.

Additionally, this method broadens perspectives and exposes students to different viewpoints–we worked with students from different bachelor's programs who then pursued various master's programs.

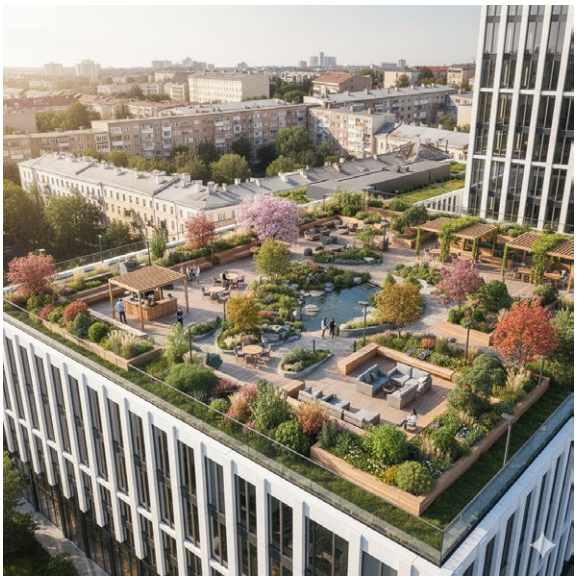
Visualizations by G. Marusauskas

– What was the most challenging part of the project, and how did you overcome it?

L. Romanovska: The hardest part was that group members had different opinions and generated various ideas when creating the concepts. Sometimes it seemed we all viewed the same area differently. We overcame this challenge through discussion and by finding a common solution that reflected the perspective of the entire group.

Ultimately, having many ideas became a strength of our project. The support of our instructors also helped–they guided us in the right direction, asked the right questions, and provided clarity when we didn't know where to start. With their help, it was easier to focus and move forward.

G. Marusauskas In my view, the



Visualizations by L. Romanovska

hardest part was differing evaluations and perspectives. This led to disagreements regarding the concepts and other project-related matters. These issues were resolved through discussion and analysis of situations, ultimately allowing us to reach decisions acceptable to everyone.

– Which methods, technologies, or tools did you use, and why?

L. Romanovska: For the project, we used several methods and tools that allowed us to perform both analysis and visualization. For evaluation, we applied the ARAS multi-criteria method, as it helped objectively compare different alternatives according to the selected criteria.

For project cost calculations, we used the BIMGATES information system, which allows precise assessment of technical solutions and their feasibility in real environments.

For visualizations, we utilized artificial intelligence, which helped us quickly and aesthetically present our concepts–making it clearer how the area could look after implementing different alternatives.

We chose these methods because they ensure professional, clear, and well-founded evaluation and presentation of area renewal concepts.

> **The PBL method showed me that learning can be livelier, more practical, and focused on real challenges rather than just theory or exams.**
>
> Livija Romanovska

G. Marusauskas For data analysis and ranking alternatives, we used the ARAS multi-criteria method, Microsoft Excel, and Word. These tools were chosen for their broad accessibility to all team members. The ARAS method was thoroughly introduced during lectures as teaching material and a practical exercise.

– What role did the instructors play in the project?

L. Romanovska: The instructors significantly contributed to the experience–we felt they cared about our opinions and encouraged creativity and independence. This created a very positive and inspiring atmosphere.

G. Marusauskas Instructors acted as mentors during the PBL project, providing possible problem-solving methods and resources,

and checking the validity and correctness of decisions. Their feedback helped avoid mistakes, narrow the scope, and ensure results met professional standards, enhancing the project's quality and practical value.

– Which skills did you improve?

L. Romanovska: My teamwork skills improved significantly. We had many different opinions and ideas, so I learned to discuss constructively, argue, listen to others, and find common solutions. This experience showed me the importance of respect, flexibility, and the ability to reconcile different viewpoints.

Creativity development was also crucial–the concept creation required not only logical thinking but also imagination and the ability to envision how the area could look after renewal and the atmosphere it would create.

G. Marusauskas Working on this project, we developed various professional skills: communication and collaboration with students from other fields, evaluating different opinions, teamwork, activity planning, task distribution, quality control, critical thinking, and problem-solving. We also improved our ability to lead discussions constructively and make reasoned decisions.

– How did this project change your perspective on studies or your professional field?

