



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

### PRE-EVENT QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Uniwersytet Łódzki / University of Lodz

**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?**

From the original number of 11 operational objectives we decided to support the entire process:

- i. development of existing research centers and expanding scientific councils to include top foreign scholars
- ii. establishing three international focused research teams led by top scholars hired through competition
- iii. internationalization of existing research teams through hiring both young and experienced foreign scholars
- iv. active participation of existing UŁ units in PRA-related research
- v. supporting outstanding young scholars by creating favorable circumstances for setting up their own research teams
- vi. a systemic involvement of students in the research of research teams
- vii. active scientific cooperation with UŁ strategic foreign partners with respect to staff mobility
- viii. constant improvement of research infrastructure, including laboratories certification
- ix. increasing the number of patents (including international patents); creating favorable circumstances for increasing the number of property rights and preventing the loss of potential benefits from their commercialization
- x. a system of administrative support reducing formal obstacles facing researchers, inventors, and persons working toward the application of research outcomes
- xi. building UŁ’s international recognizability as a respected scientific institution

So far we have one monitoring report dated March 2020. However most of the objectives are postponed due to COVID

**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?**

We are at the very initial stage of the implementation plan and therefore we consider the re-definition of PRAs, especially PRA1, which, as indicated by the reviewers, “is innovative and too much of a basket of everything.”.

We also consider to modify the description of what was indicated as “One action that seems too radical is zero-hour appointments to facilitate applications for grants”.

We have already replied to the following comment in the review: “The university would need to become much more proactive it is likely that a wider group of leading international universities will be needed.” So far we implemented new activities within the existing cooperation with the University of Giessen, there is also the new opening with the University of Bogota, additional cooperation with the Japanese universities, as the result of last year’s study visit, was commenced. The real, active cooperation is consistently extended.

The university strategy needs to be prepared for the new perspective. Till the end of 2019, we started the timetable of the wide consultation with the entire community of our academia. There are number of meetings, workshops and presentations planned. The first draft of the strategy should have been ready in May 2020, however the pandemic forced us to change the schedule. Right now we are about to start the new term of office and the very first priority for professor Elżbieta Żądzińska, the new Rector, the head of IDUB team is to restart the work on strategy.

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

University of Lodz Priority Research Areas structure was well-grounded and field- and thematic-based. However we consider some clarifications.

We would like to take such opportunity and re-define both the structure and the scope. Therefore during the first meeting of the UŁ’s Science Committees for Social, Humanities and Sciences in September we plan to establish, as declared in the application, the Units structure for the further development and implementation.

We want to be part of the mainstream of the world science in this field. What makes us different from many other universities is the approach based on the notion of the unobvious, as stated. The strong buy-in should not be a problem because of the commitment and engagement of internal stakeholders (including the new Rector for 2020-2024) as shown by the measurable indicators.

**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?**

1. Changing organizational culture and creating a new leadership model. This included such activities as laying down meritocratic rules of employee selection and evaluation, further developing a motivational system favoring the best employees, promoting interdisciplinary research projects and projects realized under international cooperation schemes, expanding projects based on Visiting Research Fellow, Junior Researcher in Residence, or Advanced Researcher in Residence, and developing mentoring systems and an integrated system for evaluating employee progress and the realization of employee development plans.
2. The development of the PRAs vision. Activities already implemented include the formation of international focused research teams applying for the external funds; in 2020 (till August) only we submitted almost 200 application for 25 mln Euro. So far UŁ the success rate in such competitions is 20- 25%; holding scientific hackathons during which UŁ employees with various discipline affiliations would identify PRA-related research problems, to be then studied; evaluating and managing brand equity, and others.
3. From the new academic year we plan to start new processes and modifying the existing structures which determine the realization of objectives and indicators at the scientific, international, educational, meritocratic, and performance-related levels.  
The work programs for all above mentioned planned activities are ready to be launched in late autumn.

The choice of UŁ's development path based on research excellence at the highest levels was best expressed by UŁ's community during the election of the new Rector for 2020-2024. Professor Elżbieta Żądzińska (the head of IDUB team), who clearly declared the above measures for developing UŁ as a respected scientific institution during her election campaign, was elected the new Rector.

**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?**

As stated in the review "the possibilities and benefits from further cooperation with the other universities and research institutes in Łódź have not been explored fully".

The cooperation with the other universities and research institutes in Łódź might not have been presented in the application clearly enough. Nevertheless, for us they are important partners for close cooperation, both presently and in the future.

Number of common publications (some being the result of the projects cooperation) for years

**2014- 2018:**

Medical University of Lodz (UMed):	317
Polish Science Academy (PAN):	231
Technical University of Lodz (PŁ):	123

and it gradually increases.

**2019:**

UMed:	93
PAN:	89
PŁ:	40

**2020:**

UMed:	71
PAN:	62
PŁ:	31

We are implementing new projects in such partnership.

On July 8, 2020, a consortium agreement was signed with the participation of the Medical University of Lodz, the University of Lodz, the Institute of Medical Biology of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Central Clinical Hospital of the Medical University of Lodz, establishing the Academic Virology Center. The newly established Center, led by the Medical University of Lodz, will conduct research on the SARS-CoV-2 virus and other types of viruses, and will jointly apply for funds and research and development grants.

New initiatives are planned in new Rector's plan for UŁ development.

**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 implementation of all declared and indicated within the first IDUB application objectives are priorities to be implemented. We do realize that the pandemic caused the serious delay in the timetable, although all procedures are about to be launched.

UL scientist every year gain a greater number of externally funded projects, including the most prestigious ones. Comparing to 2016, in 2019 we won 300% more funds. In 2019 it was almost 15 mln Euro.

This year, for the very first time in the UL history, one of our scientists is in the final stage of ERC calls.

On the monthly basis we monitor the indicators declared in the application and the ones regarding:

- Articles in TOP 10%.
- Normalized citation impact
- Articles in International Collaboration
- International Research Grants

All of the obligatory indicators requested in the IDUB application recorded the significant increase, eg. The number of top 10% publication increased to 212% in 2018- 2019 comparing to 2013- 2017.

On the greater scale we implemented the incentives to the best performing researchers.

Also the regular plan of workshops regarding the funding, publishing and research data management was implemented. We assume that the level of awareness within the scientific society of our university is much higher which may be fund as the positive change for further developments.

**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?**

University of Lodz, as all academic world, was faced the COVID epidemic suddenly.

At the initial phase of the pandemic, we were quite well prepared with the IT tools, however up till then we have never used them to such extend.

From the beginning of March all of the university administration activities were organized on- line and well evaluated after couple of weeks of the remote work. We do consider to enable university employees to work remotely to some extend also after the pandemic.

To reduce the negative impact of the pandemic on the implementation of the university development strategy, in cooperation with the faculties and all of the university stakeholders, we elaborated detailed safety procedures, first regarding the on- line courses during the lock- out, then we enabled the lab experiments in the strict sanitary regime.

All of the university activities including the courses, experimental activities, seminars and so on were conducted remotely accordingly to the programs.

We may risk the statement that the university scientists were more engaged into their research then before the pandemic. The application for the grants increased by 50% comparing to the analogous period the year before. Also their participation in the on- line courses on the sources of research funding were twice as many as stationary a year before.

The great challenge of dormitory accommodation and campus principles were the separate aim. Also within this field we implemented detailed proceedings. However some more modern solutions for the dormitory services should be and would be considered by the university authorities in the nearest future.

On the basis of the above mentioned documents and tools we are preparing our university both to the new academic year and generally to differentiate of teaching and working methods. From September we are going to implement new common IT solutions for the entire UL community.