



UNIVERSITY LIFE

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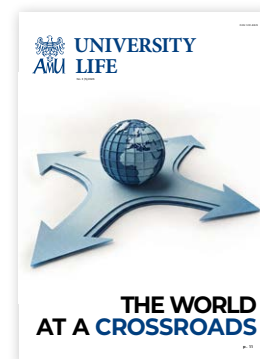
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The Third French-Polish Chemistry Congress in Paris

In early July 2026, the Third French-Polish Chemistry Congress took place in Paris under the honorary patronage of the AMU Rector, Prof. Bogumiła Kaniewska.

The congress is held regularly at the initiative of Prof. Violetta Patroniak from the AMU Faculty of Chemistry, who has fostered Polish-French scientific cooperation in chemistry for many years.

The event provides an important forum for exchanging ideas, presenting the latest research achievements, and developing international collaboration in chemistry and related disciplines. Ambassador Wiesław Tarka officially opened the congress at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Paris. Academic sessions took place at the Scientific Center of the Polish Academy

Anthropologists from Around the World at AMU

More than 1,700 anthropologists from around the world came to Poznań to attend the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) conference, *Anthropology: Possibilities in a Polarised World*, held from July 21 to 24, 2026. The conference was hosted by the AMU Institute of Anthropology and Ethnology.

The conference focused on growing political and social polarization in a time marked by deepening crises and increasingly radicalized views, while also exploring new ideas for addressing these challenges and fostering knowledge, dialogue, collaboration, and a commitment to the common good. Participants

in Poznań discussed the causes and mechanisms of polarization in different parts of the world, as well as the role that socio-cultural anthropology can play not only in analyzing these processes but also in helping to overcome them. EASA 2026 was the largest anthropology conference ever held in Poland. The four-day program featured panel sessions, roundtable discussions, workshops, and film screenings. The opening ceremony and plenary sessions took place in the AMU Auditorium, while the daily sessions were held on the Morasko Campus. The keynote lecture was delivered by Professor Dace Dzenovska of the University of Oxford.

Lanigo Named to Prestigious Global AI List



Lanigo, the first spin-off company from Adam Mickiewicz University, has been named in the prestigious Slatior Language AI 50 Under 50 list for 2026. This list recognises the world's 50 most innovative language AI companies founded within the past 50 months.

This distinction marks a major achievement for both Lanigo and the entire AMU community from which the company emerged. Its growth has been driven by an interdisciplinary team led by Dr. Eng. Artur Nowakowski and Prof. Krzysztof Jassem, who

have successfully combined cutting-edge research expertise with technological and commercialization capabilities. Lanigo's success demonstrates the strong commercial potential of research projects developed at AMU and their ability to generate solutions with tangible global impact. The company's inclusion in such a prestigious international ranking confirms that innovations originating at AMU are gaining worldwide recognition, underscoring the ability of Polish science to set trends in the rapidly evolving field of advanced technologies.



of Sciences in Paris, the Polish Library in Paris, and Sorbonne University. This year's edition brought together more than 180 participants from Poland and abroad, including representatives of 18 Polish universities and research institutions and 20 research centers from other countries. One of the highlights of the program was a series of lectures delivered by internationally renowned scientists, including Nobel Prize laureate Prof. Jean-Marie Lehn, Prof. Krzysztof Matyjaszewski, Prof. Paweł Kulesza, Prof. Bruno Ameduri, Prof. Fabrice Pontiliat, Prof. Jean-François Nierengar-

ten, Prof. Ewa Mijowska, Prof. Miłosz Pawlicki, and Prof. Artur Ciesielski. Their presentations focused on the latest advances in supramolecular chemistry, polymer chemistry, electrochemistry, advanced functional materials, and innovative applications of chemical compounds. The congress gave participants an opportunity to present the results of their ongoing research, exchange ideas with colleagues from leading research centres, and strengthen international partnerships that play an important role in advancing research at AMU.

Three International Scholars Join AMU Through Prestigious NAWA Programme

Three distinguished international researchers will join Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań through the Weigl Top200 Programme funded by the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA). This marks a major success for our university: of the ten projects approved for funding nationwide, three will be carried out at AMU.

One of the world's leading contemporary philosophers of history, Prof. Aviezer Tucker, will relocate from Harvard University to the AMU Faculty of Philosophy for a four-year appointment (Inviting Person: **Prof. Krzysztof Brzechczyn**). Prof. Tucker will

be joined by two postdoctoral researchers, while the research team has also secured PLN 400,000 in funding from the National Science Centre. The combined value of funding for Prof. Tucker's appointment and research project amounts to nearly PLN 2.8 million. At the AMU Faculty of Physics and Astronomy, research will be conducted by Dr Toni Santana-Ros from the University of Barcelona (Inviting Person: **Prof. Przemysław Bartczak**). Meanwhile, Dr Adriana Molina-Muñoz from the University of Oxford (Inviting Person: **Prof. Krzysztof Stroński**) will join the AMU Faculty of Modern Languages and Literatures.

Towards a Confederation of Universities



EPICUR, the European University Alliance of which Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań is a member, has been awarded €7.2 million in funding under the Erasmus+ European Universities initiative. The funding, which runs through the end of 2028, will support the implementation of the EPICUR-SHAPE-IT-PLUS project and further strengthen cooperation in education, research, innovation, and the mobility of students and staff.

Over the next two years, the partners will continue to expand their collaboration in education, research, innovation, and societal engagement. The long-term goal is to establish a Confederation of Universities—a model for even closer cooperation among European universities. The new funding will also support the integration of three universities that have joined the alliance: Pablo de Olavide University (Spain), Roma Tre University (Italy), and the University of Basel (Switzerland), which participates in the project as an associated partner.

Inspired by Korczak: Giving Children a Voice



The 78th World Assembly and Conference of the World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEPE) was held at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań. This year's gathering, hosted under the theme "When a Child Speaks... Korczak's Inspirations for Education and Children's Rights," explored the enduring relevance of Janusz Korczak's ideas for contemporary education and children's rights.

The event was jointly organized by the AMU Faculty of Educational Studies and the Polish National Committee of OMEPE. The conference opened in an unconventional and symbolic way in the AMU Auditorium, where participants donned crowns inspired by *King Matt the First*, the beloved children's novel by Janusz Korczak—a fitting tribute to the writer, educator, and advocate of children's rights whose legacy inspired the event.

CyberLaw Lab to Advise the European Parliament on Digital Evidence

The CyberLaw Lab at the AMU Faculty of Law and Administration has been commissioned to prepare an interdisciplinary study for the European Parliament on law enforcement authorities' access to digital data. The expert report is being developed for the Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) and will provide recommendations to support future European Union legislation in the field of internal security. The study will address one of the most pressing challenges in contemporary security: law enforcement access to digital

data stored in the cloud, protected by encryption, or distributed across multiple jurisdictions and service providers. The research team will assess the legal and technical aspects of accessing such data, identify key risks and best practices, and develop legislative recommendations for the European Union. The project has been commissioned by the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE). The study will be led by Dr. Martyna Kusak, Head of CyberLaw Lab and a faculty member in the Department of Criminal Procedure at the AMU Faculty of Law and Administration.

AMU Lecturer Crowned World Cosplay Champion



Anna Stanik of the AMU Faculty of Modern Languages and Literatures has become a World Cosplay Champion! Representing Poland, the Poznań-based duo Ayo and Helper claimed first place in the Extreme Cosplay Gathering (ECG) Grand Final held during Japan Expo in Paris.

Anyone who has seen and heard Anna Stanik perform at AMU Korean Culture Day 2026 knows that she has a beautiful singing voice. What only insiders know, however, is that the Korean language instructor has long been active in the cosplay community as AYO, a well-known cosplay artist. On YouTube, Anna Stanik runs the AYO Cover PL channel, where she posts her own renditions of songs from Korean and Japanese anime, as well as video games. She pays meticulous attention to every detail that completes her stage persona. Not only does she sing in a style faithful to the original performances, but she also transforms herself into beloved pop culture characters, performing in costumes that she designs and makes herself. And now she has achieved a remarkable success in Paris.



RESEARCH FROM DAY ONE: WHERE SCIENCE KNOWS NO BORDERS

An interview with **Prof. Piotr Pawluć**, AMU Vice-Rector for Human Resources
and Doctoral Schools, by Krzysztof Smura

What sets AMU's doctoral programs apart from those at other European universities?

Above all, I believe what makes AMU's doctoral schools unique is their skillful combination of high-quality education and a well-organized support system for doctoral students. First, we emphasize interdisciplinarity and encourage research that transcends the boundaries of individual disciplines. From the beginning, we involve doctoral students in the work of research teams carrying out projects funded by national and

international sources. This gives them experience in a real academic environment.

Providing doctoral students with comprehensive preparation for an academic career is very important to us. A doctorate involves developing not only research skills, but also teaching, publishing, grant-writing, and organizational skills, in line with the European approach to training young researchers.

We offer diverse pathways for academic and professional development. Alongside traditional doctoral

programs, implementation doctorates are becoming increasingly popular. These programs are primarily offered at the AMU Doctoral School of Exact Sciences, the AMU Doctoral School of Social Sciences, and the AMU Doctoral School of Natural Sciences. We already have over a dozen graduates, demonstrating our ability to effectively combine high-quality research with practical application in collaboration with socioeconomic partners.

The effectiveness of this model is demonstrated by concrete results. Depending on the doctoral school, 80 to 90 percent of doctoral candidates who begin their training go on to submit their dissertations. This is an exceptionally high rate, showing that doctoral candidates receive the appropriate conditions, support, and motivation to successfully carry out their research projects.

One of our major strengths is operating within a research university, which gives doctoral candidates access to modern infrastructure, extensive international collaboration, and experts from various fields of science. Organizational issues are also significant. In recent years, we have established excellent cooperation among the directors of the doctoral schools. This allows us to maintain consistency in our activities while considering the specific characteristics of individual disciplines. At the same time, we have strengthened our administrative teams so the doctoral school offices can support students effectively at every stage of their education.

How does AMU attract doctoral students from abroad, and why do they choose Poznań?

The decision to attend AMU is primarily driven by its attractive academic programs and favorable living and research conditions. International applicants are drawn to English-language doctoral programs, scholarships, and the opportunity to work in international research teams. The opportunity to pursue a Ph.D. as part of prestigious projects funded by the European Research Council (ERC), the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), or the International Research Agendas Programme FENG (Fundusze Europejskie dla Nowoczesnej Gospodarki — European Funds for a Modern Economy) is also of growing importance. These projects allow doctoral students to participate in significant global research right from the start of their academic careers. Another key element is the transparent admissions system based on clear

criteria and procedures. This system builds trust among applicants and helps attract talented young researchers from around the world.

Another strength of AMU is its modern research infrastructure. Doctoral students have access to specialized equipment, laboratories, databases, and resources at the university's faculties and research centers. In many areas, these facilities are comparable to—and sometimes superior to—those of renowned European universities.

While we continue to work on further internationalizing our doctoral programs, approximately 14% of our doctoral students are currently from abroad. The largest groups come from Ukraine, India, China, and Pakistan. Discussions with applicants reveal that they choose AMU not only because of a specific advisor or research topic but also because they perceive our university as welcoming to young researchers and as offering good support and fostering scientific development.

The city of Poznań is also a significant factor—it is a safe city with good transportation links that offers a high quality of life at a lower cost than Europe's largest metropolises. For many international doctoral students, this is a key consideration when deciding to spend several years in Poland.

What research and infrastructure opportunities are available to doctoral students from their first year on?

This is one of the strongest aspects of our educational model. We believe that a good doctoral program should be about carrying out research, not only preparing to do so. Starting in their first year, doctoral students are integrated into research teams, participate in grant-funded projects, and develop their own research plans. This "research from day one" model ensures they quickly become active participants in academic life. They take part in seminars, co-author publications, and gain experience conducting research at the international level.

The range of available opportunities depends on the discipline. In the natural and exact sciences, for example, students have access to modern laboratories, specialized research equipment, and infrastructure at AMU's faculties and research centers. In the humanities and social sciences, it includes advanced databases, library resources, digital tools, and methodological and expert support. Regardless



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of the discipline, we are committed to ensuring that doctoral students have access to the necessary tools to conduct research at the highest level from the very beginning.

Mobility is also a key element in the development of young researchers. Doctoral students can take advantage of programs such as Erasmus+ and the university's funding mechanisms for conference travel, internships, and short-term research stays. In recent years, the Excellence Initiative — Research University (IDUB) has provided invaluable support through funding for mobility, conference participation, and doctoral mini-grants. These initiatives have accelerated the development of doctoral students' academic careers.

The first IDUB program is coming to an end, but our proposal for the next program includes plans to continue and expand the most important activities aimed at doctoral students. We plan to continue supporting mobility, doctoral mini-grants, and international summer schools, as well as recognizing the highest quality publication achievements. We expect the results of the competition by the end of the year. We hope to continue these activities because the proposal we have prepared is the result of the exceptional work of a dedicated and competent team, and its quality gives us reason for optimism.

In what ways does our university support the integration and academic life of doctoral students in Poland? Do we provide financial support, mentoring, and administrative assistance?

We take a broad view of support for doctoral students. It encompasses financial matters, such as scholarships, mobility grants, conference participation, and pursuing their own research projects, as well as organizational, administrative, and mentoring support. Our goal is for doctoral students to be able to focus primarily on conducting research and advancing their academic development.

We also place great importance on building a community of doctoral students. For years, we have collaborated with the AMU Doctoral Students' Government, supporting its initiatives organizationally and financially. I am pleased to say that this collaboration is based on partnership and mutual trust. Doctoral students have a real impact on university life, and their voice is important in decision-making processes related to the doctoral community.

This partnership has resulted in numerous events that bring the community of young researchers together. We support the organization of AMU Doctoral Day and participate in the celebrations for European Doctoral Day. Our doctoral students are also active

co-organizers of Poznań Doctoral Day, an initiative carried out jointly with Poznań's doctoral schools, research institutes, and the city of Poznań. This event shows that the doctoral community can effectively collaborate across university and institutional boundaries.

I am also pleased with our doctoral students' activity at the national level. They participate in the activities of the Polish National Association of Doctoral Candidates (KRD). In June 2026, Poznań hosted the International Scientific Conference, which was organized jointly by the National Association of Doctoral Candidates and the AMU Doctoral Students' Government. The conference provided a platform for presenting research findings, exchanging experiences, and establishing new collaborations, often interdisciplinary and international.

The best confirmation of the quality of these activities is the success of our Doctoral Students' Government, which has consistently placed among the top entries in the nationwide ProDok competition for the best doctoral student government. This proves that we have created an environment where young researchers conduct research and actively contribute to the academic community.

To what extent do doctoral students have a real say in the direction of their research and collaboration with international partners?

At AMU, doctoral students have considerable freedom to shape their research. From the beginning, they develop an individual research plan with their advisor that reflects their academic interests and aligns with ongoing research projects. This process enables students to develop their own ideas while leveraging the expertise of their mentors and the university's research resources.

International collaboration follows a similar pattern. We encourage doctoral students to establish contacts with international partners by participating in research projects, conferences, summer schools, and mobility programs, such as Erasmus+. Students are also participating in an increasing number of IDUB-funded projects, which enables them to build an international network of collaborators from the outset of their academic careers.

In which international research projects are AMU doctoral students involved? Could you provide a few examples?

AMU doctoral students are increasingly involved in international research projects carried out in collaboration with leading research centers in Europe and around the world. They participate in projects funded by the European Research Council (ERC),

the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), and other international projects carried out by AMU research teams. This gives them the opportunity to gain experience working in an international environment early in their careers and to contribute to research of global significance.

The scope of their research is impressive. Young researchers carry out field and laboratory projects everywhere from Spitsbergen to Madagascar, collaborating with scientific partners in countries such as India and Singapore. An increasing number of them are also opting to pursue doctoral degrees through a cotutelle arrangement, which is jointly supervised by academic advisors from two universities. Partnerships with French universities and institutions in the Benelux countries are developing rapidly, providing doctoral students with the opportunity to earn dual degrees and establish long-lasting international networks for scientific collaboration.

Could you provide examples of graduates who have achieved national or international success?

This is a relatively new program, so I would be cautious about speaking of spectacular successes among our graduates. Most of them finished their doctoral studies just a year or two ago, so it will take more time to assess their long-term academic careers.

However, we are already seeing very promising results. Our graduates are successfully applying for postdoctoral fellowships abroad and accepting positions at renowned research centers in Europe and beyond. Others are pursuing careers in international research teams or applying their skills in the research and development sector, new technologies, or expert institutions.

The effects of the applied doctoral program are also becoming increasingly evident. For many graduates, a doctoral degree earned in close collaboration with a company serves as a gateway to professional advancement and positions that require high-level expertise and innovation management skills. The goal of doctoral programs is not only to educate future professors but also to prepare highly qualified specialists who can thrive in the academic world and the socioeconomic environment.

What is the plan for developing Adam Mickiewicz University's doctoral schools over the next five to ten years?

Our primary goal in the coming years is to continue improving the quality of education and research, as well

as to consistently increase the internationalization of our doctoral schools. We aim to create an open, dynamic environment that combines collaboration with leading research centers and partnerships with the broader socioeconomic community. We want our doctoral students to grow academically and professionally.

At the same time, we intend to strengthen the autonomy of the doctoral student community and establish a stronger identity for the doctoral schools as institutions dedicated to educating young scientists. A key element of these efforts will be developing an incentive system. We want to recognize doctoral students' achievements more clearly, especially those related to high-quality publications, grant-seeking, international activities, and commitment to research. Investing in people is the best way to strengthen AMU's position as a modern research university.

What new programs or initiatives do you think could attract the next generation of researchers from around the world to AMU?

I think three elements will be key. First, further internationalization, including developing joint programs with foreign universities (especially in new regions such as Central Asia), cotutelle doctoral programs with the best European and non-European centers, and increasing the number of projects carried out under the ERC and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions programs. The new IDUB will certainly help with this. The opportunity to work in an international environment is one of the most important criteria for choosing a doctoral program today.

Second, we must provide stronger support for ambitious, interdisciplinary research addressing critical global challenges—from climate change and the energy transition to artificial intelligence, health, and social transformation. Young researchers today are looking for places where they can conduct significant and impactful research.

Third, fostering a supportive academic environment is equally important. Modern infrastructure, efficient organization, an attractive incentive system, support for mobility, and the sense that doctoral students are full members of the academic community are immensely important today. I am convinced that combining scientific excellence with a culture of collaboration, openness, and mutual trust will most effectively attract future generations of talented young researchers from around the world to AMU in the coming years. ■



***Our doctoral students have
a real impact on university
life and decisions.***



THE WORLD AT A CROSSROADS

This is not merely a slogan, but an accurate reflection of the reality we face today. Rapid advances in artificial intelligence, geopolitical tensions, ongoing conflicts, climate change, social and economic transformations, and fundamental questions about the role of law and science in shaping our future have brought the world to a critical juncture. For this reason, we present our readers with a collection of articles in which researchers from diverse academic disciplines examine the most significant challenges of our time.

Their perspectives demonstrate the importance of interdisciplinary reflection in understanding the complexity of contemporary processes and in developing informed responses to the challenges that lie ahead.

THE EDITORS

AI HAS STEPPED INTO THE SPOTLIGHT: CAN HIGHER EDUCATION KEEP PACE?

Artificial intelligence has been around for years, operating “behind the scenes” of websites, devices, and diagnostic systems. For a long time, it remained invisible to most of us.

However, the real breakthrough came at the end of 2022 with the commercial debut of ChatGPT.

That’s when AI stopped operating solely “in the background” and became a tool accessible to everyone. Some have overlooked this change, which is evident in the way we think and talk about this technology today.

I see two dominant cognitive biases. The first is reducing AI tools to the role of an advanced search engine. Users ask questions as if they were typing them into Google, failing to tap into the potential of these systems. The second mistake is judging based on outdated experiences. Someone used AI a year or two ago, deemed the results poor, and dismissed the technology as useless. Meanwhile, AI’s capabilities change month by month, so an opinion from a year ago is outdated today.

In terms of infrastructure, we are ready for this change. AI is entering our lives without major barriers. This distinguishes this revolution from earlier digital transformations. The internet gradually reached Polish homes: investments in hardware, internet connections, and school computer labs were required. Adaptation took years. In contrast, AI is typically accessible at no cost, is readily available, and is generally available immediately.

This raises a question that goes beyond technological issues: Is the pace of AI development faster than societies’ ability to use this technology responsibly? Social, institutional, and educational changes occur more slowly than technological ones by their very nature. This asymmetry poses the greatest challenge today.

These changes are clearly visible in students’ daily lives, and they are happening much faster than institutions can keep up. Students use generative AI tools daily to generate code, summarize scientific articles, compile bibliographies, and create their own knowledge bases from articles and lecture materials. They then use AI to explore these bases by asking questions



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and simulating exams.

Nearly all teachers agree that curricula must adapt to the reality of generative AI. However, when asked about specific changes implemented in practice, it usually turns out that there are very few, if any. Teachers often cite a lack of time, being overburdened with duties, or waiting for organized training in this area as reasons for not implementing changes.

Meanwhile, adapting teaching methods requires making concrete decisions that can no longer be postponed. At the level of individual classes, it is necessary to determine the extent to which generative tools are permitted,

ranging from complete freedom to a scope agreed upon with the instructor to a total ban. Traditional homework assignments, which can now be generated in a matter of minutes, no longer fulfill their assessment function. Should oral exams and work completed during class take on greater importance? If most course assignments are generated, one cannot speak of a complete educational experience for students.

In some areas, it may be justified to partially revert to traditional methods. For example, in programming, if students use code-generating tools from the first class, they can easily bypass the stage of truly understanding the basic mechanisms. They could only freely use AI in subsequent semesters after mastering the elementary fundamentals. AI would not replace their work but support more advanced analysis and reflection.

Systemic solutions are also worth considering. For example, short courses on generative AI could be introduced into university curricula, similar to library training or occupational health and safety courses. Alternatively, this topic could be incorporated into introductory courses on academic study, which are already offered at some faculties. These courses could help students understand the potential, limitations, and responsibilities associated with these tools. The challenge lies not so much in operating the technology itself, but rather in individuals’ and institutions’ willingness to implement real change.

QUO VADIS, NATO?

Between crisis and stability

Security takes many forms, and the associated problems take on a variety of shapes. These problems range from hybrid threats and armed conflicts to public health, energy, and demographic issues, as well as challenges in cyberspace. This is why a system of international security based on legislation and specialized institutions plays such an important role. One such institution is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which was established in 1949 and deserves special attention. For over 75 years, NATO has protected its member states and the principles and values it promotes. Currently, however, it faces a serious internal crisis for the first time in its history, as well as a long list of external threats, including those related to the expansionist policies of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. In this context, three key questions arise.

What is NATO's current role and position?

NATO is the world's largest political and military alliance. It currently comprises 32 countries with a combined population of approximately one billion people and generates 50% of the global GDP. The alliance accounts for more than half of global military spending and has over 3.5 million troops at its disposal from its member states. In 2025, the member states' total defense spending exceeded \$1.4 trillion. This is the highest figure on record; in 2014, it was \$1 trillion. NATO's primary goal is to ensure the security of its members. However, NATO is also involved in peacekeeping missions, crisis management, and promoting democracy in various parts of the world. Past examples include the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The most significant current example of this is the support provided to Ukraine, estimated at approximately \$1 billion per month in 2026.

