

THE
TAVISTOCK
INSTITUTE
OF HUMAN
RELATIONS



Vilnius
University

LITHUANIAN GROUP RELATIONS SOCIETY, VILNIUS UNIVERSITY & THE
TAVISTOCK INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RELATIONS

invite you to attend

Leadership, Authority and Role in Shaping the Living World

22rd – 26th August 2025

The 14th International Group
Relations Conference in Lithuania

A face to face working conference based on the Tavistock experiential learning methodology

Introduction to the theme

To dare to be aware of the facts of the universe in which we are existing calls for courage.

Wilfred Bion

Humanity faces threats on many fronts in our living world. Accelerating disruptions related to climate change, artificial intelligence (AI), pandemics, and war followed by economic restructuring and shifts of political alliances are the realities we are living in. Do we dare to face these realities, or do we seek comfort in denial and fantasy? There is a temptation to fall back to familiar forms of absolute leadership and autocracy even in liberal democracies. Can democracy, with its complexities and vagaries, hold its value and compete with the growing discourse of authoritarianism?

How do leadership and authority link people to respond to existential challenges? In some cases, iron chains have been used to forcibly link people. The Gulag, slavery, and secret prisons are examples. In other cases, human chains link people who self-authorize and hold hands to connect with purpose. The Baltic Way, Singing Revolution, and women linking hands to resist in Belarus and Britain are examples. This conference is an opportunity for you to learn about the roles you take in relation to leadership, authority, and power in groups and organizations. You can learn to

recognize the tension between attraction to the new and unknown and desire for the security of the familiar. Both exist in all of us. You can recognize moments of your courage and moments of your timidity. Both exist in all of us. You will gain awareness about how you work with authority and how you exercise your own authority. Your engagement with the task of the conference will help you to navigate the profound challenges we face at this moment in history.

A group relations conference is a method for exploring these and connected questions such as: What forms of leadership best meet current challenges? Whom do we authorize to take leadership and how do we work with their authority? To whom do we assign authority, both formal and informal? Why and how do we do so? Who takes leadership roles? How do we use leaders? What are sources of power in the social system we create? What roles do each of us take in shaping the living world?

A conference examines the conscious and unconscious dynamics existing in each of us and between us as we live and work together in groups, organizations, societies, and nature. This conference will do so by creating a temporary organization designed to study questions relevant to how we organize ourselves collectively as a system.

Who is this Programme for?

This conference is designed for those who want to learn more about groups and system dynamics through immediate and direct experience and are curious about the dynamics of leadership, authority, and role. Members from backgrounds and careers in many different fields including organizational consulting, education, government, healthcare, community activism, law, the arts, technology, psychotherapy, human resources, leadership, and management have found valuable learning at group relations conferences.

The programme draws participants from diverse work settings and roles: leaders, managers, consultants, educators, therapists, researchers, administrators and professional and technical workers.



What will you gain from this Programme?

You will have opportunities to learn how to:

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| ● manage yourself in the multiple roles necessary to successfully perform in contemporary organisations where greater inter-personal and inter-organisational dialogue and cooperation is called for. | ● find and take up authority. Taking up authority involves risk, and putting one's authority into action involves recognizing not only one's responsibility , but also one's accountability to an-other, or a group of others. |
| ● support a new generation of skillful leaders and managers who will develop vision and foster creativity in changing organisational and social worlds. | ● take up formal and informal leadership and followership roles as you explore group, institutional, communal and national dynamics as they happen. |

The aims of the programme, therefore, are to help you:

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| ● bring together understanding of both the conscious and the unconscious, hidden motivations and resistances of work and social groups as they engage collaboratively and competitively with one another; | ● become more effective in working with the underlying dynamics within and between organisations, communities and the wider society; | ● apply the roles discovered and taken up within the programme to your own organisations, communities and networks. |
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With these aims in mind, THE PRIMARY TASK of the conference is to ...

explore the conscious and unconscious nature of leadership, followership and identity and the exercise of authority in roles as they develop through the interpersonal, intergroup and organisational relations within the conference, as a temporary institution in times of shifting boundaries and spaces.