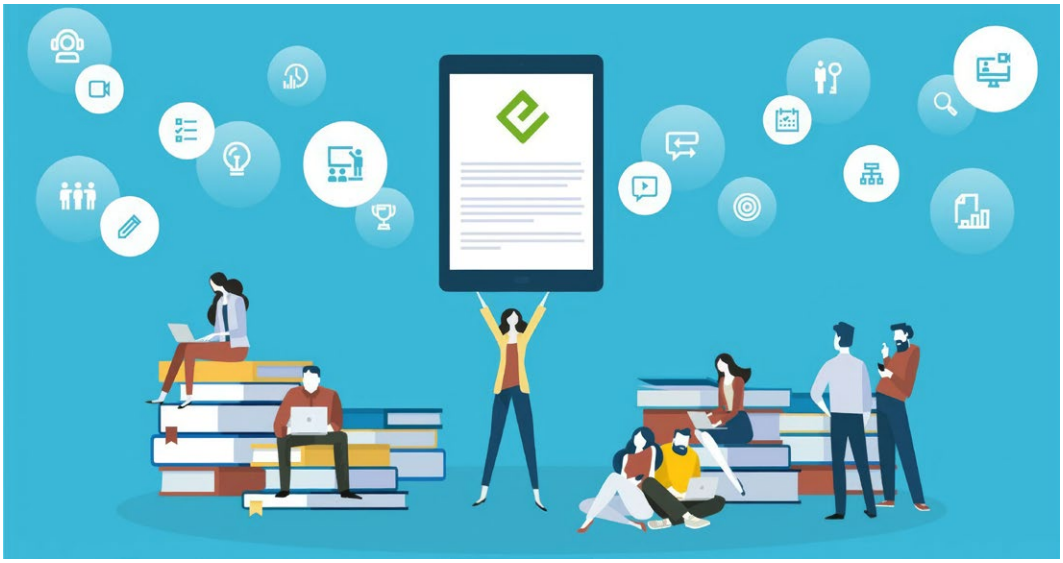
L. Romanovska: I realized that theoretical knowledge gains much more meaning when it can be applied to solving real problems. The PBL method showed me that learning can be livelier, more practical, and focused on real challenges rather than just theory or exams.

I take away many positive emotions from this project. I believe the PBL method helps engagement, promotes critical thinking, and encourages responsibility for one's own learning. I hope this type of learning is applied in other subjects as well, as it allows students to experience that studies can be both theoretical and practically engaging. I am grateful for the opportunity to work in this format–it was inspiring, creative, and extremely valuable, giving me motivation and confidence in my ideas.

G. Marusauskas The PBL project fundamentally changed the traditional study process–from passive knowledge acquisition to active learning based on solving real problems in a team, closely resembling professional work. In my view, this is a more effective way to understand information.

Interdisciplinary collaboration revealed that students from different fields assess problems from different perspectives and follow their own priorities.

This experience developed the ability to reconcile different viewpoints constructively, communicate effectively, and make well-reasoned decisions. The skills gained are highly relevant professionally, especially in business development and ensuring smooth collaboration with clients in the real estate and construction sectors.



University Launches Lithuania's First Scientific Monograph in EPUB3 Format

VILNIUS TECH, in implementing the requirements for electronic books set out in the Republic of Lithuania's Law on Accessibility of Products and Services and contributing to the development of inclusive publishing standards in Lithuania, has released the first scientific monograph in a universally accessible format – "Contemporary Architecture Theory: Interactions of Texts and Intellectual Contexts" by Prof. Dr. Almantas Samalavicius from the Faculty of Architecture. This initiative ensures that the content is easily readable, listenable, and usable by readers with diverse needs.

Thanks to the combined efforts of Audrone Gurkliene, layout designer at VILNIUS TECH Library's Journals Publishing Department, and Dalia Markevičiūtė, language editor at the Book Publishing Department, and particularly due to the layout designer's extensive technical knowledge and ability to apply it to electronic book design, this monograph has become the first VILNIUS TECH scientific publication to meet all accessibility requirements for e-books.

Library Director Ingrida Kasperaitiene and Journals Publishing Department layout designer Audronė Gurkliene discuss the creative process, technical solutions, and challenges the team encountered.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR INGRIDA KASPERAITIENE

– How did the idea to publish VILNIUS TECH's first universally accessible scientific monograph come about?

VILNIUS TECH took an important step by implementing the provisions of the European Union Accessibility Directive and the Republic of Lithuania's Law on Accessibility of Products and Services, becoming the first university in Lithuania to publish a scientific monograph in Lithuanian in the universally accessible EPUB3 format.

