

Modesta Gusaroviene, Lithuania



“Main traits allowing to achieve good results are: determination, responsibility, cooperation, hardworking, sincerity and trusting the team.”

Modesta Gusaroviene’s professional background

- Director of the Municipal Enterprise “Susisiekimo Paslaugos”, responsible for Vilnius public transport management. Became a head of the company at the age of 33.
- Obtained her Bachelor’s degree in Construction and Engineering at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University in 2000-2004, and a Master’s degree in Construction and Engineering at the same university in 2004-2006.

Modesta Gusaroviene’s story

The transport sector is still mainly male-dominated, and women are still less willing to choose their further education in sectors such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). On the other hand, these fields are the ones that can get people a diploma to start and develop a career in the transport sector. In this sense, it seems that women are limiting or distancing themselves from these or related fields and the tendencies pass on from the educational to the employment sector. Women working in the transport sector often identify a need for themselves to explore inspiration and motivation from other women, especially the ones who succeeded in their career.

Talking about transport in Vilnius, the company called “Susisiekimo Paslaugos” is in charge of the overall public transport organization and is under the authority of Vilnius city municipality administration. Interestingly enough, the head of

this company is female. Being an employee of the company for 16 years, (having started there as a student) from 2015 Modesta Gusaroviene holds the director’s position and is responsible for a number of activities of the company: organization of public transport and ticketing services in Vilnius city; toll administration and organization of parking system; coordination of traffic system and maintenance of infrastructure; coordination of development of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure; implementation of SUMP (Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan) and organization of its improvement. It is also important to mention, that more than half of the departments of the company are led by women. Talking about the professional challenges, Modesta mentioned that nowadays when technologies develop very fast, the attitude and expectations towards the system of mobility and transport, as well as their challenges are directly linked to technologies and innovations. Hence, a separate category of challenges covers

installation, maintenance, supervision and usage of any intelligent solution systems which are an inseparable part of the development and expansion of the improvement of the services. According to Mrs. Gusarovienė, there are 180 employees in the company and approximately 46 percent of the staff is female. Fig. 22 shows the evolution of gender balance within the company, in the period 2015 - 2019.

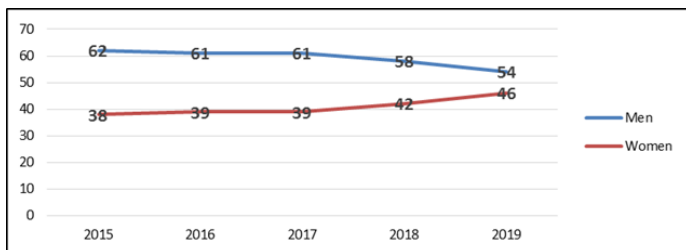


Fig. 22. Gender balance of employees in the period of 2015-2019 (%) – Susisiekimo Paslaugos
Source: Susisiekimo Paslaugos

A list of successful examples contributing to the quality services of public transport in Vilnius are:

- **Optimization of public transport routes in 2013:** hierarchical network of Vilnius public transport routes was introduced including 6 bus rapid transit routes, main and incoming routes.
- **The active participation in the initiation of Vilnius public transport fleet renewal.** For this reason public tenders were announced, EU funds were used to purchase new trolleybuses. At the end of 2019, there were 318 new (more than a half of all transport vehicles) public transport vehicles operating on Vilnius streets.
- **Expansion of public transport tickets purchase network:** major retail chains have joined the ticket purchase system.
- **The “Park and Ride” (P&R) system** was introduced in 2017. There are 4 such spaces at the moment, and further expansion is being planned.
- **Active participation in preparation of Vilnius city SUMP in 2017.** The historical plan was approved by the city council in December 2018.
- **Coordination of bike and pedestrian infrastructure.** In 2015-2019, 80 km of new bike paths were constructed in Vilnius city.

- **The expansion of m.Parking app** (payment for parking) into other cities of Lithuania (Kaunas, Klaipėda, and Trakai).

