

žurnál

Magazine of Palacký University Olomouc, 2025/2

theme

**Jana Zapletalová:
Now I know what it's
like to find treasure**



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contents

- 2 — Now I know what it's like to find treasure
- 5 — Jana Zapletalová: After the media circus, I buried my head in the sand
- 6 — UP hosted the InSEA World Congress
- 6 — Olomouc scientists' genetically modified barley now being tested in the field
- 7 — He successfully defended his practical thesis, the first at the Faculty of Law
- 7 — UP Faculty of Arts honoured eleven alumni
- 8 — UP Faculty of Physical Culture thanked its alumni
- 8 — The Centre for Digital Health prepares medical students for working with AI and other modern aids
- 9 — Experts on political engagement of social workers spoke at CMFT
- 9 — Faculty of Health Sciences hosted traditional international schools and new conference
- 10 — Brothers Jan and Lukáš Zdražil find common ground even in science
- 11 — Olomouc schoolchildren identified dangerous places, but don't get much exercise
- 12 — Student Věra Kafková discovers 19 plant species in Olomouc new to Czechia
- 13 — Eva Navrátilová receives prestigious award for research popularisation
- 13 — Veronika Šedajová wins the national final of Falling Walls Lab competition
- 14 — Playful picture book *Our University Town* introduces life at university to kindergarteners
- 15 — Portrait – Alla Fedorova: A lawyer and academic learning Czech out of gratitude and respect
- 18 — Success
- 22 — Kaleidoscope
- 24 — Student Lucie Boušková: Diabetes taught me how to plan
- 25 — Interview – Jiří Dostál: There's more to life than digital technology. We also have to develop skills in children
- 28 — UP Science and Technology Park: A quarter century of giving ideas a chance to live
- 30 — UP honoured volunteers for their work
- 31 — Ondřej Němcák: Experience and a different perspective. When I give help to others, I get back more
- 33 — Experience – Tereza Marková: She's not afraid to ask questions
- 35 — Alumni – Jiří Daněk: A social educator must be, above all, humane
- 37 — Botanist Lucie Kobrlová: Cycling to work and even on work trips
- 38 — Heritage – "They're living, living in the steppes..."
- 39 — Reflection – Egypt
- 40 — Discover Your Future at Palacký University Olomouc

cover – Associate Professor Jana Zapletalová | photo: Jakub Čermák



Dear colleagues and students,
You're reading a new issue of the English-language university magazine, in which every article, every story, and every name is proof that our university is more than just a place of education and scientific research. Palacký University is a community of inspiring personalities who have the desire and courage to change themselves – and the world around them.

You will read about the discovery of the amethyst grottoes in nearby Kroměříž, research into genetically modified barley, prizes awarded to our academics, scientists, and students, international cooperation, newly-named professors, and stories about volunteering and science popularisation. These examples show that our university is not only academically strong, but also rich in the human factor.

We extend our gratitude to all students and staff who are not afraid to go beyond the boundaries of their fields or outside their comfort zones. Whether they are researchers connecting art with science, teachers shaping future generations, or students embracing new challenges, their daily work, courage, and drive are what give our university meaning and a future.

In addition to education and research, the university has a third mission: to contribute to the development of the society in which it operates. We are committed to supporting our community in sustainability, social responsibility, and resilience through activities which bring us together under the new UP rubric: *To the Future*.

May the coming weeks inspire you with energy and pride in what we are creating, together.

Michael Kohajda, UP Rector



Now I know what it's like to find treasure

"A world-class find in an artificial grotto in the Kroměříž Chateau: a design made of semi-precious stones." "Hundreds of semi-precious stones discovered by experts in the Kroměříž Chateau." "Amethyst treasure discovered in Kroměříž." "Walls adorned with semi-precious stones discovered accidentally by torchlight." These are only a few of the headlines which flooded the Czech media at the end of August, when Jana Zapletalová of the UP Faculty of Arts Department of Art History found herself a media star. Like most stars, it didn't happen overnight – her path took a year and a half.

It all began in January 2024, when something in the dim, artificial cave on the ground floor level of the Kroměříž Chateau glittered in the light from Jana Zapletalová's electric torch. Such grottoes were all the rage among the aristocracy when the chateau was built in the late 17th century.

A chance find that paid off

They were amethysts. The discovery was thoroughly unexpected; Jana Zapletalová had a completely different goal in mind. For a long time, she has focused on Baroque stucco decorations, and she was researching them within an international project on the ground floor of the chateau in its sala terrenas and prestigious halls, which have adjacent artificial caves on two sides. About six months before the discovery, the art history scholar said that she was not going to include the dilapidated grottoes in her study.

However, purely by chance, one day when studying the stuccos in the sala terrenas, she could not climb the scaffolding because only two people could work there at a time for safety reasons. The curious academic then started walking through the overlooked dark corners of the UNESCO monument. The original stucco decorations in the cave caught her attention after all: artificial trees, miners, a horse, and even the mythical serpent Python.

One of the two grottoes is decorated with a statue of the god Apollo in the centre of a deep recess. When Jana Zapletalová entered the dark channel for the rivulet running toward the statue, she saw the first reflections of semi-precious stones lit up by her torch. "Slowly I realised that the entire tableau presented to visitors in the grotto in the time of their origin must have been truly awe-inspiring. Imagine a dark room lit solely by torches, the flickering light illuminating the statue of Apollo against hundreds of purple amethyst crystals. Bubbling water cascades around it all, helping to reflect the light and intensifying the colour and gleam of the amethysts. And from the paws of wild animals among the oak trees and from the walls around the fauns spray gusts of water, accompanied by falling mist. The entire tableau was created to intentionally celebrate the personage who commissioned it: Bishop Karl von Lichten-

stein-Castelcornio, as illuminated rock – Lichten-stein – the one who spreads the faith and clamps down on heresy in his diocese," the historian said, describing the original appearance of the Apollo grotto.

However, the bishop died soon after they were finished; the opulent decorations of the time went out of style and this one-of-a-kind, grandiose work faded into obscurity.

I understand "my man"

Interestingly, in addition to the chance find, Bishop Karl is no stranger to Jana Zapletalová. She has studied his life and work for many years, and also significantly contributed to two monumental publications about him. She immediately understood the artistic value and historical importance of what was at first glance just a superficial, glistening find. "After the first awe and wonder of the unexpected beauty and resplendence, many scholarly hypotheses soon collapsed. I foolishly thought that this great man, whom I had 'lived with' academically for many years, was someone I knew. But in that gloomy grotto, he appeared to me in a completely new light. For the very first time I completely understood how 'my man' thought about things. About himself, his mission in Moravia, and the legacy he wanted to leave to future generations. Sometimes you have lessons to learn. First you have to admit to yourself that what you used to think was wrong, and then you have to find the courage to announce that publicly and carry on. That's what I love about science," confesses the art historian.

Although it would be possible to assay the amount and weight of the precious stones to determine their value, from the perspective of art history, the discovery is far more valuable due to the artistic significance and historical context of the grottoes, testimony to the highly refined environment of the man who commissioned them. To find something new in the bowels of a well-researched UNESCO monument, which in its spiritual, cultural, and conceptual qualities is above and beyond similar endeavours in Europe, is the main treasure of this discovery. It also helps to better our understanding of the history of Moravia in the Baroque period as well as shining new light on a well-known historical personage. →

GROTTOES

Grottoes, or artificial caves, were a favourite component of aristocratic manors and gardens in the Renaissance period. They imitated natural caves. They were often adorned with various metamorphic stones, mother-of-pearl, corals, stalactites and stalagmites, stucco decorations, mosaics, and even minerals and gemstones. Many grottoes were equipped with complicated water mechanisms. They provided intellectual entertainment as well as respite from summer heat. Hundreds of grottoes were constructed throughout Europe over the centuries. Grottoes can be found at a number of chateaus in the Czech Republic.



Code name: Stones

Jana Zapletalová often plays the role of a myth buster when it comes to the work of an art historian. She does not spend all her time in libraries, archives, and galleries. She works in the field, often on scaffolding at great heights, in overalls with a helmet on. Today, the work of an art historian goes hand-in-hand with cooperation with art restorers and material specialists. Thanks to modern technology, one can literally look under the surface or inside artworks to analyse what they are made from and also determine their technical state.

And it was the poor technical state of the grottoes, the necessary scientific research work to be carried out, ensuring the monument's protection, and finally safety measures for experts and visitors alike which were the main reasons why it was necessary to keep the discovery a secret for quite a long time.

Only a handful of specialists were allowed in. The other key person was Alešna Tobolková, head of monument preservation for the Olomouc Archbishopric, a graduate of the UP Faculty of Arts Art History Department and a former student of Zapletalová's.

"I was overjoyed by the discovery, but with a slight exaggeration, at the same time it meant that my former professor had given me a huge assignment. In addition to mineralogic analysis and archival and art history research, it was necessary to carry out structural analyses, dehumidify the space, and conduct detailed 3D documentation. One sticky problem was setting up a safety system which would also be aesthetic and sensitive. Try to imagine how three-metre-thick walls with rich decoration complicated the installation of a camera system with wi-fi connection," Tobolková said, enumerating the work which was necessary to carry out in the much dilapidated spaces of the artificial caves.

Thanks to the fact that both women knew and trusted each other well, the entire operation, code-named "Stones", was able to be carried out to a successful finish. From the spring of this year, other key persons from the archbishopric, university, and the chateau were gradually added to the team, who, sworn to secrecy, prepared to make the discovery public.

Discovery was just the beginning

All of the above work carried out in Kroměříž to that time was however just the beginning of a long journey. "Now we must go through the material technological analyses, on the basis of which we will determine an overall concept for conservation and restoration. This year for example we have planned the conservation of the metals in the Mines Grotto to slow their degradation. Another task is to put up scaffolding in the Apollo Grotto, so that the restorers can comfortably inspect the stucco decorations. All of this requires international and interdisciplinary cooperation," Tobolková outlined.

The high-risk situation of part of the decorations falling complicates the temporal and financial difficulty of the entire project. In addition to its own funds, grant programmes, and collaboration with the university, the Olomouc Archbishopric has launched a public collection thanks to which anyone can contribute to saving this unique monument. In November, the Archbishopric plans to launch a website, where in addition to info on the collection, visitors will be able to find out more about the discovery, the importance and decorations of the grottoes, and the course and plans of the restoration work.

If all goes well, in a few years it will be possible for modern-day visitors to see the amethyst grotto glisten in the condition which Karl von Lichtenstein-Castelcorno dreamed of for the ground floor of the Kroměříž Chateau in the late 17th century.

Stucco

A still under-appreciated category of art. Jana Zapletalová heads the international project "Stucco decoration across Europe", financed by the Erasmus+ programme, in which her team, made up of art historians, art restorers, and material specialists, is set on returning proper attention to stucco as an art form and to protect valuable stuccoes from damage, often the result of carelessness. Stucco decorations were created throughout Europe in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, and their artisans were primarily from Lugano on the Swiss-Italian border. These artisans were able to adapt to the local conditions and to employ the varying qualities of lime, sand, plaster, and other ingredients in order to create wonderful ornamentations that could even imitate marble.



Sometimes you have lessons to learn. First you have to admit to yourself that what you used to think was wrong, and then you have to find the courage to announce that publicly and carry on. That's what I love about science.

Jana Zapletalová

Jana Zapletalová (b. 1981)

She graduated with degrees in Art History and Latin. She is the head of the UP Faculty of Arts Department of Art History. She focuses on the art and visual culture of the early Renaissance, specialising on the migration of artists and artisans from the area of what is now Italy and southern Switzerland during the Baroque period. Her main professional focus is on stucco decorations. She has had a number of international research stays, and is a guest professor at Sapienza University of Rome. She is the author of several monographs and more than a hundred articles.



Jana Zapletalová: After the media circus, I buried my head in the sand

This past August, the amethyst grottoes were covered by nearly all the media sources one could imagine. Jana Zapletalová thus faced the greatest attention from journalists in her career to date.

— Did you have any idea that the discovery of the amethyst grottoes would attract such a media frenzy? Actually, I did. I believed in their huge popular potential from the start. However for me, the bigger story about the grottoes and their media coverage is really the fine cooperation of my team. I was incredibly lucky that Alena Tobolková from the Archbishopric immediately recognised the significance of this discovery and joined me to form a duo which works well on both the professional and personal level. Alena secured the blessings of the Archbishop and we also obtained extraordinary mutual support from the university. The entire project is the result of time-demanding work by a whole team of people who were able to carry it through to the end despite a strict information embargo. Without them, the media response would not be anywhere near as strong.

— How did it feel to be in the spotlight?

I admit that I am happier in the gloom of the grottoes. The glistening of amethysts is enough for me. I enjoyed giving interviews to the media, especially when in the heat of their promotion I could forget the huge weight of responsibility delegated upon me by the team for a spell. However, listening to myself speak, reading about myself, and seeing myself on television was traumatising. I decided to follow the ostrich's example. I stuck my head in the sand and only took in the news resonating about the discovery throughout the media space with quiet joy.

— During that year and a half, what worried you the most, and what was the most difficult part?

It was incredibly difficult to keep quiet about the discovery for a whole year and a half. Everyone in my department was aware that I kept going back to the grottoes. The grottoes were my life. My colleagues could see that I was awestricken, and sometimes teased me, saying it would

be easier to find me in the grottoes than in my office. But I could not divulge to them what it was I was doing there.

And so Alena Tobolková became even more important to me, someone with whom I could confide all my excitement about the little discoveries and the gradually revealing important ones. She not only listened patiently, but sincerely shared that joy with me – even though my discovery gave her another half-time job at least, unpaid.

— Are you looking forward to when you can do something else?

Not at all, I'm enjoying it more than any other scientific project in my career to date. All the texts I have to study are in Latin, which I majored in only because I liked it, and now it's really coming in handy. This is a supremely interdisciplinary project requiring connections between art history and philosophy, hermeneutics, and even alchemy, plus at the same time you have to come up with practical solutions for the restoration strategies. In short – if you want to see me, you'll find me in the grotto.



