TRANSFORM 4EUROPE

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Transform4Europe First-Time Researchers Academy:

Doctoral Week in Social Sciences: Scientific Research Methodology
15-19 March 2027 at Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania

Overview of the event:

The First-Time Researchers Academy is an Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programme organised by the Doctoral School of Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) in cooperation with experts in social research methodology. It is designed for doctoral students from across the Transform4Europe alliance.

The programme provides intensive, interdisciplinary training covering the full research methodology process, including philosophical and methodological paradigms, multidisciplinary research design, academic publishing, and creative approaches to scientific integration. Through lectures, practical sessions, and collaborative activities, participants will address common dissertation challenges and strengthen their methodological frameworks.

Bringing together more than 30 doctoral researchers from fields such as sociology, law, economics, and education, the programme will also create opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange, peer learning, and the development of lasting European research networks.
As a member of the Transform4Europe European University alliance, VMU offers an international and academically diverse environment rooted in the Artes Liberales tradition. Its strong focus on interdisciplinary cooperation, innovative research, and academic excellence provides an inspiring setting for doctoral researchers to develop their skills, exchange ideas, and build new professional connections.

Tentative Event Programme

Monday: The Research Problem & Questions

09:00 AM — 10:30 AM: Forming and understanding the research problem context.

10:30 AM — 10:45 AM: Morning Break.

10:45 AM — 12:00 PM: Problem context analysis and group discussion.

12:00 PM — 01:00 PM: Lunch Break.

01:00 PM — 02:45 PM: Connecting the research problem with the topic.

02:45 PM — 03:00 PM: Afternoon Break.

03:00 PM — 05:00 PM: Integrating problem, topic, and research questions through group work.

Tuesday: Ontology, Epistemology, Axiology and Methodology

09:00 AM — 10:30 AM: Philosophical paradigms: ontology, epistemology, and axiology.
10:30 AM — 10:45 AM: Morning Break.
10:45 AM — 12:00 PM: Relevance and purpose of philosophical choices in social research.
12:00 PM — 01:00 PM: Lunch Break.
01:00 PM — 02:45 PM: Designing methodology parameters (design, sample, and data collection).
02:45 PM — 03:00 PM: Afternoon Break.
03:00 PM — 05:00 PM: Research instruments, ethics, and general group discussions.

Wednesday: Multidisciplinary Project Hackathon

09:00 AM — 10:30 AM: Multidisciplinary group formation and initial project scoping.
10:30 AM — 10:45 AM: Morning Break.
10:45 AM — 12:00 PM: Collaborative research project preparation across social science fields.
12:00 PM — 01:00 PM: Lunch Break.
01:00 PM — 02:45 PM: Finalizing multidisciplinary project frameworks and slideshows.
02:45 PM — 03:00 PM: Afternoon Break.
03:00 PM — 05:00 PM: Group project presentations and peer feedback sessions.

Thursday: Academic Publishing & Article Structure

09:00 AM — 10:30 AM: Structural requirements for theoretical and empirical articles.
10:30 AM — 10:45 AM: Morning Break.
10:45 AM — 12:00 PM: Principles of forming cohesive academic article content.
12:00 PM — 01:00 PM: Lunch Break.
01:00 PM — 02:45 PM: Group work analyzing content regularities in published papers.
02:45 PM — 03:00 PM: Afternoon Break.
03:00 PM — 05:00 PM: Interactive publishing discussions and peer review workshops.

Friday: The Creative Scientist

09:00 AM — 10:30 AM: Looking at social research through a creative lens.
10:30 AM — 10:45 AM: Morning Break.
10:45 AM — 12:00 PM: Integrating arts and fiction with professional scientific literature.
12:00 PM — 01:00 PM: Lunch Break.
01:00 PM — 02:45 PM: Creative workshops on mapping new research directions.
02:45 PM — 03:00 PM: Afternoon Break.
03:00 PM — 05:00 PM: Concluding reflections, feedback, and alliance certificate distribution.

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Organizational Leadership Profiles



Prof. habil. Dr. Vilma Žydžiūnaitė, Director of the Educational Research Institute at the Education Academy, VMU

Prof. habil. Dr. Vilma Žydžiūnaitė is one of Europe's foremost leading authorities on social research methodology, specializing extensively in qualitative, mixed-methods, and phenomenological frameworks. As Director of the Educational Research Institute at VMU, she holds an exceptional track record of academic mentorship and publication. She has published over 245 scientific works, including over 175 scientific articles, 12 monographs. A prolific structural mentor, she has successfully supervised 20 completed and defended doctoral dissertations, while personally raising, mentoring, and serving as a definitive guide for 25 PhD students who now drive scientific innovation across Lithuania, Europe, and the global academic community. Serving on prestigious bodies such as the Lithuanian Science Prizes Commission, Professor V. Žydžiūnaitė blends rigorous philosophical paradigm design with innovative academic publishing strategies, driving the structural concept, expert lecture curation, and multidisciplinary content execution of this entire program.



Dr. Viktorija Kavaliauskaitė-Vilkinienė, Head of the Doctoral School at Vytautas Magnus University

Dr. Viktorija Kavaliauskaitė-Vilkinienė leads the VMU Doctoral School, spearheading strategic initiatives that advance doctoral education and foster international academic collaboration. Dedicated to creating a high-impact institutional environment, she facilitates progressive research support networks for early-career researchers and promotes cross-border knowledge exchange through active participation in European university networks such as the Transform4Europe Alliance. Dr. Kavaliauskaitė-Vilkinienė is also a lecturer and researcher in the field of philology, with research interests in pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and children's language acquisition. She also participates in research projects related to these fields.

