VYTAUTAS
MAGNUS
UNIVERSITY

Vytautas Kavolis Transdisciplinary
Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities

NETWORKING ROADMAP OF VYTAUTAS KAVOLIS TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

TO STRENGTHEN RESEARCH DIRECTIONS AND FACILITATE PARTICIPATION IN HORIZON EUROPE PROGRAMME CALLS

SUMMARY

Funded by
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Networking Roadmap of The Vytautas Kavolis Transdisciplinary Research Institute

Vytautas Kavolis Transdisciplinary Research Institute (hereinafter referred to as KI) was established in 2023. KI employs over 90 researchers representing 10 scientific fields, with varying levels of academic expertise. However, given its recent establishment, KI has not yet gained recognition, while networking at organizational, national, and international levels remains one of the Institute's primary limitations. Networking, as one of KI's strategic priorities, was embedded in the strategy of the Vytautas Kavolis Transdisciplinary Research Institute, approved on January 22, 2025.

In a research institution, networking is aimed at strengthening human capital, fostering scientific advancement, increasing international recognition, and enhancing competitiveness. Active institutional networking also contributes to the improvement of research quality, supports the attraction of investments, and promotes regional and international development in science and innovation.

The aim of this study is to develop a Networking Roadmap for the Vytautas Kavolis Transdisciplinary Research Institute, for strengthening research directions and accelerating participation in the Horizon Europe programme calls. This roadmap is intended to enable KI to become an internationally recognized excellence center for transdisciplinary research, capable of forming high-level international research teams, initiating and securing Horizon Europe projects, producing top-tier international research outputs, and generating a societal impact beyond the national level.

To achieve this goal, the following objectives are addressed:

1. Conduct an analysis of KI's external and internal environments;
2. Identify KI's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT);
3. Provide recommendations for the development of KI's networking and their implementation guidelines.

While formulating the objectives and guidelines for KI's scientific networking, three core priorities were identified: national leadership, internationalization, and transdisciplinarity. The development of this roadmap included both internal and external environmental analyses, which led to the identification of KI's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as its key challenges. Strategic networking goals and implementation guidelines were then proposed. Throughout the analysis and preparation of the roadmap, it was recognized that KI's activities should consistently aim to achieve all the goals outlined in the KI Strategy.

The development of the Vytautas Kavolis Transdisciplinary Research Institute Networking Roadmap for strengthening research directions and accelerating participation in the Horizon Europe programme calls, was funded by the Horizon Europe NextGenerationEU programme, project (CPVA-KAV) No. 10-038-T-0145.

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Strengths and Weaknesses

STRENGTHS

- The composition and experience of KI research teams align with international principles for strategic partnership formation.
- KI research teams are diverse in terms of scientific experience, age, gender, and academic disciplines.
- A culture of scientific leadership and research collaboration is being fostered at KI.
- KI has assembled experienced VMU researchers in social sciences and humanities who are capable of initiating and leading international projects, publishing high-quality research outputs, and engaging in impactful scientific and public activities.
- The research contributions of leading KI researchers provide a foundation for national leadership, international and transdisciplinary scientific initiatives, and alignment with the EU's priority horizontal themes.
- Some research sub-themes partially align with EU priority horizontal themes that receive significant attention and funding within European research and project frameworks.
- Established long-term partnerships are primarily developed and operationalized at the individual researcher level.
- Active participation of researchers in scientific conferences fosters networking opportunities.
- High visibility of individual researchers in public media (TV and radio broadcasts, popular science articles, public lectures).
- KI researchers are active experts in national research programs and the Lithuanian Research Council (LMT).
- Access to data infrastructures enhances the research potential and attractiveness of KI for networking partners.

WEAKNESSES

- The diversity of research sub-themes is not evenly reflected in scientific activities and high-impact research outputs.
- The connection between KI research sub-themes and EU priority horizontal themes remains unclear.
- Limited visibility of transdisciplinarity in research activities and outcomes.
- Dominance of monodisciplinary networking results (e.g., publications, projects, scientific events).
- A limited number of co-authored scientific publications with foreign researchers.
- A small number of researchers actively involved in international research, development, and innovation (R&D&I) projects.
- Low participation in international events organized by globally recognized organizations and networks.
- Nationally oriented and fragmented dissemination of research results and communication with the public, with social media being underutilized for this purpose.
- Scientific publications, research activities, and expert contributions are insufficiently visible to the public through KI's communication channels.
- A small number of researchers engaged as experts in international and EU policy-making organizations, programs, and projects, as well as limited membership in recognized thematic associations.
- A low number of formalized KI partnerships and an unclear strategy for partnership formation, with networking largely based on individual initiatives inherited from previous institutional affiliations.
- Limited recognition of KI among potential partners, with researchers still identifying themselves with their previous institutional affiliations.

