

## Polytechnic student from Turkey: “Together with the university I choose my future”

Can Alp Alaçam is studying for his Master's degree at the Institute of Energy under a special program to train personnel for Turkey's first nuclear power plant, Akkuyu. Alp's main research interest is turbines and everything related to them: this is the field in which he plans to work in the future. In addition, Can Alp Alaçam is actively involved in the student life of Polytechnic University. He is a regular participant in various TutorForces and PolyUnion events, and is also an organizer of the Turkish Club, which takes place at PolyUnion twice a month. In an interview with SPbPU International Office, Alp talked about his choice of studies, his participation in the St. Petersburg International Gas Forum, and shared his plans for the future.



— **Alp, where did your interest in nuclear power plants come from?**

— I became acquainted with the functionality of nuclear power plants several years ago. At that time, I said to myself: in the future I will become a specialist who will work at them. I was then just finishing my undergraduate degree in engineering physics and I planned to further expand my knowledge in engineering and nuclear power.

— **Why did you decide to continue your studies in Russia?**

— In my opinion, some of the best technical universities in the world are in Russia. I was looking for opportunities to study in the nuclear power industry, and I was interested in the topic of building Turkey's first nuclear power plant, Akkuyu. I started reading materials about it and found that Polytechnic University is one of the few universities that prepares specialists to work at this nuclear power plant. I understood that together with the university I was choosing my future — it was an important and reasonable decision.

— **How did you find the decision to come to study in another country for a long time?**

— I can't say that it was too difficult for me. Before that I studied in other countries — I was in different educational programs in the Netherlands and Ireland. Russia is one of the leading countries in the energy industry. It builds nuclear power plants for Turkey. So I wanted to come here to study.

— **Can you tell us, how did you prepare for your trip?**

— Before I came to Russia, I found out in which city I was going to live, I read materials and watched many videos about St. Petersburg. I talked about it with my friends and read reviews. But all that paled when I came here and saw everything with my own eyes. St. Petersburg is an open-air museum city, I was fascinated.

— **Were there any difficulties with the language when you came to Russia?**

— I started learning Russian back in Turkey. As I remember now, I finished my studies at the level of A2, and I thought that at first that was enough for me to communicate. The first thing I realized when I came here was that A2 in Turkey and A2 in Russia are different. Speaking with native speakers was really difficult, and it took time to adapt. Now I am continuing to study Russian at the preparatory course. It is important for me to improve my language skills.



— **Do you like studying at Polytechnic University, what are your impressions of the professors and the classes?**

— I really like studying here. Our professors are great professionals, I think they are the best in their fields and I'm glad I have the opportunity to listen to their courses. We are taught by experts from Russia, and in different semesters we also had professors from Italy and Iran. Most of all I like the topic of turbines, that's what my master's degree thesis is related to. I also like thermodynamics.

— **Did you have any internships or work placements?**

— Yes, we had a group trip last summer to Obninsk, where there is the world's first nuclear power plant connected to the grid. It was commissioned in 1954 and now operates as a research complex. We learned a lot of valuable information about the work of nuclear reactors and the history of nuclear power in Russia.

— **Have you participated in any major events dedicated to the energy industry?**

— Yes, I took part in the St. Petersburg International Gas Forum. Since 2015, the Youth Day has been held on its platform, which brings together undergraduate and graduate students from different countries and key experts and executives of leading international energy companies and organizations. I was among the best



students who were selected to participate in the final events of the SPIGF. They organized a team building, a business game, brainstorming sessions and work with industry experts for us, it was a very valuable and useful experience.



**— How do you get along with your classmates? Have you made any new friends?**

— Yes, I have got a lot of new friends from Russia, Egypt, India, and China. We communicate in English or in Russian. In the first year, I was busy only with my studies — I just didn't have time for anything else. Later, I started to get more involved in the student life at Polytechnic University and I got a lot of help from the TutorForces tutor service and the international student club PolyUnion. I participate in excursions that they conduct, trips to various interesting places in St. Petersburg and its suburbs. I am also the organizer of the Turkish club, which takes place at PolyUnion.

**— Please tell us more about the Turkish club, when did this idea come up?**

— The idea originated with the PolyUnion executives, but I didn't think that many people would be interested in it and we would hold the Turkish Club on a regular basis. But when we had our first meeting and saw how many people came to it, I realized that this topic needs to continue. The participants asked a lot

of questions about the Turkish language and culture, and I saw how interested they were. Many of them are going to come to Turkey in the future, and it would be good for them to know the basics of the language and the cultural aspects of my country. We meet every two weeks, and regularly about 20 students from Colombia, Egypt, Russia, Kazakhstan, China, and other countries come to the club.

— **What are your plans for the future?**

— My immediate future is related to working on my master's degree thesis. In the future I plan to expand my knowledge in engineering sciences. And, of course, I am aiming for a career in large-scale energy companies — for example, such as Akkuyu Nuklear.

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