

Polytechnic University and TU Graz held their first strategic meeting online

This week, a strategic meeting of the staff of the international offices of Polytechnic University and Graz University of Technology (Austria) took place. The initiative to hold this kind of events belongs to the rector of TU Graz, Professor Harald KAINZ. The Austrian University intends to hold regular online meetings with strategic partners at different levels every 4-6 months.

“Despite the harm that COVID-19 has done, it helped us understand that online meetings are a promising opportunity to keep in touch with partners abroad. We believe that such events contribute to the improvement of interaction between universities’ staff involved in the development of strategic partnerships,” said Rector Harald KAINZ.

One of the first meetings, which took place by the initiative of the Austrian university, was the negotiations of TU Graz with its long-standing strategic partner, Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University. The coordinators of the strategic partnership of the two universities Svetlana KALIKINA and Barbara BÖTTGER took part in it. The agenda included several issues: the main news and changes after the COVID-19 pandemic; holding the next [international student project marathon](#), and joint supervision of postgraduate students.



The parties began negotiations on news and changes related to the impact of Covid-19 on the activities of universities by discussing the events that had to be postponed. So, in May 2020, it was planned to officially award the rector of TU Graz, Professor Harald KAINZ, the title of Honorary Doctor of SPbPU. For this purpose, an official delegation of the Austrian university was to visit Polytechnic University. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the event was postponed until next year. Nevertheless, at the end of May 2020, Rector Harald KAINZ was awarded the title of Honorary Doctor of SPbPU in accordance with the protocol of the university's Academic Council. SPbPU Rector Academician of the RAS Andrei RUDSKOI sent a letter to Austria in which he noted: *"Unfortunately, in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, we did not have the opportunity to receive the delegation of TU Graz on an official visit to SPbPU, which was scheduled for May 2020. But I am pleased to note that despite the difficult epidemiological situation in the world and the limitations in the work of campuses, cooperation between our universities does not stop, and our international offices, professors, research groups are in constant interaction."*

In his reply, the rector of TU Graz cordially thanked his Russian colleague and noted: *"It is a special honor for me to receive the title of such a respected university, Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University. For me, this is also an essential sign of good and friendly relations that unite our universities. In this time of crisis, we all clearly understand how important and invaluable long-term partnerships are. Despite the fact that in the current circumstances it is not possible to meet in person, it is pleasing to note that the cooperation between the universities does not stop and is conducted quite productively. Collaboration can continue in digital format, as it already has a solid base."*

Another important event, which was discussed by the specialists of SPbPU and TU Graz, was the holding of an international project student marathon, which is scheduled for next fall. Scientific groups in the area of computer technology will continue their joint work. The coordinators are currently considering 4 projects, related to the recognition and generation of speech, texts and images with emotion, a drone control system, recognition and prediction of cancer, and an intelligent system for building an educational trajectory.

The active joint work of scientific groups within the framework of the last marathon contributed to the growth of interest in scientific cooperation between students and professors of TU Graz and SPbPU. Several students of ISI, SPbPU are considering admission to postgraduate school and joint dissertation management by professors from TU Graz and SPbPU. Strategic Partnership Coordinator Barbara BÖTTGER noted that subject to availability of funds a number of professors and graduate students of TU Graz consistently express their desire to cooperate specifically with Polytechnic University. Taking into account mutual interest, the parties discussed the possibilities of launching programs for joint management of postgraduate students.

The next strategic meeting of SPbPU and TU Graz is scheduled for the second half

of autumn. It will be attended by the vice-rectors of both universities, who will discuss the main areas for the development of strategic partnerships between universities. The date and details of the meeting are to be agreed and will be determined in the near future.

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