

TU Graz Experts Spoke about a Student Welding Project Marathon

International student project marathons are a new phenomenon not only in Russia but also abroad. Their goal is to unite young scientists from different countries, develop student exchanges and receive new research results. Together with the [Technology University of Graz](#) (TU Graz, Austria), Polytechnic University is implementing 6 projects as part of the international student marathon. Russian and foreign experts - professors and young scientists - supervise the student groups.

Why is a student project marathon a step out from a comfort zone? What prospects await their participants in the future? What is the uniqueness of such projects? Professors of the Technical University of Graz Norbert ENZINGER and Sergio AMANCIO, who are the curators of the student welding project marathon from Austria, spoke about this and not only with the SPbPU International Services.



- Norbert, Sergio, tell us please, have you participated in student project marathons before?

Norbert: The international student marathon is a new experience not only for students, but also for us, professors. We have never practiced anything like this with other universities.

Sergio: This is new and exciting for all of us. We discussed the topic for the marathon last winter; as a result, we chose an area that is attractive and relevant for both universities.

- Why students participate in the marathon?

Sergio: There is a number of advantages. Students learn to interact with each other in the same project as a team. They communicate with world-class specialists. This is a unique opportunity to see how work is going on in other laboratories. And, of course, the cultural component: students get acquainted with another country, see the similarities and differences of other cultures.

Norbert: Not all students have the opportunity to work in laboratory every day. And if after graduation they want to continue to develop in the scientific area, the project marathon will be an ideal opportunity to plunge into the world of science and research. I established some scientific contacts during visits to other laboratories. I do not know what these people will do later, and I do not know how our students will develop. But it is likely that after many years they will meet again - for example, as academic partners. And it would be great if by then they would have such a common story.

- What language do you speak in the framework of the marathon?

Sergio: Our common language is English. For some students, a project marathon is also an opportunity to improve their language skills.

Norbert: Sometimes when working with graduate students who study part of the time in Austria, we speak German. By the way, a lot has changed at SPbPU since my first visit: this time I often hear German at your university. It happens that some technical aspects are easier to explain in the language of schemes or specialized terms that are understandable without knowledge of the language.

- What are you planning to achieve as part of the project marathon?

Norbert: Several groups of students work within the frame of this marathon. One group is studying laser welding of metals - it is led by Olga KLIMOVA-KORSMIK. The group, which we supervise from the TU Graz side and Anton NAUMOV, leading researcher at the Laboratory of Light Materials and Structures, from the Polytechnic University part, are studying friction stir welding. Our main goal is to provide students with basic knowledge of these technologies and the skills necessary to understand the basics of materials science. In the future, perhaps, we will prepare several joint publications.

Sergio: Polytechnic University has equipment for friction stir welding, which we do not have at TU Graz. It is unique. We will try to compare the results of working

on it with our technologies, and, perhaps, based on the results obtained, we will make joint publications.

- And what students must come up with?

Norbert: the marathon involves students of different levels of training - both graduate and postgraduate students. We do not expect any breakthrough results, since the project marathon is primarily a learning process. The minimum goal is to prepare a progress report and a presentation. Students will do all this at the last stage of the marathon.

Sergio: Students conduct welding experiments. We are expecting them to come to TU Graz soon, where they will also conduct a series of experiments. After that, they will prepare reports and a final presentation. They will have a month to do this. At the very end of the project, the team will return to Russia and present its results there.



- How did you choose participants for the marathon?

Norbert: We looked at such qualities as hard work and dedication. All project participants are bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

Sergio: Perhaps, thanks to such dedication, the team will do more than just a

report and presentation. And then its result will be the starting point for another large-scale project.

- How do you manage your project team?

Norbert: We share our experience, suggest what materials students can use in their work, what literature they can additionally study. We don't say, "You must do precisely this and that", but offer to make decisions on their own. It is very important to give students freedom, but also support. We are the first to read their notes for reports and presentations, provide feedback.

Sergio: Giving students freedom does not mean leaving them alone. It means leaving the door open. If they have questions, they can always contact us.

- That's a wise approach! How long have you been teaching?

Norbert: I've been teaching for about 20 years, including about 12 as professor. I first started working in the laboratory when I was a student. The understanding that this was my calling came pretty soon. I did not work in industry for long, and returned to the university, where I continued to study in postgraduate school. It so happened that I started working with students, helping them, giving advice and small tasks. Over time, I realized that I like to share skills and knowledge with students. Then I realized that one day I would become a professor.

Sergio: I have been teaching for almost 10 years. I always loved difficult tasks. When I was a student, I had a teacher who was in close contact with the industry and solved many technical problems. It was he who "infected" me with this trend. At first he delegated small tasks to me. Over time, my experience grew, I became curator of other students, and thus grew up to my present position. I still love to solve the tasks set by industry partners, share experiences with students, teach and guide them, and interact with industrial and academic colleagues.

- Colleagues, thank you for the interesting interview! We wish you productive project activities and new discoveries!

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