The Library's publishing departments at VILNIUS TECH not only

fulfilled the directive's requirements but also demonstrated best practices – preparing a scientific publication based on universal accessibility principles so that it is available to all readers, regardless of their abilities or the technologies they use.

– How does this publication relate to collaboration between people, fields, and ideas?

The first universally accessible scientific monograph at VILNIUS TECH reflects one of the university's core values – connectivity. Its preparation was an interdisciplinary process that combined the scientific ideas of the Faculty of Architecture, the technical and editorial expertise of VILNIUS TECH Library publishing specialists, and knowledge of accessibility standards. Prof. Dr. Almantas Samalavicius's scientific content was adapted so that it could be accessed by all readers. This was achieved through the technical skills of layout designer Audronė Gurkliene and the meticulous work of language editor Dalia Markeviciute, including the addition of alternative text for illustrations.

The publication brought together diverse fields – architectural theory, information technology, publishing innovation, and social responsibility. This partnership demonstrates that combining human expertise and creativity not only fulfills legal requirements but also helps establish new inclusive publishing standards in Lithuania, contributing to open and accessible science for everyone.

– What changes has this project prompted in the publishing house or the university's publishing culture?

The implementation of the accessibility directive has driven significant changes both within VILNIUS TECH Library publishing departments and in the broader university publishing culture. Publishing the first universally accessible scientific monograph highlighted that applying accessible publishing principles requires a new approach to the publishing process – closer collaboration among all participants: authors, editors, layout designers, librarians, and IT specialists.

Over the coming year, authors and publishing specialists will need to acquire knowledge related to new technologies and publishing standards. It is essential to ensure that all university-authored electronic books comply with accessibility requirements. The accessibility directive has prompted a cultural shift in university publishing – from traditional publishing to an inclusive, technology-driven model that aims to make scientific content accessible to everyone. This marks a new phase in the work of VILNIUS TECH Library publishing departments, strengthening the university's identity as an open and socially responsible center of science.

– Do you plan to continue producing publications of this type?

Currently, the VILNIUS TECH electronic book platform hosts 740 titles. The Library's publishing departments will consistently continue producing publications in universally accessible formats and plan to convert the existing electronic book archive. In the near future, all electronic publications will need to be converted to the EPUB3 format to comply with the accessibility standards set by the European Parliament and Council directive.

All future VILNIUS TECH electronic books in technology, engineering, social sciences, and humanities will be produced in accordance with accessible publishing principles, applying EPUB 3 and WCAG 2.1 standards. This ensures that content is easy to read, listen to, and use for readers with diverse needs. Accessible formats are particularly important for electronic books used by students, researchers, and the wider public, so the goal is that every university electronic book will be not only high-quality in content but fully accessible to all readers.

– Do you think accessible publishing initiatives help strengthen the connection between the university, the community, and society?

Accessible academic publishing initiatives significantly strengthen the connection between the university, the academic community, and society. They align directly with the principles of Open Science, which aim to make scientific knowledge freely accessible, transparent, and usable by all. By publishing electronic books in accessible formats, the visibility, citation impact, and societal influence of research are increased, as scientific results become more easily available not only to researchers but also to students, policymakers, businesses, and the general public.

Such publications contribute to citizen science initiatives, encouraging public engagement in scientific processes and reinforcing the university's social responsibility. An institution that ensures its publications are accessible to everyone demonstrates that it operates according to the principles of socially responsible and inclusive science. This fosters a positive public image and enhances trust among the academic community, sponsors, and partners.

Finally, accessible publishing helps create an inclusive academic culture, where knowledge is available to everyone regardless of individual needs or technological capabilities. This strengthens the university's identity as an open, community-oriented, and socially responsible center of science.

JOURNAL PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT LAYOUT DESIGNER AUDRONE GURKLIENE

– How does this publication differ from standard publishing processes? What new methods or technologies did you learn?

When laying out books, we normally follow publishing standards for printed books. The result is a PDF file intended for print or digital use. For this project, however, we had to delve into the requirements for the accessible EPUB3 format, which is considered the standard for accessible publishing. Traditional scientific books are often published simply as PDFs, which are not accessible. The new process required shifting focus from visual layout (how it looks) to structural markup (what each element is – heading, illustration, quote) to ensure that content can be understood by users with disabilities.

