

Go International: Students from Russia and Austria Participated in a Joint Project Marathon

Recently, the team of the Institute of Computer Science and Technology (ICST) of [SPbPU](#) returned from the Technical University of Graz ([TU Graz](#)). For several months now, together with Austrian students, the guys have been working in the framework of a joint student project marathon. The decision to hold it was made by university leaders last February, and it was timed to the Year of Russian-Austrian youth exchanges.



The International Student Project Marathon is not too well-known yet but extremely promising and quite unique in many ways. Its goal is to unite young scientists from different countries, develop student exchanges and get new research results. Eleven graduate and postgraduate students from the SPbPU ICST and the Faculty of Computer Science and Biomedical Engineering TU Graz, along with teachers from Russia and Austria, took part in the joint marathon. The ICST team was composed of students of the Department of Computer Intellectual Technologies. Their curators were professors TU Graz professors Wolfgang SLANI and Nikolay SHCHERBAKOV, while from SPbPU part, the projects were supervised by ICST associate professor Vadim PAK. The students were engaged in three

research projects.

During the working visit to TU Graz, the participants had an intensive program: project workshops, presentations of the results achieved, and detailed analyses of the work done. In addition, the Polytechnics visited the defense of the final qualifying works of the Master's degree students of TU Graz, talked with student activists of Austrian universities. For all marathon participants, Professor Nikolai SHCHERBAKOV conducted a seminar on project work and the preparation of scientific articles. Already next fall, the participants will present their joint reports at the student scientific conference, and this experience was quite essential for them.

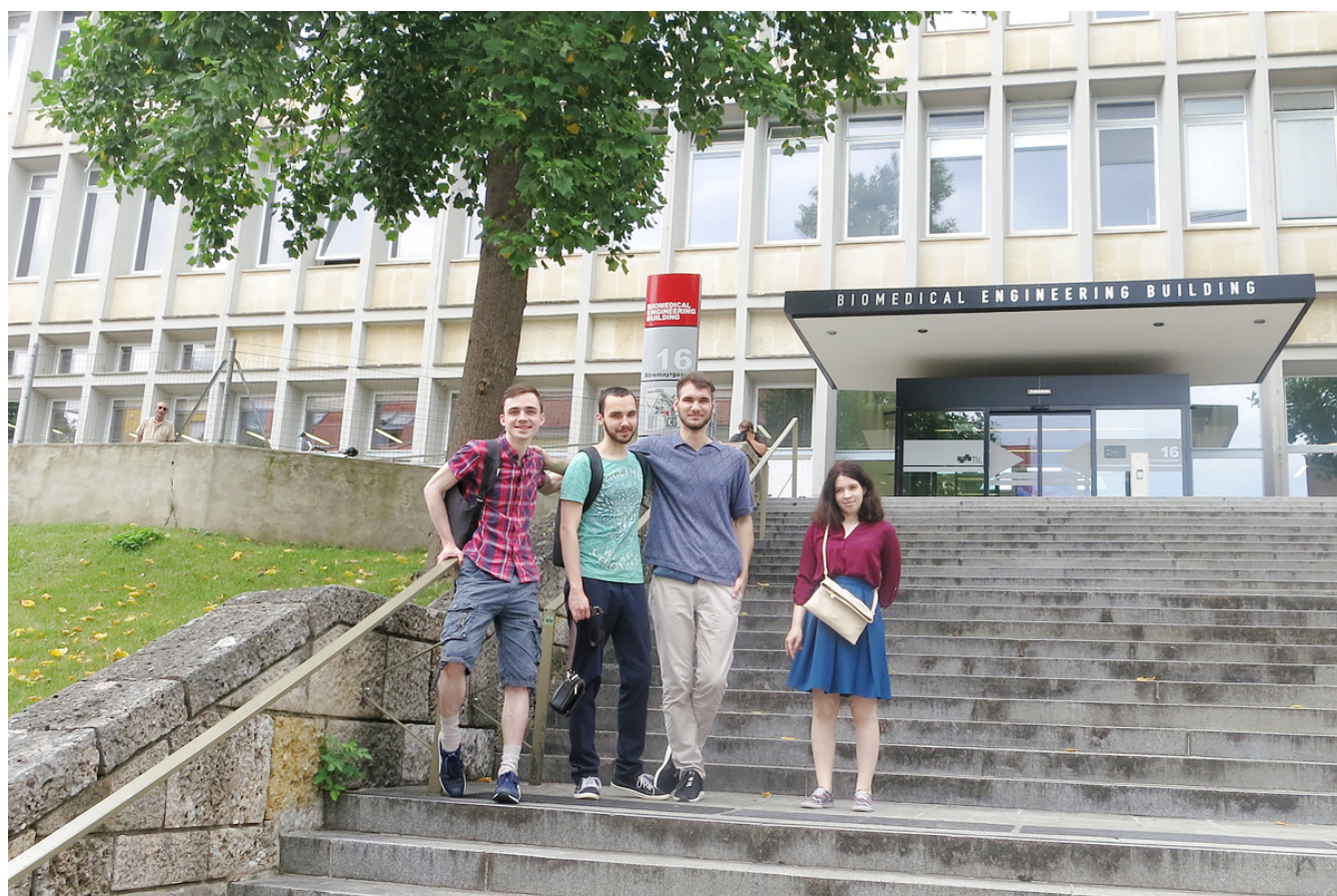
Many students shared their impressions on the marathon. *"I worked on a project connected with non-relational databases. Such databases are optimized for applications that work with large amounts of data. At first, I was a little nervous, as this was a completely new topic for me, and in our team I was the only participant from Polytechnic University. But when we got to work, all the fears stayed behind. Together with my colleagues, we jointly looked for solutions for emerging problems, explained things to each other, and could easily find compromises,"* ICST student Donat SHERGALIS says.