What role does the United States play in NATO?

As the world's largest economic and military power, the United States is the leader of NATO and has set its main goals and courses of action thus far. The U.S. is a major power in all operational domains, including land, air, sea, space, cyberspace, and the cognitive domain. The U.S. possesses the second-largest nuclear arsenal after Russia. The U.S. is the world's largest producer and exporter of weapons, supplying them to over 100 countries. In 2024, the U.S. allocated \$997 billion to defense



PROF. SEBASTIAN WOJCIECHOWSKI

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spending, accounting for 37% of global spending and 60% of NATO spending. For comparison, China ranked second at 12%, and Russia ranked third at 5%.

What might the future of NATO look like?

It is a highly complex issue, particularly when viewed in the context of political leaders' various actions and statements, including those of Donald Trump. Following the conflict with Iran, Trump said that he was "strongly considering" withdrawing the United States from NATO, adding: "I was never swayed by NATO. I always knew they were a paper tiger." Trump justified this position by expressing

his disappointment that the alliance had "done absolutely nothing" in response to the Iran crisis.

Therefore, numerous scenarios are possible, ranging from maintaining the alliance's current form and nature to completely withdrawing from it, or more likely, reducing or withdrawing the U.S. military presence. No country has ever fully withdrawn from NATO. However, there have been cases of temporary withdrawal from NATO's integrated military command, though not its political structures. France, for example, withdrew from 1966 to 2009, and Greece from 1974 to 1980. In the U.S., laws prevent the president from withdrawing from NATO without political approval. To ratify a withdrawal, the president needs the approval of two-thirds of the Senate. Another scenario involves withdrawing from the alliance under a special act passed by both houses of Congress. Regardless of which option prevails, however, the fundamental principles of trust and solidarity will change—or, more accurately, have already changed. It will be very difficult, if not impossible, to rebuild this principle, which would be a huge loss for all members and a major gain for NATO's opponents or enemies.

Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that, in many respects, the allies need the United States (not only because of the Russian threat), and the United States needs an effectively functioning alliance. In this context, the words of Polish Deputy Prime Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz ring true: "There is no NATO without the U.S., but there is also no U.S. power without NATO." The culmination of this process will most likely be the 2026 NATO Summit in Ankara. Key decisions regarding the alliance's future will likely be made there, and it will become clear whether NATO is a "paper tiger" or a "hidden dragon" capable of overcoming the most fundamental of crises. ■

WHY INTERNATIONAL LAW STILL MATTERS

Does international law effectively prevent the escalation of conflicts? Do global institutions have real power? Are we heading toward a “might makes right” system?

In recent years, the idea that international law is losing its significance in world politics has become more prevalent. Conflicts and tensions involving major powers create the impression of a return to the “might makes right” logic. From this perspective, global institutions, including the United Nations, seem incapable of preventing the escalation of conflicts. However, this assessment is overly simplistic.

The paradox is that the effectiveness of international law often goes unnoticed—we only take notice of it when it is violated. Legal norms influence how states define permissible actions in foreign policy. Many decisions that would be feasible from a military standpoint never make it to decision-makers because they would conflict with existing rules. Thus, international law operates not only at the level of the subsequent evaluation of political decisions but also at the level of their preliminary selection. In this sense, international law exerts influence not only through formal mechanisms of state accountability, but also by shaping perceptions of what is permissible. Even when violations occur, states rarely openly reject the law. More often, they attempt to justify their actions in terms of the law.

At the same time, international law is not a system imposed from the outside; rather, it was created by states through treaties and practice. Many of its norms are pragmatic. The principles of international humanitarian law, including those governing the treatment of prisoners of war, were developed not only for moral reasons, but also because states were interested in protecting their own soldiers should they be captured by the enemy. Thus, international law is largely the result of a calculation of interests rather than a mere idealistic project.

Under these conditions, global institutions cannot always act as quickly or effectively as the public expects. This is not so much due to the weakness of the norms, but rather because these institutions reflect political tensions between states. International organizations are not above politics—they are part of it. Their limited effectiveness does not stem from a lack of norms, but rather from a lack of agreement among states on how to enforce them. Therefore, the problem concerns not so much the institutions themselves, but rather whether the international community still wishes to maintain a rules-based order.



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It is particularly troubling that actions that openly undermine the significance of international law do not always elicit a clear response from the international community. Consequently, the problem is not only the violation of the law but also the gradual erosion of its significance as a common point of reference. This restraint contributes to the erosion of the norms that form the foundation of the contemporary international order. This process is evident in the economic sphere as well, where multilateral dispute resolution mechanisms are significantly weakening in favor of solutions based on states' bargaining power and bilateral relations.

Nevertheless, there are also attempts to develop new ways of strengthening the norms of international law. Flexible forms of cooperation are emerging with increasing frequency, including coalitions of states defending specific norms, such as international humanitarian law. Initiatives developed with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as cooperation addressing global challenges such as the environment and security, demonstrate that law remains an important point of reference. Small and medium-sized states also play a significant role; for them, international law remains a tool for balancing power asymmetries. Even ineffective mechanisms can increase the costs of violations by increasing the risk of accountability and political and reputational consequences.

History shows that international law often develops during times of crisis. Today's tensions may therefore lead to new forms of cooperation and mechanisms that strengthen compliance with norms. Grassroots efforts, such as civil society influencing state policy, are also significant.

International law cannot eliminate all conflicts; it has never been capable of doing so. Nevertheless, it continues to provide a framework through which states justify their actions and constrain the behavior of most participants in the system. In a world of growing competition, these constraints remain key to protecting international relations from reverting to a logic of pure might. Thus, the question of international law concerns not only its effectiveness, but also whether it will remain the common language governing relations between states. ■

MITIGATING THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The climate change observed over the past 100 years is the result of changes in the Earth's radiation balance. It is manifested in a rise of more than 1°C in the global average air temperature, as well as a range of related consequences. Examples of these consequences include changes in precipitation totals and patterns across different climate zones, an increase in the frequency of extreme events, and rising global sea levels.

Human activity involving the emission of large quantities of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrogen compounds, and sulfur compounds, is the main cause of this situation. These gases are released into the atmosphere. The emission of these compounds is closely linked to rapid industrial development, which began with the Industrial Revolution. The First Industrial Revolution (c. 1760–1840/1870) was driven by coal as the primary fuel for industrial development and railway transport. The Second Industrial Revolution (c. 1870–1914) was characterized by the adoption of electricity, the internal combustion engine, large-scale steel production, and the growth of the chemical industry. These revolutions initiated a long-term increase in the extraction of energy resources. Industrial growth, population growth, and increased consumption have led to rising greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite scientific advances, the technological revolution of the latter half of the 20th century, and contemporary digitalization, the consumption of energy derived from crude oil, natural gas, and coal continues to increase greenhouse gas concentrations. Currently, approximately 10 gigatons (Gt) of carbon are emitted into the atmosphere annually due to human activity, creating an energy surplus in the Earth-atmosphere system. This surplus contributes to the observed rise in air temperature and other aforementioned phenomena.

Of course, not all countries contribute to greenhouse gas emissions to the same extent at the global level. The size of an economy largely determines energy consumption, as well as the amount of fossil fuels burned and the resulting greenhouse gas emissions. Wealthy, highly developed countries emit more greenhouse gases, while poorer countries emit considerably less. The less affluent half of the world's population is estimated to be responsible for only 10% of emissions, while the wealthiest 10% accounts for half of all CO₂ emissions.



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The potential impacts of global warming are estimated using climate models based on assumed radiative forcing scenarios. However, it should be noted that not all CO₂ emitted from human activity accumulates in the atmosphere. Some is absorbed by the oceans and terrestrial vegetation, while between 45% and nearly 70% remains in the atmosphere. In a highly simplified sense, an increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations leads to a nearly proportional rise in air temperature relative to cumulative emissions. For example, the emission of 500 gigatons of carbon dioxide results in an increase of approximately 1°C in the global mean temperature.

We are currently unable to predict the most likely trajectory of future climate change because it depends on unpredictable factors, such as the policies adopted by individual governments. For example, the United States' decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement in 2025 is an unpredictable factor. Model projections indicate that continued warming will persist for decades or even centuries, regardless of the scenario adopted. The consequences include the aforementioned rise in sea levels, increased frequency of extreme weather events, and loss of Arctic sea ice. Therefore, measures aimed at reducing CO₂ emissions are crucial for mitigating the impacts of the ongoing climate change.

Equally important are adaptation measures that respond to observed climate changes and reduce the impacts of warming on the economy, society, and the environment. Examples of such measures include changes in urban spatial planning, such as reducing impermeable surfaces and replacing them with green and blue infrastructure. This improves the quality of life for residents. Other examples include avoiding development in flood-prone areas and expanding local water retention systems, also known as the sponge city concept, which helps minimize the impact of intense rainfall and store excess rainwater for periods of drought.

The full version of the article on our website includes a discussion of five potential climate change scenarios. ■

SHOULD SCHOLARS ENGAGE IN POLITICS?

During periods of relative peace and social stability, the question arises: Should we engage in scientific research and educate students? For serious and responsible scholars, this question is largely rhetorical. The problem is that we now live in an era in which peace and tranquility are no longer guaranteed, and conflicts that seemed local and distant yesterday can quickly become global and affect us directly or indirectly.

This makes it particularly important to ask: Should scholars get involved in political matters? This is not a rhetorical question, now or in the past. There are many pros and cons to such involvement. One pro is the debt of gratitude scholars owe to those who helped them obtain an education and later provided them with jobs and opportunities to conduct research, a lifelong passion for many. In countries where academic education is taxpayer-funded, society as a whole is the creditor. In contrast, in countries where education must be paid for out of pocket, creditors include not only parents, but also banks that provide students with loans to cover tuition. However, even in these countries, scientific research cannot “survive” on the proceeds from its practical applications alone and requires significant financial support from political and business leaders.

The problem is that decision-makers often hold views that do not conform to academic standards and expect scholars to conform to them. This was vividly demonstrated by the April 2025 decision of the Donald Trump administration to freeze \$2.2 billion in federal research grants for Harvard University.



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The administration based this decision on allegations that Harvard tolerated antisemitism and a “radical left” ideological environment. The problem lies in how the administration defines left-wing ideology and antisemitism. One indication of the administration’s position on this issue was its demand that the university suspend its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) program. Another indication was the Department of Homeland Security’s decision to revoke the university’s authorization to enroll international students. Harvard University President Alan Garber rejected these demands, describing them as an unjustified attempt

to control the Harvard community. A court subsequently ruled that the Department of Homeland Security’s decision was unlawful.

Many books have already been written about the political involvement of Polish scholars before the turning point of 1989. However, these books do not paint a favorable picture of the political landscape of that time or of the vast majority of scholars involved in it. Regarding this topic, I will limit myself to a brief comment. However, I would like to discuss the significant involvement of Polish scholars in the Law on Higher Education and Science of July 20, 2018,

in more detail. Several nationwide conferences were held during its drafting, which many scholars from various academic institutions attended. I participated in two of these conferences. I can say with full conviction that important proposals aimed at improving the quality of research and academic education in Poland were put forward at these conferences. Many of the presentations addressed politicians directly, including Jarosław Gowin, who was serving as the Minister of Science and Higher Education at the time. He seemed to take these proposals seriously, indicating that provisions that could improve the situation would be included in the legislation. However, after the law was published, many people were deeply disappointed. This is because the law focused on strengthening the position of the rector and holders of doctoral degrees and on increasing the number of councils at universities. Conversely, the significance of holding the title of professor and having a body of scholarly work that significantly exceeded the modest minimums for research activity was diminished. In my opinion, it was—and remains—naïve to believe that such changes would improve the quality of scientific research and student education.

Moreover, the negative effects of these changes did not take long to materialize. As early as the 2021 evaluation of academic disciplines, it became clear that the academic centers that had become “scientific powerhouses” were those that had adapted most quickly to the prevailing research performance indicators. However, the results of their scholars’ research were mainly known to their closest colleagues and superiors. The ministry’s list of journals also helped them, as it featured titles with negligible recognition, both internationally and domestically, in high positions. These and other negative consequences of political regulations cast serious doubt on the wisdom of scholars supporting politicians’ reform efforts. In fact, when push comes to shove, it seems that politicians know best and are convinced that they can solve even the most difficult problems. Even if they cannot, they will always find advisors, often holding professorial titles, whom they trust and whose advice they will follow—provided it aligns with their expectations and political viewpoint.

However, these pessimistic remarks do not mean that I advocate keeping scholars far away from politics and politicians. After all, scholars have their own

political views and preferences and may be closer to some politicians than to others. Journalists often treat talk of political independence as a rhetorical device to help their message reach an undecided or confused audience, so it is better left to them.

The problem lies in ensuring that scholars’ political views and preferences are not conflated with their research and teaching activities, turning universities into yet another arena for political struggle. This occurs not only when political campaigning takes place on campus but also when scholars agree to have their university affiliation mentioned while speaking before a television camera or radio microphone on a politically charged issue. While this information may lend credibility to one side of the political spectrum, it harms the university’s image as an institution that does not engage in political games and maneuvering. Furthermore, when scholars speak in front of cameras or microphones and utter common-sense platitudes that anyone could come up with, they call into question not only their academic degrees and titles, but also the authority of the institutions that employ them.

However, there are scholars who crave publicity and media attention. Journalists eagerly invite them to speak—until they say something that does not align with the hosts’ views or TV viewers simply grow tired of seeing their faces. Then, the next group eager to share their thoughts takes their place. The “logic” behind sharing these views remains the same: Those invited to speak should express themselves in a way that the average citizen can understand, even on issues

that are neither simple nor unambiguous. As a result, such statements are often nothing more than “half-truths” or “quarter-truths.” While they may serve politicians well, they do little to benefit science and academic teaching. Yet, these statements tend to have a longer shelf life than scientific truths and probabilities.

Consider, for instance, an online news report claiming that “the dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Adam Mickiewicz University believes that students should be apolitical” (I served in that role from 2008 to 2016). This is not even a “quarter-truth.” In fact, I once refused to allow a group of anarchists within the faculty to agitate on campus. They resented me further for refusing to let them put up a poster in the dean’s office. ■

The problem lies in ensuring that scholars’ political views and preferences are not conflated with their research and teaching activities.

THE ENERGY TRANSITION AND NATIONAL SECURITY: A STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY WITH NEW RISKS

Intuition tells us that the energy transition enhances national security, and this is true—but only if certain conditions are met, namely, if the transition is rationally planned and systematically implemented.

A grant project led by my research team and funded by the National Science Centre (2023/51/B/HS6/00418) confirms this assumption, provided we take into account the highly complex, context-dependent structure of interdependencies among individual countries.

First, let's assess the current state of energy security in Europe. In 2024, the EU's energy import dependency rate was 57%, meaning more than half of the EU's energy needs were met by net imports. In 2023, imported fossil fuels met 58% of the European Union's primary energy needs, returning the EU's energy import dependency rate to a level comparable to that before the energy crisis. Consequently, the European Union is far more dependent on imported fossil fuels than other major global economies, such as China and India. This structural dependence on external suppliers poses a fundamental threat to the political and economic sovereignty of European member states. While the European Union has reduced its dependence on Russian hydrocarbons, new dependencies have emerged. The United States has become the main supplier of crude oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG), with the four largest LNG suppliers accounting for over 80% of imports. As the energy crisis after 2022 and the current conflict with Iran demonstrate, dependence on imported fossil fuels can impose enormous economic costs on the EU in a short period of time and seriously undermine its economic resilience.

Against this backdrop, the EU's decarbonization strategy is unique on a global scale. The overarching aim of the European Green Deal is to make the European Union climate neutral by 2050. More significant still, the climate neutrality target is legally binding under the European Climate Law. While other countries have adopted similar goals, the EU's commitment is exceptional due to its supranational nature, the scope



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of its initiatives, and the extent of its institutional embeddedness.

Nevertheless, the energy transition brings new categories of risk that are rarely discussed. For example, renewable energy technologies depend on critical minerals such as lithium for batteries, as well as cobalt, nickel, graphite, and rare earth elements for wind turbines and electric vehicles. The average share of the three largest producers in refining increased to 86% for copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt, graphite, and rare earth elements in 2024 (up from approximately 82% in 2020), with almost the entire increase in supply coming from a single

dominant supplier: Indonesia for nickel and China for all other minerals. The supply of rare earth elements is one of the least geographically diverse of all critical minerals. China accounts for approximately 60% of global mining production and more than 90% of global refining capacity. Thus, dependence on hydrocarbons from Russia or the Persian Gulf could be replaced by dependence on critical minerals from China or the Democratic Republic of the Congo unless the energy transition is accompanied by efforts to diversify supply chains.

In my opinion, the overall assessment of the energy transition is positive. Countries that generate energy from solar, wind, and hydro resources are less susceptible to geopolitical extortion and price shocks in the oil and gas markets. They are also less likely to finance authoritarian regimes by purchasing hydrocarbons. The energy transition can strengthen national security if it is supported by a strategic approach to minerals and critical raw materials, as well as investments in electricity transmission and distribution infrastructure, energy storage capacities, and advanced energy management systems. These include smart grids, digital balancing of the energy system, supply and demand forecasting, and demand-side flexibility mechanisms. Without these measures, the energy transition risks merely replacing one form of dependency with another.

EUROPE IN THE SHADOW OF CHINA

Recent events have highlighted the extent of Europe's economic dependence on China. An increasing number of key sectors of the European Union remain vulnerable to decisions made in Beijing. Is it already too late to pursue diversification and achieve genuine economic autonomy?

The extent of the world's reliance on China for medical supplies and personal protective equipment became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, other segments of global supply chains in which partners from the People's Republic of China play a critical role have been under much closer scrutiny.

Rare earth elements and the products that depend on them have become one of the most widely discussed issues in the European Union. The experience of the Dutch company Nexperia B.V. illustrates the risks associated with this dependence. The company found itself at the center of trade and political tensions between the United States and China. As those tensions escalated, China temporarily suspended exports of semiconductors produced by Nexperia's parent group to European customers, disrupting supply chains and adversely affecting several industries, particularly the automotive sector.

For the European Union, this episode served as a clear warning that any escalation in tensions with China could carry serious economic consequences. It also exposed Europe's dependence on products supplied through European companies whose manufacturing and supply chains still rely heavily on China. In many cases, key stages of the production process continue to take place there. More recently, China's announcement of a far-reaching export control regime for rare earth elements has placed both governments and businesses in an increasingly difficult position.

There are many other areas of dependence, including active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) used in the manufacture of medicines and components for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), both of which are sourced largely from China. The issue also extends to Chinese electric vehicles. Manufacturers such as BYD have established a strong global presence that poses a threat to European industry. Questions also arise regarding the extent to which the operation of these vehicles depends on connections to manufacturers' databases and platforms.

Over more than four decades of integration into the global economy, China has developed strong competitive advantages



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across numerous strategic sectors. As a result, any disruption to supplies from China could impose significant economic costs on Europe. In response, the European Union has introduced a range of measures to reduce these dependencies, including the Anti-Coercion Instrument and regulations designed to diversify sources of supply and strengthen critical raw material supply chains through partnerships with alternative suppliers, including Australia, and trade blocs such as Mercosur. The EU also introduced tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles in 2024 to support European industry and

reduce the risk of growing technological dependence.

However, the closer we examine the complexity of economic relations, the clearer it becomes that these interdependencies have developed over decades of an open trading system. Diversification will continue, particularly in sectors related to security; yet the broader these dependencies become and the more directly they affect individual consumers, the more challenging it will be to reduce them.

Beijing's policy toward Russia represents another factor contributing to the deterioration of EU-China relations. Although no evidence indicates direct military support, China's decision to maintain normal trade relations with Moscow significantly contributes to Russia's ability to sustain its war effort. From the perspective of Chinese strategic calculations, few signs currently suggest that Beijing intends to play an active role in resolving the conflict. Nevertheless, the sheer weight of China's economy and the depth of its relationship with Russia ensure that Beijing remains an important actor. At the same time, European countries increasingly debate how they would respond to a potential conflict in the Indo-Pacific.

China does not pose a direct military threat to the European Union, but the consequences of its policies are increasingly evident. The main sources of tension concern economic relations, China's approach to third countries, and broader issues related to the international order, values, and human rights. In this sense, China's policies are playing an increasingly important role in shaping Europe's security environment. ■



POZNAŃ ON THE JUDICIAL MAP: A NEW CHAPTER FOR LEGAL TRAINING IN WESTERN POLAND

FEATURE INTERVIEW

Efforts are underway to establish a center of the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution (KSSiP) in Poznań. As **Prof. Tomasz Nieborak**, Dean of the AMU Faculty of Law and Administration and Chair of the KSSiP Program Board, emphasizes, this is a response to the real staffing needs of western Poland and the barriers faced in legal professionals.

INTERVIEW BY **MAGDA ZIÓŁEK**

What is the career path for future judges and prosecutors in Poland?

The paths to becoming a judge or prosecutor in Poland are clearly defined. In practice, they begin with professional training at the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution, which is headquartered in Krakow. Since 2009, the National School has offered judicial and prosecutorial training programs, each consisting of 36 months of training. Successfully passing the judicial or prosecutorial examination marks completion of the National School's education program and opens the way to subsequent stages of a legal career.

Of course, this is a simplification. During the training period, there are additional formal requirements, mandatory internships, and other elements of the educational process, but it can still be described as a "no shortcuts" path.

There is also an 18-month supplementary training program intended for candidates with appropriately documented professional experience, typically several years of practice as court referendaries, judicial assistants, or prosecutors' assistants. These candidates may take the judicial or prosecutorial exam at the National School, thereby shortening their path to the profession, although it still goes through the same institution.

The difference lies in the supplementary program's more limited scope compared to the full 36-month program. Nevertheless, the supplementary program includes regular training sessions, which, until recently, were primarily held in Kraków. However, this changed on March 28 with the opening of the National School's new training and education center in Gdańsk. Trainees receive a scholarship throughout the program and are required to complete practical placements in courts and public prosecutors' offices. These placements constitute the core element of their professional preparation and account for approximately 80% of the program.

Successful completion of the program requires passing all assessments and receiving satisfactory evaluations from the practical placements. During the final month of training, trainees take either the judicial or prosecutorial exam, depending on their career path.

Admission to the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution is widely regarded as highly competitive. What percentage of Poznań law graduates successfully complete the admissions process?

The entrance exam has two stages. First, candidates take a multiple-choice test with 150 questions and a prescribed passing threshold. Those who pass proceed to the second stage, which consists of solving legal case studies in civil, public, and criminal law. This format undoubtedly raises the level of difficulty because it tests not only theoretical knowledge, but also the ability to apply the law in practice. Consequently, the selection process is highly demanding. In my view, the National School remains an elite institution for educating and training future judges and prosecutors.

Relevant statistics are available on the KSSiP website. In 2025, the typical applicant is a 24-year-old woman who has completed a full-time degree program at a public university and is from the Mazovia Province. This demonstrates the geographic diversity of the school's student body. Most come from Jagiellonian University, the University of Warsaw, and the University of Silesia, which is largely due to their proximity to Krakow. If we look at western Poland, the numbers are significantly lower.