Unlike a printed book or a simple PDF, the EPUB3 format allows readers to freely adjust font type, size, contrast, alignment, and spacing. The text dynamically adapts to different device screens.

We had to learn how to apply technical knowledge to ensure active content and links, provide descriptions for illustrations (alternative text), mark foreign language inserts, and enhance text readability for speech synthesis.

One of the most important aspects is providing descriptions of illustrations for visually impaired readers. How was this work carried out, and what collaboration with the author did it require?

All illustrations were supplemented with descriptions (alternative text) so that screen-reading software for the visually impaired could convey the meaning of the visuals. Because the illustrations in the monograph are highly specialized and related to architectural theory, their meaning was not always immediately clear. This required close collaboration with the author. He had to explain the essence and context of each image accurately to ensure that the alternative text we prepared was as precise and meaningful as possible in the scientific context. This work was not just a technical skill but also an essential part of content editing.

– What role do you think the accessible publishing process plays in connecting different audiences – sighted and visually impaired, creators and readers?

The accessible publishing process plays a crucial integrative and

democratizing role, connecting diverse audiences and overcoming traditional barriers in the dissemination of scientific knowledge.

The accessible EPUB3 book format creates equal opportunities for everyone to access complex scientific information. Information barriers are removed, making architectural theory and other higher education achievements available to visually impaired individuals or those with other reading difficulties.

Although accessibility requirements are intended for people with disabilities, the EPUB3 format enhances the reading experience for all. The ability to freely adjust font size, contrast, or spacing is especially useful for older readers or those using small portable devices. This promotes social inclusion and enables individuals with disabilities to participate more actively in academic spaces and discussions.

Creators (authors) and publishers (VILNIUS TECH Library) implement the principle of inclusivity beyond the minimum legal requirements, demonstrating high social responsibility. By initiating this process, we are not only publishing a book but also shaping a new academic publishing culture. Scientific achievements should be democratic and accessible.

This process encourages continuous innovation in publishing and requires creators and technical staff (layout designers) to acquire new competencies that meet future needs.

Accessible publishing acts as a bridge, ensuring that the value of science reaches all segments of society and requiring educational and research institutions to become more responsible and progressive.

> **I feel great personal satisfaction knowing that this work has real social value – it makes complex scientific achievements accessible to everyone.**
>
> Audrone Gurkliene

– What personal value did working on this project, which makes architectural theory accessible to everyone, hold for you?

I found it very rewarding to contribute to the creation of the first publication of this kind at VILNIUS TECH. I gained new technical skills, including the intricacies of the EPUB3 format, accessibility requirements, and creating descriptions for illustrations. We received support from the Lithuanian Audio-Sensory Library, a leader in inclusive publishing.

This collaboration not only helped implement the project but also provided the opportunity to establish valuable professional connections. I feel great personal satisfaction knowing that this work has real social value – it makes complex scientific achievements accessible to everyone, including individuals with visual impairments, and directly contributes to building a more inclusive society.

The cover of SAPERE AUDE by A. Puceta: "Creativity connects disciplines."

In 2025, the covers of the university's magazine SAPERE AUDE have been created by Andrius Puceta, a student in the Architecture program. This newly formed tradition highlights the creative interconnectedness of the university community. Each issue becomes a platform that offers the opportunity to interpret its theme and shape the publication's visual character. For the cover's author, creativity is not only a form of self-expression but also a daily practice that requires discipline and consistency.

Creativity is also continuous work that can at times become monotonous. Having the chance to engage in several different yet related activities is both a gift and a way to escape the creative block brought on by daily routine.

> **I want to advise students: do what brings you joy and spend your time in environments that inspire you to grow.**
>
> Andrius Puceta

"Graphic design is still quite a new field for me, but I already have experience in architecture. The process of creating the magazine's cover is simple: once I receive the task, I try to reveal the theme of the issue and create a cover that communicates that theme from the first illustration," says A. Puceta.

The architecture student shares that he most often seeks inspiration in the field he knows best – architecture. The tools of communication used in graphic design and architecture are very similar: to deliver a clear and understandable result to the audience. He also notes that he sometimes feels certain personal traits becoming more visible in his creative work – pragmatism, brevity, and directness.

"I often take the opportunity to try something different from what I imagine myself doing, to experiment with different forms of expression. In such cases, I look for inspiration in many ways – in literature, graffiti art, painting, photography. Sometimes my ideas come from the most unusual symbols that only I notice," the Architecture program student shares.

