

Summer School for Young Researchers: Exploring the X-Factor of a City

8. – 12. July 2024, Košice

The Technical University of Košice ([TUKE](#)) organised a unique summer school **Summer Institute: Exploring the X-Factor of a City** from 8 to 12 July 2024, aimed at PhD students and young researchers. The event enabled participants to identify and define the X-factor of the city of Košice, as a combination of unique qualities and characteristics that make it attractive and exceptional, across five themes: Smart City, Sustainable City, Prosperous City, Happy City, and Living City. The summer school, initiated by the [Faculty of Economics](#) at TUKE, welcomed world-renowned experts in urban development to Košice, sparking stimulating discussions and providing valuable insights for the development of Eastern Slovakia's metropolis.



The summer school was an activity of the [European University Ulysseus](#), organised under the auspices of the [Regional Science Association International \(RSAI\)](#) and prepared in cooperation with partner universities: [University of Seville](#) (USE; Spain), [Université Côte d'Azur](#) (UniCA; France), and [University of Genova](#) (UniGe; Italy). Collaboration with the city of Košice and its municipal organisations, whose experts were available for consultations and guided tours throughout the city, was also very significant feature of the event. Moreover as such, the activity was a practical outcome of the first [joint Ulysseus research group](#) focused on the economy and smart cities.

Esteemed experts such as [Carlos Moreno](#) (author of the [15-minute City concept](#)) and [Catherine Gall](#) (France), [Peter Nijkamp](#) and [Karima Kourtit](#) (Netherlands), [Neil Reid](#) (USA), and [Umut Türk](#) (Turkey). Ulysseus was actively represented by researchers [Pedro Palos](#) (USE), [Alessio Tei](#) and [Claudio Ferrari](#) (UniGe), [Paulo Moura](#) (UniCA), and a team from the Faculty of Economics at TUKE ([Oto Hudec](#), [Peter Džupka](#), [Miriam Šebová](#), [Lenka Maličká](#), and [Tomáš Želinský](#)) brought the highest level of current and specialised knowledge to the event.

Participants of the Summer School

The summer school hosted a total of **29 PhD students** and **young researchers** from eight universities: 18 PhD students from Ulysseus member universities (USE, UniCA, UniGe) and other partner universities of TUKE (University of Pardubice, Czech Republic; Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary; and Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania). Eleven participants from Slovakia (TUKE, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice, Institute for Climate and Development, and Trenčín 2026 European Capital of Culture) complemented the group of international participants. They came from **4 continents** and **12 countries** (Bangladesh, Chile, Ghana, India, Iran, Italy, Pakistan, Palestine, Spain, Syria, Ukraine, and Slovakia).

The summer school was organised as a **Blended Intensive Programme** (BIP), supporting the internationalisation and mobility of students.

Diversified Programme

The programme offered a diverse mix of high-quality lectures, workshops, fieldwork, and practical activities, allowing participants to explore various aspects of urban development in Košice.

Introductory online kick-off meeting introduced the topic and organisation of the following onsite part of the event.



The event was officially **opened** at the TUKE rectorate attended by the university management and distinguished guests who gave their keynote presentations. The city of Košice showed great respect and support for the event, with keynote speakers being officially received at the Old Town Hall by Vice Mayor Marcel Gibóda. The first day culminated at KasárneKulturparkin an **evening conference on the 15-minute city concept**, featuring speakers like Carlos Moreno, Peter Nijkamp, Catherine Gall, and Karima Kourtit. The conference was organised by Creative Industry Košice in cooperation with the Košice Self-governing Region, the City of Košice, TUKE, and other partners.



Lectures, workshops but also **intensive team work sessions** (as part of the *Hack the City* block) fulfilled the following days taking part mainly in the **University Science Park TECHNICOM**. Students had the opportunity to consult with invited experts daily during the *Meet the Professors* block. The programme also included fieldwork: city and green space tours, visits to the Košice City Hall, ANTIK Telecom's service centre, IDS Východ, Stará Sladovňa, and a hike to the Hradová lookout tower.

On the fourth day, during the *Bootcamp* block, teams finalised their proposals for the X-factors of Košice and attended an innovative lecture by the globally renowned Professor **Neil Reid** (*The Beer Professor*) from the University of Toledo (USA) at the Hostinec Brewery.



The week-long efforts culminated on the final day, with teams presenting their findings and proposals. Discussions with experts and invited guests followed the teams' presentations. Participants' work continues as they refine and complete their policy studies based on feedback from the experts during the summer months.



What did participants say about the event?

