



EURO
CITIES



Vilnius Tech Park

Boosting startups & community life

Vilnius has repurposed a major historic site for the 21st century, transforming unused hospital buildings into a dynamic centre connecting technology, culture and creative industries. Vilnius Tech Park has not only put the city on the global start-up map, it has also become a community asset, enabling residents to connect with their heritage and new technology.



“People living near the Vilnius Tech Park now see it as a nice environment where they like to have their own community activities - there are so many things happening there now that it has its own momentum and start-ups really want to be part of it all.”



Ausra Siciuniene, Chief Specialist, City of Vilnius

Over three centuries, Sapieha palace park has been the home of a famous noble family, a military hospital in the Soviet era and, finally, a hospital for the elderly, which closed in 2015. The site stood waiting for someone to come up with a vision for its next chapter. That person turned out to be an entrepreneur and investor, Darius Žakaitis. With his partner Igor Matsanyuk, Darius took his idea for creating a start-up/ICT hub to the mayor. The municipality embraced the idea, recognising that Vilnius had long needed a central point for all the start-ups and other key players in the ecosystem scattered across the 400km² of the city.

Start-up support

Vilnius city municipality developed the original concept further with Darius, Igor and their team, ensuring the plans fulfilled its remit to serve the city's people, cultural and community life and tourism. The municipality leased some of the Sapieha park buildings for a period of 25 years and private funds of over €7 million were invested in their renovation. Vilnius Tech Park opened at the end of 2016, providing nearly 800 working places and aiming to unite technology companies, international start-ups, individual creatives, venture capitalists, accelerators, incubators and other ecosystem players with one mutual goal: to shape the region's start-up ecosystem and grow together internationally.

Vilnius Tech Park is managed by experienced technology hub administrators supported by a council made up of representatives from entrepreneurial companies and the municipality. The administrative team has overseen the development of facilities, such as a conference centre for large-scale events, as well as hackathons, meetings and product

cities in action

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where: Vilnius, Lithuania
what: cooperation
when: 2016 - ongoing

launches, and other activities and services. These include workshops, seminars and events to foster entrepreneurs' professional and personal growth. One innovative programme, Sapiegos Corporate, acts as a platform for collaboration between corporates and entrepreneurs, helping existing businesses tap into the start-up ecosystem's fresh, innovative thinking and investment opportunities.



Community action

The community focus embedded into Vilnius Tech Park and its start-ups from the beginning has led to many novel initiatives. CodeAcademy sees developers, administrators and designers work together to help change people's lives. It achieves this by teaching the most in-demand skills - programming, web design and cyber security - and helping students put them into practice in leading companies. A junior version is getting youngsters into computer game design, branding and web and mobile app development. Some of the businesses based at the Park are themselves inherently community-oriented. Miesto Laboratorijos, for example, runs a citizens laboratory for eco-gardening, inviting residents to learn about innovative ideas for sustainable living and consumption.

The cultural life of the city has also been profoundly changed for the better by Vilnius Tech Park. The traditional Culture Night held every June attracts more than 100,000 visitors and features over 100 arts and culture projects and shows, some of which now take place in Sapieha park. Throughout the year the Vilnius Tech Park organises or co-sponsors cultural events such as sculpture displays and takes part in the municipality's cultural initiatives such as Create for Vilnius. One of the best ideas to come out of this competition to find ways of rehabilitating public spaces is a robot-guide which would invite citizens and visitors for excursions. It is hoped the novel guide will be implemented in the Sapieha park area in the next few years.



Running my business at Vilnius Tech Park means I can work with my team based in other locations but not be solitary as I am surrounded by community members whose advice I can ask and whose expertise I can use, such as graphic designers for our website. The other big advantage is its campus, which is close to the city but also to nature and where I can make calls or work on my computer in the woods, which has a lot of value to me.

**Mindaugas Tutlys, managing partner,
Everise Labs**

Strong ethos

The synergy between new technologies and the city's cultural heritage that underpins Vilnius Tech Park's ethos was, the municipality team admits, hard won. Discussions about the Park's objectives at the start of the project were long and difficult. A way was eventually found to combine all the various threads into a final agreement and there's clear agreement now that the Park's impact proves the viability and value of this unique approach. Challenges since then include helping the resident start-ups grow into sustainable businesses and getting the right balance between the beauty and quiet of the environment, which attracts community groups, and the noise of cars and visitors, which is vital to the success of the start-up ecosystem.

Today, Vilnius Tech Park is the largest and most integrated ICT hub in the Nordics and Baltics. An eight hectare site has been rehabilitated, providing over 9,000 m² of office space. It currently hosts a community of more than 65 innovative companies and has become a magnet for foreign technology and talent. The project has also increased the visibility of Vilnius as a tourist attraction, with the flow of visitors and number of local excursion companies increasing every year. Sapieha park has become the city's central leisure zone and community activities are thriving as residents come up with more and more ideas and start-ups want to join in and play a part.