However, I would like to emphasize that, in terms of academic preparation, our graduates demonstrate a very high level of proficiency. We are among the leaders in advancing to subsequent stages and in final exam results. Therefore, the problem is not

the quality of the candidates, but the accessibility of the program. For many of our graduates, studying in Krakow meant setting aside their current responsibilities and making regular trips for several-day sessions, both for the basic and supplementary parts of the bar exam. If you have to spend several days away from home every month, your entire life must be organized around that. This is particularly significant for people who want to balance their professional development with their personal lives, such as those planning to start a family. Under such circumstances, traveling for a few days can be very difficult—and sometimes impossible. This is why we are making education available closer to home.

If I understand correctly, Poznań will soon have its own National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution training center. How realistic is that prospect?

Before answering your question, let me clarify one point. Much like a university, the National School operates according to a single set of educational standards. It has clearly defined learning objectives and intended learning outcomes, as well as a well-established candidate profile. The heart of the School figuratively beats in Kraków, where its headquarters are located and all key decisions are made. At the same time, the law allows the school to deliver its training programs outside of Krakow. These are not branches or regional offices, but rather off-site training and education centers that offer the same curriculum in other cities. Until recently, training has been primarily delivered in Kraków, with some activities taking place in Lublin. Gdańsk has now joined this network.

Interest in the National School's training programs is already remarkably high, with the number of applicants significantly exceeding the enrollment quota set by the Ministry of Justice. In 2025, 1,296 candidates entered the admissions competition, while the Ministry allocated 185 spots for the judicial training program and 115 spots for the prosecutorial training program.

This demonstrates that this model is effective and meets real needs. In this context, Poznań is the next logical step, and steps in this direction have already been taken. We anticipate that the training and education center in Poznań could begin operations as early as March 2027. This means that, by Sep-

tember of this year, the first candidates could take the exam with the aim of beginning their studies in Poznań in September 2027.

We estimate that there will be about 60 candidates. The procedure is certain, stemming from the previously mentioned uniform operational structure of the National School. There will be a single, common exam, and during the admissions process, candidates will be assigned to a specific center. This was the case in Gdańsk, where 60 spots were available and the number of applicants was several times higher. This demonstrates the scale of interest and confirms that we are dealing with a genuine need.

You mentioned that the planned KSSiP training center in Poznań would accept about 60 trainees per year. Is there really such a high demand for new judges and prosecutors in Poznań and the Wielkopolska region?

Indeed, and this brings us to the heart of the issue. The demand is enormous. In fact, we speak of a “rust belt” in western Poland—a region stretching from Szczecin through Poznań and Zielona Góra to Wrocław—where the need for judges and prosecutors is particularly acute. In the judiciary alone, there are more than 100 vacant judicial posts, and the situation in the prosecution service is even more challenging. Consequently, courts and public prosecutors' offices—including those in otherwise desirable locations—are currently unable to fill their vacancies.

The problem is further exacerbated by the steadily increasing caseload. Public prosecutors' offices in western Poland are among the busiest in the country. Meanwhile, the courts have seen a sharp rise in so-called mass litigation, most notably cases involving Swiss franc-denominated mortgages, with individual judges often responsible for hundreds of such cases. Unless the situation changes, there is a real risk of the justice system in this part of Poland becoming paralyzed, which would lead to growing case backlogs, increasing staffing shortages and instability, and a diminished ability to guarantee citizens their constitutional right to access justice.

Where does this shortage come from?

To a large extent, it is a consequence of the way the training system is organized. Although the program is of high quality, candidates' decisions are often shaped by practical considerations and finan-

cial constraints. Despite the scholarships provided to trainees by the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution, spending several days at a time away from home can be costly and create a barrier for many prospective applicants.

Based on conversations with students at our faculty, and based on what we know about other law faculties across western Poland, some students decide not to pursue this career path at all, while others do so only if they have adequate support, such as from their families.

Therefore, the conclusion is straightforward: professional training should be made available closer to where candidates live. Trainees from western Poland would no longer have to travel to Kraków for several days at a time but could attend classes at a training center closer to home instead. This would make the program more accessible and, in the long term, could meaningfully contribute to addressing staffing shortages within the judiciary and prosecution services.

As I understand it, the AMU Faculty of Law and Administration will play an active role in establishing the new center. How will this affect trainees' training?

That's a very good question. The KSSiP Program Board adopts the guidelines for the trainee program, and the Director decides on the program itself. As in university studies, there is a defined framework and curriculum that must be followed during training. Maintaining uniformity of training is a fundamental principle, regardless of where classes are held. In practice, this means the curriculum, standards, and oversight are consistent across all locations, while off-campus teaching and training centers implement them locally with the participation of legal professionals and academic staff. This is where universities, including our faculty, can contribute.

The Faculty of Law and Administration aims to be an active participant in this project. It is only natural that western Poland—from Szczecin to Wrocław—will be strongly represented. However, our center aims to collaborate with instructors from across the country. Many judges and prosecutors from these regions already commute to Kraków to teach there. This is an important initiative for the university and the city that we have been working on for many months, and we hope it will soon be finalized in Poznań.

The National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution has been operating for seventeen years. As the chair of the program board, do you see a need for changes to the curriculum?

My role is relatively new, so I would prefer not to speak in categorical terms. I took on this position just a few weeks ago. We should also keep in mind that the KSSiP curriculum has been modified numerous times since 2009 by successive Program Boards to keep pace with changing realities. However, our initial discussions suggest that there is room for, and a willingness to, take another close look at the curriculum.

The National School operates through two governing bodies, the Director and the Program Board, which are intended to work together in a complementary manner. This structure facilitates substantive debate because the Board brings together diverse perspectives, including those of legal professionals, such as judges and prosecutors, and academic community representatives.

As for possible changes, they must consider new challenges, such as the development of artificial intelligence, cybersecurity issues, and new technologies. They must also address matters related to management and coping with the emotional strain inherent to this profession. Soft skills remain a key area as well, already included in the curriculum but requiring further strengthening.

Given my many years of teaching and organizational experience, including my role as Dean of the Faculty of Law and Administration I wish to actively participate in this discussion and help shape its direction. My collaboration with the KSSiP Director, Prof. Piotr Girdwoyń, an open-minded and committed individual, will certainly facilitate this.

For me, the dimensions of public service and public trust remain key, particularly in the professions of judge and prosecutor. It is a responsibility that defines the es-

sence of these professions. I also see a similar dimension in academic work, such as educating future generations of lawyers and instilling in them a way of thinking about the law as a sphere of responsibility toward the state and society rather than merely as a professional practice. We must constantly remind ourselves that the law binds individuals together in society, sets limits on freedom, and protects every citizen's interests. Thanks

to the law, life in the state should be predictable, just, and grounded in security. In this sense, the National School, an institution that educates future judges and prosecutors, is a vital component of the system, essentially bringing it full circle. ■

Public prosecutors' offices in western Poland are among the busiest in the country.

FROM CELLULOSE TO CLEAN WATER

Dr. Joanna Szymkowiak combines her passion for laboratory work with a commitment to making a tangible impact on the environment. She develops materials that effectively remove pollutants from water using biodegradable cellulose and cutting-edge advances in materials chemistry.

Dr. Szymkowiak has always been drawn to laboratory work. "For someone like me who enjoys discovering new things, conducting research based on my own ideas, having the freedom to act, and analyzing previously unknown molecules or materials is very fascinating," she says.

It was this desire that inspired the young scientist from the Faculty of Chemistry to pursue an academic career. Her research primarily focuses on adsorbent materials that can remove pollutants from water and air.

Dr. Szymkowiak's scientific journey began during a two-year postdoctoral fellowship with Prof. Mark MacLachlan's team at the University of British Columbia, made possible by support from the Bekker Program of the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA). While carrying out her research project, she worked with materials composed of cellulose and silicon. "These were films exhibiting various properties, from optical properties manifesting in varied coloring to the ability to adsorb pollutants," the chemist explains.

Since January of last year, Dr. Szymkowiak has worked in the AMU Department of Supramolecular Chemistry, as part of **Prof. Michał Cegłowski's** research group. At his initiative, she completed a two-month internship in Belgium. There, as part of Professor Richard Hoogenboom's group at Ghent University, she worked on polymer synthesis. She will use these materials at AMU to develop new polymers for water purification in a project led by Prof. Cegłowski.

"Thanks to my trips abroad, I've gained knowledge about synthesizing and using various substances," says Dr. Szymkowiak. "I wouldn't have learned this in Poznań because none of my colleagues works with these types of materials. My stays in Canada and Belgium also allowed me to develop my skills as a researcher. I learned new techniques and how to communicate with others. The connections I made continue to bear fruit today. I've stayed in touch with many of them, and together, we're working on a joint research project," she reveals.

The expertise she acquired led to a research grant awarded under the MINIATURA program of the National Science



DR. JOANNA SZYMKOWIAK

Department of Supramolecular Chemistry,
AMU Faculty of Chemistry

Center. Her project, "CelluNanoGel: Hybrid Materials Based on Cellulose Nanocrystals—Gels for the Removal of Metal Cations from Water," focuses on developing novel adsorbent materials for water purification. Access to clean drinking water is not a given today. Water is polluted by industry and everyday human activities, including the presence of metals and antibiotics. Dr. Szymkowiak intends to develop adsorbents whose main component will be cellulose, a natural, biodegradable, environmentally friendly, and importantly, inexpensive raw material.

She plans to develop a filter containing cellulose nanocrystals obtained

through the selective hydrolysis of wood pulp together with organosilicon compounds equipped with specially designed receptor systems. Interestingly, cellulose nanocrystals possess unique and natural optical properties. These properties make them suitable for use as organic matrices and fillers in the development of mesoporous and helical optical materials. These nanocrystals can be produced in various forms, including gels, films, powders, and fibers.

Dr. Szymkowiak will use the nanocrystals to develop a range of hybrid materials with unique structures, including aerogels and hydrogels. She will then investigate their physicochemical properties. These materials will then be tested as adsorbents for water purification, including the removal of metal cation contaminants.

Dr. Szymkowiak is currently improving the production process to ensure the materials have high sorption capacity and mechanical durability. Next, she plans to conduct comparative studies. "With this material, we need to strike a balance between performance and environmental sustainability. The research results are highly promising," comments the chemist.

The project has the potential to contribute to the development of advanced hybrid materials. The research findings may inspire the creation of new, sophisticated (bio)materials with applications including catalyst supports, metal detection, solution purification, and optical and biomedical sorption materials.

Ewa Konarzewska-Michalak

THE HIDDEN WORKOUT BEHIND MYOPIA

Myopia, or nearsightedness, is emerging as one of the 21st century's major public health challenges. The increasing use of smartphones, computers, and other digital devices, coupled with prolonged near work, is altering the way our eyes function, especially in children. "The scale of the problem is alarming," says **Dr. Magdalena Grajek**.



EWA KONARZEWSKA-MICHALAK

In the analog world, parents warned their children against watching too much TV or reading for too long because "it would ruin their eyes." And they were right. In the 21st century, the situation has become more complicated as computers and smartphones have joined traditional activities that require prolonged close-up viewing. Current visual habits contribute to vision deterioration and the development of vision problems, including myopia. It is estimated that, by 2050, over 30% of the world's population will be nearsighted. Currently, over 20% of the population is nearsighted.

"In Singapore, 90% of 10-year-olds are nearsighted because they use electronic devices with screens, such as toys, from a very young age. This shows how important eye care is," says **Dr. Magdalena Grajek** from the AMU Faculty of Physics and Astronomy.

Prolonged near work at a distance of up to 50 cm can cause the eyeball to elongate, resulting in myopia. Everyone is susceptible to this vision disorder, but children are particularly vulnerable because their visual systems are still developing. If we give very young children a phone to play with or let them watch TV from close up—which is common today, especially with large TVs in small rooms—the proper ratio between the screen size and distance from the eyes is not maintained. It is unclear whether prolonged close-up viewing affects the shape of the eyeball, causing improper focusing of the image, or if these disorders have other causes.

Dr. Grajek jokes that we go to the gym without even realizing it. "Why does the eyeball begin to change its shape?" One possible reason may be the extraocular muscles, including the lateral and medial rectus muscles, which perform intensive work when we focus on nearby objects. You could say that they are 'working out' all the time. Many people do not realize that, even if they do not engage in physical exercise, their eyes are constantly working."

Prolonged near work causes these two muscles to gradually enlarge. In contrast, the superior and inferior rectus muscles

are much smaller because we rarely look far upward or downward. When the lateral and medial rectus muscles begin to undergo hypertrophy and the space within the eye socket is limited, pressure increases. The bones of the orbit are rigid, but the eyeball is soft. Therefore, under this pressure, the eyeball begins to take on an ellipsoidal shape, which leads to the development of axial myopia.

Fortunately, we can prevent vision problems by relieving the strain on these muscles. All it takes is taking regular breaks from working in front of a computer screen. From an evolutionary standpoint, our eyes are better suited to looking into the distance for extended periods. After an hour of near work, we should look away and focus on something far away—ideally through a window—for at least 20 seconds. During this time, it is helpful to shift our gaze between distant and nearby objects. It is also recommended to massage the eyeballs daily through the eyelids using circular movements. These exercises help the eyes relax after prolonged visual effort. Even people with myopia may experience improvement by following these recommendations. After just a few months of developing new habits, the size of the eye muscles involved in movement may decrease.

If possible, organize work duties so that we spend four hours working on a computer and use the rest of the time for other tasks. If that's not possible, take short, regular breaks from screen time. After work, we can also go for a short walk to allow our eyes to focus on distant objects, or minimize our use of electronic devices and close-up reading," advises Dr. Grajek.

Dr. Grajek is a medical physicist who specializes in ocular biometry. She is also involved in promoting physics among children and young people. Her outreach projects include "Tik-Tok Physics" and "Science Theater," story-based performances that introduce children to physical phenomena. ■



A CARING CITY

Ewa Konarzewska-Michalak talks with the authors of the book
Care for Safety: Ethics of Care and Safety in the City - Assumptions.

**What is a caring city, a concept you propose in the book?
 The idea sounds utopian.**



**AMU Prof. Mikołaj Tomaszuk, Faculty
 of Political Science and Journalism:**

The concept of a caring city is, to some extent, idealistic. However, we view it from the perspective of its potential application in public life. Combining our academic expertise with practical experience, we see

the seeds of a transformation in how public authorities and residents approach the place where they live.

Through analyzing relevant literature and studying various European cities, we have come to understand the concept, which addresses the relationship between people and architecture, urban planning, public transportation, and other urban services, as well as the social relationships that form the foundation of community resilience. It asks how space can be designed to provide optimal conditions for comprehensive development, what principles and values can be used to build social relationships, and how relationships can be fostered in the public sphere to bring together city residents and administrators.

This idea also views human beings from the perspective of the relationships that shape them. It shows that we are not only interdependent on others, but also on the environment in which we live, which is influenced by our lifestyle. It promotes shared responsibility for the quality of social relationships. The concept also addresses the foundations of social life in culturally diverse communities in large cities.

The caring city concept is a political science approach that encompasses the relationship between the executive and legislative branches within a municipality and the question of how residents can influence public policy. This approach places high demands on local authorities, requiring them to be open to residents' needs, identify them, and tailor local public policy measures accordingly.



**Dr. Mikołaj Sokolski, graduate
 of the AMU Doctoral School of Social
 Sciences:**

Though the concept may seem utopian, the interdisciplinary perspective portrays the city as a conglomerate of relationships based on normatively coherent goals interpreted through the lens of care

ethics, a concept recognized beyond its feminist origins. Consequently, rather than offering ready-made recommendations, the book invites debate on the future of cities, social relations, and the values that should guide their development.

What events in Poland and the European Union inspired you?

M.T.: I was inspired by two issues. First, the European Union's search for a development model in which urban policy plays a significant role, as reflected in the European Green Deal. It is not just about electromobility; it is also about questioning our ecological footprint and our interconnectedness. It is about thinking not just in terms of the "here and now," but with the future in mind. Second, I was inspired by the experience of the role of public authorities and changes in people's attitudes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously, the trend was the concept of the "smart city," based on technology and data. However, the "caring city" shows that people are more than just technically optimized users of cities. In the wake of the pandemic, notions of care, empathy, and reflection on the excesses of technology have returned to the forefront. From a pedagogical and sociological perspective, this means engaging in a conversation about the human condition and human relationships without offering a single ready-made solution. We emphasize the perspective of Central and Eastern Europe, where local needs differ somewhat from those in the West. However, the core of the concept remains the inherent strength of human beings.

M.S.: The pandemic has permanently altered social relations, especially among younger generations, cementing a shift toward digital interactions while simultaneously fueling technology fatigue, particularly in Western European debates, and highlighting the importance of communities in the day-to-day functioning of cities. At the same time, we are seeing the development of deliberative innovations based on the inclusive participation of residents. Naturally, these processes unfold differently in Poland and Western countries, so it is important to consider the local context—something we also strive to highlight.

Where can these differences be seen?

M.S.: The differences concern the pace at which global trends emerge. In Poland, they appear sooner or later depending on the context. For example, we are only just beginning to discuss a gradual shift away from intensive social media use. In contrast, the debate about restrictions for minors is much more advanced in Western European and Nordic countries. From a political science perspective, recent events such as presidential vetoes show that processes related to social media and the digital sphere reach Poland at different times and in different contexts. Therefore, although we draw on Western literature, we analyze these issues from a local perspective, offering a unique point of view.

M.T.: I get the impression that in Poland, the issues we're discussing are highly politicized. In one of our recent presentations

at a conference in Warsaw, we expressed concern that the concept of the "caring city" might be dismissed as feminist, left-wing, or counterrevolutionary.

These are the associations people make.

M.T.: But that's not the case. In fact, we're working on a paper that demonstrates elements of care ethics in Pope Francis's teachings. The Pope spoke about the direction in which the world should change after the pandemic.

How can we promote safety in the city by shifting our focus from control to care?

M.T.: We view the need for safety as fundamental to every human being, regardless of their circumstances. A second issue, also raised by other authors in the context of immigrants and cultural and religious diversity, is taking an open approach. Within the Anglican tradition, the concept of the theology of the city has been developing for years. It is closely related to the ethics of care, which assumes the equal right of all—including religious communities—to space and to practice their religion without mutual exclusion. It invites us to view others from the perspective of openness to what they can offer that is new.

Given the situation on our eastern border, this may be controversial, and I agree. However, we do not view international security through the lens of the ethics of care, but rather through care practices for vulnerable individuals. We recognize issues affecting many cities, such as suburbanization, depopulation, and an aging society. We highlight an area in which the city can help by leveraging its strengths and resources.

The first paper we wrote drew on my experience in local government in Świebodzin. We are proud that during the first wave of the pandemic, we provided for all students attending school. A single educational platform was created and now functions as a widely accepted standard. The city identified needs and selected appropriate tools to address them.

Who published your book?

M.T.: The Polish original was published by the AMU Faculty of Political Science and Journalism Press.

M.S.: The English-language edition by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, with support from AMU.

Are you planning to do any more research on the "caring city"?

M.T.: My seminar student, Olaf Kozak, wrote an excellent paper on the role of leaders from the perspective of the ethics of care. Together, we're working on forming a research group. Our book isn't a lifetime's work; it's one step in a larger process. We plan to develop criteria for a caring city and conduct research, starting with the Poznań metropolitan area. Similar studies are being conducted in Amsterdam and cities across South America, but our context is completely different. Our culture, society, public services, and needs are different, so the criteria for a Polish "caring city" will be different. ■



QUEEN ANT: HOW AN AMU STUDENT FILM WON INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION IN TURIN

A group of young filmmakers from AMU has shown that independent cinema can flourish with passion and creativity. Their film *Queen Ant* has earned international recognition. As the filmmakers themselves explained, “Our story is like a horror film set in everyday life. There are no ghosts or monsters to scare you.

The real fear is something everyone can relate to: a job interview.”

EWA KONARZEWSKA-MICHALAK

Produced by a team from the AMU Stanisław Lem Experimental Media Laboratory, *Queen Ant* achieved notable success at the sixth edition of the prestigious Job Film Days festival in Turin. The short film received the Grand Prix from the student jury in the “Job for the Future 2025 Award” competition. It was the only Polish production among the eleven finalists, which were selected from nearly 400 submissions.

The festival takes place at Turin’s Cinema Massimo and is co-organized by the National Museum of Cinema in Turin, which is one of the largest institutions of its kind in the world.

During the festival, films addressing ethical, social, and economic issues related to the world of work, such

as equal opportunities, workplace safety, and social responsibility, are screened and evaluated. Currently, Job Film Days receives more funding than Turin’s largest festival, the Torino Film Festival. Clearly, there is no shortage of institutions committed to promoting this kind of socially engaged cinema.

The Poznań filmmakers’ success would not have been possible without years of hard work. The creators of *Queen Ant* met while studying at the AMU Film, Media, and Audiovisual Arts Institute. In 2018, they formed an amateur film group. They collaborate with students and graduates of film schools in Łódź, Warsaw, and Katowice to produce graduation films.

“We decided to take it a step further in terms of production quality and budget scale. That’s why we chose





Queen Ant to be the first film officially produced by the Experimental Media Laboratory,” said **Dominik Cywiński**, the film’s screenwriter and a Laboratory staff member.

Inspired by the opening pages of David Foster Wallace’s *Infinite Jest* and the experience of working within a university setting, the screenplay depicts a peculiar job interview involving a young candidate and two middle-aged recruiters.

“My initial idea was about trying to communicate with someone who speaks a completely different language, one based on implication. Over time, however, the focus shifted to the question of nonverbal communication: Is it harassment, or simply the result of generational differences? I won’t answer that question because everyone can draw their own conclusions,” the screenwriter noted.

Przemysław Raczek was the producer of the film, and **Michał Mróz** was the director. Both are pursuing their doctorates at AMU. Michał Mróz was assisted by **Kacper Jasiński**, an administrative staff member at the AMU Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology who was also responsible for the film’s special effects. Daniel Le Hai, the cinematographer, is a graduate of the Krzysztof Kieślowski Film School at the University of Silesia and the winner of the Silver Tadpole Award at the International Film Festival of the Art of Cinematography Camerimage.

Despite their best efforts, the team did not receive grant funding for the project and had to raise money from private sponsors.

“In my conversations with people associated with the university, the importance of what AMU prides itself on today—being a socially engaged university that isn’t afraid to tackle difficult topics concerning its own community—was often emphasized,” says Przemysław Raczek. “This was on my mind as I sought funding for the project. I pointed out that, although such situations are usually linked to corporations, similar issues arise in academia as well. With the university’s support, we can promote the project and highlight these difficulties where they actually exist.”

Donors were also impressed that the team enlisted professional actors — Michał Kaleta, Dariusz Siastacz, and Maja Wolska — for the production. The funds were sufficient to cover the entire production process and a decent salary for the cast.

The university provided the filmmakers with substantive and promotional support. “The Dean of the Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology, **AMU Prof. Krzysztof Skibski**, was particularly involved and actively supported the film’s promotion. It was thanks to his help that we were able to travel to Turin and present our project there,” emphasized the producer.

For the director, this was his first film featuring experienced and well-known actors. They made time to star in this intriguing independent production. “The collaboration went very well. I’ve worked with many talented people before, but these actors had significantly more experience and skill. I was a little stressed because they were ‘top-tier’ artists, but it turned out—paradoxically, or perhaps simply naturally—that working with them was much easier. I was amazed by how consistently they delivered the same performance across multiple takes, while remaining

so responsive to direction and feedback. It was a remarkably dynamic creative process.”