Permanence, shifting grounds, and unexpected territories in art education: UP hosted the InSEA World Congress

With the aim of promoting international dialogue and exchange of experience and expertise in arts education and related disciplines, the 38th annual InSEA World Congress – the International Society for Education through Art, affiliated with UNESCO – was held at the UP Arts Centre. Five hundred specialists in art education and museum and gallery education, as well as artists and representatives of related fields, came to Olomouc. Many others participated online.

“We are proud that the World Congress took place at our Faculty of Educa-

tion (UP FE). The first ever event of this kind, which has become legendary in our field, was held in Prague almost sixty years ago. Since then, these congresses have taken place in various world capitals. We see this as recognition of our role in global art education,” said Petra Šobáňová, Vice-Dean of the UP Faculty of Education, who is also Vice-President of the Czech section of InSEA.

According to Aleš Pospíšil, chair of the section, the World Congress is always an exceptional opportunity to show the international community of art

educators the high level of Czech art education as a source of inspiration for the whole world.

In addition to the keynote speakers – art educator and activist Susan M. Coles, Vice President of InSEA, who is based in the UK, and Rolf Laven, who works at the University College of Teacher Education in Vienna – a number of other experts spoke during the congress. The premises of the UP Arts Centre were filled with panel discussions, individual lectures, and many interesting workshops. (map)

Olomouc scientists' genetically modified barley now being tested in the field

UP scientists have been the first in the European Union to launch a field trial with genetically modified barley, using the CRISPR genome editing method in its development. They obtained spring barley with a shortened stem using new genomic techniques (NGT). Experts from the Laboratory of Growth Regulators, a joint workplace of the UP Faculty of Science (UP FS) and the Institute of Experimental Botany

of the Czech Academy of Sciences, worked on the research. The Czech Ministry of the Environment has granted Olomouc scientists a permit to verify the properties of this barley in field conditions.

The experts used the modern CRISPR/Cas9 genome editing tool, which allows the DNA of a plant to be “edited” at a precisely determined location. This makes it possible to specifically modify the agronomic properties of plants, such as resistance to diseases or biotic and abiotic stresses. In developing this barley, Olomouc scientists worked with a mutation of the PIL1 gene, which is involved in regulating plant growth in response to light conditions. Its mutation is expected to disrupt stem growth control, leading to a shortening of the internodes in the plant stem.

The plant was derived in such a way that no foreign DNA remained in its genome.

It differs from the original variety only by a single change in the PIL1 gene. “The functional sample of spring barley labelled TL-GP-PIL1 was first grown in a greenhouse for genetically modified organisms under clean room conditions. We developed the mutated, edited line in collaboration with Prof Peter Hedden from the Rothamsted Research Institute in England,” said Ludmila Ohnoutková from the Laboratory of Growth Regulators.

As part of a four-year experiment, scientists will monitor the growth stages of barley plants, their yields, and grain quality in the field. The experiment also includes crossing the new line with elite Czech spring barley varieties. The project builds on previous research on genetically modified barley conducted at UP FS in the past, which aimed to increase the nutritional parameters of barley. (cho)



He successfully defended his practical thesis, the first at the Faculty of Law

The first practical thesis. This is how Vojtěch Hudec, a student of the Master's programme in Law and Legal Science, made history at the UP Faculty of Law (UP FL) with his successfully defended thesis. He drafted a legal document – an award in international arbitration proceedings issued under the Arbitration Rules of the International Chamber of Commerce.

"I'm pleased that exactly one year after the introduction of this option, the first defence of a practical thesis took place at our faculty. It turned out that when preparing a specific document, it is necessary not only to master its formal aspects and take into account procedural steps, but also to subject the subject matter itself to detailed and specific analysis in a practical context," said Maxim Tomoszek, UP FL Vice-Dean for Academic Affairs, who was also a member of the examination committee for the defence of this thesis.

Hudec's thesis was entitled "ICC Arbitral Award on Cyberattack Disclosure un-

der CISG" and was supervised by Slavomír Halla from the Department of International and European Law. The dispute he adjudicated was a fictitious case that formed the basis of the prestigious Willem C. Vis International Arbitration Moot, an international student competition in which he participated. "The student had experience with simulated arbitration tribunals. I thought it would be appropriate and practical for him to experience the case from the other side, to become an arbitrator and write an arbitration award. And that was a perfect opportunity for a practical thesis," explained Halla.

Author Hudec considers the new practical thesis to be very beneficial. "The practical form is a great way to transfer specific skills from a thesis into legal practice, and it allows students to create something truly new and original instead of choosing increasingly narrower academic topics. At the same time, it brings new possibilities for dealing with the specified scope – divid-



ing it into practical and theoretical parts, which can help many students write even better theses."

Vice-Dean Tomoszek hopes that this very positive first experience will convince other students who want to stand out from the crowd in the job market to choose a practical thesis. (eha)

UP Faculty of Arts honoured eleven alumni

Jan Stejskal, Dean of the UP Faculty of Arts (UP FA), honoured eleven selected alumni of the faculty. He highlighted not only their professions, but also the fact that even though their journey began at UP FA in Olomouc, they have not forgotten their alma mater to this day.

"The meeting was lovely, free of unnecessary formalities, entertaining, and touch-

ing. It was very interesting to hear the life stories of the other alumni. I feel honoured and grateful for the award. I'm proud to have had the opportunity to study at an institution that does not just 'spit out' its graduates, but is interested in following their next steps, maintaining contact with them, and building a community," said award recipient Jitka Hanušová, a Czech language

specialist, Finnish translator, editor, poet, and photographer.

Playwright, theatre director, and writer David Drábek was enthusiastic not only about the award, but also about the enjoyable meeting, and he had this message for current students: "Don't give up on your dreams, pursue them with passionate enthusiasm, and don't take yourselves too seriously!" In addition to Hanušová and Drábek, diplomas were also awarded to Germanist and sculptor Christine Habermann von Hoch; psycholinguist and university lecturer Kateřina Chládková; social worker and existential conciliator Miroslav Kadlubiec; Germanist and world and Austrian champion in Olympic boxing Michaela Kotášková; secondary school teacher and career counsellor Magda Králová; director of Academia Film Olomouc Eva Navrátilová; diplomat Eva Plocek Kubešová, secondary school teacher and festival programmer Aleš Říman; and archaeologist Sylva Tichá Bambasová.

UP FA honours its alumni every year, to underline how proud it is of them. The aim is also to show current students how diverse their field of study and life paths can be. (map)



UP Faculty of Physical Culture thanked its alumni

Before students returned for the new academic year, the UP Faculty of Physical Culture (UP FPC) welcomed its alumni. For those who completed their studies between 1998 and 2000, it organised a silver graduation ceremony, and five distinguished graduates were honoured at the large faculty meeting.

Among those who received a commemorative diploma at the silver graduation ceremony were David Smékal, the current Head of the Department of Physiotherapy, and Zdeněk Dvořák, who studied recreation and journalism and now works at the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade. Dean Michal Šafář and Vice-Rector Miroslav Dopita wished the 24 silver graduates all the best for the coming years.

The fanfare of the ceremony at the Archbishop's Palace was followed by a casual programme at the BALUO Application Centre. The event brought together people connected with UP FPC through their studies or work, as well as participants in the traditional event for physical education teachers, Těloolomouc [Olomouc Body], which took place on the same date.

During the evening, Dean Šafář honoured five graduates selected for the faculty's "wall of fame". "You are an inspiration to us, and we thank you for spreading the good name of UP FPC and proudly identifying with the faculty," he said. The honourees included Hana Majarová, Head of the Czech Archery Association's national team committee; Jarek Černý, fitness trainer and ket-

tlebell lifting competitor; four-time Olympian Miroslav Vraštil; and Marek Vaněček, co-founder of the Švihej [Jump Rope!] project, who, together with his brother, taught those present a few jump rope tricks.

Another of the award winners, Jana Stejskalová, chair of the Czech-Moravian Nordic Walking Federation and a Recreation Studies graduate, wrote for the faculty website: "Recreation was the best school I could have gone to. The beginnings were difficult, but I can't really think of anything that could be considered a mistake. There were tears shed, I was afraid of many challenges, and I often had to overcome discomfort and my own limits. But that's what helped me. The school, the Nordic Walking courses, everything has moved me forward in life in an incredible way." (vim)



The Centre for Digital Health prepares medical students for working with AI and other modern aids

Modern technology is changing the world, and medicine is no exception. The Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry (UP FMD) at Palacký University in cooperation with University Hospital Olomouc, is preparing its students for electronic information systems, telemedicine, and artificial intelli-

gence in patient care. Fourth-year students undergo training at the Centre for Digital Health, and UP FMD is the first faculty in the Czech Republic to introduce such a compulsory subject.

The course is very practical, but it also covers important theory – about the benefits of the digitisation of healthcare and how to work with new tools *lege artis* and correctly with regard to applicable legislation and cybersecurity.

"Telemedicine and artificial intelligence are our most debated phenomena of today. Among other things, we familiarise students with the principles of remote communication with patients, explaining that it is not appropriate to send medical records via WhatsApp or email, and we discuss the principles of anonymisation and pseudonymisation of shared materials, as well as the design of applications for patients," explains Antonín Hlavinka, head of the centre.

"Regarding AI, we talk about its use when studying, where even free versions can be very useful, but also in administration. For clinical use, we have a whole range of practical examples of applications that, for example, detect the extent of injuries, and students also try to summarise comprehensive reports in this way. However, we always emphasise that the responsibility lies with the individual doctor. We try to educate students and doctors not to be afraid of AI, but at the same time not to rely on it too much," he adds.

The course also includes visits to selected faculty and hospital workplaces where modern aids such as the da Vinci surgical robotic system, 3D printing, and AI are used, so that students can see them and even get hands-on experience.

The Centre for Digital Health was established in 2022 as a joint workplace of UP FMD and University Hospital Olomouc, thanks to support from the National Recovery Plan. (vim)



Experts on political engagement of social workers spoke at CMFT

The Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology (UP CMFT) welcomed two exceptional guests, renowned experts on the political engagement of social workers: John Gal, professor of social policy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Idit Weiss-Gal, professor of social work at the University of Tel Aviv. Their lecture, entitled "When Social Workers Not Only Implement but Also Influence Policy", attracted dozens of students, academics, and social workers.

"This was the first event in the Czech Republic dedicated exclusively to the role of social workers in promoting social justice and human rights at the systemic level. We named it 'Achieving More' because it is through systemic change that we can achieve more than by helping individuals or groups alone. We are extremely pleased

that such distinguished foreign guests came to our faculty," said Agnieszka Zogata-Kusz from the organising Department of Christian Social Work.

John Gal and Idit Weiss-Gal have been developing the issue of political engagement of social workers for more than 20 years, and not only in research. They are the initiators of the introduction and expansion of education in the field of political practice in social work in Israel. Thanks to their work, this area is also developing and consolidating in other countries. "They've been involved in a number of policy changes at various levels. They have also involved their students in this activity, which – especially in recent years – is not easy in Israel," added Zogata-Kusz.

The lecture, together with a follow-up panel featuring a number of experts with



knowledge of the political process and experience in influencing social policy, aimed to point out that social workers should not only be those who "save others from drowning", but also those who explore the causes of their problems, which are very often systemic. (per)

Faculty of Health Sciences hosted traditional international schools and new conference

One week, three international events. The Faculty of Health Sciences (UP FHS) organised its traditional school of physiotherapy and occupational therapy, along with a concurrent school of midwifery. The traditional events were complemented by the pilot edition of a conference with the Latin title "Per salutem coniungere".

The fifth Czech School in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy offered a programme packed with workshops, joint

projects, and excursions. The international event, whose programme was prepared by the UP FHS Department of Clinical Rehabilitation, was attended by guests from partner universities in Iceland, Spain, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Poland. The entire programme commenced on September 8, which has been designated World Physical Therapy Day for almost thirty years. "The theme of this year's Physical Therapy Day, i.e. the role of physiotherapy and physical

activity in healthy ageing with a focus on preventing frailty and falls, closely corresponded with our programme," said Petra Gaul Aláčová, on behalf of the organisers.

For the fifth time, the Olomouc School in Midwifery was held at UP FHS. Academics and students from Estonia, Belgium, Norway, and Hungary participated in workshops and lectures on newborn resuscitation, ultrasound screening, and breastfeeding. "The main benefit of the event is the practical training of future midwives in the European context – students compare what they have learned with practices in other countries, which may differ for various reasons," summarised Štěpánka Bubeníková, Head of the UP FHS Department of Midwifery.

Connecting through health – this is the translation of the Latin title *Per salutem coniungere*, given to the conference organised by UP FHS in cooperation with University Hospital Olomouc. The main part of the programme was devoted to neuroscience nursing. "Presentations by Czech and foreign speakers from the United Kingdom, Israel, and Poland confirmed how important it is to connect clinical practice with science and education," emphasised Daniela Bartoňíčková, Head of the UP FHS Department of Nursing. (dkr)





Brothers Jan and Lukáš Zdražil find common ground even in science

The motivations for pursuing the path of science vary greatly. For brothers Jan and Lukáš Zdražil, a scientific profession was definitely not their childhood dream. Nevertheless, today they both work at the Czech Advanced Technology and Research Institute (CATRIN) at Palacký University, combining materials and plant research and information technology with the aim of applying their findings in practice. And they make no secret of the fact that family ties play a great role in this journey.

“As kids, we wanted to be binmen. We even greeted the binmen by saying ‘Hey Dad!’, which our mother didn’t take very well. The profession of scientist never came up when we were choosing our careers. Our parents let us choose for ourselves. However, they’ve always taught us that family is the most important thing,” both brothers agree.

