

1st Progress Review Conference of the Universities participating in the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme

PRE-EVENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach / University of Silesia in Katowice

- 1) Which of your university’s original objectives (when applying for a 10% increase in funding) have been chosen to retain having received a lower funding level? How is progress being reviewed?**

The University of Silesia in Katowice adopted the Strategy for 2020-2025, taking into account the guidelines of the IDUB programme, including 5 priority operational goals:

- 1) development of science, in particular in priority research areas (PRAs); purchase of research, educational & artistic infrastructure and ensuring access to equipment resources;
- 2) research cooperation with renowned scientific institutions; increasing the dynamics of international cooperation and employee mobility; employing world-class scientists;
- 3) improving the quality of education, in fields related to PRAs; support for doctoral schools;
- 4) implementation of comprehensive solutions for the professional development of employees, especially young scientists; employing outstanding scientists, prepared to form research teams; promoting the project method of conducting research;
- 5) improving the quality of university management, including organizational changes; improving the visibility of the University abroad.

The goals are being met despite the lower level of funding. In 2019, the structure of the US was deeply changed, established disciplinary institutes, administrative structure was adjusted to the requirements of the programme. Achievement of strategic goals and meeting the indicators of the Strategy is monitored by a specially appointed Quality Department and other collegial bodies. The administration of the IDUB is provided by the project office, central administration, offices for evaluation.

- 2) Which measures have been added, deleted or modified following the recommendation of the reviewers? What changes to university strategy and policy have been made in the light of evaluation and the outcome of the funding competition?**

The new structure was implemented; the culture of work, education and research changed with a view to achieving strategic goals. The status of a European university was obtained under the T4E activity. The Polish-Chinese Centre for Environmental Research, International Environmental Doctoral School associated with the Centre for Polar Studies, and several Research

Centres were established. Internationalisation has been increased under the NAWA programme, and the culture of work is changing through the POWER programmes.

Areas of excellence are increasing through new research teams, a complete change of the philosophy of competitions, which is harmonised with the principles of the HR Excellence and the provisions of the Strategy. The Project Board and the IDUB Scientific Council will be established to serve advisory and decision-making functions, as well as setting directions for research development.

The possibility of increasing the research potential and expanding the US's offer has been designed to open up to outstanding scientists from abroad. Cooperation with international centres is being developed, e.g. under the European Universities programme.

The adoption of an ambitious plan was a conscious decision. We will consistently pursue detailed goals and monitor the progress. The most strenuous activity, i.e. the transformation of the university into the current organisational structure, has been completed. The number of evaluated disciplines has been reduced from 37 to 25

3) Did the university change/reduce the Priority Research Areas (POBs)? What is the scope of such change?

The University finally defined the PRAs indicated in the Application, taking into account the analyses of the directions of the development of science and higher education in the country and in the world, including the social mission of universities, Poland's development strategy (Polska 2030) and the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 adopted by the United Nations in 2015. The University has not changed or limited PRAs, guided by the perspective of improving the quality of research conducted at the US and the attempt to diversify research areas. The PRAs are as follows:

- 1: Harmonious development of the human being – care for the protection of health and quality of life.
- 2: Modern materials and technologies and their social and cultural implications.
- 3: Environmental and climate change as a challenge for public policy in Europe and worldwide.
- 4: Humanities for the future – interdisciplinary studies of culture and civilization.
- 5: Study on the fundamental properties of nature.

4) What concrete measures has the university taken to encourage cutting edge research? What evidence can you provide of continuing promotion of research excellence at the highest levels of the university? Has this been achieved using alternative sources of funding, apart from the 2% subvention increase?

Achieving better quality of education is supported with funds from subsidies, as well as funds obtained from various additional projects. A fund for the purchase and maintenance of equipment has been

established with a budget of PLN 6 million. There has been a quality-improvement system operating at the University (approx. PLN 4 million), which is currently being modified. In 2019, nearly 300 scientists received incentive awards for quality-improvement activities. The amount of the allowance depends on the type of activities (grant applications, outstanding monographs, the highest scored scientific articles, international grants, works of art or patents). The Staff Mobility Program, has been suspended due to the pandemic, but is expected to resume in 2021.