Although he does not consider himself especially bold when taking on new activities, A. Puceta explains that sometimes the comfort zone becomes too comfortable, and opportunities appear almost by chance – opportunities he tries to make use of. Most often, this happens when he is experimenting, and those experiments reach people who appreciate them.

"I want to advise students: do what brings you joy and spend your time in environments that inspire you to grow. Even if it is not part of a creative university initiative, knowing that what you do has meaning can, in one way or another, contribute not only to your own personal achievements but also to the success of the university community," says VILNIUS TECH Faculty of Architecture student A. Puceta.


Hey :)

Wear VILNIUS TECH merchandise – become part of the community!

Studies at the university: experiences and insights from international students

VILNIUS TECH attracts an increasing number of international students each year–those seeking high-quality engineering studies and opportunities to broaden their professional field.

VILNIUS TECH attracts an increasing number of international students each year–those seeking high-quality engineering studies and opportunities to broaden their professional field.

The first steps in a new country are always filled with excitement as well as challenges such as adapting to cultural differences, new academic environment and community.

Master's student of Civil Engineering, Rizwan Mahnoor, and Master's student of Environmental Engineering and Management, Ali Haider, who both came to Lithuania from Pakistan, openly share their personal experiences: why they chose to study in Lithuania, how they felt upon arriving in a foreign country, what surprised them the most, and how they managed to integrate into the university community.

– Why did you choose to study at VILNIUS TECH?

R. Mahnoor: I decided to study at VILNIUS TECH because the university is highly ranked in the Baltic region and has an excellent reputation for the quality of its engineering studies. In addition, the university offers many opportunities for international students, such as the Erasmus exchange programme, internships, and more.

A. Haider: VILNIUS TECH attracted me because of the professionals working here, the practised innovative research, and the strong focus on study quality and innovation. I especially appreciate the structure of the study programme, as it aligns very well with my own research.

– How did you feel when you arrived in Lithuania for the first time?

R. Mahnoor: I felt a bit nervous – it was my first time travelling alone to a foreign country.

A. Haider: I was anxious, but at the same time excited, because I knew I was starting a new chapter of my life in a completely different country.

– Which cultural differences surprised you the most?

R. Mahnoor: People in Lithuania are very quiet and polite. The climate here is much colder than what I'm used to.

A. Haider: What surprised me the most is the calm and quiet lifestyle of people, their punctuality, and their respect for others.

– What do you value the most while studying at VILNIUS TECH?

R. Mahnoor: I value my lecturers the most. They constantly support, advise, and encourage international students to gain new knowledge. This is very important to me.

A. Haider: I appreciate the practical, research-based learning environment and the supportive lecturers who help students develop both academically and professionally.

– How have you integrated into the VILNIUS TECH community?

R. Mahnoor: I arrived in Lithuania only a few months ago. Through group projects I am gradually getting to know new people. In the near future, I plan to attend seminars that will help me integrate better into the university community.

A. Haider: I have integrated into the university community by actively attending lectures, participating in group projects, and interacting with classmates and lecturers.

– How can students from different countries strengthen connections within the university community?

R. Mahnoor: Students can strengthen connections by sharing their culture and traditions, working together on various events, and being open to new friendships.

A. Haider: I believe that communication, learning about new cultures, participating in projects, and engaging in student activities help to build new connections.

– What advice would you give to international students considering studying at VILNIUS TECH?

R. Mahnoor: My advice to those coming here is not to be shy – participate in various activities and seminars, and get to know new people. Don't be afraid to ask lecturers or classmates for help. It may be challenging at first, but everything becomes easier once you start interacting.

A. Haider: I would advise planning your time efficiently, balancing both studies and activities outside the university, as well as actively engaging in events organized by the university community.

MELP app: all employee benefits on a single platform

This year, the VILNIUS TECH community welcomed a new innovative tool into its daily life – the MELP app, which was designed to manage employee benefits. This initiative, launched by Chancellor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vaidotas Trinkunas and coordinated by the Senior Specialist of the HR Directorate Agne Sipaviciute, has become not only a technological solution but also a unifying tool, strengthening the VILNIUS TECH community.

According to Agne Surpickiene, Senior Specialist of the HR Directorate, more than two-thirds of the university's employees are currently actively using the benefits offered by the app – ranging from food, sports, and beauty products to cultural activities and children's camp services. MELP simplifies access to these benefits.