Lukáš, who is four years older, wanted to stay true to the family tradition and applied to study medicine. When that didn’t work out, he went to study chemistry at the Brno University of Technology. “Chemistry appealed to me, so after a year I didn’t even try to apply for medicine again. In my third year, I was sure that I wanted to devote myself to science. Today I can’t imagine doing anything else,” says Lukáš, who completed his doctoral studies in Physical Chemistry at Palacký University and who at CATRIN focuses primarily on the development of photoluminescent nanomaterials and their use in solar energy harvesting and sensor technologies.

Jan realised his affinity for science while studying Cyber Security at Tomas Bata University in Zlín. That led him to pursue a doctoral degree at the VSB – Technical University of Ostrava, during which time

“Our parents let us choose our careers ourselves. However, they’ve always taught us that family is the most important thing.”

he began collaborating with CATRIN in research. He facilitates his colleagues in plant and materials research in the acquisition, processing, and analysis of data. Their common goal is to contribute to the development of technologies that have the potential to be applied in practice.

In addition to sharing an office as well as their passion for science, which they discuss at home after work or over a beer in the evening, the two young scientists now also have a common research topic. "The research is still in its infant stage, but basically we're trying to use atomic engi-

neering and carbon dots in plant research. I specialise in materials, and Jan processes the huge amount of data we collect. By using AI, among other things, we determine from the data whether our strategy is functional or not," explains Lukáš, who already has placed a number of publications in prestigious journals and has completed several internships at the Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen–Nuremberg, Germany. His research into the use of new materials in the preparation of a luminescent solar concentrator was previously supported by the UP Endowment Fund.

Jan, the younger sibling, is still pursuing his doctoral studies at VSB-TUO. The first concrete outcome of his interdisciplinary and inter-university collaboration is the AMULET modular system, which uses images of plants to enable faster and more accurate analysis of plant characteristics, which can help farmers and breeders develop more resistant and higher-yielding crops. "I really enjoy my work. I could work in IT at a private company, but what's important to me is that our research can be beneficial in practice. And yet another huge benefit is that I can work with my brother," adds Jan.

Olomouc schoolchildren identified dangerous places, but don't get much exercise

New findings on schoolchildren's physical activity, as well as the identification of dangerous spots on the way to school, were revealed in a survey examining the impact of the urban environment on children's active transportation in the context of their 24-hour physical activity. Experts from Palacký University collaborated with the Olomouc City Council, which has access to the schoolchildren's responses.

The questions answered by Olomouc primary school pupils in the questionnaire with an interactive map included how they get to school, whether they perceive any barriers along the way, whether they feel safe in the vicinity of their school, etc. On the map, they recorded their route to school and the risk areas they encounter along the way. Among the 540 points identified were, for example, problemat-

ic or missing pedestrian crossings and locations with concentrations of individuals who harass passers-by.

"We followed up on a previous survey called Safe Way to School and managed to collect data from 1,050 children. Their suggestions were then assessed by the Office of the Olomouc City Architect in terms of possible solutions. Some things have already been resolved, while others have been forwarded to the relevant authorities. Only 4% of the suggestions were deemed unsolvable," said Michal Vorlíček, the main investigator from the UP Faculty of Physical Culture.

At ten selected schools, eighth-graders (13–14-year-olds) also wore a device that monitored their physical activity. Researchers monitored approximately 200 schoolchildren to see how much and how

intense was the physical activity they had during the day, for how long they were sitting, and how much sleep they got. "The conclusion is that an average eighth-grader in Olomouc does not meet the World Health Organisation recommendation of 60 minutes of moderate to high-intensity physical activity. The average was less than 45 minutes. However, when it comes to sleep, eighth-graders in Olomouc are doing well, sleeping around 8 hours," said Vorlíček.

The results of the monitoring and other findings were discussed with pupils and teachers at the participating schools. "During these discussions, the students themselves came up with ideas about what they could change in their lives to get more exercise, such as getting off the tram one stop earlier, and so on," he added. (vjm)

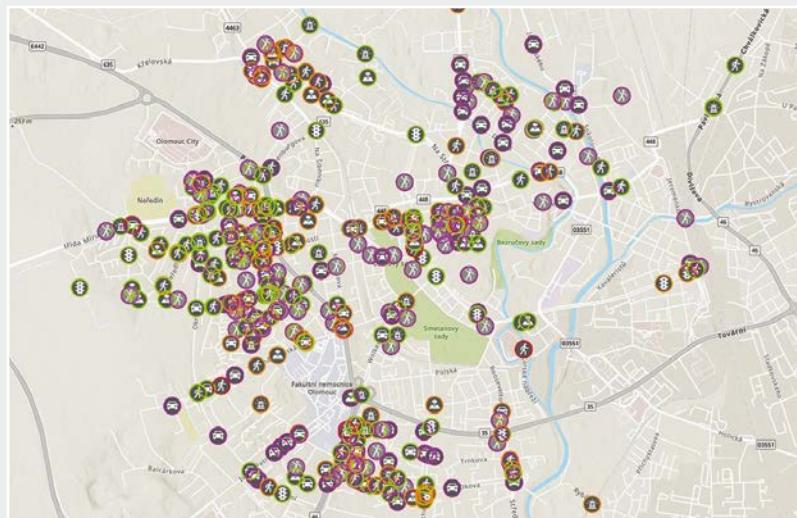


photo: M. Višňa

Student Věra Kafková discovers 19 plant species in Olomouc new to Czechia

Even secluded urban spots can hide unexpected botanical treasures. While exploring the wider centre of Olomouc, Věra Kafková, a UP Faculty of Science student of botany, discovered 19 species of plants that had not yet been reported in the Czech Republic. For this extraordinary floristic discovery, she received the Vit Grulich Prize from the Czech Botanical Society.

"This amazing award is a huge honour for me; I really appreciate it, it means a lot to me. At the same time, it gives me motivation for the years to come. I've always enjoyed searching for plants and identifying them; however when you're recognised in this way, you really find it meaningful and you have the desire to keep going on," she said.

In her Bachelor's thesis, which took the top prize in the Dean's Award Student Scientific Competition, Kafková mapped 324 non-native and 54 endangered plant species. Her findings confirm that cities are a significant gateway for the introduction of plants from other parts of the world.

"During the mapping, I surveyed the entire area of interest to make sure I covered every single street. Urban flora changes rapidly in space and time. You never know what you're going to find, and that's what I loved about it. Botany, and especially floristics, is something I really found myself drawn to, something that fulfils me," said the student, who has been systematically focusing on floristics for two whole years.

One of her most valuable discoveries is

Eragrostis virescens, a grass originating in America. Although botanists in Olomouc had noticed it before, they did not identify it as a species new to Czechia. "The discovery of a new grass that is difficult to distinguish from other species requires outstanding observational skills. This was one of the reasons why we awarded this discovery with a prize named in memory of one of our greatest botanists," said Milan Chytrý, chair of the Czech Botanical Society.

According to experts, the results of Kafková's work confirm that urban environments create suitable conditions for the spread of non-native species, typically from ornamental gardens or along roads. Climate change also plays a significant role.

"Urban flora changes rapidly in space and time. You never know what you're going to find, and that's what I love about it."



popularisation



Veronika Šedajová wins the national final of Falling Walls Lab competition

UP achieved phenomenal success at this year's national final of the Falling Walls Lab competition, where young scientists present their research in only three minutes. Veronika Šedajová from UP CATRIN succeeded in competition with fourteen other young innovators. She won not only the expert jury prize, but also the Audience Award, and will represent the Czech Republic at the global finals in Berlin.

Three minutes, two presentation slides, and a scientific topic that breaks down barriers – these are the rules of the prestigious international Falling Walls Lab competition, the global finals of which are always held in Berlin on the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The national winner was Veronika Šedajová, who is conducting research into graphene supercapacitors and focused her presentation on their use in pacemakers. In addition to the clarity of contestants' presentations, the jury also appreciated their innovative approach, and since Veronika's technology is already at an advanced stage of development, she had an undeniable advantage. In addition to the main prize, she also won the Audience Award. "I'm so very happy about both awards. I think the audience was interested in my topic because almost all of us know someone who has a pacemaker. Our technology affects a huge number of people," said the winner.

In addition to her, Andrea Nedělníková and Tomáš Malina from UP CATRIN, Silvie Dostálková from the UP Faculty of Science, and Eliška Zgarbová, a UP graduate who is continuing her research at the Department of Pathophysiology at the MUNI Faculty of Medicine in Brno, also presented their projects in the competition finals at the National Library of Technology in Prague.

"Such a large representation in the Falling Walls Lab final confirms how dominantly UP popularises science on the domestic scene. I'm very pleased that our scientists are entering similar competitions and presenting their work to the public," said UP Rector Michael Kohajda. (luž, rdic)

Eva Navrátilová receives prestigious award for research popularisation

Eva Navrátilová has been granted a major award for her work. The director of the Academia Film Olomouc international science documentary film festival received the Research, Development and Innovation Council Chair's Award for the Promotion and Popularisation of Scientific Research. "Without the ability to communicate scientific knowledge to the public in a highly comprehensible way, science loses its social dimension and, as a result, even people's interest in science. In this regard, Eva Navrátilová's work is an example of how science can be conveyed to people with respect for scientific work and at the same time with humanity and comprehensibility," said Marek Ženíšek, Czech Minister for Science, Research, and Innovation, who presented the award.

Navrátilová was nominated by Jan Stejskal, Dean of the UP Faculty of Arts. "She has long been committed to popularising science and research with extraordinary

dedication. With her proven talent, experience, and personal enthusiasm, she contributes significantly to the positive image of Czech science in the European context. Although she is not a scientist in the strict sense of the word, her work often has a fundamental impact on how science is perceived in society," said Dean Stejskal.

Eva Navrátilová gave thanks to her colleagues. "I greatly appreciate this award. I see it not only as recognition of my work, but above all, that of all the teams I have had the opportunity to work with over the years. I am also very grateful that my home Faculty of Arts nominated me for this award. It was thanks to its support and its inspiring teachers that I came to love the popularisation of science," said the laureate during the ceremony.

UP Rector Michael Kohajda also congratulated on her award. "Eva took over the management of AFO in 2022, when the



festivals had been held online-only for two years in a row due to the Covid-19 pandemic. She managed to bring the festival – and science with it – back to the streets of the city with great fanfare. Thanks to her, AFO boasts huge attendance, positive feedback from performers at home as well as abroad, and offers an attractive platform for student involvement in the running of the festival. I see her award as praise for Palacký University for hosting this unique science film festival for six decades, making Olomouc an integral part of the global science popularisation scene." (luž, rdic)

Playful picture book *Our University Town* introduces life at university

Arno the chameleon is missing. Somewhere in a classroom at the medical faculty. Can you help find him and tell his story? This is a brief description of one of the many storylines awaiting preschoolers in the new picture book *Our University Town* by illustrator Barbora Valecká and co-author Tereza Vintrová. The book is published by Palacký University Press.

Reading the book, children will experience a whole year in a university town and learn what studying and working at a university involves and how much it resembles their adventures in kindergarten. The guide to this interactive publication, full of accompanying tasks and illustrated stories, is the aforementioned chameleon, as well as five-year-old twins Teo and Lea and other children and adult characters.

The publication features a popular large-format concept, with countless micro-sto-

ries unfolding on lavishly illustrated two-page spreads. Children follow the individual characters throughout the academic year, searching for them in a whirlwind of cartoon storytelling, uncovering their fates and plots – and finding lost items and engaging in fun activities in the process.

“Each two-page spread focuses on a specific season and the essential activities associated with university life – whether it’s May student celebrations, exam periods, or graduation ceremonies. At the same time, we looked for parallels between the world of preschool children and the university environment,” says the book’s illustrator and co-author of the concept, Barbora Valecká. “Each two-page spread helps develop children’s imagination, observation, visual memory, and vocabulary,” adds the co-author and editor of the book, Tereza Vintrová, listing the benefits of the book for preschoolers.

The book is also linked to a website where parents and teachers can find a wide range of additional games and activities – from manual to physical activities, including instructions and worksheets. Everything can be easily printed out and used again and again. There are also tips specific to kindergarten teachers. Thanks to a free methodological guide, the book can also be used effectively in kindergarten activities and in larger groups of preschool children.



text: Eva Hrudníková
photos: Jakub Čermák

portrait



Alla Fedorova
**A lawyer and academic learning
Czech out of gratitude and respect**



During our two-hour conversation, tears ran down her face – twice. The first time, it was when she remembered 2022, and her forced departure from her native Ukraine. The second time, it was when she spoke about the gratitude she feels toward the Czech Republic and her Czech colleagues.

In Olomouc for over three years, lawyer Alla Fedorova has been working, researching, and mainly LIVING, together with her daughter and their dog. And it's all due to the Palacký University Faculty of Law (UP FL), where she works as a researcher at the Department of International and European Law.

“I've always liked the Czech Republic. Until 2022, I only knew it as a tourist. But the war changed everything,” says the Donetsk region native, whose domestic workplace is the Department of Comparative and European Law at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv Institute of International Relations. Her voice trembles while recounting the days when Russia first attacked her country. “Overnight, there was no food in the shops, no petrol, and anti-tank barricades in the streets. My sole task at that moment was to find a way to ensure the safety of my then fourteen-year-old daughter and myself.” Once she was able to find petrol, they got in the car and drove five hundred kilometres west from Kyiv, on to Czechia. First to the flat of a family friend near Karlovy Vary.

As soon as Fedorova was once again able to breathe normally and sleep through the night, she began to browse university websites and look for job opportunities in Czechia. A programme to support Ukrainian academics announced by the Olomouc Faculty of Law caught her eye. She passed their selection procedure and was able to move to Olomouc.