The method

This conference is based on the theoretical perspectives and methods of group relations as developed in the Tavistock 'Leicester' working conferences on Leadership, Authority, Role and the Organization.

The conference is designed to provide opportunities for learning for leadership. By **examining, interpreting, reflecting and making sense of** experiences in the programme events, participants will develop clearer understandings of their own organisations and their roles within them.

The programme offers the participants opportunities to use their imagination to explore how **they are taking up leadership roles and reacting to the leadership of others.**

The programme focuses on **culture, structure and task**, and the need for understanding the **roles** of participants as they relate collaboratively and competitively with each other. Such understanding involves disciplined attention to one's own **experience**, openness to the experience of others, tolerance of **uncertainty**, readiness to **interpret** what is happening, and courage **to test one's interpretations** through communication and action. This includes being alert to both **conscious** and **unconscious** aspects of behaviour and the ways in which behaviour is shaped by the broader social, political and economic **contexts** in which we work and live.

The method of learning is **experiential** – as participants you will be invited to study your own and others collaborative and competitive behaviour as it happens in the different events. **Consultancy** is always available in the programme events.

The focus of learning is based on examining the **'here and now'** of group and institutional behaviour. You will be invited and challenged to take up your own **authority** to accept what proves to be useful **learning** and reject what is not. Through this process you will be able to reconsider the way that you gain or lose **power** and exercise **authority** in your organisations.

Consultancy Learning Group

The conference design includes a Consultancy Learning Group (CLG). Participants of the CLG will have an opportunity to strengthen their ability to exercise their authority and build up their consulting expertise by taking up different roles within the conference. Members of the CLG will be invited to learn from these experiences and make links with their external roles outside the Conference. The CLG is not intended primarily as a training to take up consulting roles in group relations conferences, but as an opportunity to deepen learning about consultancy through the group relations model which can be applied beyond the conference membership role.

The CLG is open to those who have been members of at least two group relations conferences and are interested in developing this type of learning, exploring roles requiring a consultative stance and applying it to their professional lives. The consultancy learning group has its own separate timetable, which combines experience with time for reflection. **The number of places in the CLG is limited.**

Conference Staff

Participants will be working with a staff group that is invited by the Conference Director on behalf of the sponsoring organisations of the Conference.

Director:

Jolita Buzaitytė-Kašalynienė, PhD, Associate professor of Sociology and Social Work Institute, Vilnius University. Co-founder and board member, Lithuanian Group Relations Society. Associate of oezpa GmbH - Akademie & Consulting (Germany) and professional partner of Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. Member of Lithuanian Sociologists Society and Lithuanian Scouting Association. Representative of Vydūnas Youth Foundation (Chicago). Based in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Associate Director:

Raymond Bakaitis, Ph.D., the Past-President of the A. K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems (AKRI). A member of the Lithuanian Group Relations Society (LGRS) and a co-creator of International Group Relations China (IGRC). An Associate Clinical Professor, Retired, in the UCLA Department of Psychology and a Past-President of the Los Angeles County Psychological Association. His interests include reparations, the political and economic system dynamics of modern slavery, and the challenge for citizens to navigate feelings of hope, cynicism, and despair. Based in the USA.

Director of Consultancy Learning Group:

Olya Khaleelee, M.A., Corporate Psychologist, Pintab Associates Ltd offering senior executive assessment and coaching; Professional Partner, The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations; Organisational Consultant; Chairwoman of OPUS: an Organisation for Promoting Understanding in Society. Has published extensively on group relations and societal dynamics. Has co-authored with Halina Brunning *Danse Macabre and Other stories* (2021), and *The Covid Trail* (2023). A third co-edited book, *Sitting on a Suitcase*, was published in March 2025. Based in London, United Kingdom.

The Conference Director, Associate Director and Director of Consultancy Learning Group, in addition to their consultancy roles, together with the Conference Administrators, constitute the **Conference Directorate**.