Almost all participants of the marathon claim that they've got a great experience of intercultural communication. *"I am always excited to meet and work with new people, to exchange ideas and learn something new. Working on this project gave me exactly that opportunity, for which I am grateful. Although it was challenging to coordinate our time schedules and do specific tasks, it turned out to be a valuable experience which helped me grow as a developer,"* - TU Graz student Eman BASIC says.



“As researcher and lecturer, it is my highest desire to create and support environments that foster knowledge transfer as well as innovation. Bringing together students, but also lecturers, from different institutions and working on joint projects provides the chance to gain new viewpoints, new ways of problems solving in a creative and sustainable way. I hope to see interdisciplinary collaboration on different topics, enabling all involved parties to learn and gain new skills relevant for their future career. This cooperation builds the perfect frame to achieve these goals, to provide a platform of collaboration for learning and research about exciting issues of our today’s world,” - noted TU Graz professor Matthias MÜLLER.

Notably, the guys were solving practical problems for real projects, and at the same time, overcoming their own doubts and achieving their goals. *“I had many doubts concerning my participation, as the project marathon was originally designed for Master’s degree students, but after all it turned out to be quite feasible and exciting. I got in a project related to the development of neural networks. As part of the work, we had to show the results together with our Austrian colleagues in Graz,”* says ICST student Lev STOYANOVSKY.



To participate or not to participate? A positive answer is the only option. *“My part of the project was to create a web crawler and parser for the real estate project. The main part was to extract information from websites and to create a well-defined interface in JSON for further processing. It was very valuable for us to improve our intercultural communication skills and to learn about different problem solving techniques. I would recommend anyone to take the opportunity to participate in future joint projects to strengthen their theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of project management, software development and to improve their communication skills in general,”* - says TU Graz student Pascal WERKL.

“For Polytechnic University, student marathons are a new but already successful experience of international cooperation. We see that students are enthusiastically working on projects, and that the universities are seriously involved in the process. Everyone expects interesting and useful for the development of computer science and technology results. In the future, a new marathon launch is scheduled for next year: check the news!” wished the head of the working group from SPbPU associate professor Vadim PAK.

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