The distribution of funds for research is based on a transparent system, rewarding scientific excellence (<http://bip.us.edu.pl/sites/bip.us.edu.pl/files/po201916.pdf>).

In the new organisational structure of the university, it has been planned to establish units responsible for continuous monitoring of the implementation of the University's strategy. Activation of scientists takes place through: a quality-improvement programme, financing research, educational and artistic infrastructure, activities in the T4E network, financing ground-breaking research at the US, engaging students in research projects and doctoral schools.

In the National Science Centre competitions, for which the application call ended in December 2019, scientists from the US obtained grants for a total amount of over PLN 17 million. This is almost 3 times more than in the competitions launched in June 2019. In the December call, our scientists submitted 124 applications, 22 of which were successful, whereas 104 applications were submitted in the June edition, 10 of which were successful. This leap shows that the institutional changes introduced in 2019 both on the scientific and administrative level have begun to have the desired effect.

5) What progress has been made regarding establishment of a federation or merging with other institutions from the region, particularly in case of universities which received relevant recommendations?

The University of Silesia in Katowice has not received any written recommendations in this regard.

6) What steps is your university taking in order to increase the likelihood of enhanced levels of funding being secured in future rounds of the IDUB programme?

The Strategy sets out the directions for development and introduced a fundamental change in the paradigm of its activity, i.e. transformation into a research university, primarily focused on conducting high-quality, internationally recognised research. It is planned to include selected collegiate bodies of foreign experts.

Regular meetings of the authorities with employees are held to develop and implement the concept of strengthening the research position of the US. A group of priority operational goals has been identified. The process of activating and increasing employee awareness was launched through quality improvement activities supported by flagship quality improvement programmes, continuing the implementation of the University's strategy, including the implementation of IDUB milestones, financing research projects under PRAs, fast research funding paths; investments in research centres, the Interdisciplinary Centre for Staff Development (key competences

of prospective human resources, development of significant competences of research staff and administrative support employees), creation of a school of scientific excellence, employment of outstanding scientists from Poland and the world, additional incentives for persons preparing and implementing grants (especially ERC), administrative support for scientists, support in building career paths, activities of the SPIN-US special purpose vehicle, training and English language courses, funding the Open Access purchases.

7) The worldwide impact of measures and limitations introduced as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic should be taken into account in the implementation planning, and institutions should be driven by the will to maintain strategic development as planned. The good use of digital means of communication has a crucial role to play. Thus, universities should see to it that they are up to this challenge. What actions have been taken by your university in order to reduce the negative impact of the pandemic on the implementation of the university development strategy?

During the epidemic, the University has been managed taking into account the guidelines of the MSHE and MH. Funds were provided to enable the implementation of the Strategy, including the efficient functioning of the university, education and research. A crisis management team was established.

Researchers have been supported at every stage of submitting project applications. As an effect, there was a record number of applications submitted. Remote access to research data has been provided, including scanning materials for researchers.

The strategy and tools for communication with employees have been implemented, including the website devoted to the functioning of the University during the epidemic.

Researchers have been involved in CSR activities (e.g. the action #UŚwspiera and #pomagamyzrozumieć, popularising scientific knowledge about epidemics among the US community and its environment).

The formula for implementing HR processes has been changed: employee recruitment and training are carried out remotely. Trainings on the use of IT tools in remote work have been conducted in the field of research, teaching, and administration, along with webinars on obtaining grants.

The organisation and system of work have been changed (remote work, postal and remote handling administrative formalities). Educators have been widely supported in using the Moodle e-platform, the MS Teams platform, discussion platforms, communication tools such as: video, audio, chat, and IT tools to verify the learning outcomes.

In order to increase the visibility of the University, the lectures at the Silesian Science Festival Katowice have been made available. Funds have been secured for student allowances from the scholarship fund. Departures and arrivals from abroad have been suspended until further notice. Conferences and other events organised by the University of Silesia or by third parties are expected to return in 2021. Some of them will be held online.