Opportunities and Threats

OPPORTUNITIES

- Utilizing Lithuania's geographical and geopolitical situation as a relevant and specific research object.
- Timely monitoring and integration of EU priority themes into KI activities to ensure scientific relevance.
- Synergies with other VMU and international research institutes (e.g., health, biodiversity, etc.) to foster transdisciplinarity.
- Effective use of existing and potential research partnerships, project platforms, and databases to enhance networking.
- Participation in international programs and projects (e.g., Horizon Europe, COST) to strengthen internationalization and transdisciplinarity.
- Engagement in programs and projects aimed at developing scientific infrastructure to support networking efforts.
- Utilization of public procurement and commissioned research for attracting R&D&I projects.
- Membership in high-impact national and international organizations, programs, and expert groups as a platform for networking.

THREATS

- The negative impact of geopolitical tensions on KI's attractiveness as a networking and research partner.
- Variability of priority research themes across different funding periods and programs.
- Insufficient ability to quickly identify and adapt to emerging priority research themes.
- High national and international competition in KI's research fields.
- The formation of funding and research partner priorities based on regional factors or project-specific target groups and objectives, which may change across different programming periods.
- Over-reliance on a small number of strategic partners or initiatives, potentially limiting the flexibility and diversity of future partnerships.
- Uncertainty in research funding and strong competition for resources across scientific programs and projects.
- Misalignment between KI's transdisciplinary orientation and the evaluation criteria of individual scientific disciplines, leading to limited attractiveness for researchers, partners, and networking efforts.
- The lack of international recognition (e.g., accreditation), a high-impact international scientific journal, or a conference reduces KI's appeal as a networking partner.
- Uncertainty regarding KI's financial sustainability, posing risks to researcher employment and continuity of activities.

Networking Challenges; Strategic Networking Objectives and Implementation Guidelines for 2025–2030

NETWORKING CHALLENGES

Based on the analysis of KI's internal and external environments, as well as the summarized results presented in the SWOT table, the key limitations and challenges currently facing KI's networking efforts have been identified.

Existing Networking Limitations and Challenges at KI

1. Lack of identity and visibility of KI as a transdisciplinary research centre focusing on social sciences and humanities in international, regional, and national contexts.
2. Networking needs to be transitioned from the individual level to the institutional level, without diminishing the value, efforts, and outcomes of individual initiatives.
3. KI lacks a formal strategy for partnership development and management, as well as systematic approaches to partner identification, collaboration activation, and outcome evaluation criteria.
4. The alignment between EU horizontal priority themes and the Institute's research themes and sub-themes is not effectively managed, limiting transdisciplinary and international collaboration.
5. Uneven, inconsistent, and overall insufficient KI researchers' international collaboration (e.g., in co-authored scientific publications) and limited involvement in international projects (e.g., Horizon Europe).
6. Monodisciplinary networking results (publications, projects, conferences) still dominate at KI. The strategic orientation toward transdisciplinarity is only marginally visible.
7. Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration among researchers is limited—not only with researchers from other institutions in Lithuania and abroad but also internally within KI and with other VMU research units.
8. KI and its researchers are not sufficiently engaged in high-impact national and, especially, international scientific and governmental organizations, programs, expert groups, and similar activities, which restricts KI's ability to make a significant societal impact.
9. There is a lack of modern, systematic dissemination of research activities and outcomes, which limits the visibility of KI and its researchers. Communication efficiency and visibility for partners are insufficient, hindering effective networking.
10. The networking support system at the institutional level is insufficient to empower researchers, research groups, and the Institute itself to pursue effective and high-impact networking.