Filming took only eight hours in a room rented from eNStudios. The necessary equipment was rented from 2K42 Film Rental. Staff from the adjacent Adam Mickiewicz University Press helped assemble the office set. The director was accompanied on set by his assistant, Kacper Jasiński, who also operated ... an ant puppet. From the beginning, the crew knew that the surreal ant that appears in one of the scenes could not be digitally created and added to the film because it would look artificial. So, Kacper Jasiński built a large puppet, finishing it at midnight on the day of filming.

“The puppet was made from simple, inexpensive materials—paper, tape, and disposable tableware. I covered it with copper and black paint to make it look like an ant,” explains Kacper Jasiński. “The most interesting part of working on a film for me is always the task where you don’t know how to do it—you have to come up with the solution yourself.”

“I wouldn’t downplay the ant’s role because it turned out great and was well-received,” comments the producer. “People couldn’t believe the puppet was handmade. It made a big impression—not many people would take on such a task.”

The film has not yet had its theatrical release. It is still making the rounds at film festivals, meaning its distribution has not been finalized. It has been screened at the Nysa Film Festival and the “Szkłarnia” National Film Festival in Toruń. “The reception was very positive everywhere. Socially engaged films are often associated with Ken Loach’s depressing pictures. We proposed a more surrealistic approach, which was appreciated,” says Dominik Cywiński. Michał Mróz adds, “I like to think of the form we chose as an attempt to use genre cinema to say something meaningful. Our story is a kind of everyday horror. It’s not ghosts or monsters that frighten us but something far more familiar—something everyone can relate to. The real horror is the job interview.”

The film resonates with the experiences of young people entering the job market and is used in classes with students. “Students recognize situations in the film that they have experienced themselves, sometimes even in an academic environment,” explains Przemysław Raczek. “It’s an interesting moment. The film comes at a time when we’re discussing workers’ rights and implementing anti-discrimination and anti-harassment regulations at the university.” Following its success in Turin, there were inquiries about screening it on campus. The response has been enthusiastic, and the feedback has been extremely interesting.

The award at the Job Film Days festival in Turin led to collaborations with professional filmmakers from other countries. The winners are in contact with Job Film Days organizers, DAMS (Discipline delle Arti, della Musica e dello Spettacolo) students, and film engineering students at local universities. This collaboration may develop into concrete joint initiatives in the future. The contacts we made in Turin are important not only for us but also for AMU film studies and students,” the producer concluded. ■



THE FUTURE BEYOND LITHIUM

Dr. Adam Gorczyński is a researcher in the Department of Functional Nanostructures Synthesis at the AMU Faculty of Chemistry. He is one of two university researchers to have received a LIDER grant from the National Center for Research and Development.

INTERVIEW BY KRZYSZTOF SMURA



You recently returned from another research visit to the United States. Prior to that, you spent a considerable amount of time as a research fellow with Professor Krzysztof Matyjaszewski in the U.S., which was no coincidence.

I spent over two years at Carnegie Mellon University under the guidance of my mentor, working on the chemistry of so-called living polymers. Professor Matyjaszewski is one of the world's leading experts in this field. I've always been fascinated by the idea of creating something and designing it at the molecular level. Over the years, I've noticed that creating such compounds requires order and control, but it also turns out that introducing disorder can yield interesting properties.

So, does creative chaos make sense?

Absolutely. Together with our department colleagues, **AMU Prof. Marcin Runowski** and **Dr. Szymon Sobczak**, we created a macrocyclic complex containing a neodymium (III) ion. We observed that precisely because of its disorder, it can function as a multifunctional sensor of temperature and/or pressure. As Prof. Matyjaszewski said, to do great science, you have to create it at the intersection of disciplines. The experience of working in the U.S. was quite distinct from my time in Poland, where I was part of a smaller team under the guidance of **Prof. Violetta Patroniak**. Prof. Matyjaszewski's team consisted of 20–30 people, and its composition was constantly changing. I also formed personal friendships there with Dr. Julian Sobieski and Dr. Paulina Maksym from the University of Silesia. These friendships are also rewarding in scientific terms.

Now, let's move on to the LIDER grant. Is 1.8 million PLN sufficient for research?

I think so. The project is scheduled to last three years. We've already started working on it. The core of the team is based at the AMU Faculty of Chemistry. **Dr. Dawid Marcinkowski** is joining me; I've collaborated with him for a long time. There's also a doctoral student and a group of undergraduates. **Dr. Dawid Pakulski**, a battery design specialist from the group led by **visiting professor Artur Ciesielski** at the AMU Center for Advanced Technologies, is working with us. Also joining us is Dr. Marcin Wysokowski from the Poznań University of Technology.

What are your goals?

Lithium is a critical material. It is highly valued but relatively scarce. Moreover, its deposits are concentrated in regions that could become problematic in the event of a conflict. Lithium can store and release large amounts of energy. However, it is highly reactive when exposed to air or moisture. Sometimes, fires involving cell phones or electric cars are difficult to extinguish. We are looking for energy storage materials based on other elements. The ENER-POM project combines polyoxometalates and covalent organic frameworks to enable the development of highly efficient cathode materials for batteries and/or supercapacitors. We are looking for materials that offer high energy storage capacity and performance and can be produced simply and efficiently. These materials must also demonstrate long-term stability over repeated charge-discharge cycles. For example, after 5,000 cycles, they should retain 90–95% of their initial performance. Our preliminary studies have shown that our research direction has genuine potential for the future, not merely aspiration. The novelty lies in the nature of the designed compounds—the hybrid materials I mentioned earlier.

Commercialization: A magic word. Is there a chance?

Absolutely. We believe that we can develop a battery or supercapacitor that can ultimately be manufactured under real-world conditions. There is also interest from industry. For example, the ZAP Sznajder Batterien S.A. company has promised to support us in further research aimed at implementation if we deliver on our commitments. Currently, we are focusing on synthesizing compounds that can meet the project's design specifications, as we have demonstrated. Our goal is to prove that we can use these compounds as components in batteries or supercapacitors. Additionally, we are conducting research to answer the question of whether we can synthesize materials at room temperature using green chemistry principles. Can we modify these hybrids to increase the material's specific surface area, thereby improving energy storage?

Milestones?

We are committed to producing at least three publications and two patent applications, as well as master's theses and doctoral dissertations based on the project. These will certainly not be the end of our efforts. As part of the project, we also plan to hire a technology broker to promote the results of our work. ■

AI IN THE SERVICE OF JUSTICE

Dr. Karolina Kiejnich-Kruk from the AMU Faculty of Law and Administration combines academic research with legal practice. She promotes the use of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies in the administration of justice. She is one of two AMU researchers to have received a grant from the LIDER program of the National Center for Research and Development this year.

INTERVIEW BY KRZYSZTOF SMURA



Your project is titled “An Integrated Platform for Decision Support and Case Analysis in the Application of Combined Criminal Penalties and Penal Measures.” What is its goal?

The goal is to develop the JURIDICA platform, an interactive tool that supports the process of issuing aggregate sentences in criminal cases. It enables modeling, trend analysis, and comparison of judicial decisions. The system will indicate which criminal penalties and penal measures are subject to consolidation and the ranges within which aggregate penalties may be imposed. As part of the research, a language model (chatbot) will be developed to provide legal information, collect user feedback, and generate recommendations for specific cases.

What are the first steps?

We have already taken them. As lawyers, we are accustomed to conducting basic research. The National Center for Research and Development, on the other hand, funds applied research and development. We will create an interdisciplinary team that includes programming specialists. I have collaborated with specialists from the Poznań Supercomputing and Networking Center and the Poznań University of Technology for several years now. We now have three years to develop a tool that will facilitate the work of Polish lawyers.

I am sure there is already a plan.

Yes. Once the team is formed, our first step will be to conduct a “case-file analysis” of six court cases. The project is divided into application and development phases. The systems will be integrated and verified, and a pilot version will be made available to judges, attorneys, and legal advisors. We will gather their feedback. Based on their input, we will make ongoing changes to improve the system. Next, we will commercialize the system and create a university spin-off. It is important to emphasize that the system will not replace the work of judges or other legal professionals, but rather, it will support their work.

Exactly—the automation of the law. You recently finished the project, “Automation of Judicial Decision-Making in Criminal Cases.” Could we discuss it in the context of artificial intelligence

development? I understand that the law is rigid. But to that extent?

I believe there are certain areas of law and legal fields that can be formalized. One such area is the rules for combining criminal penalties and penal measures in criminal cases. These rules are based on pure mathematics and can be translated into algorithmic rules. This certainly does not apply to all areas of law. Fortunately. However, there are fields that are worth formalizing and automating. I am a judge and preside over criminal cases. This perspective is extremely important to me as a legal practitioner. This approach is also important from a scientific standpoint because it makes practitioners’ work easier. We are not interested in creating so-called “artificial intelligence courts,” though such ideas do arise.

When automating court rulings, we draw on the experiences of others. You have observed how this works in Estonia, a country heavily involved in this process.

Not long ago, news spread around the world that Estonia had introduced the world’s first AI court. That was an over-interpretation. However, the fact remains that Estonia has introduced an AI model for civil cases. It operates in cases involving small claims. The parties submit documentation to the system, and based on that, a ruling is issued. The parties can then either accept the ruling or appeal it to a human court.

A machine makes the decision, which reduces the court’s workload.

The overall duration of proceedings is reduced. One remedy for their protracted nature is to either increase the number of adjudicators or reduce the number of cases that reach the courts. Estonia has moved toward automation, which is hardly surprising. Estonia has just over one million citizens, and they all have to contribute to the gross domestic product.



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WHEN YOUTH MEETS ADULTHOOD



Emerging adulthood is an increasingly recognized stage of life and a distinct phase of human development. What challenges does it present? An international research team, including researchers from AMU, answered this question. Magda Ziólek spoke with **Prof. Barbara Jankowiak** from the AMU Faculty of Educational Studies about the project's findings, published in the article "Building Bridges Between Arnett's and Havighurst's Theories: New Developmental Tasks in Emerging Adulthood Across Six Countries."

What is emerging adulthood, and why is it now considered a distinct stage of life?

The concept of emerging adulthood was introduced in 2000 by American psychologist Jeffrey J. Arnett. Arnett observed that the social revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s changed social norms and shaped a new life model for young people.

Previously, adolescence led directly to adulthood. By the age of 20–22, most people were starting families and entering the workforce. Higher education was rare, so the path to stability was shorter. Today, however, things look different. Technological advancements and the economy's shift from industry to the knowledge sector have made education longer and more complex. Young people pursue higher education—often in multiple fields—gain additional qualifications and professional experience, travel, and work abroad. These experiences extend the time spent in education and delay the moment when young people achieve full independence.

Additionally, we live in a culture that demands continuous development and self-improvement. This means that reaching formal adulthood does not necessarily imply possessing all the attributes of adult life, such as stable employment, independence, or starting a family. Consequently, a “gap” has emerged between youth and adulthood, filled with new challenges.

Initially, it was thought that this applied only to highly developed countries, but research shows that the phenomenon is global. Therefore, emerging adulthood has been recognized as a distinct phase of human development.

Since this is a global phenomenon, do young people around the world face the same challenges?

A project involving researchers from six countries explored this question: Poland, Japan, South Korea, Spain, Portugal, and the United States. The Polish team consisted of AMU researchers: **AMU Prof. Sylwia Jaskulska** and **Dr. Karolina Kuryś-Szyncel** from the Faculty of Educational Studies; **Prof. Emilia Soroko** from the Faculty of Psychology and Cognitive Science; and myself.

Our goal was to determine whether this is indeed a global experience. We conducted qualitative research with elements of quantitative analysis involving 129 participants. However, with such a small sample size, it is difficult to generalize about individual countries. In our article, we did not highlight specific cultural differences, though certain variations in participants' experiences emerged. To capture these differences, the study would need to be repeated with a larger sample size.

Could you tell us more about this study?

The study was based on Robert Havighurst's concept of developmental tasks, which states that each stage of life is characterized by specific tasks. These tasks arise from three domains: biological maturation, social expectations, and an individual's own goals. The interaction between these elements creates tensions that generate new challenges, or developmental tasks. Havighurst described the tasks associated with particular life stages, but he did not address emerging adulthood because it is a relatively new developmental phase, as we have already established. Our aim was therefore to determine which tasks are characteristic of this period.

We asked students from six countries to write an essay on what adulthood means to them. We analyzed their responses to determine the extent to which they reflected the “classic” developmental tasks described by Havighurst and the extent to which they included new elements characteristic of today's young adults. This allowed us to identify which tasks carry over from earlier stages and which are entirely new, defining emerging adulthood.

Which challenges and developmental tasks did the surveyed students identify most frequently?

Their responses provided interesting insights into the tasks characteristic of this stage of life. New ones included social solidarity, openness to diversity, lifelong learning, developing reflective thinking skills, and building mental resilience. Of course, this is not a complete list—there are certainly more, including the “classic” ones.

Could you explain what you mean by “classic” developmental tasks?

The participants identified responsibility, pursuing independence from parents (though not always fully achieved), and developing one's own value system as tasks typical of adolescence. Interestingly, the essays did not address issues related to accepting one's changing body, a very important topic during adolescence. It seems that this task had already been accomplished earlier.

As for the tasks Havighurst attributed to adulthood, which were also present in the young people's statements, these primarily included finding a job, earning an income, and managing a household. These two emerged most frequently.

Therefore, it is clear that emerging adulthood takes on some tasks from adolescence and some from adulthood, but new ones also emerge. There are certainly more, but further research is needed to determine exactly what they are.

The period of emerging adulthood generally covers the age range of 19 to 29 years old.

How can emerging adulthood be characterized?

This period generally covers the age range of 19 to 29 years old. In our study, we focused on college students, though this developmental stage applies to a broader group of young people. Jeffrey Arnett described this period as a prolonged post-adolescent phase of identity exploration—a continuous search for answers to the question, “Who am I?” The process of finding a definitive answer does not end during adolescence; it continues into emerging adulthood.

Arnett emphasized that emerging adulthood involves developing both a sense of identity and a sense of responsibility. He also described a sense that “anything is possible” and an openness to new experiences. However, our research revealed that many students approach this stage with less optimism, acknowledging that they already bear the weight of life experiences. Consequently, they must actively develop and strengthen their psychological resilience.

This demonstrates these young people's high level of self-awareness.

Exactly. Our research findings, especially the short essays, paint a clear picture of young people who are grappling with difficult, sometimes traumatic experiences from their past as they enter adulthood. They know they need to work through these experiences, for example through therapy, in order to cope with their problems.

Not everyone described stressful events. Many emphasized the importance of developing self-awareness, improving mentalization skills, and gaining a better understanding of their own mental states. The awareness that emotional and mental life is important sets this developmental stage apart.

What conclusions can we draw from this research?

We can see that these young people fully understand the need for lifelong learning and prioritize self-development. Education and personal growth are important to them, and they see university programs as very significant. Their statements reflect a conviction that expanding their knowledge and awareness of how the world works is necessary.

Many of these young people appear to be aware of diversity and the needs of minorities. This awareness is linked to academic mobility and openness toward others with different experiences. Such tolerance is clearly evident within the group we studied. For them, adulthood means taking care of themselves and others, especially those in need. Thus, themes related to caring for others and supporting minorities emerged in our research.

At the beginning of our conversation, you mentioned differences in the participants' experiences. Could these differences be attributed to different cultural contexts?

Among the young people we observed, we did not notice any significant differences between countries. Interestingly, the study included both highly individualistic and collectivist societies, yet many experiences were shared, demonstrating the universality of this stage of life. However, certain differences did emerge.

As part of this project, we examined how young people perceive adulthood, not from the perspective of developmental tasks but by answering the question, “What makes me feel like an adult?” Another publication on this topic is in the works and will be released soon. Our goal was to identify the criteria for adulthood that emerged from the participants' experiences. While Jeffrey Arnett primarily used questionnaires with predefined answers in his research, we identified the criteria used by male and female students by analyzing the open-ended statements in their essays.

Our observations suggest that a certain level of stress related to financial responsibility was more prevalent in some countries. For instance, in countries where higher education is universally accessible, students have a different sense of financial responsibility than students in the United States who attend tuition-based universities.

Leaving home also proved to be an important milestone. While we did not study this directly, other research shows that moving out is a significant marker of adulthood. In our study, participants often described moving out of the family home as the moment when they felt like adults. This reflects the social expectations placed on people of this age, of which young people are aware, as well as their own goals. At the same time, it is clear that paths toward adulthood are diverse and individualized.

Interestingly, although Arnett emphasized the optimism of this stage, young people often described difficult emotions associated with adulthood in their essays. They feel a strong sense of responsibility—many participants feel as if they have been “thrown” into this stage of life, which can be burdensome. ■





RETHINKING EU VALUES IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

“The ValeUs project allows us to compare European perceptions of the European Union and its foreign policy with those of other regions of the world. It creates a space for constructive dialogue,” says **AMU Prof. Jarosław Jańczak** from the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism. He is the coordinator of the initiative, which is carried out as part of a Jean Monnet Network. This network brings together scholars from 20 universities on five continents.

INTERVIEW BY **MAGDA ZIÓŁEK**

The Faculty of Political Science and Journalism has a long-standing tradition of participating in the Jean Monnet Program.

That's true. Over the past dozen years, we have successfully applied for Jean Monnet grants numerous times. We have gone through all the stages, from the simplest Jean Monnet Teaching Modules, to more extensive Chairs and Networks, to a Center of Excellence, a three-year project led by Vice-Rector **Prof. Tadeusz Wallas**. Now, it is time for the ValeUs Jean Monnet Network.

Typically, Jean Monnet projects address topics related to various dimensions of European integration. Paradoxically, the less they are tied to traditional political science, the better. They should focus on the various

effects of integration, taking into account cultural, economic, and social issues, among others. The key is to always attempt to situate analyzed phenomena within the context of integration.

You mentioned modules and chairs. How do these projects work in practice?

Regardless of its format (Teaching Module, Chair, or Centre of Excellence), the Jean Monnet Program is always based on three main components. The number of scholars involved differs from project to project, but each must include a teaching component implemented through courses for students, a research component that most often results in a series of publications,

and a dissemination component that shares research findings on a global scale.

ValeUs is a project involving a broad consortium of universities.

It is a large-scale, global initiative structured around six work packages. A total of 20 universities from 17 countries are participating. In this context, organizing a conference or even an online meeting presents huge academic, logistical, and intercultural challenges. With our partners in Japan and South America, we can only meet at one reasonable time: 2:00 p.m. Central European Time (CET). This is the perfect time for us, but for our Japanese colleagues this means joining us late in the evening after a full day of work. Meanwhile, our colleagues from Colombia have to get up early in the morning. This illustrates just how complicated the logistics are—and that's on a basic level only. Cultural differences add another layer of complexity.

This brings us to the heart of the matter. What exactly is this project?

Essentially, it is an attempt to examine the EU's foreign policy — how the Union shapes its relations with the surrounding political and economic landscape — through the lens of European values.

From a Polish perspective, we have a lot to contribute to this discussion. Naturally, we are primarily interested in the countries beyond our eastern border, especially in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the acceleration of integration processes. However, the EU's focus is not solely on the east (the so-called Eastern Partnership). We also have relations with countries in Southern Europe and the Nordic region. Additionally, the European Neighborhood Policy represents the EU's attempt to build a “ring of friends” around itself.

Furthermore, the EU has been trying to act as a global player, not just in its immediate vicinity, a process that has accelerated in recent years. The EU is shaping transatlantic relations and relations with countries in Central and East Asia. For example, China is extremely active and is often perceived as a more attractive partner. The EU is also establishing relations with African nations.

The EU is becoming a global player, and European values remain at the heart of this transformation.

After all, the EU does not solely speak the language of economic interests or geopolitics as a global actor. In fact, the Union often refers to European values. So, what do those values actually mean? In declarations, everything looks wonderful. We talk about democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and equality. However, when we compare these ideals with reality, questions arise: How should we understand them? Does everyone in the EU perceive them the same way? How do our non-European partners view them?

These are precisely the questions that the ValeUs project addresses. We examine how the EU defines its identity and foreign policy and compare these perceptions with how they are received and evaluated outside the Union.

That's interesting. How are European values perceived outside the continent? For example, how are they viewed in South America?

France, Spain, Portugal, and the United Kingdom (as long as it was an EU member) are still viewed as former colonial powers that often resorted to military force in the past to impose their will and solutions. This is why contemporary attempts to export certain solutions, concepts, and ideas are viewed through this lens in many parts of the world. As someone from Central and Eastern Europe, I was surprised that this negative legacy of colonialism is still present today.

Second, the disconnect between current European declarations on normative issues and values and the EU's actual actions and how they are perceived in many places is striking—and not limited to South

America. Calls for human rights and dignity, for example, resonate strongly yet often contradict actions such as closing borders and barring unwanted visitors from entering the EU. These sentiments are often linked to the idea that development aid is insufficient. This issue is not just a matter of funding, but also a lack of trust in previous declarations. This was evident during the pandemic when some countries, especially in Africa, felt abandoned and left to fend for themselves regarding access to vaccines, for example.

Very interesting and contentious arguments often arise, including regional ones, and, in many cases, they take the form of constructive debate. One example is the voices from South America regarding trade agreements being negotiated or finalized. The question is often asked: “Why so late for a world without barriers?”

The issue of conditionality also arises. When proposing trade relations and development aid, the EU sets conditions. This is where the normative sphere begins, with the liberalization of systems and changes in laws that give women specific opportunities. Meanwhile, China is also present on the international stage, but it does not ask such questions. It is not concerned with the normative dimension. Of course, China has its own geopolitical agenda and economic interests, but its strategy primarily offers a “carrot” rather than combining it with a “stick,” as the EU does.

The ValeUs project gives universities a special role.

This provides another context for the actions we are taking, which I believe are part of broader changes taking place in European politics. The process of European integration is often perceived as a top-down mechanism. It is the states that decide on accession;

Typically, Jean Monnet projects address topics related to various dimensions of European integration.

prime ministers and presidents meet at summits; and elites negotiate in Brussels.

For years, there has been a debate within the EU about the so-called “democratic deficit”—that is, a lack of understanding among European citizens of what the integration process actually entails. It encompasses not just politics, but a wide range of areas. Approximately 80% of the legal regulations in force in member states originate from Brussels and are implemented into national legal systems in various ways. In this sense, what happens in Brussels is often more important than what happens in national capitals such as Warsaw.

This poses a significant challenge: How can we engage Europeans in these processes? Brexit has shown that we often only begin to see how a given reality was constructed when it comes to an end. After leaving the EU, the British realized how many aspects of their daily lives, such as development policies, mobility, and education, had been shaped by the European Union.

So we ask: How can we make the integration process more understandable? How can we make it more accessible, even though it is complex? Most importantly, How can we involve other actors, not just the political elite, in shaping it?

The importance of assigning a special role to universities becomes clear here—as institutions that are key actors in the social, political, and cultural order in most European countries. Why is this the case? There are several reasons. First, we are talking about mass higher education. Depending on the country, roughly one-third of all Europeans end up at a university at some point in their lives. They will spend three to five years in this environment. Second, universities benefit from integration policies. The European Union strongly supports higher education through programs such as Erasmus and by providing support for research and teaching projects. These programs constitute a huge part of financial and functional systems.