Asset for faculty dealing with large projects

It only took a few weeks for the faculty to realise what a significant asset the Ukrainian expert on human rights, rights protection, and the Europeanisation of social rights was. Soon came success. Together with Ondřej Hamulák, her mentor from the Department of International and European Law, she answered a special Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions call intended for Ukrainian researchers. And their project “The Approximation of Ukrainian Social and Labour Legislation to EU Law” was funded. They worked two years on it. It resulted in recommendations for Ukraine on how to adapt to EU legislation in matters of social law, social security law, and the Labour Code.

“Being awarded the project really meant a lot to me at the time. I was given the opportunity to focus on my own research, and in ideal conditions. Ondřej Hamulák is a fabulous mentor, an expert in his field, and a great guy,” she says. And the faculty could celebrate, too. It was the first Horizon Europe project awarded to UP FL as the main investigator.

Last year, Alla Fedorova received more prestigious support for her further research work. She is the main investigator of the project “Social Rights of Temporarily Protected Persons from Ukraine in EU Countries: Development and Key Challenges”, financed by the Czech Science Foundation (CSF). Being awarded a CSF grant in the area of law is quite a rarity for a non-Czech.

And in addition to the CSF project, she has big plans for the coming months: together with Ondřej Hamulák, she is planning a conference on the application of Court of Justice of the European Union

Alla Fedorova (b. 1976)

She is a graduate of the Donetsk National University Faculty of Law. She was made an associate professor at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv in 2003. She teaches in the Department of Comparative and European Law at the Institute of International Relations at that prestigious university. She specialises in protection and Europeanisation of social rights. She left for the Czech Republic with her daughter after Russia invaded Ukraine. She started at the UP Faculty of Law as a research worker in 2022 and became a postdoctoral fellow of Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions 4Ukraine. In the coming three years, she will work as the main investigator for the project “Social Rights of Temporarily Protected Persons from Ukraine in EU Countries: Development and Key Challenges” financed by the Czech Science Foundation. She sits on the European Committee of Social Rights.

case law in Ukraine. They would like to invite Czech colleagues, experts from various countries, and especially Ukrainian judges from the Constitutional Court of Ukraine.

To Strasbourg, for European Committee of Social Rights meetings

Fedorova conducts research, organises conferences and round tables, participates in teaching, including in Ukraine, and roughly seven times a year travels from Olomouc to spend a week in Strasbourg, sometimes driving there herself. Not for the monuments and its famed food, but as a member of the European Committee of Social Rights – an important controlling and executive organ of the Council of Europe, which has the task of monitoring European social charters and how they are being adhered to. She was nominated by the Ukrainian government and chosen by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. She is the only Ukrainian on the fifteen-member committee of independent and political

ly unaffiliated experts. “It is a huge honour for me to cooperate with the top European experts in this field, to be a part of a chosen few. It’s an enormous responsibility,” she says with pride and humility, for she does not only consider her membership in the committee as a personal triumph, but as an important signal for all of Ukraine. “I can pass my experiences on, for example to Ukrainian and Czech students.”

When it comes to speaking about the future, she admits that the war has impacted planning. “Life has shown me that all our plans can evaporate in seconds. When I left with my daughter for the Czech Republic, I thought we’d be here for a month. I believed that international sanctions and pressure from Europe and the US would stop Russia. But that didn’t happen. After 2022, I focus on short term goals.”

She has fallen in love with the Czech Republic. She loves the history, the tastes, aromas, and the atmosphere of Olomouc, her university family and the locals. “Every-

one is so friendly, from my colleagues at the faculty who have taken me in and also taken an interest in what I do, to the people I meet in the streets. Whenever I needed help, I always got it,” she adds, after a moment of silence. “Every time I return to Olomouc, I feel enormous gratitude. I’ve got my daughter here, my dog, and new colleagues who have become friends. But it is still my second home. Home for me is Ukraine. I feel like I am living a double life. It can be quite exhausting.”

No matter whether Alla Fedorova will live in Ukraine or keep straddling the two countries, she has decided to learn Czech. “For me, to respect the state which has helped me means respecting its language. I’m attending an on-line Czech course, but I don’t have as much time as I would like to spend studying,” she says, shrugging her shoulders and switching from English to Czech. “Děkuji za příjemné setkání a zájem o mě.” Thank you for a pleasant session and your interest in me....

“Life has shown me that all our plans can evaporate in seconds. When I left with my daughter for the Czech Republic, I thought we’d be here for a month. I believed that international sanctions and pressure from Europe and the US would stop Russia. But that didn’t happen.”



Ondrej Hamulák

UP Faculty of Law Vice-Dean for Science and Research, head of the UP FL Institute for Law and Advanced Technologies

I've been working with Alla since 2022, when the faculty hired her as a research worker as part of our helping Ukrainian academics. In the first months of our cooperation it was obvious to me that Alla had huge potential to be an asset for the faculty and university, which her work at the faculty has proved. Alla is incredibly hard-working, indomitable, and creative. The speed with which she adapted to a new and difficult life situation is amazing. She comes to every meeting with new ideas for events, projects, and research collaborations. Her energy and commitment are unbelievable. However, what I appreciate most about Alla is that despite her successes and important international recognition in the European Committee of Social Rights, she is still down-to-earth and humble. Her humbleness and determination are inspirational to me. And I have to say that I have found in her a good friend, one who keeps spoiling me. I can't remember a single meeting when she didn't give me some little present, in the form of a Ukrainian delicacy or French bonbon. I have to admit that while they are often intended for my daughter, sometimes they go astray. Thank you, Alla!

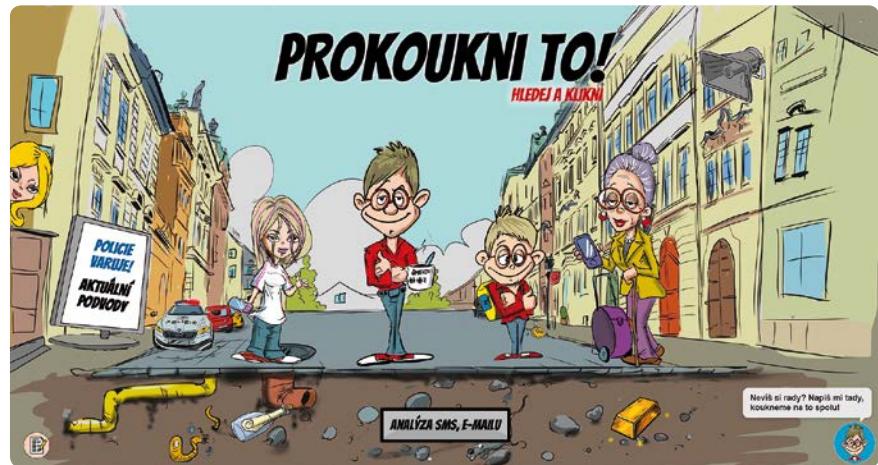


Olena Sviatun

Institute of International Relations, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

I've known Alla Fedorova for more than twenty-five years, since she was a grad student at our institute and I was still an undergrad. Over the past twenty years, we've become not only colleagues, but close friends. I've always admired her dedication to work and her deep knowledge in the area of human rights and the Council of Europe legal system. We've worked together on several projects financed by the Council of Europe and cooperation with her is truly a pleasure. As the first Ukrainian expert, she is representing our country, and especially the Kyiv school of international rights on the highest level in the European Council of Social Rights. Alla is also able to successfully combine her professional commitments with family life – she is a wonderful mother and a caring daughter. I don't know anybody as great and exceptional as Alla.

success



E-Safety helps create new website protecting citizens from cyber-scammers

As part of the awareness campaign Prokoukl to! A ty? (He Saw Through It! Can You?), a new website called Pan Prokoukl (Mr Seethru) was created. It was launched by the Olomouc Region in cooperation with the Regional Police Directorate of the Olomouc Region. The technical background for the platform was provided by the E-Safety team at UP.

The platform is intended to serve as a quick source of information for people who find themselves in a difficult situation involving cyber-scammers. Free of charge and without registration, it offers round-

the-clock assistance through a chatbot named Mr Seethru (an AI tool) that quickly analyses text received in emails, text messages, and WhatsApp messages. The website also offers information on current fraudulent practices, police cases, as well as useful advice and videos that can help people better understand the most common forms of fraud.

“Our main goal was to enable people, such as seniors or basically anyone, to use AI to verify whether they have been the target of fraud. Artificial intelligence large language models are integrated into the

website and trained to provide useful advice concerning cybercrime. They can also evaluate graphic content, such as screenshots of fraudulent messages, fraudulent advertisements, and the like,” said Kamil Kopecký, director of the Institute for Research and Education in Digital Technologies and Cybercrime at the UP Faculty of Education, on behalf of the UP E-Safety platform. He added that the team of experts from UP E-Safety uses the reported content to further train and improve the AI’s functionality and that work on the website is ongoing. (map)

Sensors of the future inspired by winged seeds



A new vision and emerging trend of lightweight, energy-efficient, and autonomous sensors that could represent a breakthrough in collecting key environmental data on Earth and planetary research was described by scientists from CATRIN at Palacký University in an opinion paper in the journal *Trends in Biotechnology*. They have found inspiration for new systems in nature, specifically in plant seeds that are spread by the wind over long distances. They combined these findings with state-of-the-art technologies, including 3D printing, flexible electronics, artificial intelligence, origami-inspired folding mechanisms, and photovoltaic cells.

“Similarly to winged maple seeds or dandelion seeds equipped with parachute-like fluff, the proposed sensors use aerodynamic properties for slow and sta-

ble flight. This would allow them to be dispersed over a large area and collect data on temperature, humidity, and soil quality. Unlike conventional electronics, these sensors are lightweight, environmentally friendly, and can be made from biodegradable materials using a combination of natural and synthetic materials via 3D printing, which means they can be produced cheaply on a massive scale without harming the environment,” said lead author Sagar Arya of CATRIN.

Another novelty in the presented vision is the use of artificial intelligence, which would enable the sensors to optimise their flight paths, process data in real time, and adapt to changing conditions. Further progress will enable the use of ambient energy sources such as wind or sunlight, ensuring the long-term functionality of the systems without external power sources. (srd)

Faculty of Arts psychologists receive Jaroslav Skála Award in addictology

The UP Faculty of Arts Department of Psychology celebrates a special achievement. Its monograph entitled *The Use of the Internet, Social Networks, and Digital Games Among Adolescents: Theoretical Foundations, Diagnostics, and Intervention Strategies* won the 2025 Jaroslav Skála Award. Martin Dolejš, head of the department, accepted the award at the Addictology Topics conference.

“It’s a prestigious award for us, it goes beyond the scope of a single book or specific research project,” said Dolejš together with Jaroslava Suchá, his department colleague and main author of the monograph. The team of authors, which consisted of Eva Aigelová, Helena Pipová, Miroslav Charvát, Nikol Václavková, and Terezie Babilonová, has been conducting research in the field of addictology, the

development and standardisation of psychodiagnostic methods, and the study of risky behaviour in adolescents and adults for several years.

“The Jaroslav Skála Award which is traditionally granted for significant contributions in addiction research, prevention, and treatment, represents a significant recognition for us, not only for a specific achievement, but for the entire scope of our work to date. It motivates us to continue researching and developing evidence-based diagnostic tools and intervention strategies that can make a real contribution to improving the situation in addiction prevention and treatment,” said Dolejš. He added that the award-winning publication can serve as a guide for academics, researchers, and professionals working in education, clinical practice, counselling,



psychotherapy, and anyone dealing with the issue of online addiction. Its goals are simple and clear: to contribute to the understanding of the broad field of addiction and to help create a safer and healthier digital environment. (map)

Ten new professors at Palacký University

Ten personalities employed at Palacký University have achieved the highest scientific and pedagogical title in their fields in recent months and received their appointment decrees from Czech President Petr Pavel and Minister of Education Mikuláš Bek during a ceremony at Carolinum in Prague.

Half of the newly appointed professors are associated with the UP Faculty of Science. Among them is Lucie Plíhalová, who works on the organic synthesis of purine derivatives at the Department of Chemical Biology. “Being named full Professor is

not only an honour for me, but also an opportunity to reflect on my own professional path and who I have become in the world of science and research,” said the former UP Vice-Rector for Science and Research.

The current dean of the faculty, Martin Kubala, who specialises in the structural biology of proteins, and his colleague from the Department of Experimental Physics, Libor Machala, were also appointed. Other new professors among the natural scientists are Karel Berka and Milan Urban, who also works at the UP Faculty of Medicine

and Dentistry (UP FMD) and is involved in the activities of the National Institute for Cancer Research.

Paediatric cardiologist Eva Klásková, who is the UP FMD Vice-Dean and treats young patients in Olomouc and Frýdek-Místek, also successfully completed the professorship procedure. The Faculty of Health Sciences has a new professor in its ranks, Elen Gurková from the Department of Nursing. Petra Potměšilová from the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology was appointed in Special Education.

David Uher from the UP Faculty of Arts Department of Asian Studies, and the current dean of the UP Faculty of Law, Václav Stehlík, are also new professors. The appointment decree was also received at Carolinum by Elen Nováková from the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine at Comenius University in Martin, Slovakia, who completed her professorship at the UP FMD, and Martin Šín, who used to work at the Department of Ophthalmology at UP FMD and University Hospital Olomouc.

At the beginning of the academic year, Rector Michael Kohajda met with the newly appointed professors and wished them “to realise many more projects that benefit themselves, their field, and the university, and to have as much time as possible for their students, including undergraduates.” (vim)



Two awards for Zdeněk Špíšek: Changing the landscape and people's relationship to nature

Zdeněk Špíšek from the UP Faculty of Science Department of Chemical Biology, who advocates for the return of fruit trees to the landscape and motivates volunteers to do so, has become the first ever winner of the new Landscape Personality category in the 2025 Landscape Award. The award ceremony took place at the Partnership Foundation's Open Garden in Brno.