Networking Challenges; Strategic Networking Objectives and Implementation Guidelines for 2025–2030

STRATEGIC NETWORKING OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR 2025–2030

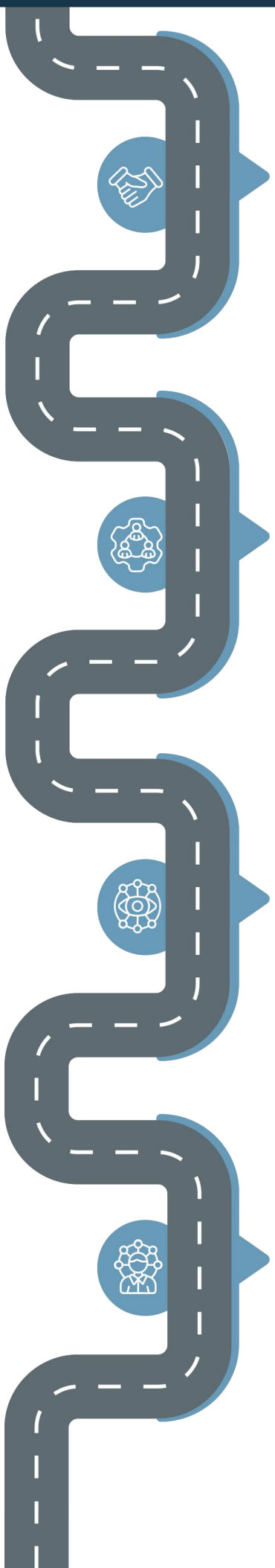
The identified limitations and challenges in KI's networking, combined with the strengths and opportunities highlighted in the SWOT analysis, have led to the identification of four priority networking areas for 2025–2030:

KI PRIORITY NETWORKING AREAS FOR 2025–2030

1. Development of a Partnership Network
2. Strengthening Thematic Relevance
3. Enhancing Visibility
4. Support and Cultivation of a Networking Culture

Based on these priority areas, strategic networking objectives and their implementation tasks for 2025–2030 have been defined.

KI Networking priorities, strategic objectives and tasks for 2025-2030



Development of a Partnership Network

Strategic objective 1 – systematically expand and operationalize the partnership network.

1.1 Formalize the processes of partnership formation, partner identification, collaboration, and the criteria for assessing achievements.
1.2 At the institutional level, initiate the activation of existing partnerships (e.g., MIT) by coordinating the formation of research teams and engaging researchers with diverse expertise and scientific disciplines.
1.3 Prioritize the establishment of strategic partnerships based on methodological and data infrastructure principles.
1.4 Participate in programs and projects aimed at developing scientific infrastructure to expand and strengthen networking activities.
1.5 Leverage the diversity of research teams as a strength in forming partnerships, aligning with international principles of strategic partnership formation (e.g., gender balance, empowerment of early-career researchers, transdisciplinarity, etc.).

Strengthening Thematic Relevance

Strategic objective 2 – align institutional networking with research areas and scientific competencies that address the European Union's priority horizontal themes.

2.1 Identify the horizontal dimension of KI scientific activities and integrate it into KI scientific activities.
2.2 Initiate and promote transdisciplinary networking among researchers.
2.3 Demonstrate scientific leadership in forming partnerships for research on the geographical and geopolitical contexts of Lithuania and similar countries as relevant and specific research objects.
2.4 Initiate and foster international and national leadership and networking in conducting fundamental and post-disciplinary research.

Enhancing Visibility

Strategic objective 3 – create conditions to enhance networking by ensuring transparent and timely communication of KI researchers' expertise, activities, and achievements.

3.1 Develop guidelines for disseminating information about KI and its researchers' expertise, activities, and achievements across various communication channels, and enable researchers to effectively utilize them.
3.2 Regularly publish updates on the institutional website about KI and its researchers' expertise, activities, and achievements.
3.3 Actively engage in timely communication on social media about KI and its researchers' expertise, plans, activities, and achievements.
3.4 Encourage and support researchers' public engagement activities (e.g., television and radio appearances, popular science articles, public lectures) by facilitating and ensuring their successful execution.
3.5 Initiate and organize scientific events under the name of V. Kavolis.

Support and Cultivation of a Networking Culture

Strategic objective 4 – Foster a culture of networking and sharing scientific plans/achievements within targeted, high-impact audiences.

4.1 Utilize institutional and university communication channels (e.g., intranet) for the systematic dissemination of relevant networking and other information to researchers and other university departments.
4.2 Develop researchers' competencies in effectively engaging in networking, communicating research developments and achievements, aiming to foster scientific leadership at different stages of research and in various cultural contexts.
4.3 Provide consultations, administrative support, and other assistance to researchers with diverse backgrounds.
4.4 Prioritize high-impact research outputs and scientific activities that enhance national leadership, internationalization, and transdisciplinarity.
4.5 Facilitate and promote researchers' involvement in high-impact international and national expert and governmental groups, committees, and programs.