According to A. Surpickiene, the implementation process of the app was not simple – the university is a large organization with sensitive security requirements, so it was necessary to adapt it to internal security standards. By collaborating with the MELP team, it was possible to successfully tailor the system to the VILNIUS TECH structure.

'The main goal of implementing the app is to bring all employee benefits into one place, thereby increasing their visibility and convenience. We wanted to boost employee motivation. MELP allows each employee who has worked at the university for more than one year and works more than half-time to use up to €200 per year for selected goods or services. The app features discounts from over 200 partners – ranging from sports to household products. The decision on how to use the budget is made by the employees themselves,' says the Senior Specialist of the HR Directorate.

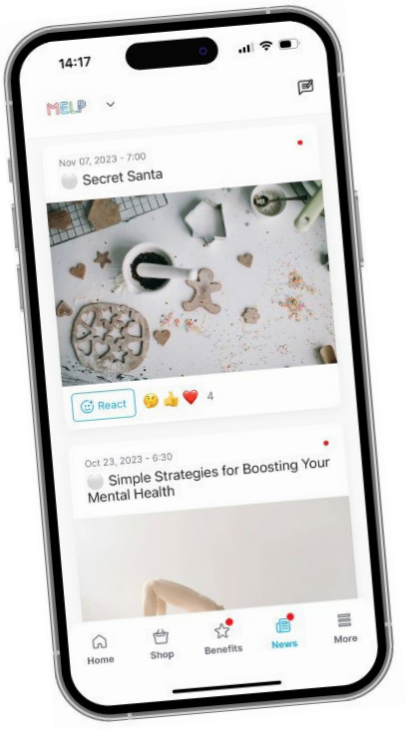
They are introduced to the app – how to log in, how to use it, and where to find information about the benefits offered. Although a personal budget is allocated to new employees only after 12 months, they can immediately use the shared benefits system: additional health days, activities at the Sports and Arts Center, the library, children's camps, and more.

'We are continuously developing MELP – monitoring employee behavior, collecting feedback, and planning expansion. The app already has more functionalities than just benefits management. While all new plans are still in development, we aim for MELP to cover even more areas of employee engagement,' shares A. Surpickiene.

MELP offers a very wide range of services and products, so everyone, regardless of their job role or interests, can find relevant offers. Diversity is the key way to meet the different needs of VILNIUS TECH community members.

'It gives me great joy that MELP is becoming a daily unifying tool for the VILNIUS TECH community. I see that employees not only use the benefits but also share experiences, talk, and seek advice from one another. It is not just a technological solution, but also a means of strengthening the community. Such results inspire us to keep moving forward and continue creating so that people enjoy working at VILNIUS TECH,' says the Senior Specialist of the HR Directorate.

A. Surpickiene hopes that in the future MELP will become not only a benefits management platform but also a tool for sharing information, community engagement, and recognition.



MELP has become an important part of new employee integration

Creativity Beyond University Walls

We continue the section from the previous issue of the magazine, which showed that the creativity of VILNIUS TECH community members thrives not only in scientific research or engineering projects but also in their personal lives.

We invite you to take a closer look at the creativity of our scientists from a different perspective–our colleagues' hobbies reveal incredible skills and, most importantly, help maintain a balance between professional and personal life. Members of the VILNIUS TECH community share their stories.

Germany, World Aerobatic Gliding Championship. J. Valivonis in refereeing position

PROF. JUOZAS VALIVONIS, HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF REINFORCED CONCRETE STRUCTURES AND GEOTECHNICS

Beekeeping

I have been practicing beekeeping for 54 years. My father sparked my interest in this field, and my journey began with quarrels and tears.

J. Valivonis keeps bees with his grandson

I grew up in the countryside, and as long as I can remember, we kept bees. As a child, I was forced to help my father take care of them. I have to admit, back then I wasn't very enthusiastic about beekeeping, but over time, I grew to appreciate it, and it became one of my hobbies. Without noticing, 37 years have passed since I started beekeeping independently.

Throughout my years of beekeeping, I have experienced both funny and sad adventures. One of them is related to VILNIUS TECH–I decided to bring a beehive to the university. After transporting the bee colony, it needed to be placed into the hive, which must be done in the evening. It was summer, and I was wearing shorts and a T-shirt, thinking it would be like in our countryside apiary. However, the bees were very angry after the journey. When I opened the swarm, even though it was dark, they suddenly flew upward and stung me.