"This award belongs not only to me, but to my entire team, which has been helping me care for the Moravian Karst and the White Carpathians for nine years. I couldn't have done it without them. Under the former regime, our landscape suffered many a blow to its soul, and now it is suffering from global warming. Planting fruit trees has a positive impact on the climate, facilitating cooling and water retention. Our work is about perseverance, and we are increasingly joined by groups of like-minded people. I'm glad that mayors in municipalities today have volunteers at hand who are able to take care of the trees and prune them," said Špíšek.

Thanks to the Trees for the Moravian Karst initiative, Špíšek has managed to plant more than five thousand fruit trees

in dozens of villages. In doing so, he is not only saving old varieties but also restoring the landscape to its original character and strengthening biodiversity. He organises courses and workshops focused on nature conservation and has been training future mountain guides specialising in nature conservation for more than fifteen years.

In October, Zdeněk Špíšek also received the 2024 Blansko Personality Award in the Environmental Protection category. Both juries praised his exceptional contribution to the restoration and practical care of the landscape, his work with volunteers, and his ability to inspire the young and to educate the general public. (cho)



Kateřina Koubová from UP FMD receives Young Histochemist Award

In recognition of her potential and enthusiasm in the discipline, Kateřina Koubová from the Department of Histology and Embryology at the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry (UP FMD), received the Young Histochemist Award from the Interna-

al Federation of Societies for Histochemistry and Cytochemistry. She earned the award for her work on arachidonic acid metabolism in the differentiation and carcinogenesis of intestinal cells.

"Receiving this award is a great honour for me and, above all, motivation for further work. It confirms that the direction I'm taking makes sense and inspires me to look for new ways to advance our knowledge. I greatly appreciate this opportunity and thank everyone supporting me on my scientific journey," said the biologist, who, as a doctoral student, has already received two UP FMD Dean's Awards and the Annual Award of the Czech Society for Histochemistry and Cytochemistry for the best original scientific publication. Recently, she represented UP in the finals of the FameLab Czech Republic science popularisation competition with her research.

Koubová focuses on the differentia-

tion of intestinal cells, specifically the role of soluble epoxide hydrolase (sEH) in this process. She has discovered that the use of sEH inhibitors has a negative effect on intestinal cells, disrupting their development, and potentially, in the long run, leading to inflammation or cancer. Yet these inhibitors are being considered as drugs for diseases such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

"First, we examined cell lines in vitro. When we applied the inhibitor to already developed cells, their microvilli, which are important for nutrient absorption, were damaged. They also had differently expressed proteins than cells that had not been treated with the inhibitor. There were various disruptions in cell function. We then compared the results on human tissues. Their condition after inhibition resembled the environment in tumour tissues," she explained. (vim)



Michal Bartoň: First Olomouc law school graduate to become Constitutional Court judge

Michal Bartoň, head of the Department of Constitutional Law at the UP Faculty of Law (UP FL), will be appointed a constitutional judge by President Petr Pavel. The final necessary condition has been met, with the Czech Senate approving his nomination. This also significantly raises the prestige of the faculty. Bartoň is the first graduate of the re-established Faculty of Law in Olomouc to become a constitutional judge.

“I would like to thank the President for the trust placed in me and the senators for their expressed support. I greatly appreciate it,” said Bartoň in the Senate, shortly after the results of the voting were announced. He received 53 approvals of the 58 votes cast.

His professional scope is quite broad; he lectures on both organisational constitutional law and human rights law, specialising in topics related to freedom of expression. His professional career is not only academic: he has direct experience

in the Constitutional Court, where he has been working as an assistant since 2013. In the past, he was, among other things, a member of the Working Committee for Public Law at the Government Legislative Council.

Bartoň joined the UP Faculty of Law staff immediately after graduation. He was the first UP FL graduate to become an associate professor. He heads the Department of Constitutional Law and is a member of the faculty’s Academic Senate, which he chaired for many years.

The 49-year-old academic was one of the individuals recommended by the faculty to the Office of the President following its call in 2023. “I’m very pleased with the professional success of my colleague Michal Bartoň. I congratulate him on the completion of the nomination process. Bartoň is not only a respected legal expert, but through his attitudes and actions, he represents respect for the ideas and values



of the rule of law. I am convinced that he will be a great asset to the Constitutional Court,” said UP FL Dean Václav Stehlík.

The President will decide on the date of Michal Bartoň’s appointment to the Constitutional Court. The term of office of a Constitutional Court judge is ten years, with the possibility of reappointment. (eha)

University to coordinate new Europe-wide internationalisation opportunities

Palacký University has achieved a success on the European stage. Beginning in November 2025, it will coordinate a 3-year international project, INSIGHT (International Network for Support, Inclusion, Global Harmony, and Training), designed to strengthen the internationalisation of higher education and create a comprehensive support framework for international students and staff. The project will run until October 2028 and has secured a grant of €400,000.

The consortium led by Palacký University Olomouc (UP) includes the Uni-

versity of Warsaw, Université Paris-Est Créteil, and the European University Foundation. INSIGHT aligns with European priorities on inclusion and diversity and reflects universities’ efforts to foster a more open and welcoming academic environment.

“In selecting our partners, we drew on long-standing ties within the Aurora alliance and built on previous successful projects and collaborations,” said Alena Vyskočilová, Head of the Welcome Office and the project’s overall coordinator. She added that of the 38 projects submitted to the European Commission Cooperation partnerships in higher education (KA220 HED) call in 2025 from the Czech Republic, only 5 were successful.

The project’s primary objective is to develop a universally applicable methodology for establishing and operating Welcome Points, central contact hubs providing services for international students and staff.

INSIGHT also advances the concept of “internationalisation at home,” cultivating a global environment directly on the home campus, and supports virtual exchanges.

“Activities will include a summer school, pre-departure support for students going abroad, and the strengthening of peer-to-peer (buddy/mentoring) and ambassador programmes for both incoming and outgoing students,” Vyskočilová added.

“The project places strong emphasis on an inclusive approach and takes into account the needs of diverse groups, including people arriving from crisis-affected regions. Its goal is to create an environment where every member of the academic community is respected, supported, and feels welcome, regardless of background, language, or experience. INSIGHT is building a space where people can find their bearings quickly, feel at home, and fully study, teach, and create,” summarised Pavel Flekač, UP’s institutional coordinator for INSIGHT. (ipu)



Alena Vyskočilová (UP), Carole Torriero, Arnaud Salaver, and Kateryna Verlan, from Université Paris-Est Créteil, and Pavel Flekač (UP).



New university podcast



Palacký University's new podcast is called Studio UP. Its hosts are Rector Michael Kohajda, who interviews students; Matěj Dostálek, Vice-Rector for Communication and Social Responsibility, who invites interesting personalities associated with the university town; Vendula Lužná, who popularises science; and Andrea Hanáčková from the Faculty of Arts, who interviews inspiring alumni. This quartet will gradually be complemented by representatives of individual faculties who have their own established podcasts. (ipu)

Emil Viklický – Made in Jazz

This is the title of a new documentary made by UP in co-production with Czech Television. Emil Viklický, a native of Olomouc, is one of UP's most distinguished alumni, and also a recipient of an honorary doctorate degree from the university. "One could say he is the patriarch of Czech jazz piano.



He has been playing this instrument since childhood, yet surprisingly, at university he did not study music, but mathematics. In our film, we wanted to capture his amazing symbiosis with jazz music; he is so intertwined with it that he has long since transcended the boundaries of the classical concept of jazz," said director Martin Müller from UP Audio-Visual Productions. The film had its world premiere at the Golden Prague International Television Festival. It was broadcast by Czech Television in November 2025. (eg)

Green for Good conference in Olomouc for the seventh time



Plant biotechnology experts attended the Green for Good international conference, which took place in September at Palacký University Olomouc. Seventy leading scientists, industry representatives, and young researchers sought ways to develop sustainable agriculture and ensure food security. "The aim was to bring together experts in the field of plant technologies and to discuss topics such as plant breeding and genome editing, smart solutions for agriculture, the use of waste materials, and diseases and pests in a changing climate," said Ivo Frébort from CATRIN, chair of the conference's scientific board. (srd)

Medal for Services to Czech Archiving awarded to UP



Pavel Urbášek, head of the UP Archives, received the Medal for Services to Czech Archiving. The prestigious award, granted on behalf of the Czech Minister of the Interior for lifetime achievement or extraordinary deeds for Czech archiving, was presented during a ceremony at the National Archives building. (map)

Top women scientists in the Czech Republic



Forbes magazine listed two representatives of Palacký University in its selection of 2025 Top Women Scientists in the Czech Republic. Eva Kriegová (in the photo) from the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry Department of Immunology focuses primarily on research into immunological and genetic biomarkers that can help improve patient care and adapt treatment procedures to the needs of personalised medicine. The second UP representative, physical chemist Veronika Šedajová from UP CATRIN (see p. 13), is involved in the development and research of new carbon nanomaterials for use in batteries, supercapacitors, and other technologies. (vim)

kaleidoscope

SAM'S
ADVENTURES



Trouble at School: Fun and education

The E-Safety project of the UP Faculty of Education prepared a new educational computer game called Sam's Adventures I: Trouble at School. The game is primarily intended for elementary school students. In the story, players find themselves in a school that has been attacked by computer viruses and other digital threats. Their task is to help the main character. The game focuses on key topics of online safety, such as creating and protecting strong passwords, two-factor authentication, safe behaviour on social networks, the significance of digital footprints, and the risks associated with sharing. “It is essential for us that students start learning about online safety at an early age, when they are forming their first digital habits,” explained Kamil Kopecký, author of the game, head of the E-Safety project, and director of the UP Faculty of Education’s Institute for Research and Education in Digital Technologies and Cybersecurity. (map)



Žurnál magazine wins Golden Semicolon award

UP Žurnál magazine received the Top Rated award in the Zlatý středník (Golden Semicolon), a Czech-Slovak professional competition organised by the Association for Strategic Communication and Public Relations, which evaluates the best communication projects and internal as well as external corporate media. “I’m very pleased that we’ve been acknowledged in the category of internal print magazines by communication, PR, and marketing experts, who evaluate the submitted works across various sectors. The judges ranked us among the top internal magazines, and I’m proud that we were able to make our mark with our university magazine among the big business players,” said Ivana Pustějovská, UP media editor-in-chief. (vim)



Top rated

We give help where needed



They cleaned up an animal shelter, tended a hospice garden, even a vineyard in the academic orchard. Over 250 employees from Palacký University, the City of Olomouc, and the Olomouc Regional Office took part in the third annual Employee Volunteer Day. (gsd)

Student Lucie Boušková: Diabetes taught me how to plan



Each year, approximately 60,000 people in the Czech Republic are newly diagnosed with diabetes. It is estimated that in twenty years, there will be about 630 million diabetics world-wide. Lucie Boušková, a student of Paediatric Nursing at the Palacký University Faculty of Health Sciences, was diagnosed with type I diabetes mellitus, an autoimmune disease, at the age of six.

You have to accept the bogeyman

“The disease is kind of a bogeyman, until you get used to it. Once you do that, you will find that you can cope with everything. Of course, I have good days and bad days. Sometimes I feel angry that I have this disease, but I have to accept it as a part of me. And I guess it was better that I was diagnosed at such a young age. I don’t even remember life before it, so I can’t make comparisons. I think it’s more difficult for teenagers to try to get used to,” says Lucie.

The Brno native leaves the house every morning with her trusty friend – her insulin pump. “The technology just keeps getting better and better, the new insulin pumps have been improved so that when the blood sugar level rises, the insulin dose increases proportionally. And it shuts off in the case of hypoglycaemia. I used to use an insulin pen, which had to be injected every night, and taken with food. You could say that, overall, diabetes has taught me how to plan and organise my life.”

Hospital as inspiration

Although she was often hospitalised in childhood, she doesn’t have any phobias about the hospital environment. Just the opposite: when choosing a university, she realised that she wanted to work in a hospital in the future. “I’ve always wanted to work with children, and ever since I was little I’ve been attracted to healthcare, so paediatric nursing was an obvious choice,” Lucie explains. She started her second year

in September. “Of course at first, I worried I couldn’t manage nights and 12-hour shifts, which are part of being a nurse. My diabetic physician also pointed this out. But so far, I’ve managed my internships without a problem, I just have to remember to eat regularly.”

Diabetics generally have problems with rapid fatigue and energy loss. “I dutifully try to keep to a sleep regime where I get at least eight hours, otherwise I can’t focus during the day and feel exhausted. The hardest part is having to go back and forth between the buildings where we have classes. Because then there isn’t enough time to eat. When a normal person skips lunch, it’s ok, but this can be problematic for me, so sometimes I have to fill up on the go,” she says, describing the risks of everyday life.

Diabetes doesn’t stop me

She spoke publicly about her illness at the Congress of Paediatricians and Paediatric Nurses – the 41st annual Days of General and Hospital Paediatrics. “Thanks to taking part in this event, I could get out of my comfort zone and at the same time pass on my experiences and outlook on living with diabetes.”

Diabetes may have slowed Lucie down, but it certainly hasn’t stopped her. If she doesn’t have time for sports aerobics, she still goes to the gym and runs. She hasn’t given up on her dream of running a marathon. And she has a yen for travel. “I love travelling, but I can’t go anywhere for a longer period. I have prescription diabetic aids which are dosed, and I also can’t spend my holidays in the sun, because heat spoils those aids and then I would be in trouble. This year I partly spent my holidays in Valencia, where I went with a friend whom I know from a diabetic camp. I’d also love to go to Thailand, but I have to figure out how to do that,” says Lucie Boušková, revealing her plans.

text: Ivana Pustějovská
photos: Jakub Čermák

interview

A professional portrait of Jiří Dostál, a middle-aged man with short grey hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue checkered blazer over a dark shirt. He is standing in a workshop or laboratory setting, with his arms crossed. In the background, there are wooden workbenches, electronic equipment, and two large white monitors on stands.