Europe aspires to base its economic and social structures on knowledge. We are not meant to be an industrial or agricultural continent, but rather, we are meant to possess a new, broadly defined body of knowledge. This knowledge is possible only when we share and create it together.

In this sense, the question arises regarding the role of universities, which is the dilemma we are addressing. A university is no longer merely a place where someone comes, receives an education, and leaves. It is a space where individuals and the entire university structure have the opportunity—and indeed the obligation—to interact with other entities. Today, universities are among the most internationalized and networked institutions within the broader European system. In this regard, I suspect they can rival the business sector.

From our perspective, the question arises not only regarding functional aspects, such as how many students go abroad and how many come here, but also regarding the terms under which this occurs. In this sense, we are talking about a European model.

I believe such a model exists. In any case, AMU is very active in emphasizing and promoting values such as openness, dialogue, and inclusivity, and not just internally. These concepts have many dimensions and can relate to gender, social issues, such as a person’s family’s financial means, or cultural differences.

Finally, let’s focus on the ValEUs project. What specific activities are still planned?

The project began in January 2024, so we are halfway through the three-year implementation period. Our core team consists of **AMU Profs. Paulina Pospieszna and Beata Przybylska-Maszner, Dr. Jakub Jakubowski**, and me. Other project participants are involved to varying degrees.

The best way to see what’s happening with the project is to visit the valeus.eu website. Our university is responsible for developing the website in collaboration with partners from South America. It is an ongoing effort involving gathering materials, publishing, and creating content. However, the most important aspect is the substantive content. AMU prepares smaller components that together form a larger global whole. For instance, during the first year, we organized an open lecture for 120 people and broadcast it in a hybrid format to several dozen participants from around the world. The recording now serves as academic and educational material.

This fall, as part of an international series of meetings with civil society, a debate will take place, and similar discussions will be held in South America and Amsterdam. All discussions will be streamed online. Our team recorded materials for MOOCs developed by colleagues in Istanbul, including lectures and ready-to-use teaching materials. We also produced a 40-minute podcast. We just wrapped up our first conference in Astana, where we presented our research findings, and we also held a workshop in Paris. Our second annual conference in Zagreb is coming up.

Most important, however, will be the “lasting” effects of this project, namely its scientific and educational outcomes, such as publications, articles, and educational materials. As part of our outreach efforts, we are producing policy papers with recommendations for policymakers, which are already being well-received in Brussels. Another important outcome is relational capital: a network of contacts and collaborations leading to new projects and initiatives. Some of the teams are already operating independently and continuing the work begun in ValEUs. ■



PROF. TADEUSZ WALLAS

RECTOR'S REPRESENTATIVE FOR UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT

AMU LAUNCHES A MEDICINE DEGREE PROGRAM IN PIŁA

After waiting for over a year, Adam Mickiewicz University finally received authorization from the Polish Minister of Science and Higher Education to establish a medical degree program at the end of February. Undersecretary of State Professor Maria Mrówczyńska signed the decision after a team from the Polish Accreditation Committee visited the campus and the Minister of Health issued positive opinions. The new program will be offered by the AMU Institute of Medical Sciences at the university's Piła campus.

Training for future doctors will begin in October, marking a return to the university's early years. Until the Medical Academy was founded in 1950 and renamed the Poznań Academy of Medicine in March of that year, this type of education had been conducted at the University of Poznań's Faculty of Medicine, which included a Section of Dentistry. The university has been known as Adam Mickiewicz University since December 24, 1955.

In early spring 2023, **AMU Rector Prof. Bogumiła Kaniewska**, made the decision to begin the process of applying for the minister's approval to offer medical studies. The decision stemmed from the need to implement the AMU Strategy, analyze the labor market, expand the AMU branch in Piła's educational offerings, meet the expectations of prospective students, and address the current situation facing healthcare facilities, particularly those operating outside major academic centers.

It was assumed that the need for physicians would increase, given the significant number of vacancies in public healthcare facilities, the relatively high average age of those employed there, and the growing demand for medical care from an aging population. Medical school graduates will find employment opportunities in hospitals, clinics, outpatient centers, private practices, sanatoriums, rehabilitation centers, hospices, and emergency medical services. The decision

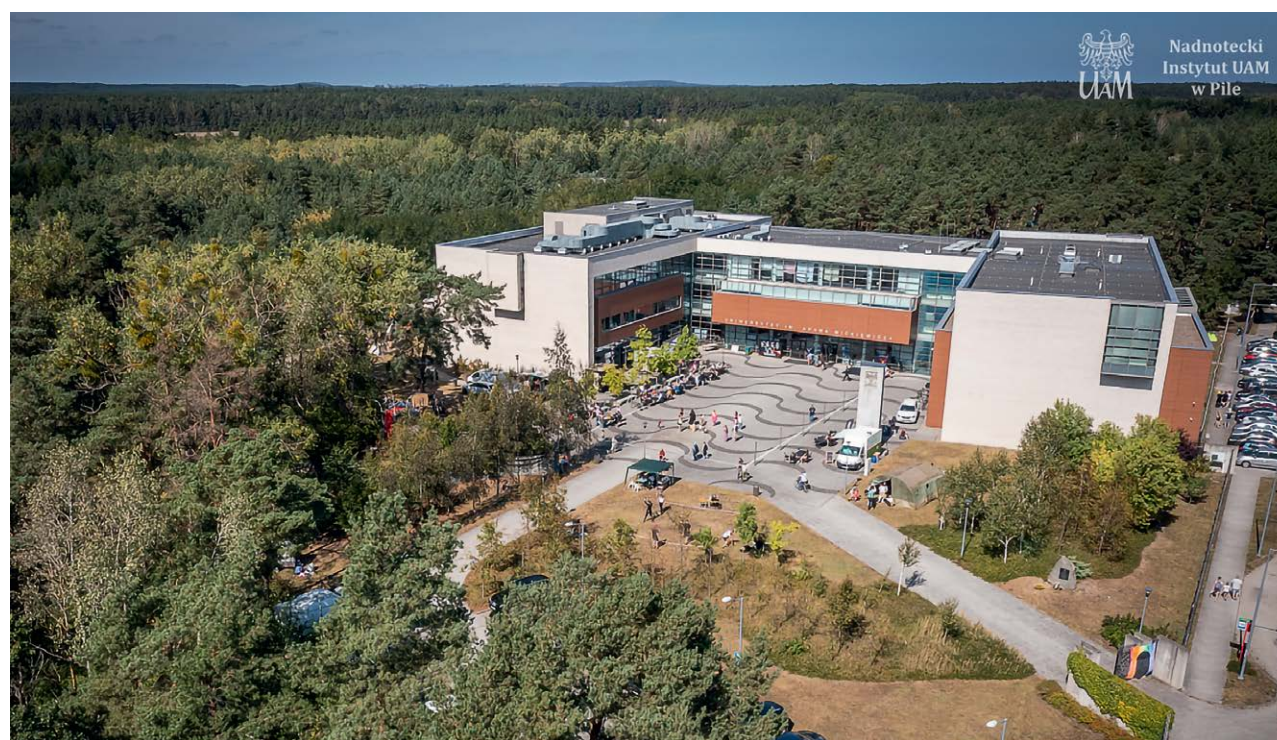
to launch a medical education program at the AMU branch in Piła was also motivated by the hope that some of the future graduates would work in healthcare facilities in northern Wielkopolska, where the aforementioned shortages are particularly evident. For this reason, the university's initiative received strong and enthusiastic support from the Wielkopolska Region Assembly and Executive Board, which are responsible for regional healthcare; the Wiel-

kopolska Parliamentary Group; the governing boards of Piła, Chodzież, Czarńków-Trzcianka, Wągrowiec, and Złotów counties; and the mayor of Piła.

The first major challenge in preparing the application was assembling a team of academic teachers and medical professionals for the proposed program. This was due to the requirement that prospective students earn 75% of their ECTS credits in courses taught by faculty members for whom AMU is their primary employer. Candidates for these positions had to demonstrate current

scholarly achievements relevant to the subject, as well as teaching and professional experience. More than 160 professionals were recruited to teach lectures, tutorials, seminars, laboratory sessions, and clinical training. Seventy-five percent of this group are physicians with the required specialty and an academic degree or title. They are not yet employees of our university, but have declared their willingness to teach

The six-year, single-cycle master's degree program in medicine comprises nearly 5,900 hours of study and combines comprehensive academic training with professional preparation.





Anatomy Dissection Room

future students under an employment contract. The remaining individuals are already employed at AMU, primarily at the Faculty of Chemistry, the Faculty of Biology, and the Faculty of Physics and Astronomy. They will mainly teach first-, second-, and third-year students. These faculties' well-equipped laboratories will also be available to students in the medicine degree program.

The second challenge was designing, setting up, and equipping facilities to train future doctors. In the first half of 2025, an anatomy lab and classrooms were built and equipped on the grounds of the Stanisław Staszic Specialist Hospital in Piła to this end. The Department of Pathomorphology is located in the same building. While the hospital owns the facility, AMU will use it exclusively under a loan-for-use agreement. The Self-Government of the Wielkopolska Region financed the investment precisely because the facility would be used for student education. As part of the preparations, certain rooms at the branch's headquarters were renovated in September to serve as a physiology lab, histology lab, embryology lab, and Multispecialty Medical Simulation Center. The center's most important component will be high-fidelity simulation rooms for conducting clinical classes. The center will be equipped in phases according to educational needs. The entire facility will be ready by summer 2030, before the start of the fourth year of study for students beginning this October. The AMU branch campus in Piła also houses an extensive library that has purchased textbooks, reference materials, journals, and access to databases necessary for medical student education. These purchases will continue, of course. AMU has set aside funds for additional necessary investments and purchases. These funds will come

from bonds transferred to us by the then-prime minister in the summer of 2023.

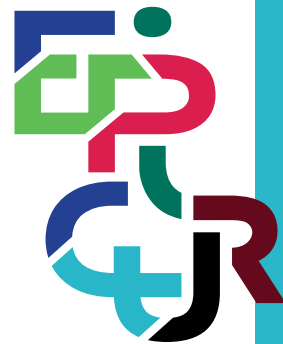
Another important task was establishing partnerships with hospitals, outpatient clinics, and a hospice. These institutions will serve as venues for students' clinical rotations and selected clinical teaching activities. To date, we have concluded agreements with 19 institutions, primarily public healthcare providers but also several private ones. The list of partner institutions is open and will continue to grow.

Currently, we are seeking funding to establish clinical departments at the hospital in Piła and other similar facilities in different cities. These departments will be equipped to conduct clinical classes, which will begin to increase starting in the seventh semester.

The medicine degree program will be conducted in accordance with the requirements set forth in the September 29, 2023, Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science amending the Regulation on the Standards of Education Preparing for the Professions of Physician, Dentist, Pharmacist, Nurse, Midwife, Laboratory Diagnostician, Physiotherapist, and Paramedic. When designing the curriculum, we made sure that the educational process aligns with the principles of humanism, tolerance, and respect for human rights and dignity. At the same time, we remain open to using the latest methods and technological advances applicable to medicine. AMU will continue to improve educational conditions by enhancing the quality of education, developing its academic and teaching staff, implementing effective student support systems, expanding its material resources, and fostering cooperation with Poznań University of Medical Sciences, Stanisław Staszic State University of Applied Sciences in Piła, and public healthcare providers in Piła, Poznań, and northern Wielkopolska counties.

The six-year, single-cycle master's degree program in medicine comprises nearly 5,900 hours of study and combines comprehensive academic training with professional preparation. The scientific discipline in which the program will be conducted is medical sciences. Students must earn 370 ECTS credits by successfully completing all courses specified in the curriculum and five four-week professional placements to complete the program. Graduates will be awarded the professional title of physician.

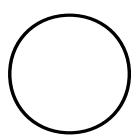
The program's primary objective is to prepare future graduates for a 13-month postgraduate internship and the Polish Medical Final Examination (LEK). Those who pass the exam will be granted the right to practice medicine. The LEK results will undoubtedly serve as an important measure of the quality and effectiveness of AMU's medicine degree program. ■



FROM TURKEY TO POZNAŃ, FROM STUDENT TO LEADER

Last November, Taha Musullu, an AMU Liberal Arts and Sciences student, was elected Chair of the EPICUR Student Board. He believes that this position will enable him to better represent students' interests within the university alliance.

MAGDA ZIÓŁEK



Originally from Turkey, Musullu studied philosophy at Anadolu University. He arrived in Poznań in 2022 and is currently pursuing his interests in the humanities, particularly sociology, culture, and communication.

"I first came to Poznań as an Erasmus student. I spent a year studying philosophy here, and that's when my Poznań story began. In no time, I fell in love with the city, the university, and the social life here. Above all, I felt that this was my place in the world. That's why, after my Erasmus exchange ended, I started looking for opportunities to continue my studies at AMU. I decided to pursue my bachelor's degree here and move here permanently," he recalls.

Living abroad in Poznań was not Taha Musullu's first experience—before coming to Poland, he spent a short time in Belgrade as part of an internship program. He emphasizes that it was there that he made his first international friends and gained skills that later helped him greatly in navigating an international environment, such as communicating with people, adapting to a new country, and coping with everyday challenges.

At AMU, Taha is studying in the Liberal Arts and Sciences program. He has chosen courses in art, sociology, and communication. He explains that he is interested in how societies function and how people express their ideas and emotions through culture, art, and the media.

"I want to continue developing my ability to view issues from different perspectives," he says. Working at the intersection of various disciplines has allowed him to see his interests in a new light. Flexibility, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary awareness have become key competencies for him in navigating complex social and cultural contexts.

He explains that he is not limiting himself to a single, predetermined path in the future. His experience with international, educational, and communication projects is steering him toward a career in an international environment, education, communication, or digital media.

Taking on his new role as Chair of the EPICUR Student Board and the responsibilities that come with it in a community where he had previously invested his time and energy was motivating and exciting.

The choice was no accident. For a year and a half, Taha Musullu served as a student member of the Board, representing Adam Mickiewicz University. During that time, he took full advantage of the opportunities offered by the alliance, participating in co-courses and conferences and overseeing social media and communications activities. This allowed him to represent EPICUR more effectively and gain an in-depth understanding of how it operates.

As Chair of the Student Board, he will coordinate its activities, ensuring smooth internal communication, implementing long-term projects and strategic directions, and overseeing the Executive Committee's work. He will also represent the Board in dealings with institutional partners and ensure that students' voices are heard within the EPICUR Alliance.

"EPICUR is currently facing a series of interrelated challenges as it seeks to transform itself into a full-fledged university federation," Musullu notes. "It is crucial to adapt management structures, secure sustainable long-term funding, and deepen academic integration across various national and institutional contexts. Equally important is building a shared sense of commitment and belonging among students and staff. Without this, the alliance's further development will not be possible," he emphasizes.

Taha Musullu also emphasizes that active student engagement is essential to maintaining the EPICUR Alliance as an inclusive initiative that addresses real academic and social needs. He emphasizes that the Student Board can play a significant role in this process by serving as a liaison between decision-making bodies and students and ensuring the students' perspective is considered in further developing the collaboration.



EPICUR (The European Partnership for Innovative Campus Unifying Regions) is one of the first-generation European University Alliances piloting a new model of cooperation among higher education institutions by establishing a European University. ■

FROM ERASMUS STUDENT TO JESUIT HISTORIAN

Dr. Andrea Mariani, a historian from Milan, came to Poznań out of curiosity. Today, he not only researches the history of the Jesuits in Central and Eastern Europe, but also promotes knowledge about Poland and Italy. His research sheds light on the Jesuits' role in Polish-Lithuanian society.

EWA KONARZEWSKA-MICHALAK



Poles certainly know much more about Italy than Italians do about Poland. I wanted to share this knowledge. Sometimes I write articles in Italian to introduce my compatriots to Polish history,” says the researcher.

Dr. Mariani came to Poznań as part of the Erasmus program while he was still a graduate student. At the AMU Faculty of History, he participated in a seminar led by **Prof. Maciej Serwański**. “I liked the atmosphere. Later, I decided to pursue my doctorate in Poland, and that’s how it all unfolded,” he recalls.

While studying in Milan earlier on, Dr. Mariani developed an interest in the history of Central and Eastern Europe. His bachelor’s thesis focused on the Transylvanian Saxons. The young scholar was also fascinated by the history of the Jesuits. Prof. Daniel Tollet from France introduced him to this topic. Tollet is an outstanding historian of Jewish history and an acquaintance of Dr. Mariani’s advisor at the time, Prof. Giulia Lami. When he arrived in Poznań, Andrea Mariani initially intended to study the history of the Reformation. Ultimately, however, he “ended up joining the other side”—the Jesuits, as he jokingly puts it. This led to the idea of publishing the inventories of Jesuit colleges in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania—a body of sources that had never before been edited.

“I first came across the inventories while conducting research in Moscow when writing my doctoral dissertation under Prof. Serwański’s supervision,” says Dr. Mariani. “There, as in Minsk and Vilnius, a large number of post-suppression inventories have survived. Unfortunately, similar sources once existed in Poland as well, but they have not fared as well over time. Many of the manuscripts were destroyed during World War II,” he adds.

The inventories were compiled in 1773–1774 in connection with the suppression of the Society of Jesus by decree of Pope Clement XIV. The Partition Sejm appointed commissioners who were sent to compile inventories of the Order’s property. These assets were then transferred to the state and used to support the budget of the Commission of National Education, the educational administration system of the period. To date, Adam Mickiewicz University Press has published the inventories of the Jesuit colleges in Nesvizh and Novogrudok, which we reported on in *Życie Uniwersyteckie*, as well as the college in Minsk. The latest of these books won the third-degree Klio Prize last year at the Historical Book Fair.

“The manuscripts created as part of the inventory provide a broad overview of what was found in the Jesuit colleges, from libraries to pharmacies,” the researcher explains. “The inventories listed medications recommended for pregnant women and people suffering from venereal diseases, for example. These documents illustrate the role the Jesuits played in a society living in a region marked by religious, cultural, and linguistic boundaries.”

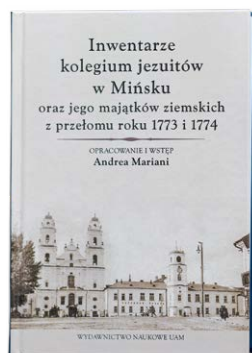
The Jesuits were remarkably adept at adapting to local conditions, as demonstrated by the inventory of the Jesuit college in Slutsk, which will soon be published in an edition prepared by Dr. Mariani. In this private town, the Orthodox Church maintained a strong position for a long time. Initially belonging to the Olelkowicz princely family, Slutsk and the Duchy of Slutsk then passed into the hands of the Biržai branch of the Radziwiłł family, who were Calvinists. Finally, they came under the rule of the Catholic Nesvizh branch of the Radziwiłłs.

“The Jesuits arrived at the end of the seventeenth century, during a very difficult time. A civil war was unfolding between the Sapieha family and other magnate houses,” the researcher explains. “Nevertheless, the Jesuits managed to establish good relations with the local elite, who were predominantly Calvinist. They avoided antagonizing the community and were also able to blend into the local landscape visually. In Nesvizh, they built the Corpus Christi Church, which resembles the Church of the Gesu in Rome because its founder had traveled to Italy and wanted to recreate what he had seen there in his own town. In Slutsk, by contrast, they built a wooden church on an octagonal plan that resembles an Orthodox church more than a Catholic one.”

The Jesuit brothers had a library in the monastery, and some of its books have survived to the present day. Most of the volumes are now held in the Vilnius University Library. Among them are some surprising printed works. “The Jesuits received many books as gifts from Hieronim Kłokocki, whose father, Kazimierz, was the administrator of Bogusław Radziwiłł’s estate. Radziwiłł was a Calvinist immortalized in Henryk Sienkiewicz’s novel *The Deluge*,” the historian explains. “Kazimierz was Catholic, but his wife was a Calvinist. In his private library, he collected prohibited books, among other things. This is how they eventually came into the possession of the Jesuits.”

Jesuit inventories, which contain descriptions of estates, villages, and manors, are sometimes used as sources for genealogical research. A Belarusian man from a village that used to belong to the Jesuits wrote to me, asking me to check if his ancestor’s name was listed in the serf registry. This shows that even events from the distant past can hold personal significance for us. Moments like these can warm the heart,” comments the researcher.

There is also an interesting story connected with the Minsk inventory. Dr. Mariani received a grant from the National Science Center to study it. However, first the pandemic struck, and then a full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine occurred. However,



it turned out that **Prof. Michał Zwierzykowski** had found the inventory in the collections of the V. I. Vernadskyi National Library of Ukraine in Kyiv and had obtained photographs of the documents.

“Russian bombs were falling on Kyiv—and continue to fall—so I thought these inventories needed to be published because we don’t know what will happen to them,” explains Dr. Mariani. “I did something a historian would normally avoid because one should examine a manuscript in person. In this case, that wasn’t possible.

I am very grateful to Prof. Zwierzykowski for sharing this wonderful discovery.”

The difficult international situation has meant that research in Eastern Europe is currently on hold. Dr. Mariani has remained focused on the Jesuits, expanding his area of interest to include the Czech and Austrian provinces—a vast region stretching from Uzhhorod to Trieste. This time, the historian is focusing on prosopography. He is attempting to create a collective portrait of the Jesuits to show who they were, where they came from, and how the structure of their religious communities changed. He is using personnel directories.

“Year after year, the Jesuits recorded who was where—a sort of ‘Who’s Who’ of the province. From these records, we can learn what was taught at a given institution and how individual people moved around and developed their careers. The Polish angle will certainly come up because the Bohemian Province included Silesia, and many Silesians joined the order in Poland,” he predicts.

In addition to his research on the Jesuits, Dr. Mariani is dedicated to popularizing knowledge about Italy among Poles. He wrote *Historia Włoch w pieśniach i piosenkach: Antologia tekstów. Część I: 1796–1918* (A History of Italy Through Songs and Ballads: An Anthology of Texts, Part I: 1796–1918). By contextualizing songs within social, political, and cultural changes, he offers a different perspective on Italy and its people. The anthology includes political songs, songs of social protest, and popular songs.

“Not only does the Polish national anthem, ‘Mazurek Dąbrowskiego,’ contain an Italian theme, but Italy’s current national anthem, ‘Il Canto degli Italiani,’ also known as ‘Inno di Mameli,’ contains a Polish theme,” says the lecturer. “In the fifth verse, there is a motif of ‘the Eagle of Austria,’ which drank ‘the blood of Italy and Poland,’ and this burned its heart. The song was written in 1847, when the struggle for Italian unification was beginning and Poland had been partitioned,” he explains.

Among other things, the book reveals that the famous Neapolitan song “Funiculì, Funiculà” was originally written as an advertisement encouraging tourists in the late nineteenth century to reach the summit of Mount Vesuvius via the newly opened funicular railway instead of riding donkeys.

Dr. Mariani is planning Part II of the anthology, but that’s not all. He teaches a monographic course on modern Italy at the Faculty of History, which inspired him to write an outline history of the Italian Peninsula. Work on these books is ongoing. ■



EVA WITH A

“I identify very strongly with my name,” says Eva Rufo when we first meet.

“Here in Poland, the name is spelled *Ewa* with a *w*, and to me, that’s not the same. For me, it’s a matter of identity.”