María Lozano (University of Seville): *The summer institute has been an amazing opportunity to learn about the research that renowned academics are conducting in the city to propose ways of designing inclusive and accessible spaces. In this experience, different working methodologies have been put together, and the different meetings throughout the week have enabled close and direct contact between all participants, enhancing new networks and favouring future research with a multidisciplinary procedure. In addition, the approach of the workshop has been eminently practical, and we have been able to experience the city of Košice first-hand to learn from its numerous qualities and propose solutions to meet the X-Factor of a city.*

Ola Qasseer (ELTE Budapest): *The opportunity to participate in the summer institute "Exploring the X-Factor of a City" in Košice has been an incredibly enriching experience. Combining theoretical knowledge with real-life urban experiments allowed us to deeply understand the city's planning challenges and solutions. One of the highlights was engaging with renowned scholars who provided valuable insights, mentorship, and networking opportunities. Additionally, the location in Košice, with its rich history and vibrant culture, offered a great chance to explore the city's cultural heritage, engage with the local community, and enjoy social activities. It was a fantastic experience for me as a PhD student on both academic and professional levels.*

Pedro Coneja (University of Seville): *My experience at the Factor of a City program on the Ulysseus campus was incredibly enriching. The interactive sessions and keynote lectures by renowned scholars like Peter Nijkamp and Carlos Moreno provided profound insights into urban dynamics and the integration of big data. Furthermore, my participation at Ulysseus campus has been profoundly impactful, particularly due to the opportunity for in-person engagement with the city. This firsthand experience has been invaluable for my research, allowing me to observe urban dynamics directly and gain practical insights that go beyond theoretical understanding.*

Jawad Ullah Jan (University of Genoa): *As part of my PhD journey, I've attended some summer schools, but the one organised by TUKE was extraordinary. The commitment and punctuality of the organisers was superb. From group discussions and lectures to interactive workshops, every activity was aimed at developing our soft skills and academic progression. "Meeting the professors" sessions provided us the opportunity to get new ideas and energy from the esteemed professors from around the world.*

Besides academics, a wide array of recreational activities like city tour, visiting restaurants and parks kept us entertained and motivated. These activities were not just enjoyable but also facilitated teamwork and social interaction.

Overall, this summer school was a perfect combination of education and fun, blessing us with valuable knowledge, enhanced confidence, and wonderful memories for the rest of our lives ☺.

Conclusion and Thanks to Partners and Sponsors

The summer school *Exploring the X-Factor of a City* brought countless inspirational moments and groundbreaking ideas that can have a positive impact on the development of Košice. A week full of lectures, workshops, fieldwork, and lively discussions transformed Košice into an epicentre of innovative thinking and international collaboration in urban development.

The final presentations revealed that the X-factor of Košice lies not only in its history and culture but also in its ability to adapt and innovate. The proposals and visions of young researchers offered real solutions that can contribute to improving the quality of life in the city.

The success of this summer school would not have been possible without the exceptional support and continuous cooperation between TUKE, its partner universities (especially within the Ulysseus European University), experts from around the world, and numerous sponsors and partners.

We are deeply grateful to all who contributed to the realisation of this event and look forward to future similar initiatives that will allow us to continue exploring and defining the X-factors of our city. Especially we thank to event partners and sponsors: [The Regional Science Academy \(TRSA\)](#), [RSAI](#), [The City of Košice](#), [Creative Industry Košice](#), [VISIT Košice](#), [Hotel Crystal](#), [Slovak – French University Institute \(SFUI\)](#), [Antik Telecom](#) and [KOSIT](#).

About Ulysseus

The vision of Ulysseus European University for 2030 is to develop an excellency-recognized and internationally attractive open to the world, persons-centred and entrepreneurial European University for the citizens of the future. By doing so, our ambition is to contribute to shape the European Higher Education and Research Areas, and hence the future of Europe.

Ulysseus alliance is one of the 50 European Universities selected by the European Commission to become the universities of the future. Led by the [University of Seville](#) together with seven other universities in Europe: [Université Côte d'Azur](#), France; [University of Genoa](#), Italy; [Technical University of Košice](#), Slovakia; [MCI | The Entrepreneurial School](#)[®], Austria; [Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences](#), Finland; [University of Münster](#), Germany and [University of Montenegro](#), Montenegro), the project will allow students, researchers and graduates to move freely between universities, carry out internships in companies and start high-impact research projects.

More information

- The event was co-financed from Erasmus+ programme funds.
- For more information about the event and its outcomes: summerinstitute.tuke.sk
- Photo gallery is available at the [link](#).
- More information on Ulysseus European University: www.ulysseus.eu

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Co-funded by
the European Union