Consultants:

Leila Djemal, M.A., Organization Development Consultant and Executive Coach; Founding past Co-Director and Instructor, Touch OFEK Professional Development; Graduate, William Alanson White Psychoanalytic Institute Program in Systems Psychodynamics, New York; Associate, A.K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems; Board Member, PCCA - Partners in Confronting Collective Atrocities, Member; OPUS - Organisation for the Promotion of Understanding in Society; Member and past Board Member, OFEK - Association for the Study of Group and Organizational Processes. Based in Israel.

Mark Stein, PhD is Professor Emeritus of Leadership and Management at the University of Leicester, an Executive Coach and Organisational Consultant, and a Career Consultant at *Careers in Depth*. Is on the core faculty of the Tavistock Clinic/ University of Essex Professional Doctorate and Certificate in Consultation and the Organisation, and has been an Adjunct Professor and Visiting Scholar at INSEAD, Fontainebleau.

Tomas Rakovas, MSc in clinical psychology, organizational consultant and group psychotherapist in private practice based in Vilnius, Lithuania. Over 15 years of experience leading teams and projects in organizational culture, leadership development, and emotional learning across business, public, and non-governmental sectors. A member of the Lithuanian Group Relations Society and the Lithuanian Group Analytic Society. Based in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Laura Miķelsone, MA Politics and International Relations; Pedagogy; Certified supervisor, Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe ANSE; Human Resource manager at Eversheds Sutherland Bita ns; Organisation development consultant - Gestalt therapist in training; Lecturer on Organisation and Team supervision at Riga Stradins University; Member of A.K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems; Cofounder of Group Relations International. Based in Latvia.



Kasparas Laureckis, MA, Social Work at Vilnius university. Head of the programs at NGO Vilnius social club. Group psychotherapist in private practice. Group Analyst in training, Vilnius university and Lithuanian Group Analytic Society. Board Member of Lithuanian Social Street Work Association and Lithuanian Group Relations Society. Based In Vilnius, Lithuania.

Brayn Maguire, Phd, CPsychol, AFBPsS, a chair of the Irish Group Relations Organisation (IGRO). After graduating from the University of California, San Francisco, lectured and researched in psychology in Wales and Ireland, and currently works as a senior manager in public administration of Irish tertiary education. A member of OPUS, former member of OPUS International Listening Post Steering Group (2020-2023), and co-convenor of the OPUS Listening Post Ireland. Based in Ireland.

Administrator:

Agnė Mažvilaitė, EMBA, Vilnius University and ISM University of Management and Economics. Executive Management experience in the fields of business, non-governmental and public sectors. Organizational consultant in training, Vilnius university and Lithuanian Group Analytic Society. Member of Lithuanian Group Relations Society. Based in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Associate administrator:

Ona Stravinskaitė, MA, Humanitarian studies (History) at Vilnius University. Extensive experience in the Public sector, Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Experienced in analytical work on implementing laws and decisions. Volunteering and working with non-governmental sector groups. Member of Lithuanian Group Relations Society. Based in Vilnius, Lithuania.

The Role of Staff

Staff have specific roles in the conference:

1. They **act collectively as management**.

Collective management takes responsibility and authority to provide the boundary conditions – task, territory and time – in such a way that all participants in the Conference, members and staff, can engage with the primary task of the Conference.

2. They work in their consultancy roles to the various events, informed by their own experiences of the events and the primary task of the event and the Conference overall. The staff will **offer working hypotheses** based on their understanding of what is happening.

3. Staff members are not only observers of the process but are actively involved in it. It is important, therefore, for staff to be as **explicit as possible about their task and roles** throughout the Conference. The way they take up these roles is always open to examination.

Working Language:

The working language of the conference is **English**. However, where all members of a group are Lithuanian or of some other nationality, their native tongue may be the language of usage in that group.

When is the Conference? Where? How much?

Time:

The conference will begin at 09.00 on Friday, 22nd and end at 17.00 on Tuesday 26th August 2025.

Place:

The conference will be held at Vilnius University, Faculty of Philosophy, Universiteto str. 9/1, Vilnius.

Fees:

The conference fee is **850 EUR**. Additional fee for participation in the Consultancy Learning Group is **110 EUR**.