There are several examples proving that implemented programs have positively affected the company's development, bringing huge value to the City:

- **The m.Parking app** (payment for parking) is being used by 252 thousand of unique users. In comparison with parking slot machines, the app is much more popular and even 85 percent of all toll is being gathered via the mobile app. It is almost 15 percent cheaper solution than the parking slot machines.
- **Another mobile app – m.Ticket** - is being used by 137 thousand unique users for the purchase of Vilnius public transport tickets. This modern channel for selling public transport tickets is much cheaper and it saves around 90 thousand Euro per year.
- **After renewal of traffic lights control software in 2018,** the traffic jams in the morning start 11 minutes later, and they have shortened by 5 minutes.
- **After implementation of an internal document administration system in 2017,** the company significantly reduced usage of paper, while at the same time - control of tasks has become more efficient.

Talking about her personal experience as a female leader, Mrs. Gusarovienė identified the main traits allowing the achievement of good results as: determination, responsibility, cooperation, hardworking, sincerity and trusting the team. When asked whether she had experienced any difficulties in her professional development, she listed the following critical characteristics allowing her to overcome the difficulties: participation, diligence, curiosity, team work and cooperation. These traits have contributed to Mrs. Gusarovienė's successful career development. Unlike some common opinions,

our interviewer did not have the slightest suspicion that Mrs. Gusarovienė's career development could have been in any way affected by the gender issue. As for the stereotype related experience, Mrs. Gusarovienė said she had never felt any advantages or disadvantages for being a woman. She has always believed in her work and knowledge. However, Mrs. Gusarovienė said that she had felt certain barriers because of her young age. According to her, more time and energy was dedicated to prove to other leaders and partners that they could trust her – as a young leader of the company. According to her, the main factors and personal traits for success were: knowledge, constant improvement, involvement, diligence, responsibility and openness.

“It is important to see difficulties not only as problems, and regard them instead as new challenges which one can solve and treat as critical material for learning something that could be adapted in the future.”

Asked about the company's input into developing 'gender-smart mobility', Modesta listed a few of the main factors - and emphasized that the services of "Susisiekimo Paslaugos" had been designed for everyone:

- A lot of attention is dedicated for cultivating awareness of the society. A list of social campaigns is being annually organized. Their aim is to identify and pay more attention to people who need more respect and consideration from the society. The company has spread plenty of educational films and videos promoting respect for seniors, pregnant women, and people with disabilities.
- The vehicles of the public transport fleet are constantly renewed so that travelling for people with disabilities, parents with baby strollers is as comfortable as possible. At present, 70 percent of the public transport vehicles in Vilnius city are low-floored.

- A year ago a social project "the transport voice" was launched. It is an innovative solution for people with visual impairment. 580 public transport stops were equipped with special IT tools, which allow people with visual impairment to use a special mobile app. The application sends some information to its users, e.g., number of a bus or a trolleybus which arrived to a certain stop.

According to Mrs. Gusarovienė, there are no universal solutions regarding measures that entrepreneurs, companies and politicians could use to address and encourage the development of smart mobility, social and financial equality. She is absolutely convinced that the best measure for encouraging gender equality in every sphere of life and for demolishing still existing stereotypes is education of the society and sharing the best examples. She proudly boasts about her company's achievements in the field of equal opportunities. These achievements were awarded with three "Wings of Equal Opportunities" out of total three possible awards (an award initiated by the Ombudsman's Office for Equal Opportunities). This means that the company is quite proactive and voluntarily implements initiatives targeted at promoting equal opportunities and diversity and has created an organizational culture that stimulates equal opportunities. The important thing is, that both employees and employers are equally involved in the activities and initiatives related to equal rights.

When asked to give advice for women making a career in the fields of transport and smart mobility, Modesta emphasized the importance of not underestimating one's own abilities, being self-assured, relying on your individual skills and knowledge. Moreover, having a motivated and reliable team is crucial during challenging times.

It is important to see difficulties not just as problems and regard them instead as new challenges which one can solve and treat as critical material for learning something that could be adapted in the future.



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