After finishing the bee placement, I counted 36 stings on my body. I decided I couldn't go to sleep immediately, fearing I might not wake up in the morning. Yet, after watching TV until 2 a.m., I realized I was resistant to that amount of bee venom.

Aerobatic Flying

Like many children, I was fascinated by aviation. As I mentioned, I grew up in the countryside. The best

Lithuanian aerobatic pilots used to train above my head. I spent a lot of time lying on a haystack, admiring their amazing maneuvers. I always dreamed that it would be wonderful to try it myself.

As soon as I moved to Vilnius for my studies, I joined an aerobatic flying club. During all my years at the club, including two years of postgraduate studies, I flew in Vilnius Aeroclub in Kyviškės.

I flew until my postgraduate supervisor asked me to decide whether I wanted to continue flying or focus on research. At the same time, the coach of the Lithuanian national team encouraged me to choose between aviation and studies. I chose my studies, but many years later, inspired by pilots, I returned to aerobatic aviation and became an FAI international judge in aerobatics. This allows me to judge Lithuanian, European, and World Championships and observe the best pilots in the world.

This activity fascinates me, brings back memories of my youth, and allows me to breathe the unique air of the airfield.

A. Okunyte volunteers at the "Dogspotas" shelter.

AURELIJA OKUNYTE, LECTURER, DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS

I have been volunteering at the NGO "Dogspotas" shelter for over eight years. Sometimes my home becomes a temporary stay for dogs until they recover, regain confidence, and find a new loving family. Although I have always loved dogs, I discovered this shelter through a friend who had been volunteering there. What impressed me most was the strong, warm, and active community of volunteers who care for many animals in their own homes. The shelter houses dogs that require special care–those unable to control their hind legs or suffering from serious health issues. They are looked after by the experienced and dedicated director of Dogspotas.

In everyday life, we often search for meaning, but in the shelter, it emerges naturally. Every petted and healed dog, every scared soul walked outside becomes a small yet meaningful victory. Animals' emotions are genuine and unpretentious, so the gratitude they show is worth more than any material reward. This work reminds us of simple but essential things: empathy, care, and humanity.

By working with animals, I help

create a better society. Every rescued, socialized dog that finds a new home is not just a story of one life; it is also education for people, fostering responsibility and awareness that animals are not objects. Through volunteering, we spread a message of respect for life, changing attitudes toward animal welfare broadly.

The most fascinating part of this journey is observing the transformation. Dogs arriving injured, scared, and insecure gradually open up. Seeing their trust rekindle day by day, their tails wag with joy, is indescribable. Sometimes, all it takes is patience, attention, and a few weeks of calm evenings on the couch for the animal to understand that humans can be trusted again.

The most challenging aspect is emotional attachment. When a dog lives in your home, you feed it, care for it, soothe it at night–it naturally becomes part of your daily life. Letting it go to a new home is always sad, even knowing it is what you aimed for. It is also difficult to face cruel stories–they stay in your mind for a long time. However, these challenges remind us why our work is so important: to ensure that the final chapters of an animal's life are filled with care, not pain.

JUSTAS JACKEVICIUS, HEAD OF SERVICE DEPARTMENT

I always wanted to play the guitar, more or less. Perhaps it was influenced by my musical family–singing and playing were just part of the environment. I became the third child in my family to learn to play guitar. I studied, played, and enjoyed it. I attended a music school for nearly seven years and played as an amateur, which I continue to do.

Once I learned to play, I wanted to perform somewhere. I was thrilled that the school held musical events in spring and autumn. I found a singing partner, as I cannot sing by myself. A few performances were very successful, and I really enjoyed them.

Once, I even dared to get on stage with friends and sing. I probably sang poorly, but the important thing was that I dared to try. I also wrote my own lyrics. For a while, I loved writing and felt that my creativity improved with each new line.

I consider myself, more or less, a bard. I appreciate the bard culture: the texts, direct and indirect thoughts. The sound itself is meaningful to me. If I had to choose a style or concert, I would always choose bards–my acquaintances and beloved performers.

For a while, I also played in a band as the lead guitarist. In my dormitory, I was probably the only one with a guitar on the entire floor, so I became well known–if anyone needed music, they came to Justas.

J. Jackevicius not only plays the guitar, but also writes song lyrics himself