Discounts:

(I) There is a reduced fee of **610 EUR for public and NGO sector workers in Lithuania**.

(II) In addition, there is an **early bird discount of 80 EUR** for all applications received by 15th June, 2025.

(III) A limited number of partial bursaries will be available. To apply for a bursary, please complete the Registration Form and send a request with a short description of the relevant background by **15th June, 2025**.

Early booking is advised as the number of places is limited and not guaranteed.

Closing Date for Applications:

25th July 2025 or earlier if the Conference is full.

Payment can be made by bank transfer. Other administrative details will be given upon completion of the registration process.

Cancellation Policy:

Cancellation occurring on or before 5th August, 2025: 75% of payment will be returned.

Cancellation occurring after 5th August, 2025: 25% of payment will be returned.

How do I apply and reserve my place?

To register for the conference, please follow this link and fill in the online form:

REGISTRATION FORM

We will get in contact with you.

Registration will take effect once participant fee payment has been made.

Participation in the Consultancy Learning Group will be confirmed by the CLG Director on the basis of the experience and motivation of the applicant.

For further details or if you have any questions, please contact the Conference Administrator, Agnė Mažvilaitė, by email grupiusantykiai@gmail.com

Other Administrative Details

Meals:

Coffee and snacks will be provided in the morning and afternoon. Meals will not be provided by the conference.

Attendance:

As the programme of the conference constitutes an integrated whole and its events are all inter-related, participation in all the sessions of the programme is highly recommended. If you know in advance that you will be unable to attend all the events in the conference, we suggest you defer your application to next year.

It is important to note that while experiential learning such as that available in this conference can be enriching, it can also be stressful at times. Therefore, individuals who are ill or experiencing a period of significant personal difficulty may wish to postpone attendance at this time.

The conference is not residential and participants from other cities or countries should reserve their accommodation at hotels in the vicinity.

Certificate:

Participants will be issued with a certificate of attendance of professional development by Vilnius University.

Sponsoring organisations

Lithuanian Group Relations Society

The Lithuanian Group Relations Society, established in 2017, is an association whose mission is to develop experiential learning in groups, organizations and communities. The Society works with a group relations “learning from experience” methodology and from a psychodynamic systemic perspective. The Society strives to encourage a culture of open and reflective dialogue and fruitful collaboration between representatives of private, public, and non-governmental sectors for the purpose of enhancing leadership and empowering meaningful action.

The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations

The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, first registered as a charity in London in 1947, is a non-profit consultancy, research, and professional development organization dedicated to the application of social science to contemporary issues and problems. The Institute is engaged in evaluation and action research, organizational and change consultation, and executive coaching and professional development. All these activities are designed to support sustainable change and ongoing learning. The work of the Tavistock Institute, developed in many countries, is noted for its innovation and for working across boundaries in difficult situations. The Tavistock Institute combines research and analytical skills with practical help in devising solutions and following through to implementation. It is particularly known for its capacity to work with issues that are otherwise hidden, and sometimes unconscious. The Tavistock Institute has been a sponsoring organization of Vilnius Group Relations Conferences and Lithuanian Group Relations Society since their inception. www.tavinstitute.org

Vilnius University, Department of Social Work and Social Welfare

Vilnius University houses one of the first schools of social work in Lithuania. The Department of Social Work began operating in 1992. It initiated the process of institutionalizing the profession of the social work which hadn't existed during the Soviet regime. In 2018 the Department of Social Work and Social Welfare was established to further define the mission and scope of the profession. The Department offers master and bachelor study programmes in social work and delivers in-service training.

Faculty take active roles in the discourse of social work as an academic discipline. These roles include researching the profession's field, practice, identity, and status. The Department organizes scientific events around social work leadership, social innovations, the ecology of social work, and other national and global issues. Faculty publish in the scientific journal STEPP. Faculty participate in the formation of social policies, consult as experts and evaluators of policy measures, and testify to the legal basis for social work. <https://www.fsf.vu.lt/sociologijos-ir-socialinio-darbo-institutas/struktura/socialinio-darbo-ir-socialines-geroves-katedra>