MAGDA ZIÓŁEK

We’re sitting in a classroom on the second floor of Building B at Collegium Novum. Eva just finished teaching a class to the ethnolinguistics students, yet she doesn’t look tired at all. In fact, she has enough energy to share with everyone around her. Her striking, unmistakably Spanish beauty; her expressive gestures; and her incredible openness make me feel wonderful. I’m not nervous at all, even though Eva Rufo is a well-known personality to me. I know her from posters: she’s an actor, an activist, and a promoter of Spanish culture in our city. To tell the truth, I’ve wanted to meet her for a long time.

I show up with a prepared script for our conversa-

tion, but Eva immediately shatters that plan. Contrary to my expectations, she starts from the middle and tries to direct my attention to teaching methods. As she erases the whiteboard, she explains how important cultural context is in language teaching and that words take on new meanings in literature and history. I listen and realize that Spanish lessons like this must be wonderful. Still, I’m most interested in Eva the actor, especially since her roles intertwine. But first things first.

EVA THE ACTOR

“I’ve been fascinated by theater since childhood,” she says. “I performed on stage as a dancer from

age four, but attending drama school seemed impractical. Classical theater dominated in Spain at the time, but I was drawn to Jerzy Grotowski, alternative theater, minimalist black-box theater, and the direct connection between actors and audience.”

Eva Rufo Sánchez-Román was born in Toledo, where she earned her law degree from the University of Castilla-La Mancha. In addition to theater, she was interested in foreign languages, specifically English and French, which led her to travel extensively throughout Europe during her studies.

She didn’t leave for an extended period until after defending her master’s thesis. When the right-wing Partido Popular, led by José María Aznar, came to power in Spain, she left the country in a gesture of defiance. An opportunity arose in Poznań, where she received the Krzysztof Skubiszewski Scholarship and began postgraduate studies in international law at AMU.

Echoes of this decision can be heard in the play *Heartburn*, in which her character explains to a taxi driver that she left Spain not for a man, but for theater. As she recalls, Poznań turned out to be an excellent choice—not only because it is close to Wrocław, home to the Grotowski Institute, but also because of the opportunities it offered theater enthusiasts.

Much later, in an interview, Eva Rufo said that, at that time, theater was everywhere for her. This echoes the words of her other mentor, Peter Brook, who, in his book *The Empty Space*, emphasized that all that is needed for theater to exist is an empty space and a person.

“I arrived here in 1997, and two years later, I began creating my first productions. I was given access to the stage at the legendary Eighth Day Theater in Poznań, where I performed in Spanish to a full house. In Spain, I would have had to pay to rent a venue,” she recalls.

Poznań also turned out to be an exceptionally friendly city to alternative theater. The following theater groups were active there: Porywacze Ciał (Body Snatchers), Strefa Ciszy (Silence Zone), Biuro Podróży (Travel Agency), and Usta Usta (Mouth to Mouth). A few years ago, Eva tried to count them all. She came up with 32 groups, most of which she had been in contact with. Theater was all around her.

EVA THE STORYTELLER

I first heard about Eva Rufo at a cuentacuentos (storytelling event). In Spain, storytelling is still an integral part of fiestas. Actors stand before an audience gathered in a park or courtyard and vividly recount stories they’ve prepared in advance. Eva organized her first Polish cuentacuentos in 1999, which was then known as “Story Hour.” The tradition survived the pandemic and continues to this day.

“We told stories in Spanish, primarily based on works from Spanish and Latin American literature. At first, the group consisted mainly students of Spanish, but later, students of ethnolinguistics joined them as well. By 2006, there were so many participants that two performances began to take shape—one ‘story hour’ was no longer enough,” she says.

The Klan group was formed for the purpose of cuentacuentos. The students not only told stories, but also created their own tales and developed performances based on them. Thanks to them, Storytelling Week, Christmas Stories, and the Short Story Writing Contest—which ran until the pandemic—were launched. However, with the development of artificial intelligence, the contest lost its meaning because there was no way to verify the authorship of submitted stories.

“The ‘Cuento Break’ project really stuck with me,” says Eva. “For a week at Collegium Novum, we told stories in various languages—not just Spanish, but also Arabic, Korean, and Hindi. It was an interesting, though challenging, experience. The hallway was noisy, and students rushing to class didn’t always want to stop. Listening to a story in a foreign language requires concentration. Despite this, there was no shortage of people eager to participate,” she notes.

“For me, it was an important experience. We were able to see for ourselves that languages are alive and present at our Faculty. It also reinforced my belief that theater can happen anywhere. It doesn’t need the Poznań Grand Theatre’s classic stage to exist—sometimes a hallway, lobby, or library is enough,” she argues.

THEATER AT THE FINGERTIPS

“In alternative theater, we all work together,” Eva says when I ask her where she gets her ideas for performances. “There’s no division between director, set designer, and actor. We make all the decisions together, including those about the text, form, and music.” For *The Real Pole Is Dead*, we received funding from the Marshal’s Office for the first time. Thanks to this support, we were able to work with costume designer Idalia Mantas and composer Malwina Paszek. It was a tremendous help,” she recalls.

The script for *Heartburn* was created through a collaboration between Rachel Karafistan, founder of the Cosmino theater company, and Eva Rufo. In it, the artists shared their reflections on women’s rights, patriarchy, and stereotypes.

“I’ve been asked thousands of times why I came to Poland. At first, I tried to explain that the sun doesn’t always shine in Spain, and that not all Spaniards love football. I don’t like it, and neither does my father. But that didn’t work because the questions kept coming back. When we started performing this play abroad, it suddenly became clear that these are universal experiences present in Denmark, England, and other countries as well. Regardless of the country, we all have our own ideas about life abroad and travel with that mental baggage,” she says.

EVA AND STEREOTYPES

In the play *The Real Pole Is Dead*, Eva plays a Spanish woman. As she says, people often call her that. People say things like, “That’s the Spanish woman,” “Oh, our Spanish woman,” and “Hey, Spanish woman, come over here.” Although they don’t mean any harm, she finds it a bit uncomfortable.

The play is precisely about this. The protagonist, the Spanish woman, tries to transform herself into a typical Pole. Before that happens, however, she is confronted with many stereotypes about what a Pole is supposed to be. Should a real Pole have a mustache like Lech Wałęsa? Does he drink because “all Poles drink”? Does he have hair because “Spaniards do”? These questions also prompt us to consider who the typical mother or wife is.

“I don’t like stereotypes because they limit our perception of the world,” says Eva. “I’ve lived in Poznań for almost 30 years, and I still don’t feel like I can say anything with absolute certainty about the people of this country. You can’t speak for everyone with a single voice,” she explains.

She also encountered similar oversimplifications in Spain. “For example, I’ve heard that Poland is a very Catholic country, mainly because of its association with John Paul II. That image has become ingrained, and it’s difficult to convince the average resident of Toledo that this isn’t the case,” she says. She also notes another mechanism: “If someone already has a certain idea about a country, then when they’re there, they look for confirmation. When a Spaniard is late for a meeting, it’s easy to say, ‘Oh well, that’s just how they are.’ Even though everything else runs on time, a single instance is enough to reinforce the stereotype.”

FOR WOMEN AND FOR MEN

The division into women’s and men’s categories is a recurring theme in Eva Rufo’s projects. She finds inspiration for them in everyday situations. “I’m in a store and want to buy a phone. When I walk up to the counter, the salesperson asks me if I want a ‘women’s or men’s phone.’ I don’t know how I’m supposed to respond. What is a ‘women’s’ phone supposed to be like? Pink with larger buttons and fewer functions? I conclude that I am being insulted or that the salesperson is suggesting that I am stupid.” Eva describes this event from her life to me. It later served as the basis for one of the scenes in *The Real Pole Is Dead*.

In Poland, the distinction between women’s and men’s items also applies to many other things that Eva often finds absurd. “For example, I learned that beer can be ‘for women’ or ‘for men.’ That surprised me, especially since in Poland, women are served beer with juice and a straw. Or take this scene: A friend invites me to a ‘girls’ night.’ I don’t say anything because I don’t know what that is. I thought the word *baba* was offensive. I’m not sure if I want to participate in something like that. But I can see that my friend is very excited, so I ask, ‘Can Jorge come?’ ‘No,’ I hear. Puzzled, I ask, ‘Why?’ “Eva, is Jorge a *baba*?”

Eva learned that in Polish schools, girls and boys exercise in separate physical education classes. “This separation reminds me of Francoist Spain, which—fortunately—is behind us. And yet, in the 21st century, right in the middle of Europe, I hear that children aren’t allowed to exercise together. Why? Do they run or exercise differently? Someone told me it’s because

of menstruation. To me, that’s more of an argument for them to exercise together so that it becomes normal,” she explains.

MUJERES

This brings us to another topic close to Eva’s heart: stories about women. She is the co-author of the play *Mujeres-Kobiety*, which premiered in 2008 and was presented at the first No Women No Art festival, among other venues. In 2024, a new version was produced: *Mujeres-Dziewuchy*.

It’s a story about women from two continents. The stories, told by Marta Królikowska and Eva Rufo, are based on the writings

of Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano and are complemented by traditional Polish folk songs arranged by Malwina Paszek. “It’s a story about women from two continents—seemingly two different worlds—and yet, the stories we tell are very similar,” says Eva. “There’s something sad about it. Sometimes, after the show, audience members come up to me and say, ‘I know a woman like that’—it’s my grandmother, my mom, or sometimes even worse, a friend,” she adds.

EVA WITH A V

I’m saving the hardest question for last. To what extent has her nearly thirty-year stay in Poland led her to identify with the country and its culture? “That’s a difficult question,” she replies. “Many people who consciously choose to emigrate feel as though they’re living in between—not quite here and not quite there.” I certainly don’t feel Polish—I know that for sure. In Poland, I represent my country, which is a responsible task. In Spain, on the other hand, I dispel false notions about my home country. I keep repeating that I’m not always freezing here and that there aren’t bears roaming the streets—just as you wouldn’t encounter a bull in Spain. Deep down, I still feel Spanish, but I don’t miss Spain as a whole—maybe just the sun, especially in March, like probably everyone in Poland,” she says.

To wrap things up, she tells me a story. She’s been practicing yoga for years and sometimes gets massages as well. After one such session, she goes to the front desk to book a massage and notices that the receptionist is writing her name with a w: *Ewa*. She corrects her, saying, “It’s *Eva* with a v.” What does she see? The receptionist writes in the calendar: “Ewa with a v.” ■

Deep down,
I still feel Spanish,
but I don’t miss Spain
as a whole—maybe
just the sun, especially
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PROF. KATARZYNA DZIUBALSKA-KOŁACZYK

VICE-RECTOR FOR RESEARCH

SCIENCE IS ABOUT CREATING NEW KNOWLEDGE

“New knowledge can emerge only when researchers are free to question established assumptions, even at the risk of reaching a dead end. Science advances through questioning, not confirmation.”

This quote is from a document titled *The Research Policy Framework of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań*, which was adopted by a resolution of the Adam Mickiewicz University Senate on February 23, 2026.

The word “policy” has different meanings depending on the context. “University research policy” can refer to a strategy, a set of rules, or a collection of decisions outlining how an institution develops its research activities and utilizes its research resources. We view our university’s research policy as a declaration of the fundamental principles that guide us in organizing and conducting



research. Thus, our research policy also guides the development of the *AMU Strategy* and informs strategic decision-making. *The Research Policy Framework of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań* is the University’s overarching policy document and provides the foundation for all other research-related documents. It is general and mission-oriented, serving as a reference point for drafting working documents and administrative

orders. It also provides recommendations that guide the actions of the university's governing bodies and officials. *The Research Policy Framework* is a declaration of principles and a commitment.

The Rector entrusted the AMU Research Council with drafting the document. Readers may be surprised to learn that this brief document is the result of nearly three years of work. Over this period, the AMU Research Council adopted a series of position statements on key issues related to the conduct of scientific research. This bottom-up process ultimately led to the development of the principles set out in *The Research Policy Framework*. During the same period, members of the AMU Research Council consulted with AMU Faculties, Deans' Councils, and School Councils. We received numerous opinions and critical comments from these bodies. Thus, *The Research Policy Framework* was developed by addressing current issues and taking stances on emerging dilemmas that shape the contemporary context for science in Poland and globally.

We started with the AMU Research Council's *Position on Proposed Modifications to the Principles of Research Quality Evaluation*, given the controversy surrounding Poland's research evaluation system. In April 2023, our university joined the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) and signed the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment. The agreement states that the signatories "commit

to a common vision, which is that the assessment of research, researchers and research organizations, and recognize the diverse outputs, practices and activities that maximize the quality and impact of research. This requires basing assessment primarily on qualitative judgement, for which peer-review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators."

In *The Research Policy Framework of Adam Mickiewicz University*, we state that:

"...although systems for evaluating disciplines and individual researchers are intended to provide information about the quality and impact of research, they risk creating a situation in which the pursuit of knowledge becomes secondary to the pursuit of metrics, points, or rankings."

"The contemporary system of organizing, funding, and evaluating research often hinders scientific progress by discouraging researchers from taking risks and exploring new directions. The tension between building upon established knowledge and creating space for new ideas, as well as between the regulatory function of the scientific community and the freedom of thought, is becoming increasingly evident."

"A realistic and responsible AMU research policy should strike an appropriate balance between the autonomy of researchers and transparent yet flexible evaluation criteria."

The evaluation system also involves assessing the contributions of individual researchers to the overall quality of the university.

Another position statement was issued by the AMU Research Council regarding modifications to the criteria for the periodic evaluation of academic faculty. This statement served as the basis for the new *Regulation No. 158/2025/2026 of the Rector of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, of December 16, 2025, on the Criteria for the Periodic Evaluation of Academic Staff, the Evaluation Procedure, and the Bodies Responsible for Conducting Periodic Reviews*.

Other documents issued by the AMU Research Council concern the publication of research results. These include positions on predatory journals and unethical publication practices, as well as the *Publishing Policy of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. Preliminary Recommendations of the AMU Research Council*. The AMU Senate adopted our recommendations by passing *Resolution No. 47/2024/2025 from January 2025 Regarding the AMU Senate's Position on Unethical Publication Practices*. The AMU

Research Council also prepared *The Rules and Scope of the Audit of AMU Journals for the AMU Audit Team*. These rules were applied in the latest audit of the university's journals. The audits aim to enhance the substantive and editorial quality of AMU-affiliated journals and increase their international reach.

The following provision in *The Research Policy Framework* reflects the guidelines from these documents: **"A commitment to research ethics and scientific integrity**

ty is another essential element of such a policy. The University should strengthen researchers' competencies by supporting professional ethics committees, such as the AMU Ethics Committee; providing training in good research practices; offering guidance on research involving sensitive data; and promoting the inclusion of marginalized perspectives. Equally important is **the development of a responsible publication policy** that prioritizes quality over quantity, supports responsible open access, and counters unethical publication practices."

The statement "Equally important is **creating stable working conditions...**" is reflected in the objectives of the so-called Action Plan developed at AMU every three years as part of meeting the European Commission's criteria for renewing the **HR Excellence in Research** award. These tasks pertain to the following areas of the university's operations: ethics and integrity, recruitment and progression, working conditions, and social security, as well as training and career development.

The following call to action and guiding principle for the current and future leadership of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań is presented in the summary of its *Research Policy Framework*:

"AMU's research policy should foster a culture of trust, responsibility, and dialogue. Transparent evaluation procedures, consultation on institutional regulations, and meaningful involvement of the academic community in decision-making can ensure that measurement serves as a tool supporting—rather



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

than constraining—the advancement of knowledge. In this way, effectiveness becomes an integral element of a mature academic culture founded on autonomy, integrity, and a commitment to the societal value of research rather than an externally imposed requirement.”

This call closes the document, which opens with the statement: **“Academic freedom is the foundation of academic life and a prerequisite for the genuine advancement of knowledge. [...] Accordingly, Adam Mickiewicz University’s research policy should promote intellectual courage, creative risk-taking, and the willingness to challenge established ways of thinking.”**

Is our *Research Policy Framework* too idealistic? Too traditional? Too general? Is it more philosophy than policy? These were among the questions raised during a discussion of the document with the Adam Mickiewicz University Scientific Advisory Board (AMU SAB), the University’s international advisory body. According to the board members, universities must evolve from loosely defined institutions of knowledge into strategically managed, autonomous, impact-oriented systems while preserving fundamental strengths, such as academic freedom and basic research. The following essential themes of research policy were emphasized:

- ▶ equal recognition of basic and applied research;
- ▶ societal impact as both the objective and the outcome of translational research;
- ▶ the dual outcomes of research: new knowledge and the development of people and talent;
- ▶ the transition from disciplinary to interdisciplinary and, ultimately, transdisciplinary research;
- ▶ research autonomy and the removal of unnecessary administrative and regulatory barriers;
- ▶ defining the University’s role within the local, regional, European, and global research landscape;
- ▶ team-based research led by outstanding scholars and strengthened through cross-sector collaboration;
- ▶ addressing the tension between collaboration—essential for achieving meaningful impact—and competition, driven by funding mechanisms and university rankings;
- ▶ research priorities emerging from interdisciplinary collaboration and supported by university leadership through targeted incentives rather than rigid top-down control;
- ▶ clearly defined strategic priorities and the translation of the University’s research vision into practical policies and institutional guidelines.

In my view, these themes are rooted in *The Research Policy Framework*. They are also translated into practice through key university documents, including the *AMU Strategy*, the Excellence Initiative – Research University (IDUB) programme, the position statements and directives mentioned above, as well as other strategic

POSITIONS ADOPTED BY THE AMU RESEARCH COUNCIL

Adoption date	AMU Research Council Positions
December 7, 2022	Position of the AMU Research Council on Proposed Modifications to the Principles of Research Quality Evaluation
March 15, 2023	Position of the AMU Research Council on Modifications to the Criteria for the Periodic Evaluation of Academic Teachers
June 12, 2023	Position of the AMU Research Council on Predatory Journals
January 22, 2025	Position of the AMU Research Council on Unethical Publication Practices
March 19, 2025	Publishing Policy of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań: Preliminary Recommendations of the AMU Research Council
March 28, 2025	Rules and Scope of the Audit of AMU Journals
January 1, 2026	Recommendations for AMU Research Policy

documents such as the *Ranking Strategy*, *Gender Equality Plan*, *Open Data Policy*, *Ethics Committee Regulations*, and the *OTMR* (Open, Transparent, Merit-based Recruitment) *Policy*. These themes are also found in our foundational documents such as the *AMU Statutes* and relevant regulations.

While the principles guiding Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań are timeless, the methods of their implementation are determined by the current state of civilizational development. The foundations of research policy are idealistic, yet they give concrete shape to the university’s activities.

This invites a comparison with the seemingly “idealistic” mission of the European Research Council: “to encourage the highest quality research in Europe through competitive funding and to support investigator-driven frontier research across all fields based on scientific excellence.” Yet it is precisely this mission that has enabled thousands of researchers to pursue truly groundbreaking research.

Guided by this mission, our University seeks to create an environment that combines institutional responsibility and appropriate oversight with the intellectual freedom essential to research, while respecting the diversity of methods, aims, and traditions that characterize individual disciplines. ■

When we started preparing the initial application to the European Commission for funding the EPICUR European University Alliance in 2018, we could not have anticipated how far we would come together. Last month, EPICUR submitted another application for funding from November 2026 to November 2028. Initially, the European Commission planned to establish 20 alliances, but more than 60 were ultimately created as its expectations continued to evolve. Today, European University Alliances are platforms not only for testing innovative legal and institutional solutions, such as the European degree and micro-credentials, but also for developing concrete educational approaches. In this area, EPICUR coordinates cooperation between the alliances and Ukraine. The entire field of research and educational cooperation within the European Union remains highly dynamic, a fact reflected in EPICUR's new application.

The composition of our university alliance is changing. The University of Amsterdam has decided to continue its collaboration within a different alliance focused on medicine and health in the broadest sense. To date, nearly a dozen European universities have decided to switch alliances. The University of Basel, which previously participated in EPICUR as an associated partner through Eucor – The European Campus, has joined EPICUR as a full member alongside two other universities: Roma Tre University in Italy and Pablo de Olavide University in Seville, Spain. Consequently, our alliance has welcomed one of Europe's most prestigious universities, whose traditions date back to the fifteenth century, as well as two rapidly developing universities founded in the late twentieth century that bring a touch of Mediterranean culture to the alliance. The number of students has risen to 280,000, the number of academic staff to 29,000, and the number of university administrative staff to 17,000. Currently, EPICUR spans nine European countries and seven languages, with English serving as the primary language of communication. A ceremonial meeting of the university rectors and the entire alliance is planned for November 2026 in Poznań.

When planning its activities for the next two years, EPICUR determined that it should focus on fundamental issues to prepare for a long-term proposal starting in 2028. Two years is a very



AMU PROF. RAFAŁ WITKOWSKI
VICE-RECTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION



EPICUR LOOKS AHEAD: NEW PARTNERS, NEW PROGRAMS, NEW CHALLENGES

short time. EPICUR is moving toward a confederation of universities and the adoption of a non-restrictive legal framework because, without agreements at the ministerial level within the EU, universities alone cannot adopt the necessary solutions. Although political decisions rest with the government ministers, the alliances are independently seeking ways to strengthen cooperation. The next two years will be devoted to integrating educational systems through joint study programs (European Label), learning pathways, and micro-credentials. AMU will bear significant responsibility for these efforts. A new pilot master's degree program has already been developed in Strasbourg, Odense, and Poznań, and additional programs based on this model are currently being drafted. AMU has proposed several interdisciplinary educational pathways and micro-credentials. AMU students will be able to participate in summer schools through financial support similar to that of the Erasmus program.

This type of educational program can be implemented only because EPICUR, the first alliance to launch a digital platform during the pan-

demic, is expanding its functionalities (three other alliances are currently negotiating license purchases). Without digital integration, EPICUR will not be able to achieve its future goals.

Scientific and research integration is gradually becoming a reality thanks to the development of seed money funding. This funding is primarily intended for young researchers who need support to prepare for large grants offered by European agencies. This allows research groups to emerge from the ground up by integrating the human and equipment resources of various EPICUR universities.

All tasks in the new project, EPICUR-SHAPE-IT-PLUS, are divided into five work packages (WPs). AMU is participating in all of them, and our most important activities involve creating new educational offerings at the bachelor's and master's levels.

Since 2019, the project has enjoyed tremendous success at AMU, thanks to the immense commitment of many faculty members, doctoral students, and graduate and undergraduate students. The EPICUR community continues to grow. EPICUR at AMU has many faces, making it one of the pillars of the university's continued development.



Not all beliefs about children are harmless. Some—though they sound familiar—can hinder their development. Magda Ziółek speaks with **Dr. Monika Kiszka** from the AMU Faculty of Educational Studies, author of the book *Mity dotyczące dziecka i dzieciństwa. Studium socjopedagogiczne* (Myths of the Child and Childhood: A Socio-Pedagogical Study).

In your book, you argue that the way we think about children and childhood is largely shaped by myths. What exactly are they?

The concept of myth has its roots in ancient Greek culture—the term *mythos* originally meant a story or a speech. Over time, it came to be understood as a collection of simplified, often not entirely accurate explanations of reality. Today, it is more often understood in a critical light. Myths are typically narratives based on half-truths that simplify reality and present it in a schematic, often black-and-white manner. They give rise to stereotypes, prejudices, and oversimplifications regarding various social groups—including children and childhood itself. In this sense, myths can be understood as socially entrenched beliefs that simplify reality and influence the way people think and act.