Daily Reference & Reading List

Monday: The Research Problem & Questions

- Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. (2011). Generating research questions through problematization *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2), 247-271.

- Bryman, A. (2007). The research question in social research: What do its detractors and defenders say? *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 10(1), 5-20.

Tuesday: Ontology, Epistemology, Axiology and Methodology

- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2(163-173), 105.

- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Pearson Education. *(Focus on the 'Research Onion' framework covering ontology, epistemology, and axiology).*

Wednesday: Multidisciplinary Project Hackathon

- Daučianskaitė-Kubilevičienė, A., & Žydžiūnaitė, V. (2026). *Leadership of a music teacher in developing performers at different levels of educational institutions*. Bad Heilbrunn: *Verlag Julius Klinkhardt*.

- Kaminskienė, L., Žydžiūnaitė, V., & Jurgilė, V. (Eds.). (2022). *Teacher Leadership: Learning, Teaching and Leading. Experiences of Teachers and School Administration*. Peter Lang.

- Repko, A. F., & Szostak, R. (2020). *Interdisciplinary research: Process and theory* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

- Žydžiūnaitė, V. (2025). *Teacher leadership in school for student learning: Experiences of Lithuanian teachers*. Bad Heilbrunn: Verlag Julius Klinkhardt.

- Žydžiūnaitė, V., Butanavičius, V., Jurgilė, V., & Kaminskienė, L. (2022). Leadership within the phenomenological structure of teacher creativity. *Frontiers in Education*, 7.

Thursday: Academic Publishing & Article Structure

- Belcher, W. L. (2019). *Writing your journal article in twelve weeks: A guide to academic publishing success* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

- Cargill, M., & O'Connor, P. (2021). *Writing scientific research articles: Strategy and steps* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

- Žydžiūnaitė, V., & Matulaitienė, J. (2026). Using concept analysis to understand teacher professional knowledge. *Frontiers in Education*, 11.

Friday: The Creative Scientist

- Chilton, G., & Leavy, P. (2014). Arts-based research: Merging social science and the arts. *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*, 403-422.

- Leavy, P. (2020). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice* (3rd ed.). Guilford Publications.

- Richardson, L., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2005). Writing: A method of inquiry. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 959-978.

- Žydžiūnaitė, V., & Arce, A. (2021). Being an innovative and creative teacher: Passion-driven professional duty. *Creativity Studies*, 14(1), 125–144.

- Žydžiūnaitė, V., & Butanavičius, V. (2026). The meaning of being a creative teacher through discovering. *Creativity Studies*, 19(1), 142–149.

Open-Access References: Arts Integration with Social Research

Chelule Kwemoi, K. (2024). The integration of arts-based research methods in scientific studies. Research Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences, 4(3). Sourced via ResearchGate Open-Access Database. (Examines how the combination of creative practices with traditional methodologies yields deeper emotional and embodied insights in scientific inquiry).

Coemans, S., & Hannes, K. (2017). Development of arts-based research in the social sciences: A scoping review. The Qualitative Report, 22(1), 34-51. Sourced via Nova Southeastern University Open Repository. (A comprehensive, freely accessible framework mapping out how researchers utilize visual, performative, and literary arts within various social science fields).

Inwood, H. J., & Nolan, J. (2023). Integrating arts in a collaborative research process: Navigating arts-informed inquiry. Journal of Creative Methods, 4(1), 45-62. Available via ERIC Institutional Repository (EJ1348526). (Outlines decision-making frameworks for employing artistic creation as an analytical and data representation tool in collaborative environments).

MacLeod, A., & Kitson, A. (2022). Interweaving arts-based, qualitative and mixed methods research: Materality and narrative reflection. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 21. Sourced via SAGE Open Journals Gateway. (Investigates how researchers can blend material artistic expressions with conventional qualitative text to understand complex sociological data).

Rosén, S. (2013). Drama-based research methods as an integrated part of group interviews. DiVA Academic Archive, 1-12. Sourced via DiVA Institutional Portal. (Details how dramatic performance methods extract tacit emotional knowledge and social realities during focus group research environments).
Sack, M., et al. (2025). Performative arts and social transformation: The potential of performative arts in contexts. Social Science Open Access Repository (SSOAR), 14-38. Sourced via SSOAR Repository. (A multi-author framework evaluating how performance methodologies and theatrical spaces reshape rigid social structures during periods of systemic transition).

Shabtay, A. (2021). Ethical considerations in drama-based research with children and young people. Performative Inquiry in Qualitative Research, 13, 199-215. Sourced via ResearchGate Publication Network. (Establishes the constructivist epistemological boundaries of using performance and dramatization to unpack sensitive social injustices and generate transferable insights).

Schoone, A. (2024). The role of the arts in the classroom: Does integration disrupt or reinforce existing social climates? Education Sciences, 15(1), 14. Sourced via MDPI Open-Access Journals. (Applies structural social metrics to evaluate how artistic interventions actively change social relationships and group dynamics inside institutions).

Sonn, C. C., & Quayle, A. F. (2024). Art, science, and life: Where arts-based research and social-ecological transformation merge. Sustainability Science, 19(2), 511-525. Sourced via SpringerLink Open Access. (Argues for a unified methodological framework that places localized community realities at the center of social sciences by utilizing participatory arts)

Wessels, A. (2022). Complicating the lone voice through rewriting in role. Qualitative Inquiry, 29(3), 392-401. Sourced via SAGE Journals Database. (Presents an open-access methodological guide on "rewriting in role," illustrating how to deliberately process empirical data by translating it into fictional characters and collaborative narratives).