Jiří Dostál
There's more to life than digital technology. We also have to develop skills in children

Usually, I look people in the eye when I do interviews. This time, though, I couldn't help but look at the hands of the smiling man in front of me. To see whether they were scratched or bruised. It seemed logical to me that they might be a visible indicator of someone who dedicates himself to technical education. But he had no bruises, even though he had just remodelled the bath in his cottage. My naïve impression of what a person who teaches how to teach "shop or gardening" should look like vanished. Prof Jiří Dostál, head of the UP Faculty of Education Department of Technical and Information Education, breaks all the stereotypes of how to teach "shop". He complements the imaginary saw or hammer in the arsenal of future teachers with modern technology and creativity. And also bees. Really. Bees.

— Professor, where are we today?

Technology rules the world, our mobiles are full of apps. On the other hand, we should have at least basic hand skills – know how to use a screwdriver, how to sew. How do you put the two together? Back in the pre-Velvet Revolution time, before November 1989, in every school there were shops, kitchens, and school gardens, and pupils learned various skills. They were part of a fixed, established educational curriculum. After the revolution, these practical subjects receded into the background: they seemed useless, old-fashioned. Not just here, the same thing happened in other developed countries. The curriculum was gradually extended into information technology, computer classrooms were built, now they teach how to work with computers and AI.

— Which is a good thing, right?

Well, yes, but from the perspective of all-round childhood development, we're missing the target. Education must be balanced in terms of the workload. Like maths, foreign languages, and natural sciences, computer science develops cognitive skills to a great extent; these are academic subjects. But a child can't arrive at school at 8 am and sit all day long until the afternoon and use the same part of their brain. They also need to develop their aesthetic and creative capabilities, which is why art and music are taught. And children need to improve their physical prowess, which is why they have physical education. And there should also be a subject to improve their hand skills, their craftsmanship. I'm not talking about manual dexterity. In terms of technical education, this means combining craftsmanship with creativity and searching for innovative solutions and approaches. The goal is to get the child's hands and head working in tandem. Over time, we have learned it is necessary to develop their technical literacy, technical creativity, and purposeful thinking. We have begun to gradually plan a new curriculum aimed at developing craftsmanship, which is now implemented in schools in the form of new educational programme frameworks. At the same time, schools are being fur-

nished with newly-equipped shops, called "makerspaces" abroad.

— But shouldn't children be able to handle some basic tools – a saw, a hammer?

Naturally they must learn some basic skills. But once they do, it's important for teachers to give them tasks which are creative. If a pupil produces something based on a prepared drawing or photograph, then they are learning rather routine work. But if they are given a task with a specific function or asked to solve some technical problem, then they have to do some thinking. Here's an example from electrical engineering: I need to install a light on a stairwell. The task is that it has to be able to be turned on at the bottom and turned off at the top. And I want the pupil to think about how and what to connect, where to place the switches, etc. This develops technical thinking and the creative approach.

— What's the ideal time to start developing technical thinking?

The sooner, the better. Children aren't automatically born with a positive relationship to technology, but all of them encounter and use it throughout their lives. However, they are genetically equipped with potential which needs to be developed. As a society, we are dealing with a lack of technically educated people. I've discussed this with politicians across the board – the prime minister, ministers, MPs, and regional representatives. They have this deeply rooted prejudice that it's enough to start motivating pupils in secondary schools, so that they continue in technical fields at universities. But that's too late, it's not effective enough. Also, not everyone needs to go to university. This is why I am reacting to this reality with new educational programme frameworks for elementary schools, which will allow them to start technical education in the first grade. And some schools are doing it. But you could begin even earlier.

— Earlier means nursery school....

That's right. This is why I'm working with the town authorities and going to Olomouc nursery schools with university students. We have a programme prepared for them, they try out various skills, hand skills, and these kids are absolutely absorbed. When we announce a sign-up for our next events, the spaces are filled in minutes. Headmasters are literally begging us to come to their nursery schools. I'll divulge an interesting finding in this connection. Not long ago I conducted an experiment. We invited children from five nursery schools to the Faculty of Education and prepared various activity stands for them. It was balanced: half modern technology, computers and robotics; and half places where they could make something with their own hands, create something. Places where they could develop hand skills, and other places where they could develop digital competencies, information technology thinking. And believe it or not, most of the children went right to the hammers and nails and simple electrical engineering. They left the

digital technology alone. When I asked why, they answered: we have that in our nursery school, we're bored with it.

— You have an interesting place at the Faculty of Education. It's called Tech-
noLab – a shop open to the public. How does that work?

We wanted to offer people a space for creativity, to provide the necessary equipment and expertise. Families with children go there, teachers looking for inspiration on what to do with their pupils go there, but even more mature adults stop by – those who want to try something out or need advice on how to do something. Some come just to remember what they used to make with their grandpa. It's a great space, and all are welcome.

— But inspiration alone is probably not enough for teachers to captivate their pupils....

The teacher should have had a quality education and must be well-prepared in practice – and that is what we are trying to do here at the Faculty of Education. And the school must have a shop. They don't have them everywhere, but for instance in Olomouc there are schools with excellent facilities. And the third thing they need is the support of the school's management. If technical education is given secondary status, it doesn't work. But where it does work, it works wonders.

— We're talking about craftsmanship, and what people call savvy. AI probably can't do everything for us...

They used to say the future would belong to technology and manual skills would no longer be needed. Today it is clear that those manual skills, connected with technological thinking, have immense value. Many professions which are based on routine cognitive activities are disappearing – for example accounting, some computer programming positions, etc. These are things that AI actually can do. But craftsmanship – where experience, creative solutions, and savvy are necessary – is not so easy for AI. I'd like to see the day when I want a new bath, so I contact a call centre. A robot answers, it listens to me, and soon a driverless car stops in front of my door, eight robots pile out of it, and by the afternoon, the bath is done. That would be nice, but a robot is not going to remodel your bathroom. At least not for the time being. There do exist innovations, such as 3D printing of houses, but that's still a rarity. Construction is so compartmentalised that human activity remains something difficult to replace. The craftspeople who are able to think and resolve problems are those most in demand today.

— I guess we're not talking about how drudgery, donkey work will disappear, but about how necessary are skill and human experience. They're what's going to be valuable?

Indeed. Being able to think is important. I meet with representatives of various handcraft guilds. They know they can get a con-

Jiří Dostál (b. 1980)

Graduate of the UP Faculty of Education in teacher training for natural sciences, plant cultivation, and technical and information education for elementary schools. He is now the head of the Department of Technical Education and Information Technology at the same faculty. He is the author of a number of publications, the recipient of many awards, and he provides specialised expertise upon request. He focuses on questions regarding teaching technical and modern information technologies in their wider conception, including teaching computer science. He cooperates on devising professional study programmes, and he took part in preparing the Czech Republic Innovation Strategy 2019–2030 "The Czech Republic: The country for the future", working on its Polytechnic Education pillar. Last year, he was promoted to full professor.



struction worker who does odd job work from anywhere, even the other side of the globe. But they lack people who understand things, who are able to come up with a suitable solution according to someone's demands or a specific situation, who know how things should work, how to connect them, people who have expertise. We used to say to kids, go to school so you don't end up as a handyman; today we tell kids, go to school so in the future you can make enough money to pay a handyman.

— You're not just an expert in technical education, you are also a beekeeper and a promoter of beekeeping. How do you manage both?

About fifteen years ago my path led me to beekeeping, which satisfies and interests me. And I actually did connect it with my work at the faculty. A while ago we needed accreditation for our study programme, and in order for us to accept applicants, the Ministry of Education insisted that only focussing on technical education would not be enough. Primary schools do not only teach shop, but also things like home economics and animal caretaking. And headmasters need professionally educated teachers. Home Ec was not a problem; we set up a kitchen and found guarantors with credentials. But animal caretaking? We didn't have the space for horses, so I thought of bees. I brought my own into the classroom. One day, when I was pressed for time, I put them on the roof garden of our building. And there they stayed and became the faculty beehive. We have five colonies and they're great for teaching. Students can try out all the practicalities of bee-

keeping, and they even have the opportunity to taste honey right from the hive.

— How do bees enrich your life?

I like order in life. Bees are not interested in the plans and ideas of people. They don't adapt to us. They have their own world, their own rules, and you have to try to understand *them*. And that is what is beautiful about them – they teach us humility, they remind us that we are not alone on this world.

— We also say that a person should be as busy as a bee. We tell kids that...

Here's the reality. Bees are incredibly hard-working. But that diligence shortens their lifespan considerably. Worker bees – the ones you see in the summer that fly from flower to flower to collect enough supplies for winter – live a mere five to eight weeks. They work themselves to death. So diligence is fine, but we shouldn't overdo it. Relaxation is important, too.

— But there are "winter bees" who live longer, aren't there?

Yes, there are summer and winter generations. To put it simply, winter bees have only one task: to consume the garnered supplies and wait out winter in the hive until spring, when they start a new generation. They live for about eight months.

— So in the case of reincarnation, it would be better to be a winter bee?

Yes. Some would want to be the queen. Nursery school children always ask, what does the queen do in the hive? The stereotypical answer is: she reigns and commands. But

that's not the reality. The regime inside the hive is very strict. The queen, who lets herself be fed, would not survive without the workers, who prepare the royal jelly for her. How about that? The workers, and above all the society as a whole, run her entire life. The colony determines when and where she will lay her eggs. Did you know that during the time of the height of the colony's expansion, which is in May, the queen bee is able to lay up to 2,000 eggs daily, more than her own body weight? She lives roughly three to five years, and as soon as the colony determines that the queen is non-productive, then they replace her with a new one. It's not true that the queen says when it is time to leave. It's not her decision. It's the colony's decision.

— So it would be better to stay who we are.

Definitely. When I was with our kids once in a cat café, I said to myself, I wouldn't even want to be a cat. I'm happier being a dad. I don't only live for science and education, my role as a father fulfils me, I try to take a large role in raising them – though if my wife were here, she might debate the word "large" – but I truly enjoy raising them.

— So you're an enthusiastic beekeeper, a capable technician, and a happy dad?

Yes. Sometimes I say that I wish I had kids when I was younger – maybe I would be enjoying this coffee in more peace. After our first was born, the technician in me would sometimes look for the "Power Off" or "Restart" button. But I didn't find one. You can't stop kids – and I'm glad of it. Kids should be kids.



anniversary

text: Lucie Bačík Goryczková
photos: UP STP

UP Science and Technology Park: A quarter century of giving ideas a chance to live

How long is the road from an idea to reality? Sometimes pretty long. But when you have the facilities and experts at hand who can help breathe life into your ideas, taking an idea from a sketch into actual production, that makes the road a lot shorter. And Palacký University has the facilities and the people. We're talking about the UP Science and Technology Park, and 2025 marks twenty-five years of fulfilling the vision that a university should not only be a place of lectures and exams, but also a space where scientific and entrepreneurial ideas can find their road to reality.

In that time, STP, as it is known by its acronym, has become an integral part of the innovation environment of the Olomouc region, and its results have confirmed its role as a centre of entrepreneurship and knowledge transfer into practice. Its services span from a modern business incubator in four buildings where they help how to jump-start businesses with fresh ideas, to a technology transfer centre which makes sure scientific discoveries don't end up on the shelf but find their way to businesses and customers.

An app for driving sheep? Every idea gets its chance

Actors say there is no such thing as a small part; at STP, there is no such thing as a small idea. And whether it is driving sheep by means of an app, monitoring bee colonies with artificial intelligence, herbal syrups, acupuncture needles, or 3D models of human skulls, STP has been at the birth of all these projects. "Our philosophy is clear: we don't sweep any idea under the rug, every idea gets its chance," says STP's director, Petr Suchomel, who took over the reins this year.

Would you like to start your own business? STP can help

Thanks to STP's support, several successful spin-off firms have emerged from under its wings, such as Iron Analytics, Sensem Communem Rehabilitation Centre, and the Centre for Psychosocial Health. "Searching for opportunities for cooperation between the university and businesses is one of our key activities. That is why we are starting a new project this year support-



ed by the Operational Programme Technology and Application for Competitiveness (OP TAK) – Infrastructure Services. Its goal is to decrease costs and make available the services of the university and its partners to small and mid-size businesses via transfer vouchers,” explains Suchomel.

Envelopa Hub: Science and coffee

STP for one and all. This is a simple way of saying whom STP serves and who can find facilities there. Entrepreneurs, companies, innovators. Sure, but... you'll also find children and students there, as well as ordinary visitors looking for a good place for coffee in the centre of Olomouc. This is all possible due to the new building called Envelopa Hub. Children can try out science in practice in its UP Lab run by Fort Science, students and entrepreneurs can make use of Element Coworking facilities including networking, and regularly scheduled theme-based Element Talks take place there. And the Lyrata café is the place to go if you want that coffee.

Technical facilities ready to go

The Envelopa Hub is a green-wall building impossible to miss. DIGI2Health, a digital innovation hub which focuses on digitalisation of healthcare and support for small and mid-sized businesses in that field, is headquartered there.

The basic agenda of STP is extended by the UPrint 3D printing centre in the Holeček campus, another very important component of STP. UPrint 3D specialises in 3D modelling, 3D printing, and 3D scanning. It also offers tours for schools and companies, and it is open to the general public during the Researchers' Night.

We are enterprising – and we've got the brains

“One of our priorities is to support university students and beginning entrepreneurs. This is why every year we run the UP Business Camp conference and the Enterprising Mind competition, where business-minded people who are just starting out can get their chance,” said Suchomel, immediately adding that every original idea can get support. One example is a creative app for sewing.

“In its quarter-century existence, I believe the Science and Technology Park has been able to create a region-wide community which has access to university technologies, mentoring, a network of experts, and inspirational events. Great thanks are due to everyone who has taken part in the running of STP, including my predecessors. I believe that in the future, UP STP will continue to be a place where people can make their dreams come true and their ideas a reality,” says Suchomel, in closing.