Why do myths prove so persistent specifically in the realm of childhood?

First and foremost, because childhood is often a realm that adults find difficult to fully understand. When we lack knowledge or certainty, we turn to myths because they offer ready-made, easily accessible explanations.

Myths are also part of our cultural heritage—we often inherit them across generations, treating them as proven models of behavior. They function as universal frameworks that—at least on the surface—can be applied to various situations. They also provide a sense of security. By simplifying reality and offering ready-made answers, they help us cope with uncertainty and difficulties. Finally, myths easily seep into our consciousness because they address topics that are close to our hearts and important to us—such as parenting, child development, and relationships with children.

One of the examples you give is the saying, “Children should be seen and not heard.” How might this affect a child’s development?

This saying immediately reveals how adults define a child’s place. Rather than treating children as partners in the parenting relationship, it places them in a subordinate position while positioning the adult as having a more important and decisive voice, regardless of the child’s perspective.

This attitude can lead to children becoming conformist. Accustomed to submitting to adult authority, they may struggle

~~CHILDREN SHOULD BE
SEEN AND NOT HEARD~~



to express their own opinions, set boundaries or make independent decisions in the future.

Denying children the right to be heard also limits their sense of agency, which is crucial to their development. Children learn through experience: by trying things out, making mistakes and learning from them. If they do not have the opportunity to speak up and participate in decision-making processes, their social and emotional development may be stunted. This can consequently affect their future functioning, including their ability to act, resolve conflicts, defend their own position, and build relationships based on partnership. In this sense, such a saying is not harmless, but can constitute a form of symbolic violence against the child.

Admittedly, this statement may be controversial from a parent's perspective.

However, it is worth noting that it is often used as a kind of “stand-in argument,” particularly in difficult situations when an adult has no other justification for their decision. In such cases, the phrase “children should be seen and not heard” allows the adult to maintain authority and end the discussion. In this way, the phrase becomes a tool that legitimizes parental authority but carries a number of negative consequences. First, it reinforces the child’s belief that their voice is unimportant and that they do not have the right to participate in decision-making or express their opinion, even on matters that directly concern them. This affects how the child perceives themselves and their role in relationships, seeing themselves as someone who should submit rather than participate.

In your book, you demonstrate how childhood has been portrayed across different eras. What do these portrayals reveal about adults’ expectations of children?

Historical analyses show that, in the earliest eras, childhood was not considered a distinct stage of life. It was not considered

significant or characterized by any particular traits. During the Middle Ages, children largely participated in social life on terms similar to those of adults, without clear distinctions based on their stage of development.

The modern understanding of childhood developed gradually as the result of long-term cultural changes. A significant turning point occurred during the Renaissance when people began to recognize the distinctiveness and significance of this stage of life. Neil Postman argued that childhood is a social construct that emerged in the early modern period. During this period, the first theories describing the nature of children began to appear, including the idea of the *tabula rasa*, or blank slate.

From today’s perspective, it is important to recognize that childhood is a social construct. This means our understanding of it depends on cultural, religious, and political contexts and value systems. Contemporary research is moving away from the concept of a single, universal childhood and recognizing its many forms. Childhood takes on different forms depending on the environment in which a child grows up. Recognizing this diversity is one of the most important conclusions of the research. Childhood emerges as a variable, ambiguous category strongly embedded in a social context.

Today, we have a much greater understanding of child development. How does this knowledge change the way we think about children?

This knowledge significantly influences our perception of children and their role in society. For one, our growing understanding of the stages of development and the mechanisms that govern them leads to a more informed approach to childhood. This knowledge also changes our thinking by allowing us to recognize children’s needs and the risks associated with their development. However, this does not mean that myths about

childhood have disappeared. They persist and often coexist with scientific findings.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that advances in scientific research significantly influence how we perceive children and childhood. These advances enable a better understanding of developmental processes and the creation of appropriate tools to support education and work with children. In this sense, knowledge forms the foundation of the contemporary approach to childhood.

Which myths do you think are the most deeply rooted and hardest to dispel?

If I had to choose two that recur most often, I would point to the myths of the “good child” and the “happy childhood.” The first is associated with the image of a child who is calm and submissive, subordinate to adult authority, and well-behaved. Today, another significant element has been added to this image: the belief that a “good child” is one who makes their parents proud by excelling academically, athletically, or in other areas.

This way of thinking has serious consequences. It can lead to difficulty setting boundaries, limit a child’s ability to express their opinions, and reinforce submissive attitudes. It instills in children the belief that simply being themselves is not enough and that they must constantly prove their worth through achievements. This fosters competition, lowers self-esteem, and often creates a feeling of being “inferior” to peers or siblings. It can also lead to the belief that love and acceptance must be earned, which has negative long-term effects on emotional development.

The second myth, the “happy childhood,” is based on the idea that childhood is a carefree, almost idyllic time devoid of difficulties and problems. This image is largely a projection of adults’ expectations. Consequently, children’s experiences and emotions are trivialized and considered less important than adults’ problems. This often results in an inability to recognize the real challenges children face. Furthermore, the belief that children should have a “happy childhood” sometimes translates into overscheduling their lives and using them to fulfill adults’ ambitions. Thus children may feel overwhelmed, and their needs may go unnoticed.

These myths demonstrate how our perceptions strongly influence our thoughts about children. This is why it is important to challenge these perceptions with knowledge and, above all, with the real needs of children.

I would add the myth of the “perfect child” to this list. Paradoxically, this myth is sometimes reinforced by the growing body of psychological knowledge.

One could speak of this myth and, more broadly, of the idea of a child as a “parental project.” From this perspective, children

are treated as undertakings that must be carefully planned and consistently carried out. Childhood then becomes primarily a stage of intensive preparation for adulthood, where children are expected to succeed in many areas, such as education, sports, and social life.

This mindset is also linked to the idea that the “outcome of upbringing” reflects the social image of the parent. A child’s achievements indirectly become a measure of a parent’s competence, further increasing the pressure on parents and children.

The consequences of this myth are clear. There is increasing talk of children being overscheduled and overburdened to the point that they are considered one of the most overworked social groups. This leaves little room for spontaneous play, a fundamental element of development.

Contemporary myths do not exist in isolation. The “perfect child” myth is clearly linked to the “good child” and “happy childhood” myths, creating a coherent—though oversimplified—picture of childhood. This illustrates how adults define a child’s place in society and the expectations placed on them. Although some traditional notions seem to be fading, they often resurface in new forms.

The book is based on your doctoral dissertation, which you defended a little over a year ago. Where does this interest in childhood come from?

I was primarily inspired by observing the world around me. The subject of children and childhood has been close to my heart since the beginning of my academic career.

At the same time, I noticed that the myths surrounding children and childhood had not yet been the subject of a comprehensive scholarly study. There have been fragmentary analyses, but a synthetic approach to organize this phenomenon and subject it to systematic scholarly reflection was missing. It was precisely this gap that prompted me to take on the topic.

While working on the book, I realized how often and unconsciously we rely on myths when thinking about children and childhood. Many of these myths are part of everyday language and are passed down from one generation to the next. For example, the saying “children should be seen and not heard” is a common myth. We treat these myths as part of tradition and rarely subject them to critical analysis, even though they actually influence our attitudes and practices.

This phenomenon aligns well with the perspective of social pedagogy. As Helena Radlińska pointed out, social environments contain “invisible” beliefs and patterns of thinking that influence our actions even when we are not aware of them. Myths about childhood are precisely such elements: present in our culture yet often unrecognized.

THE FACES OF A GENIUS

Mathematician Henryk Zygalski was an extraordinary figure and one of the cryptographers who broke the Enigma machine ciphers. Thanks to the book *Zygalski. Oblicza geniusza* (Zygalski: The Faces of a Genius), edited by Piotr Bojarski and Maksym Kempieński, we can now delve into the life story of this renowned University of Poznań graduate and Prof. Zdzisław Krygowski's student.

KRZYSZTOF SMURA



Henryk Zygalski with a friend in Warsaw, 1934. From the collection of the Enigma Cipher Center.

This extraordinary book contains unpublished documents and photographs, notes from everyday life, and eyewitness accounts that greatly enrich our understanding of the Poznań cryptologist. Our university is extremely proud to have had him as an alumnus.

FIRST THERE WAS GRUNWALD

"I was born on July 15, 1908, in Poznań," wrote Henryk Zygalski years later. Few people pay attention to the highly symbolic fact that the future cryptologist was born on the anniversary of the famous 1410 Polish-Lithuanian victory over the Teutonic Order at the Battle of Grunwald. According to his birth certificate, written by a German official, Zygalski was born at 12:30 p.m. in a tenement house at 22 Wiktoria Street (today 19 Seweryna Mielżyńskiego Street). He came from a petty bourgeois family. His parents were Brigitta Stanisława, née Kielisz, and Michał Zygalski, a master tailor and sewing teacher who was sometimes referred to as a ladies' tailor.

As a middle school student, Zygalski witnessed the outbreak of the Greater Poland Uprising in 1918 and Poznań's reclaiming of its Polish identity. He saw German monuments disappear from the city, including the Otto von Bismarck monument next to the Imperial Castle and the Emperor Frederick III monument at Wilhelmsplatz, which was renamed Freedom Square in 1919. Zygalski grew up amid the city's recovery by the Poles and its repolonization. These events must have had a strong impact on the young man's patriotic feelings," says Piotr Bojarski.

"At least since his middle school years, Henryk Zygalski had shown above-average abilities in mathematics. When he took his mathematics school-leaving exam in 1926 as a student of the renowned St.



Mary Magdalene Gymnasium, he received an excellent grade accompanied by a commendatory description from his teacher,” writes Maksym Kempieński in one of the chapters of his book. “Zygalski worked on the tasks with such great understanding of the subject matter and in such a short time that I considered it absolutely necessary to grade his work as ‘very good,’” stated Prof. Józef Huss.

UNDER THE WING OF PROF. KRYGOWSKI

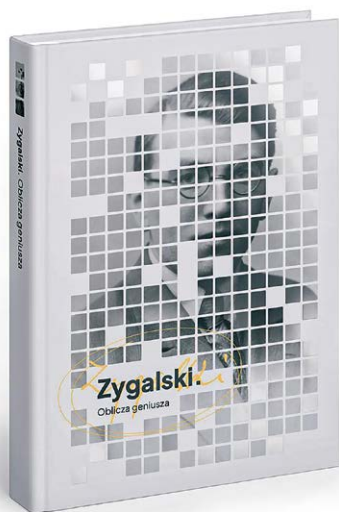
In the same year, Zygal-ski began studying at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at the University of Poznań under Prof. Krygowski. He was fortunate to be accepted into both the mathematics and physics programs. It is important to note that, in the 1920s, the mathematics major in Poznań was the scientific elite of the elite. This was due in part to Prof. Zdzisław Krygowski, former rector of the Lviv Polytechnic, who agreed to move to Poznań and take over the newly established Department of Mathematics. Krygowski built the academic staff of mathematicians from scratch and became the founder of the Poznań school of mathematics.

“Classes were held in the then Collegium Maius of the University of Poznań, in the former Imperial Castle,” writes Maksym Kempieński. “The lectures covered a wide range of mathematical topics. Zygal-ski, like the other two future Enigma codebreakers, attended Krygowski’s lectures on the theory of elliptic functions and its applications, higher algebra, as well as his renowned mathematics seminar.”

FOCUS: CIPHERS

During his third year of studies, probably at the end of 1928, Zygal-ski was invited by Professor Krygowski to a meeting that would determine the young mathematics student’s future career and fate. Representatives of the Polish intelligence services were already waiting in the seminar room, which was filled with over twenty students. They presented the students with an unusual proposal: to participate in a secret cryptology course conceived by the architects of Poland’s success against Enigma: Major Maksymilian Cieńki, Sub-Lieutenant Antoni Palluth, and Lieutenant Wiktor Michałowski.

Organized by Polish signals intelligence and officially by the Command of Corps District No. VII, the secret course took place in Poznań from January



15 to March 22, 1929. Zygal-ski and over 20 other participants attended classes twice a week. During the course, Zygal-ski learned the basics of cryptology and the types and classification of ciphers. He also studied the double columnar transposition cipher in detail. This cipher was often used by the German army.

After completing the course, the Poznań Branch of the Department of Signals Intelligence was established in September 1929 within Department II of the Pol-

ish Army General Staff. Several of the course graduates were employed at the branch, including Henryk Zygal-ski and Jerzy Różycki. The facility was located in the Military Intendence building (today the AMU Collegium Martineum), and Zygal-ski probably led the entire group at that time.

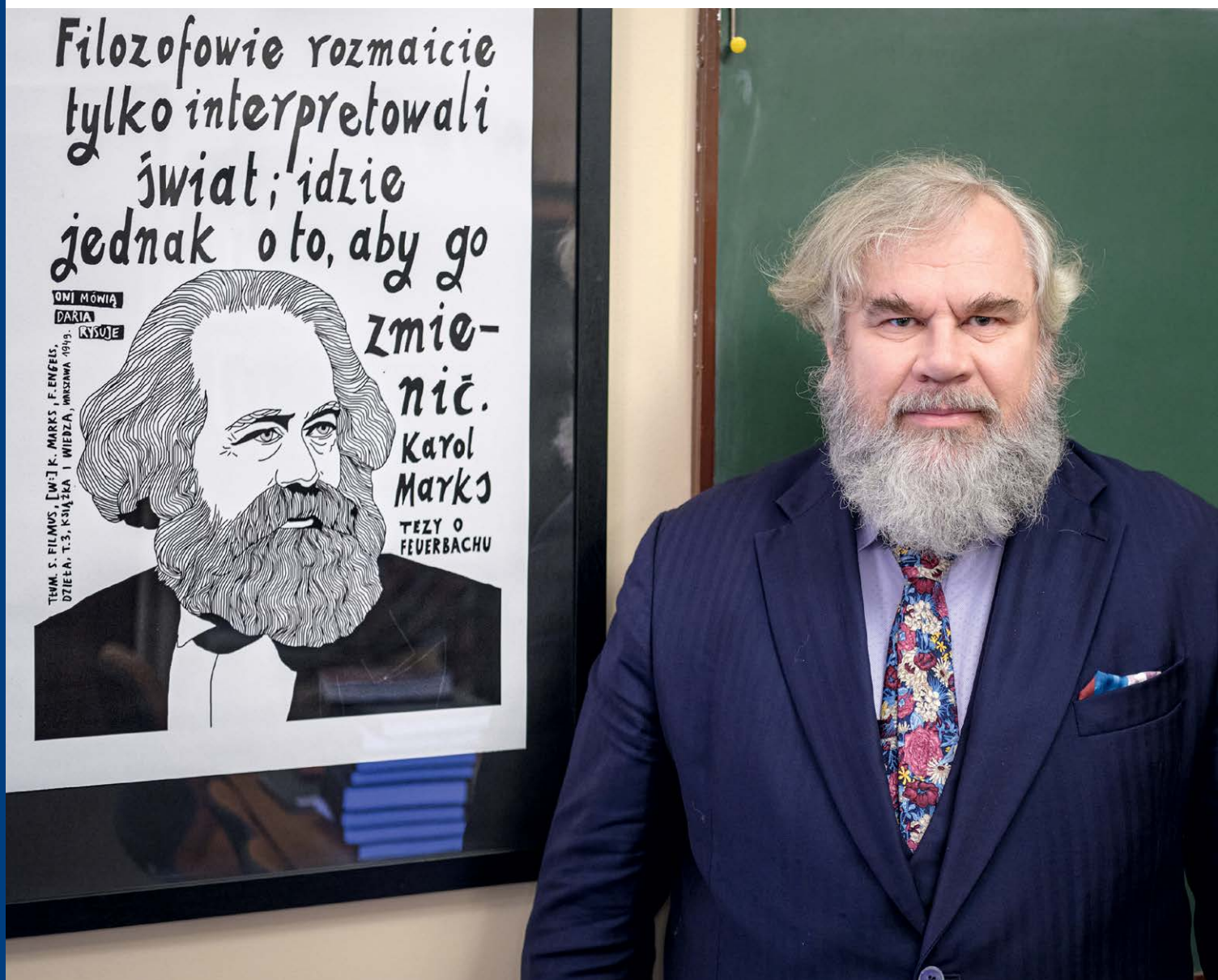
“It can be assumed that Henryk Zygal-ski did not inform anyone close to him about his secret job, which was easy to hide considering that he was still attending mathematics classes,” writes Maksym Kempieński. “He graduated in December 1931 and received a master’s degree in mathematics two months later.”

If it had not been for cryptology, Zygal-ski would have probably pursued a career as a lecturer at the University of Poznań. He had been working towards this goal before he was hired by the Cipher Bureau of the Polish Army General Staff. Zygal-ski’s time in Poznań ended in August 1932 when the Poznań branch of the Cipher Bureau closed and the three young cryptologists were transferred to Warsaw. Marian Rejewski was the first to break the Enigma code at the end of December 1932. Soon after, Zygal-ski and Różycki were also initiated into the subject of Enigma,” adds Piotr Bojarski, director of the Enigma Cipher Center in Poznań. The result was the Zygal-ski sheets, which were used to quickly determine the correct initial settings of the rotors of the German Enigma encryption machine. This tool proved crucial for decrypting Enigma after 1939. Knowledge about the Zygal-ski sheets, along with all Polish cryptological achievements, was passed on to the Allies in July 1939. To fully understand the method,

British mathematician Alan Turing met with Polish cryptologists in Paris in January 1940. Thanks to this meeting, they were able to decode the first Enigma-encrypted message during World War II together. But that’s another fascinating chapter in the story of these cryptologists. ■

(based on the book
Zygalski. Oblicza geniusza
[Zygalski: The Faces of a Genius])

Five years after Henryk Zygal-ski’s death, in 1983, Adam Mickiewicz University honored him, along with Marian Rejewski and Jerzy Różycki, with a plaque in Collegium Minus. In 2000, the President of Poland awarded him the Grand Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta. He is also mentioned on the monument to the three Enigma decoders, unveiled in 2008 in Poznań. Zygal-ski, along with the two other Polish Enigma code breakers, is the patron of the Enigma Cipher Center in Poznań, which opened in 2021.



BUILDING A STRONGER LAY JUDGE SYSTEM

An interview with **AMU Prof. Piotr W. Juchacz** from the Faculty of Philosophy, Chair of the Council for Lay Judges at the Ministry of Justice, by Dariusz Nowaczyk

At the end of July 2025, the Polish Minister of Justice was replaced.

However, as for the Council for Lay Judges at the Ministry of Justice, it is actively continuing its work. Currently, 80% of the members are women serving as lay judges. The overwhelming majority of Polish lay judges are women.

Is it true, as the stereotype suggests, that Polish lay judges are retirees?

No, you are correct in noting that this is a stereotype. In fact, retirees make up only 40% of Polish lay judges. Nevertheless, I would like to emphasize that I personally strive to combat the ageist view that retiree participation is a shortcoming of the lay judge system. On the contrary, I believe it is a great way for older adults to take responsibility for civic affairs and share their life experience and skills. Furthermore, I support the Polish lay judges' community's proposal to raise the maximum age limit for judicial service to 75, following England's example. Note that in our world, one could be the Pope or president of the most powerful country at that age, yet one cannot be a Polish lay judge. Including older citizens who meet the health requirements stipulated by law is also one of the European community of lay judges' demands. This community is organized within the European Network of Associations of Lay Judges (ENALJ), of which I have the honor of serving as vice president.

Could you please elaborate on the current projects of the Council for Lay Judges at the Ministry of Justice?

I would highlight five main areas of interest and work for the Council: First is the development of a training system for lay judges. Second is expanding the scope of cases in which they adjudicate. Third is a range of efforts to empower lay judges in the courts. Fourth are activities aimed at raising awareness about citizen participation in the administration of justice. Fifth is empirical research on the current state of the lay judge system in the courts.

Perhaps we should briefly discuss what the Council is working on in the areas you mentioned.

Let's start with the last one: empirical research. As a researcher, I assumed that our recommendations for reforming the lay judge system should be based on empirical data and align with evidence-based policy principles. Fortunately, my research proposals received full support from the Ministry of Justice. We began our work immediately, focusing initially on lay judges' councils as mandatory bodies for the self-governance of lay judges; methods for assigning cases to lay judges; determining the number of days lay judges participate in adjudication; and obtaining data on the scope of training provided to lay judges.

We are currently finishing another extensive survey directed at lay judges' councils.

Can we share any initial findings from this research and the actions you have proposed based on them?

Some issues are too complex to explain in just a few sentences, but I will choose the simplest and most important example. Despite the mandatory nature of lay judges' councils in courts, as provided for in the 2001 Law on the Organization of Common Courts, we found that such councils had not been established in 110 district courts. Our research confirmed our hypothesis that this was due to the insufficient number of lay judges serving in those courts. The Regulation of the Minister of Justice of January

31, 2006, on the procedure for the election, composition, and organizational structure of lay judges' councils establishes a minimum council membership of eight people. However, in those district courts, fewer than eight lay judges are in office. Consequently, the court presidents did not hold elections for the lay judges' councils. Our study's findings prompted us to begin work on a proposal to amend the regulation by lowering this threshold. This amendment would allow the principle of lay judges' self-governance to be effectively implemented, even in courts where only a small number of lay judges serve.

This is an interesting example of research that directly informs reform recommendations. Next, let's discuss the training of lay judges.

Currently, there is no training system in place, so training in individual courts is either sporadic or non-existent. In June of this year, I initiated an empirical

Furthermore, I support the Polish lay judges' community's proposal to raise the maximum age limit for judicial service to 75, following England's example.

study of the scope of lay judge training in Polish courts of general jurisdiction, conducted by the Ministry of Justice. We now have a complete picture of the current situation, and it is not favorable. Based on these findings, we propose creating a new, modern training system for lay judges. The National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution would play a central role in coordinating training programs and delivering e-learning courses. We are modeling this system after the Judicial College in England. A similar decision was made there years ago, and since then, the level of preparation for serving as magistrates in England has increased significantly. In my opinion, we can achieve a similar outcome in Poland within a few years. We are currently in the stage of internal ministry consultations, with a preliminary green light from ministry officials—though the details still need to be worked out.

In addition to working on the training system, are you taking any other ongoing actions in this area?

Yes, we have decided to develop several accessible guides for lay judges. The first is for lay judges' councils, and the next is for newly elected lay judges. In her beautiful essay, *Ćwiczenia z obcości* (Exercises in Otherness), Olga Tokarczuk wrote, "Whenever we embark on a journey, our own ocean of meanings, concepts, stereotypes, and habitual ways of thinking travels with us. It overflows into the world we encounter, covering it with what we already know and are able to comprehend." This also describes the situation of a newly elected lay judge encountering the world of the justice system. After all, for an ordinary citizen to take on the role of a lay judge is an effort—a transgression, or stepping out of one's comfort zone and entering a new world full of surprises.

We want to help lay judges become familiar with this world. That is why we are preparing an onboarding guide for newly elected lay judges. The guide will contain information on procedures, courtroom etiquette, how to read case files, and a basic glossary of terms used in courts.

However, the Council adopted resolutions recommending that the jurisdiction of lay judges be expanded.