25 YEARS OF STP IN NUMBERS

13 years of the UP Business Camp conference

4 buildings



16 years of the Enterprising Mind competition

496 persons trained in commercialisation of science and research results

75 business incubator clients

18 THOUSAND flowering plants on the Envelopa Hub façade

11 spin-off companies

1 co-working premises



UP honoured volunteers for their work

Helping orphans and refugees, accompanying patients, improving laymen's knowledge of the law. These are after-school or after-work activities to which student, faculty, and alumni laureates of this year's Rector's Award for Volunteering devoted themselves. The award ceremony was part of the MEET UP festival at the start of the academic year. It took place at the new Josef Jařáb Embankment, named in honour of the first post-Velvet Revolution UP rector.

One of the nine honoured was Tomáš Gongol, Rector of Silesian University in Opava, a graduate of the UP Faculty of Law (UP FL). He and his wife have been supporting orphaned children in Tanzania for a long time via their Czech organi-

sation Bez mámy (Motherless). "We are always overjoyed when we are able to support a child up to the age when they can get an education, take care of themselves, and live a normal life," he said, describing the non-profit's volunteering activities.

Another award winner, Yuliya Krasylenko from the UP Faculty of Science (UP FS), has long been involved in integrating Ukrainians into Czech society, and is also the founder of the Ščedryk [The Little Swallow] Ukrainian Community of the Olomouc Region. "I'm surprised. Volunteering is about helping someone, you never expect to get any recognition for it. It's a lifestyle. Plus, Ščedryk is teamwork, it's not only me," she said, thanking UP and the Faculty of Science for their support.

Adéla Valentová from the UP FL was awarded for helping a Ukrainian mother and daughter who fled the war; law students Aneta Rustler, Nga Thi Nguyen, and Klára Holková, among others, were awarded for their involvement in organising the Human Rights Olympiad for secondary school students. Emergency Medicine and Intensive Care student Johana Jánošová is a Malteser International volunteer; and dentistry student Adam Pazúrik was awarded for his work in supporting the university community and student association activities. The seventh laureate was Petra Hrušková of the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology (UP CMFT), who on her own initiative began to coordinate university volunteers to visit cancer patients.

RECTOR'S AWARD FOR VOLUNTEERING LAUREATES

Tomáš Gongol, UP FL graduate, Rector of Silesian University in Opava, awarded in the area of Children and Youth

Petra Hrušková, clerk for UP CMFT projects, awarded in the area of Healthcare

Johana Jánošová, student of Emergency Medicine and Intensive Care at UP FHS, awarded in the area of Social Services

Yuliya Krasylenko, assistant professor in the UP FS Department of Biotechnology, awarded in the area of Culture

Adam Pazúrik, student of Dentistry at UP FMD, awarded in the area of University Community

Adéla Valentová, lecturer at the UP FL Institute of Language Preparation, awarded in the area of Children and Youth

Aneta Rustler, Nga Thi Nguyen, Klára Holková, students of Law and Legal Sciences at UP FL, awarded in the area of Children and Youth





text: Milada Křížková Hronová
photo: Jakub Čermák

Ondřej Němčák: Experience and a different perspective. When I give help to others, I get back more

During the refugee crisis in 2015, he went with Charita Olomouc to help out at border crossings. He will probably never forget travelling by freight lorry or sleeping outdoors in a sleeping bag there. And it was there that Ondřej Němčák, then a student of political science at the UP Faculty of Arts, probably really experienced for the first time what it means to be a volunteer. He could already feel that helping others was something that attracted him.

“Volunteering forces you to step out of your bubble,” he says. He is the Project Manager of the UP Project Service, and although his profession is associated with serving others, he has a great need to be wherever it is important to help out, even physically. Entering non-standard situations is very healthy, he says. “Moments like those always teach you something. The work of a volunteer is far from just helping or giving. It is primarily about what you gain, such as experience, and a different perspective.”

He was always interested in what was going on around him. And he never wanted to stand on the sidelines. Therefore, when a volunteering centre was established at UP, he was among the first to help. He sees the UP Volunteering Centre as a guarantor of help, and since its very beginnings he has been actively responding to its almost every call. He has participated in the majority of its organised volunteer activities, from employee volunteer days to last year’s flood relief in the Jeseník district. He received the Rector’s Award for Volunteering for helping others.

“I’m very sensitive about the situation in the Jeseník district to this day. When we returned there in June of this year, it was interesting to see how much had already been repaired, what was working again. On the main square in Jeseník, you’d be hard pressed to tell that there was flooding there a year ago. On the other hand, if you visit local people’s houses, you’ll see that many locals are not so positive. Even

after a year, there are people who have not yet returned to their homes: some of their houses are still being repaired, some are waiting for the verdict on structural damage. So there’s an upside and a downside to what’s happening in the Jeseník district, it depends on what you want to see,” the young man describes. Part of his family hails from Troubky, a place still synonymous with the Great Flood of 1997.

Helping out in the Jeseník district gave him much in return. “You know, whenever someone used to ask me what I like to do, until recently I would say that I am a passionate gardener, taking care of the raised beds at the community garden near the Olomouc outdoor cinema. When helping in the Jeseník district, however, I got to know a different circle of people than I meet in Olomouc or at Palacký University. A change of scenery, a different outlook on things, and being in the moment are very important to me. They bring necessary values into my life.”

researchers' night

photos: Vojtěch Kmenta, Martin Višňa



Night dedicated to the sciences

Various chemistry and physics experiments, debates with scientists, educational robotics, science cartoons, the use of modern technologies in healthcare and physical activities, a courtroom drama performed by Moravian Theatre Olomouc, tours of places that are usually off-limits – the list of everything that this year's Researchers' Night had to offer could go on and on. In the city, University Hospital Olomouc and the international programming school Logiscool Olomouc joined this popular event alongside traditional UP workplaces. According to Ondřej Martínek, the event's coordinator from the UP Marketing and University Events Office, 12,000 people set out to discover the wealth of human knowledge during the night. Hundreds more were attracted to schools and institutions in nearby Hlubočky, Přáslavice, Prostějov, and Přerov; the Researchers' Night was also held for the first time in the outer reaches of the Olomouc Region, in the town of Jeseník. (vim)



Tereza Marková: She's not afraid to ask questions

While at the clinic she helps improve patients' quality of life, outside healthcare premises her voice is crucial as to which direction universities are headed. Tereza Marková, a doctoral student at the Palacký University Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, represents UP in the Student Chamber of the Council of Higher Education Institutions; she is also a member of the Committee for Tertiary Professional Education of the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education. "My grandma asked me whether I am going to be the Minister of Education or Health. But I don't have such ambitions. At the moment, I just want to get through my doctoral studies," she says, with a smile.

Tereza Marková's research focuses on objective evaluation of patient rehabilitation after strokes. As she points out, con-

tact with patients in the Kinesiology Laboratory at University Hospital Olomouc helps establish her priorities; there are many more important things in life than long discussions at meetings.

On the other hand, she has been involved in academic or school politics since high school, where she was the head of the student council. "I was active even then. It was mainly about being a go-between, communicating information from school management to my fellow students. I also remember that on Teachers Day we made cards and handed them out to the teachers," she reminisces.

The importance of communicating information was something she was aware of later as a student of Physiotherapy at the UP Faculty of Health Sciences. When she was a second-year student, her teacher Petra

Gaul Aláčová wanted to nominate a student from the faculty to the university Senate, and so she decided to throw her hat into the ring.

"At first, it seemed crazy. The student chamber was made up mostly of doctoral students; I was the only Bachelor's student there. I told myself maybe I shouldn't be there, I don't know what I have to offer, I don't even know how the university is run. I went to meetings with great respect, I read everything carefully, I asked my colleagues questions. On top of that, I was commuting from Prostějov and working on my Bachelor's thesis," Marková describes.

Diligence, curiosity, patience, and courage – the latter for when she had the feeling something was important, she wasn't afraid to ask questions. And because of that, her voice was heard often at senate meetings.





Tereza Marková (b. 1999)

A doctoral student in Neuroscience at the UP Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, a graduate of the UP Faculty of Health Sciences, and a physiotherapist at the University Hospital Olomouc Rehabilitation Department. She represents UP and is head of the Student Chamber of the Council of Higher Education Institutions; she is the student representative on the National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education; a member of the Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool of the European Students' Union; and an evaluator for the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education. She has been a member of the UP Academic Senate and the UP FHS Senate, as well as the UP Internal Assessment Board. Her interests include dance.

"I've been literally absorbed by the topic of quality education in recent years, and I know now that certain things look different in reality than on paper."

Moreover, she was voted into the faculty Senate, and later she became a member of the UP Internal Assessment Board, which decides on new academic programmes, among other things. "The people around me began to notice that I have the need to discuss things, so I became a kind of liaison officer, and they supported me – my fellow students would send me their notes from the classes I missed."

In the "big" senate, she served for one term, and though she continued her studies, she didn't run for office again. "Even though some small victories occurred those three years on the faculty and university senates, I was frustrated that other things could not be implemented so quickly and that we were not able to cut through the red tape. I need to go forward, which is why I accepted the nomination for the Council of Higher Education Institutions," she detailed.

First, she was an alternate delegate; now she is the chair of the Student Chamber of the Council of Higher Education Institutions. "To deal with university education as a whole from the students' perspective is difficult, but I enjoy it, and what we are doing has meaning. We're a kind of student 'Super Senate': we discuss various problems, such as school financing,

we host roundtable discussions, and with the non-profit Díky, že můžem [Thanks That We Can], we give out the Jan Opletal Awards to students who make a difference," she says, adding that they often meet even on weekends.

Nevertheless, she answered a call for student representative on the National Accreditation Bureau, which oversees the quality of Czech universities – and she got it. "I'd love to give this new job my utmost, because I think that the role of students there should be prominent and useful. I believe that I'll make good use of my experience from the Council of Higher Education Institutions and the senates. I've been literally absorbed by the topic of quality education in recent years, and I know now that certain things look different in reality than on paper," she adds.

She mentions her membership in other bodies, such as the Quality Assurance Student Experts Pool of the European Students' Union, only in passing. Maybe because nobody would believe she still has the time and energy for them. "I wouldn't want to lose my contact with students or patients in the future. And I'd like to have more time for relaxation and my personal life," she says, in closing.

text: Martin Višňa
photos: Jakub Čermák

alumni

**Jiří Daněk:
A social educator must
be, above all, humane**



Jiří Daněk (b. 1990)

Social educator at the Primary School Přerov, Boženy Němcové Street 16, graduate of Social Education at the UP Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, where he collaborates as a lecturer. He was involved in the founding of the Czech Association of Social Educators, and is now its chair. In his leisure time he enjoys sports, especially swimming and cycling, travelling, walking his dogs, and relaxing with a good film.



A companion whom students can come to talk to about their problems as well as joys. This is how Jiří Daněk, a social educator at the primary school on Boženy Němcové Street in Přerov, describes his profession in simple words. A graduate of the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology (CMFT) at Palacký University, he has been giving support to schoolchildren for over ten years, and is also the chair of the Czech Association of Social Educators. However, the original destination of his career was meant to be the railways.

He wanted to be a train engineer, having studied Electrical Engineering – Electric Traction in Transportation at the technical school in Břeclav. The switch came when he learned that the lives of railway employees were not always easy ones.

“When talking to people, I had a tendency to discuss their problems with them, and I found myself being drawn to psychology. Then I realised it would be nice to work with children and young people, so I thought about becoming a youth educator. But then I discovered social education, which combines these areas. I was excited, and the head educator at a youth home, who had studied social education, encouraged me to apply. The beginnings were a little challenging, but I got used to it, and when we later had to do some calculations in Excel, I really excelled because I had used it throughout my secondary school to calculate loop currents,” says Daněk.

He began working as a social educator in his native Přerov immediately after completing his Bachelor’s degree. “The school

gave me a really great foundation for practice. We debated values and ethics a lot. Or the adaptation course in the first year at the Ignác Stuchlý House in Fryšták – this was where we got to know not only our teachers, but above all ourselves. I then studied for my Master’s degree while working, and fortunately, CMFT was always very accommodating.”

Daněk and his colleagues from the school counselling centre deal with problems such as student absenteeism, disruption in the classroom, conflicts in relationships, and risky behaviour. They also work with socially disadvantaged children and combat early school leaving.

“I try to respond to specific pressing needs. During individual consultations, we try to find solutions and discuss what can be done differently. We also carry out diagnostics in the classroom and try to establish cooperation with the student’s family. We have several preventive programmes dealing with social skills, gambling problems, violence in relationships, and so on,” he explains, adding that students, teachers, and parents of schoolchildren can always come to him.

The pillars of his work are communication, trust, and support. “A good social educator should be, above all, humane, empathetic, and authentic, without pretending to be something they’re not. And when they promise something, they must keep their word.”

It is also important to work on oneself, among other things as a means of preventing burnout. Jiří Daněk says he has expe-

rienced the symptoms of burnout several times during his more than ten years of practice. What helped was continuing education, self-development, and hobbies – such as simply walking his dogs on Čekyňský Hill.

Another encouragement is the fact that social educators have been included in the law regarding teaching staff, in which the association that Jiří co-founded three years ago and now heads also played a role.

“Until now, as non-teaching staff, we were not allowed to work with the class as a whole, which made no sense, because working with classmates is essential in preventive programmes. In practice, this was not really an issue, however we are backed up by legislation now. At the same time, we also have a clearly defined job description,” he says, describing some of the recent changes that are gradually being put into practice. “The association’s activities certainly do not end there; on the contrary, we are trying to provide methodological support during the current changes to social educators, headmasters, and school authorities.”

In addition to his work at school and for the association, which has two hundred members, Daněk also collaborates with his alma mater. He teaches courses and participates in conferences. For the time being, he has declined offers to become more involved in the academic community. “Maybe in the future. I don’t want to completely leave my school; it’s important to be in touch with practice. Plus, I would miss the kids – they are the reason why I chose this job in the first place!”

Botanist Lucie Kobrlová: Cycling to work and even on work trips

Cycling to work is nothing unusual in the plains of Olomouc. But cycling over 1,300 kilometres during a monthly challenge, and repeating it two years in a row? That is unusual. All you need is to go beyond your daily commute to the university and take your bike on work trips.

This is exactly what botanist Lucie Kobrlová from the UP Faculty of Science Department of Botany does. She not only teaches and conducts research at the university campus in Holice, but also goes out into the field to study plants – especially in the spring months, when the May campaign Cycle to Work takes place.

“I try to ride my bike all year round, whenever possible – as long as there isn’t deep snow or it’s not too freezing. The journey to work and back home helps me clear my head, which is necessary after a whole day spent in the classrooms or laboratories,” she says. During the May challenge, she extends her journey home to Olomouc-Neředín to a 30-kilometre ride – either via the southern route through Grygov and Hněvotín, or the northern one via Šternberk.

May is also the month when many plants are at their best, i.e., in the optimal stage for botanical expeditions and sample collection. Kobrlová is currently researching bugloss, a blue-flowering plant covered with rough hairs that sting when touched. “Two species grow in this region – the more common field bugloss and the very similar and overlooked eastern bugloss, often mistaken for the former. My colleagues and I are researching and verifying their current distribution in Czechia and Slovakia,” she explains.

Both types of bugloss grow mainly in warmer areas on the edges of fields, vineyards, and roads. “So I decided to combine work with pleasure and set off to their locations by bike. I got to the closer ones directly from the town, while for the more distant ones I used the combo of the bike and train. At four in the morning, I set off from Olomouc all the way to Lovosice, where I had identified places where the eastern bugloss should be growing. A bike is the ideal means of transport for such an exploration – you can plan your route along the roads between

the fields, monitoring what is growing here and there, and you can stop and collect samples at any time,” describes the botanist.

But how do you find out where to go to find bugloss? When selecting locations, Kobrlová uses not only official botanical databases, but also citizen science projects such as iNaturalist.org. Using a mobile app, anyone can take photos of plants, animals, and even mushrooms they encounter and add them to a global database along with their coordinates. “The app can also suggest an approximate identification, which is then confirmed or modified by the user community. This gives us access to a large amount of data that we can examine in more detail. It is also possible to contact the author of the record, ask them for details, request a closer survey of the area, or even ask them to send samples. My colleagues recently received such a shipment from North America,” she adds.

Kobrlová has been participating in the Cycle to Work challenge for several years with her colleagues from the department. Beyond pooling the kilometres they have travelled, they also go on cycling trips together in the surrounding countryside. For them, cycling is not just a means of individual transportation, but also a team effort – just like modern science, which is based on collaboration, sharing, and openness.



“They’re living, living in the steppes...”

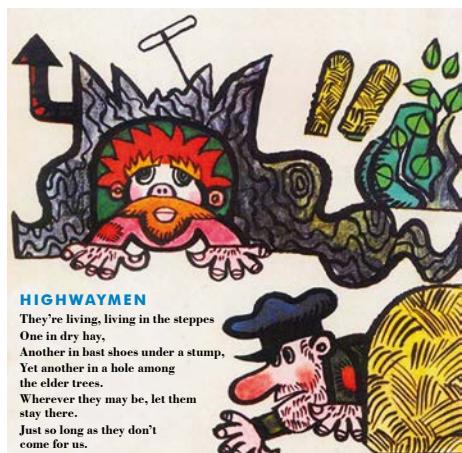
Jiří Pištora (1932–1970), a student who began a double major in Czech and History at the Palacký University Olomouc Philosophical Faculty and who continued in both subjects in the temporary Olomouc Teacher Training University from 1953–1957, displayed his poetic talents already in secondary school. In 1956 he was the editor of *Majalesovy listy*, the Olomouc Majáles May Student Celebrations bulletins, and the following year he became the editor of the Majáles periodical *Troubadour*, published 9 April 1957.

However, it came to pass that said *Troubadour* journeyed all the way to the Central Commission of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, even into the hands of then President Antonín Zápotocký, substantially contributing to the fact that the 1957 May Student Celebrations were not only banned at Palacký University, but at all universities in Czechoslovakia.

Poet and Editor

Pištora’s poetry collections *Hodiny v řece* (Pendulum Clock in the River, 1961) and *Země přibližných* (Land of Approximations, 1965) were well received, as were his numerous and varied contributions to contemporary magazines, justifying Pištora’s job position as the Secretary of the Czechoslovak Writers’ Union starting in 1962; at the same time he was editor of the literary magazine *Tvář* from 1963–1964.

He wrote suggestive nature and love poetry, imbued with existential motifs – for example the quatrain from his collection *Pendulum Clock in the River*: “In the silver alley,/ where the trees have already forgotten their names because of autumn,/ the last sun silently cuts the fog/ into planks.” His literary translations focussed on Russian and Ukrainian “gulag” poetry.



After the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armies on 21 August 1968 – because before that time, the country was without Soviet military bases and what is more “infected” by the ideology of “socialism with a human face” – Jiří Pištora, writer Karel Michal (b. Pavel Buksa, 1932–1984) and Michal’s future wife, poet and translator Viola Fischerová (1935–2010, daughter of philosopher and sociologist Josef Ludvík Fischer, first rector of Palacký University Olomouc after it was reinstated after WWII), emigrated together to Basel, Switzerland.

Several months later, Jiří Pištora returned home, along with his soon-to-be second wife Majka (later Marie Kaplan Sismic); Pištora’s return was motivated primarily on account of his mother and his seven-year-old son Ivan. Pištora and his first wife Ivana divorced.

Highwaymen

Soon after, Pištora contributed four nursery rhymes to the children’s magazine *Materídouška* (Thyme 26:2, October 1969, p. 6–7) from his prepared collection *Brundibášně* (Bumblepoems, published posthumously within the collection *Básně a Brundibášně* in 2011), illustrated by Luděk Vimr (1921–2005).

One of the nursery rhymes was titled “Lapkové” (“Highwaymen”, see illustration). The learned Czech reading public, regardless of age, would recognise the archaism “lapka” (bandit, highwayman), and also know that these highwaymen were Russian because of the Russian word *lapti* (bast shoes or slippers) from Russian fairytales; the same way a hollow under a tree stump was known by the Russian word *zemlyanka* (dugout).

Vimr’s illustration even depicts where these highwaymen lying in wait for us are from: one highwayman a red-nosed alcoholic, and the other in a green army shirt and a cap like Russian *furazhki* military caps, both with red patches (like the Soviet Army epaulets jokingly called *gymnastyorki*). The entire print run of the October issue of *Materídouška* flew off the stands – partly thanks to the “buzz” regarding the double entendres of Pištora’s nursery rhymes, buyers opposed to the post-invasion ‘Normalisation’ scooped it up, and partly thanks to the issue’s liquidation by Secret Police officers. The general public’s awareness of this revolutionary little opus is documented by its mention in the communist daily *Rudé právo* (1 Nov 1969, p. 2) in the note “Ideje z Materídoušky” (Ideology in *Thyme*), signed only with the initials mh and with the closing verdict that mh does not wish for readers of *Rudé právo* “that someone would put incorrect ideas into their children’s heads”.

Persecution

Jiří Pištora was retroactively removed from his position as Secretary of the Czechoslovak Writers Union, and became a closely watched “person of interest” by the Secret Police, charged with alleged ties to Amnesty International in London.

Regarding his “confessions” to the Secret Police, Pištora informed thusly: “I am a Maoist-Zionist-Catholic-Revisionist-Right-wing Opportunist-Bourgeois Nationalist-Cosmopolitan-Western lackey, on top of which I torture my parrot, beat my wife, and in 1953 I even went skinny-dipping at midnight in the Elbe.”

The impossibility of getting real work, his impending criminal prosecution for “parasitism”, and a problematic second marriage all led Jiří Pištora to suicide by gas jet in his flat in Prague-Nusle on 26 September 1970. Pištora’s farewell note ended with these words: “The debacle of my life is but one small part of the horrible moral debacle of this society. We have destroyed the last remnants of honour in the hearts of generations. I don’t know how I can go on here. I am afraid of loneliness because it’s a solitude unredeemed, a solitude ordered upon me, not a gift of solitude: death solitude.”

Memorial

An obituary of Jiří Pištora, together with a drawn portrait, was published under the initials “mb” in the exile quarterly *Svědectví* (Testimony, 1971, no. 42); Pištora’s unpublished poetry was collected and published in London in 1984 by then Czech writer and translator in exile, later Czech diplomat and politician after 1989 Velvet Revolution, Jiří Gruša (1938–2011) under the title *Mezery v paměti* (Memory Gaps; 2nd ed. Prague, 1993). The collected edition of Pištora’s poetry under the title *Básně a Brundibášně* (Poetry and Bumblepoetry, 2011) with an afterword by Gruša was already mentioned above.

A memorial plaque to Jiří Pištora was unveiled on the building of his primary school on Štefánikova St in Pardubice on 16 June 2016; bearing the following text: TO THE ETERNAL MEMORY OF POET JIŘÍ PIŠTORA / (12 JUNE 1932 PARDUBICE – 26 SEPTEMBER 1970 PRAGUE) / PARDUBICE GYMNAZIUM GRADUATE (1951) / CASUALTY OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME / HIS SCHOOLMATES AND THE CITY OF PARDUBICE.

Czech Television
documentary film *Odepsaný
ze života – Erased from Life*





Kaoud Salama

An organic chemist who came to Palacký University's CATRIN from Sohag University, Egypt.
He deals with bacterial resistance to antibiotics in the Era Chair Accelerator project.

عندما وصلت إلى أولوموتس لأول مرة، شعرت بمزيج من الحماس والقلق مما ينتظري. قادماً من مصر، كان علي أن أتأقلم ليس فقط مع بيئة أكاديمية جديدة، ولكن أيضاً مع ثقافة ولغة وأسلوب حياة مختلف. في البداية بدت المهام اليومية البسيطة مثل استخدام وسائل النقل العام أو التسوق أو التنقل في المدينة تحدياً بالنسبة لي. لكن مع مرور الوقت، وبفضل الصبر ولطف الناس من حولي، بدأت أشعر بالراحة والثقة تدريجياً.

لقد تركت أولوموتس انطباعاً عميقاً في نفسي بجمالها وسحرها وتاريخها.الميادين الواسعة، والحدائق الهادئة، والأجواء المليئة بالسلام جعلتني أقدر هذه المدينة كثيراً. وأكثر ما أعتبر به هو الجو الترحيبى في الجامعة، الذي ساعدنى على التركيز في بحثي وبناء علاقات طيبة مع الزملاء والأصدقاء.

كانت الإقامة هنا رحلة أكاديمية وشخصية في الوقت ذاته. تعلمت فيها الصبر والانفتاح والاستمتاع بخوض تجارب جديدة. أولوموتس أصبحت جزءاً خاصاً من قصتي، وسأذكرها دائماً بالامتنان.

After arriving in Olomouc, I was equally excited and uncertain about what awaited me. I had to get used to a new academic environment as well as a different culture, language, and lifestyle. It's a big difference compared to Egypt. In the beginning, even seemingly small things like public transportation, shopping, and finding my way around the city were a big challenge for me. However, thanks to the patience and kindness of the people around me, I gradually began to feel more comfortable and confident.

Olomouc captivated me with its charm, history, and peaceful atmosphere. The beautiful squares, quiet parks, and friendly spirit of the town will leave a lasting impression on me. What I appreciate most is the welcoming environment at the university, where I can focus on my research while also building camaraderie with my colleagues.

For me, life in Olomouc is much more than just an academic journey. It's also a personal experience that has taught me resilience, openness, and the joy of embracing new challenges. Olomouc occupies a special chapter in my life story, and I will remember this town with gratitude.

Discover Your Future at Palacký University Olomouc

In the heart of the historic city of Olomouc lies a place where knowledge inspires change – Palacký University Olomouc. With a proud tradition dating back to the 16th century, the university combines academic excellence, innovation, and a warm, student-friendly environment that attracts unique talents from all over the world.

“Palacký University is not just a place to study; it’s a place to grow, connect, and unlock your full potential,” says Ivoňa Barešová, Vice-Rector for International Relations. “Our mission is to prepare students for an increasingly globalised world – to think critically, act responsibly, and make a meaningful difference.”

As a proud member of the Aurora European University Alliance, Palacký University connects its students with a global network of opportunities, research collaborations, and exchange programmes.

The university offers a wide range of Bachelor's, Master's, and doctoral programmes, from the natural sciences, medicine, and law to the arts, social sciences, and education, including prestigious Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degrees. Students are supported throughout the entire process, from application and onboarding to adaptation and career development.

Short-term programmes, summer schools, and internships abroad further enrich the academic journey and help students gain valuable international experience.

Life in Olomouc offers the perfect blend of academic focus and vibrant student culture. The city's welcoming atmosphere, affordable living, and strong sense of community make it one of Europe's most charming university towns.

“I've been living in Olomouc for almost a decade now,” says Moktan Pratap, a Physiotherapy student from Nepal at Palacký University. “At first, adapting to a new culture and environment wasn't easy, but over time, Olomouc became my second home. The city is peaceful and welcoming, and everything is within reach, which makes student life very comfortable. Studying Physiotherapy here has been a great experience — it's practical from the very beginning. We work directly with patients and learn from professionals who genuinely care about our progress. Seeing how my work helps people recover gives me a sense of purpose every day.”

Whether your dream is to become a scientist, teacher, or entrepreneur, your journey begins here – at Palacký University Olomouc.

UP IN NUMBERS

- 8 faculties
- 1 research institute
- 23,000 students
- 4,000 international students
- 106 countries represented
- 400 international academic and scientific staff members
- Member of the Aurora European University Alliance



“Olomouc became my second home. The city is peaceful and welcoming, and everything is within reach, which makes student life very comfortable.”

Moktan Pratap



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