We treat the proposals concerning the expansion of jurisdiction as strategic directions rather than final solutions. I have discussed them with the Minister of Justice Waldemar Żurek, who asked me to consult these ideas with the chairs of the government codification commissions. I have therefore recently consulted with Prof. Włodzimierz Wróbel (Codification Commission for Criminal Law), Prof. Marek Safjan (Codification Commission for Civil

Law), and Prof. Magdalena Szafrańek of the University of Warsaw (Codification Commission for Family Law) on this matter. Some of these discussions were difficult but painfully honest, highlighting the challenges that must be addressed when expanding the expertise of lay judges in various types of cases. Nevertheless, our proposal to establish a new training system in which the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution would play a central role was met with approval in all the discussions.

Another area of the Council's activities focuses on empowering lay judges in the courts.

This involves several issues that I will briefly list: First, change the inadequate term "lay judge" to "social judge" to better reflect their role as representatives of society in adjudication. Second, make the compensation more realistic. Third, resolve the lack of transparency in allocating cases to lay judges outside criminal divisions. Fourth, address the number of adjudication days. Fifth, deal with practical matters, such as the lack of a separate room for lay judges, problems with judicial robes, the absence of court-domain email addresses for lay judges' councils, and access to legal information systems such as Lex and Legalis.

Some of these issues should be resolved immediately.

Unfortunately, it is not that simple.

What other problems need to be addressed?

Another area is promoting citizen participation in the justice system. This is important because public knowledge on this subject is minimal and based on stereotypes. However, that's a topic for another conversation. ■



*„Whenever we embark
on a journey, our own
ocean of meanings,
concepts, stereotypes, and
habitual ways of thinking
travels with us [...]”*

Olga Tokarczuk



Prof. Ryszard Vorbrich

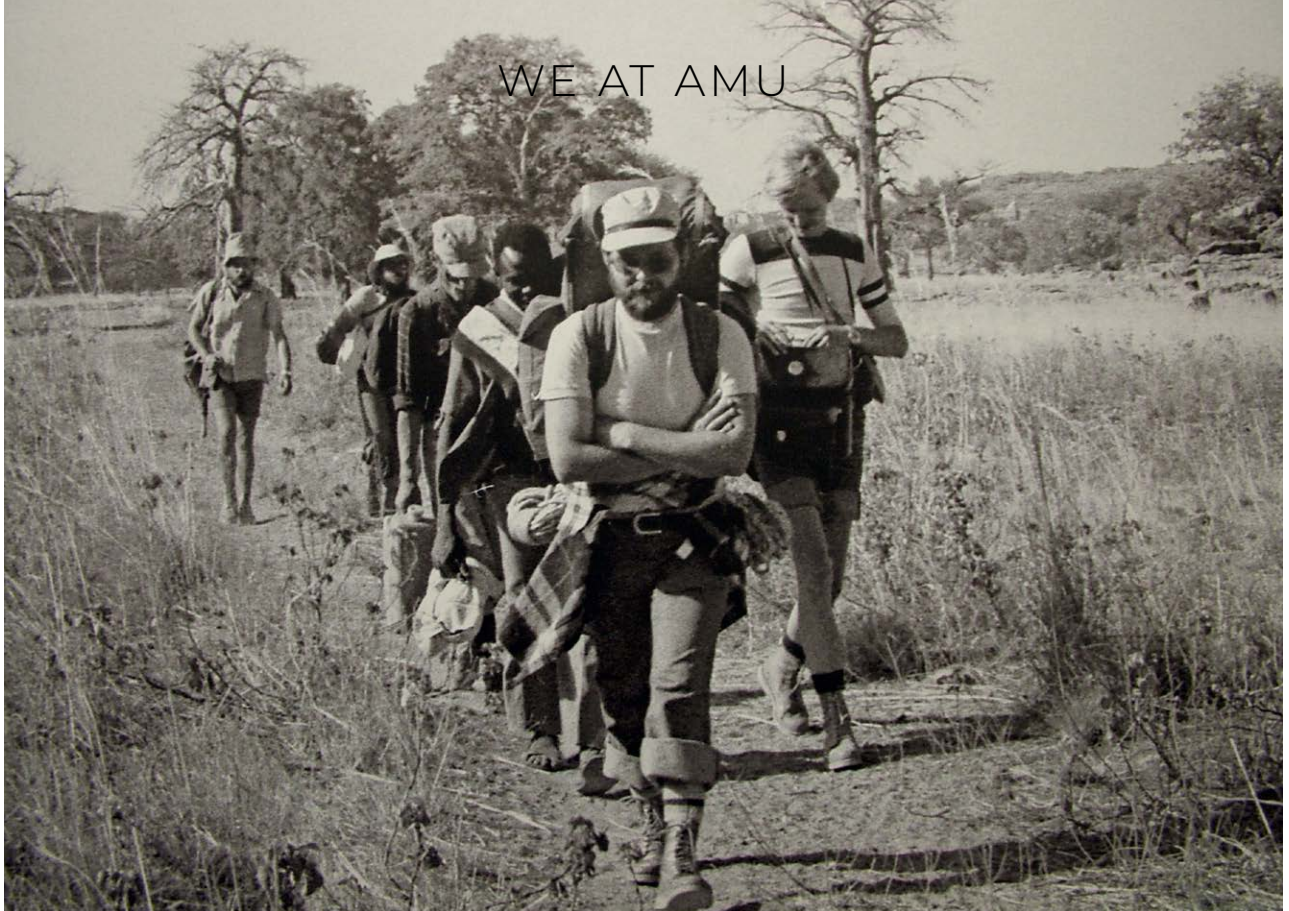
AFRICA '76: THE EXPEDITION THAT SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE

In December 2026, fifty years will have passed since the Africa '76 Student Ethnographic Expedition. At the time, it was the first and only scientific initiative of its kind and scale undertaken by AMU students. The expedition laid the foundation for the Polish school of Africanist ethnography, and its long-term legacy includes three doctoral dissertations, two postdoctoral habilitations, and one professorial title. Since the journey to make it happen was a true ordeal, you will discover this for yourselves as you read the story below. This is a tribute to those who took part and a record for future generations.

PROF. RYSZARD VORBRICH

When we began our studies in 1972, the austere years of Władysław Gomułka's communist rule were already behind us. The early years of Edward Gierek's leadership brought what appeared to be a modest opening of the tightly controlled socialist system of the People's Republic of Poland. Limited

access to consumer goods and greater contact with the outside world created an atmosphere of cautious optimism. However, these hopes ultimately proved illusory. The grim reality of the 1981 declaration of martial law and the severe economic crisis that left shop shelves chronically empty still lay beyond our imagination.



Members of the "Africa '76" Student Ethnographic Expedition trekking through the bush on their way to remote Dogon villages in Mali.

As twenty-year-olds, we looked to the future with unbridled optimism. During our inaugural lecture, **Professor Józef Burszta**, who was then the head of the Department of Ethnography, looked us in the eye and asked, "What do you plan to do after graduation?" An awkward silence followed. When he pressed on—"How do you see your future?"—Ania Jaworska finally replied, "In South America." Clearly amused, Professor Burszta asked, "And how exactly do you expect to get there?" "By plane," she answered without hesitation.

Neither the professor, who was well aware of the restrictions severely limiting the opportunities available to Polish ethnographers at the time, nor we, who were too young to appreciate the scale of the challenge, could have imagined how quickly and to what extraordinary extent Ania's prediction would come true. Before we graduated, five of us—nearly half of our class—had reached Africa, South America, or Asia. Then, paradoxically, the declaration of martial law in 1981 accelerated the dispersal of our generation. During the 1980s, sixteen of the approximately thirty ethnography graduates from Adam Mickiewicz University's Classes of 1977 and 1978 built their lives and careers in different parts of the world.

In the autumn of 1974, members of the Ethnography Students' Club at AMU proposed organizing a scientific expedition to Africa within this framework. Over time, an organizing committee formed, bringing together some of the expedition's most dedicated student supporters. Ultimately, the Africa '76 Student Ethnographic Expedition included four AMU ethnography students: Paweł Kostuch, Tomasz Szymański, Włodzimierz Żukowski, and the author of this article. The group was joined by **Dr. Tomasz Schramm**, an AMU

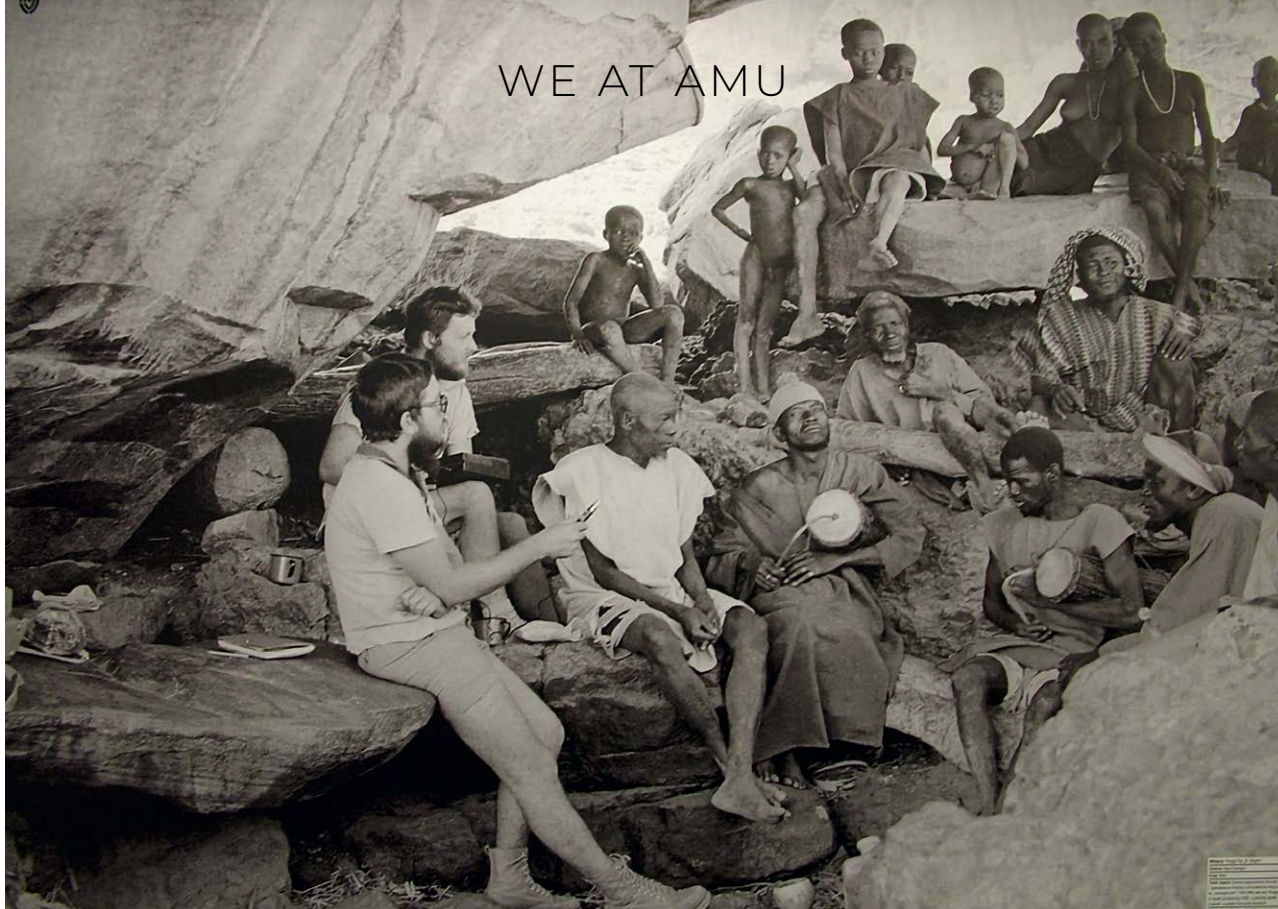
historian and the expedition leader who returned to Poland from Algeria in December 1976 due to illness; Jacek Łapott, an ethnographer from the National Museum in Szczecin who served as the scientific coordinator; Andrzej Polaszewski, the expedition physician; **Leon Bąbelek**, an AMU driver and mechanic; and Zbigniew Staszyszyn, a photojournalist with the Polish Press Agency.

WHY WE CHOSE AFRICA

What drew us to Africa? We wanted to collect original ethnographic field data to form the basis of our master's theses. From the beginning, we were determined to conduct our research based on firsthand fieldwork outside of Europe rather than on existing literature. At our home university—and in Poland as a whole—there were virtually no ethnographers with firsthand research experience in Africa. Because of this, we had very little expert guidance as we prepared for what lay ahead.

Recognizing our limited knowledge, we turned to Jacek Łapott for assistance. Although he had never been to Africa, he had read far more on the subject than we had. At the time, he was preparing his doctoral dissertation on African ethnography, with a focus on the masks of the Dogon people. One of the key resources he introduced us to was Marcel Griaule's *Masques Dogons* (1956), which became our indispensable guide while conducting fieldwork in Dogon Country. In Cameroon, our main reference was Yves Schaller's *Les Kirdi du Nord Cameroun* (1973). I found this richly illustrated book, which was especially valuable to us at the time, in the library of the Major Seminary of the Oblate Missionaries in Poznań.

WE AT AMU



Members of the "Africa '76" Student Ethnographic Expedition recording Dogon songs and music in Mali.

CANNED FOOD FROM GENERAL JARUZELSKI

One of the greatest challenges for the organizers of the Africa '76 Student Ethnographic Expedition was securing the necessary equipment, food, and funding to make the journey possible. Today, it is difficult to imagine, but because Poland had limited access to foreign currency and operated within the constraints of a centrally planned economy that was largely cut off from Western markets, we had to bring all the food we would need for six months, as if we were setting off for Mars.

It would be impossible to recount the entire story of how we obtained our supplies. We approached everyone, from large, state-owned factories to small cooperatives producing clothing, footwear, tents, cooking equipment, batteries, fertilizers, canned food, jams, pasta, and countless other essentials. As tireless fundraisers, we traveled across Poland, visiting potential sponsors in person. More often than not, we were received warmly, even when our requests were declined. In those days, the phrase "an expedition to Africa" captured people's imaginations. I still remember the women at a leatherworkers' cooperative in Poznań with gratitude. They spent several days sewing a large base tent for our expedition with remarkable dedication.

However, not every appeal was met with such goodwill. In fact, on one occasion, our efforts caused quite a stir at a meeting of the Council of Ministers. In hopes of obtaining specialized equipment, we submitted a request to the Polish People's Army. In retrospect, I must admit that we were rather audacious. Our extensive wish list included camping equipment, water filters, and even canned emergency bread manufactured for military reserves in the event of a third world war. Tomasz Szymaniak and I traveled to the Ministry of National Defense in Warsaw, hoping

to secure the support of its minister, General Wojciech Jaruzelski. Needless to say, we never met the general himself. Instead, we were received by the director of the minister's office, a colonel who listened politely, but mostly in silence, to our presentation. We explained our plans and left behind our lengthy list of requests, accompanied by a letter of support signed by the rector of Adam Mickiewicz University.

A few weeks later, Associate Professor Zbigniew Jasiewicz arrived at the expedition headquarters. He was then Vice-Dean of the Faculty of History and one of our strongest supporters. He looked distinctly agitated. The AMU Rector, **Prof. Benon Miśkiewicz**, had just summoned him and instructed him to dissolve the expedition's organizing committee. What had happened? According to what we heard, the rector had been called to Warsaw by Professor Sylwester Kaliski, the Minister of Science, Higher Education, and Technology. During a meeting of the Council of Ministers, General Jaruzelski reportedly slid our application across the table to Minister Kaliski and remarked, "Some students from Poznań keep sending me requests for military assistance outside the proper chain of command. They've even attached a letter signed by their rector. Does Comrade Minister know anything about this?" The result was an order to disband our organizing committee. For a few weeks, our preparations came to a halt. Once the political storm had passed, however, we quietly resumed our work. In the end, we did get the canned bread.

A TRUCK, US DOLLARS, AND A CUSTOMS OFFICER

A turning point in the preparations came when the management of the Starachowice Star Truck Factory agreed to lend us an all-wheel-drive Star 66 truck for the expedition. Jan Pałka,

the originator of the idea for the student expedition who had previously worked in the factory's advertising department, made this remarkable gesture possible.

Foreign currency was the key resource on which the fate of the expedition depended. Access to foreign currency for student initiatives was controlled by the National Executive Board of the Socialist Union of Polish Students in Warsaw. The amount we obtained—or rather, the right to purchase at subsidized official state exchange rates—was modest: 1,800 US dollars. On the black market, this sum equaled the average earnings of about 100 Polish workers at the time. This money had to be accounted for in detail and could only be used for one purpose: purchasing fuel. We supplemented these limited foreign currency resources by purchasing an additional 130 dollars per person through promissory allocations, which allowed Polish citizens to buy a restricted amount of foreign currency at preferential exchange rates.

After nearly two years of preparation, mid-November 1976 finally arrived. It was time to pack our equipment and food supplies and clear them through customs. A customs officer supervised the process to ensure that the export inventory matched the actual contents of the shipment. Marytka, my future wife, looked after him, making sure his glass was never empty. When the time came to seal the truck's cargo compartment with official customs seals, the officer could not stand on his own and asked me to perform the procedure.

The following day, the official farewell ceremony for the Africa '76 Student Ethnographic Expedition and christening of our expedition vehicle was scheduled. It was also the day of the traditional initiation ceremony for first-year ethnography students. Students from all years of the program, along with much of the academic staff, gathered at a local venue to celebrate. In the evening, at the height of the festivities, everyone spilled out onto the street to see our vehicle. The atmosphere was one of pure euphoria. Then, Włodzimierz Żukowski appeared around the corner. He had just returned from Warsaw, where he had handled the final formalities with Polish Ocean Lines. He approached each member of the expedition, gave them a firm embrace, and whispered into their ear, "We're not leaving. The ship is delayed."

On December 14, 1976, we finally set sail for Algiers aboard the MS *Siemiatycze*. We then crossed the Sahara and reached West Africa, where we conducted our field research.

THE FIRST EXPEDITION OF ITS KIND

The expedition covered over 13,000 kilometers across Africa. We undertook the longest and

most productive studies among the Dogon people of Mali and the Daba people of Cameroon. The team also completed shorter research visits with Tuareg communities in Algeria and Niger, as well as with the Buduma people in Nigeria. At the request of the city authorities of Kalisz, the team followed the Rogoziński Route in Cameroon and collected scientific documentation along

the way. The expedition members returned to Poland in June 1977.

In Dogon country and among the Daba, we traveled on foot with teams of porters to reach remote mountain villages that had not had contact with Europeans for decades. Among the Daba, our research was conducted in an area that had never before been visited by an ethnographer. Our studies primarily focused on the material culture of these communities because it was more accessible to direct observation.

We collected documentation on unique technologies, including bronze working, iron smelting, and pottery-making techniques that did not use a potter's wheel. This material later served as the foundation for the master's theses of the students who organized and participated in the expedition. These were the first Polish ethnography theses based on original, firsthand research conducted among non-European peoples.

Throughout the Africa '76 Student Ethnographic Expedition, our team assembled a collection of over 1,200 African art and material culture objects. It was the largest ethnographic collection ever brought to Poland. The collection was subsequently donated to museums in Szczecin, Kalisz, and Poznań. The receiving institutions valued the collection at over 1.4 million zloty, which was twice the total cost of the expedition. The scientific documentation gathered during the research, including 12,000 photographs, 300 meters of color film footage, and several dozen hours of audio recordings, was also mostly donated to academic institutions.

During the expedition, we encountered various technical and health-related challenges. Fortunately, we managed to overcome them all. Leon Bąbelek set up a fully functioning mechanical workshop with a field forge in the middle of the desert. Andrzej Polaszewski looked after our health and saved us during bouts of malaria. He was so deeply ingrained with a sense of caring for others that after we returned from Africa, he helped deliver my daughter, Kinga, into the world. Years later, I became the supervisor of his son Marek's master's thesis.

The educational project "Show Me Your World," created for Dogon children and carried out within the framework of the Polish Aid program funded by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was a fitting epilogue to the Africa '76 Student Ethnographic Expedition. In 2008, the project was implemented in Mali under my supervision by a new generation of AMU students: Katarzyna Maissner, Piotr Maliński, Marek Polaszewski, and Kinga Vorbrich.



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SEPTEMBER 14–19, 2026

IPSA-PPSA Summer School Poznań 2026: Transforming Politics and Media in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

The AMU Faculty of Political Science and Journalism will host the IPSA-PPSA Summer School Poznań 2026: Transforming Politics and Media in the Age of Artificial Intelligence. This five-day program is designed for Ph.D. students and early-career scholars (within five years of receiving their Ph.D.) from around the world. Participants will attend workshops on modern research methods used to analyze politics, media, and communication. The event aims to promote high-quality scientific research and facilitate knowledge and experience exchange between participants and renowned researchers in political science and communication. The summer school is organized by the International Political Science Association, the Polish Political Science Association, and the AMU Faculty of Political Science and Journalism.

SEPTEMBER 16–18, 2026

The 5th Congress of European Studies: Europe in Times of Upheaval

The AMU Faculty of Political Science and Journalism will host the 5th Congress of European Studies: Europe in Times of Upheaval, bringing together researchers, educators, and practitioners to discuss the most pressing issues facing Europe today. The Congress will convene scholars from political science, economics, law, sociology, history, philosophy, and international relations, creating a forum for multidisciplinary debate on contemporary European challenges. One of the special guests will be Professor Jan Zielonka of the University of Oxford. This year's programme will focus on four main themes: identity, contestation, resilience, and transition. Held every three years at leading academic institutions, the Congress serves as a platform for dialogue and collaboration among research communities in Poland and abroad. The event is organized by the AMU Faculty of Political Science and Journalism, the Centre for European Research and Education, and the Polish Association of European Studies.

OCTOBER 19–20, 2026

The 5th Central European Technology Forum (CETEF'26): High Technologies for Europe's Security

The 5th Central European Technology Forum (CETEF'26) will take place at the Lecture and Conference Centre of Poznań University of Technology. The event is expected to attract more than 1,000 representatives from academia, the high-tech sector, public administration, and European institutions across Central Europe and the European Union. The program will feature a plenary conference, Young Scientist Day, study visits, a technology exhibition, a poster session, the Horizon Europe Matchmaking Event, and parallel thematic conferences devoted to the key technological challenges facing contemporary Europe. AMU contributed to the development of the program and is organizing the thematic conference *Social Impact of the 21st-Century Technological Revolution*, scheduled for the Forum's second day. The conference will examine how emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, are transforming individuals, society, culture, science, and everyday life. CETEF'26 is organized by the Polish Chamber of Commerce for High Technology, Poznań University of Technology, the European University Alliance EUNICE, the Polish Federation of Engineering Associations, and the City of Poznań.

OCTOBER 23–24, 2026

The 22nd National Conference on the Philosophy of Physics

The 22nd National Conference on the Philosophy of Physics will take place at the AMU Faculty of Physics. This year's edition, *Quantization and Cognition: On the Centenary of Quantum Mechanics*, will commemorate the centenary of the breakthrough achieved in 1926 with the discovery of the wave-particle duality of matter. The conference programme will explore the foundations of quantum mechanics and its philosophical interpretations. Invited lectures will be delivered by Prof. Wojciech Sady of the University of Silesia and Prof. Michał Eckstein of Jagiellonian University.

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The editors do not return any unsolicited material. The editors reserve the right to abridge content and change titles.

The editors are not responsible for the content of advertisements, announcements, or other notices published in the magazine.

We look forward to working with all interested parties.

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