

POLICY STATEMENT

of the candidate for Rector
of Masaryk University



Martin Bareš

Motto: "A human being will endure much if they have a goal." Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk

Introducing the candidate: motivation, vision, tools, role of the Rector

After four years as Rector, I am again addressing the academic community of Masaryk University (MU) as a candidate for the Rector's office, this time for the term of September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2027. In the first round of the election in April 2019, I obtained a strong mandate from the MU Academic Senate, and on September 1, 2019, I accepted the Rector's office as a service to the entire university community and started to implement my policy statement.

Since the very beginning of my mandate, I have always tried to work in accordance with my nature: systematically, responsibly and with great commitment, being aware of my obligation to those who voted for me in 2019 as well as to the whole of our academic community. I have been guiding the university towards the quality in education, science and research, emphasizing its social role and responsibility and creating the necessary framework for its international visibility. The goal of my efforts has been for MU to become the most successful university in this country and a major player in Central Europe and beyond.

The Rector of the university that bears the name of the first Czechoslovak President and was founded soon after the establishment of the Republic, will always have special responsibility. Being aware of my personal and professional responsibility towards the university and the general public, I would like to ask the MU academic community, represented by the Academic Senate, for the second mandate as the Rector of Masaryk University.

I have no other commitments save for minor duties at the Department of Neurology of St. Anne's University Hospital (a joint workplace with the Faculty of Medicine MU), where I take care of patients with various neurological disorders. There is, however, one other important commitment outside the university that I will mention, because I consider it a great recognition of the work, attitudes and opinions of myself as well as of the entire university. As of August 1, 2021, I became the chairman of the Czech Rectors Conference (CRC) after I was elected in the first round of the election of this body in June 2021, and became the second Rector of MU to hold the post. This office implies my participation in crucial discussions about the direction of Czech higher education at the time of negotiations on key legislation (the Higher Education Act, Act on the Support of Research and Development from Public Funds or the debate regarding budgetary rules). I highly value the opportunity to emphasize the significance of higher education issues within the European Union and of further development of international cooperation of higher education institutions (HEIs). I strive to run the CRC as a sovereign and confident platform which defends the role of education in society and interest of HEIs as scientific and research institutions and socially responsible players.

Recapitulation of the 2019–2023 period

Since I personally believe in decision-making and debate based on facts, let me mention the greatest achievements that I most value in the past four years of office.

Thematic areas of greatest achievements in 2019–2023:

- **Return of the Faculty of Pharmacy to MU after 60 years:** The Faculty of Pharmacy (FPharm) was part of this university during 1952–1960 (it was established as the sixth faculty) before it was transferred elsewhere by the totalitarian government. The return of the FPharm to MU means redressing an apparent historical wrong and opens a new chapter of growth in many vital areas: the strategic development of MU through the MUNI BioPharma Hub (biopharmahub.muni.cz) on the University Campus at Bohunice, funded by a special project of the National Recovery Plan; new degree programs (designed in cooperation with other faculties); interdisciplinary research; cooperation with the applied sector; support for spin-off companies including the vision of the MU Research and Technology Park etc. I must also mention the smooth transition of FPharm students and faculty from the University of Veterinary and Pharmaceutical Sciences to Masaryk University (although national legislation was not a great help in the process).

- **Management of an unprecedented crisis related to the coronavirus pandemic:** Beginning with February 2020, all of us faced a situation that was unprecedented in the modern history of the university. The Crisis Board of MU was established right at the beginning of the pandemic. Thanks to the board, we resolved hundreds of security, operational, legal, technical and administrative issues related to the operation and functioning of the university during the two-year coronavirus crisis. With the help of top-notch capacities provided by all the faculties we chose an efficient strategy that enabled us to effectively protect lives and health of the entire university community (our records suggest we had 50% of covid cases if compared to regional averages); in addition, we managed to maintain the three key roles of the university operation. Our comprehensive approach served as an example for other HEIs. Although financial impacts of the coronavirus crisis are considerable (e.g., the profit and loss statements of halls and canteens), our budgets have been surplus and pro-growth. We continued to pursue our educational mission, engaged in scientific and research activities and worked on grant projects. As a university we understood that the time of crisis poses a challenge for individuals and for all of us together. To contain the crisis, we also had to address issues of MU employee care (testing, work from home, online operation, vaccination etc.). Although this was not an easy time in the life of our university, I think that as an institution, we stood the test and came out stronger. Last but not least, I must mention the idea of the MUNI HELPS volunteer center, which was established as early as in March 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic, when Masaryk University started to give significant assistance to individuals and institutions in need. The volunteer center has continued in its activities to date. Masaryk University obtained several major national and international awards (among others, the European Citizen's Prize, awarded by the European Parliament, and the Award for Excellence in Internationalization from the European Association for International Education) for the work done by MUNI HELPS.

- **A principled and firm stance on Russian aggression in Ukraine and tangible assistance to Ukrainian refugees:** MU expressed its support for Ukraine and publicly denounced the aggression right after the Russian invasion of the sovereign Ukrainian territory in February 2022 (I initiated a similar stance of the CRC as its chairman). The university turned words of support into action: we admitted several hundred new students, offered positions to several dozen Ukrainian female academics and created a platform for their quick adaptation. We are getting ready for the postwar cooperation with Ukrainian universities. Our aid to Ukraine also included e.g. assistance in the organization of admissions procedures to Ukrainian universities and other HEIs. In addition to the above-mentioned assistance, the university later provided a refuge for Professor Andrei Zubov, a long-standing and prominent critic of the Russian regime, who became a member of the academic community of the Faculty of Arts MU.

- **Education:** We completed a substantial part of the degree program transformation, which was approved by the Internal Evaluation Board. This includes the expansion of major/minor studies, specializations and engineering plus career-oriented programs. Program boards were introduced as a major innovation of the quality assurance system and an important component of student participation in development and evaluation. Mechanisms for approaching and accepting motivated and gifted students of secondary schools were further developed (Olympiads, Students' Professional Activities and language certificates are taken into account now; the minimum of 30th percentile in the Learning Potential Test was introduced at MU etc.). The number of courses taught in English increased rapidly. The integration of modern methods of synchronous and asynchronous teaching using videoconferencing and various types of multimedia learning aids was successful, and we served as an example for other HEIs. Study guidance and counselling were supported and standardized; the system for the prevention of student dropout was further developed. Shared university core courses were designed and pilot tested (full implementation is expected in the academic year 2024/25). The university-wide course opinion poll was added a management extension linked to periodical evaluation by teachers and guaranteeing units. The student competition Start-Your-Business was launched (with its 3rd year over). New Rector's Awards were introduced: one for volunteering and the other one for teaching innovation. Study-related administrative issues were significantly simplified and computerized (electronic confirmation of studies; electronic enrolment is offered by most faculties; we were the first HEI in the Czech Republic and one of the first in Europe to introduce an electronic diploma).

- **Confirmation of MU's position as a prominent European educational and research institution:** MU achieved a significant success in the ARWU international ranking (shanghairanking.com/rankings/arwu/2022); for the first time in history, MU placed among the first five hundred world universities. This great achievement is based on long-term systematic work. According to the national research evaluation (M17+), MU is included in the top, A Category. MU is a member of the Association of Research Universities of the CR, which raises themes aimed at excellence (not only) in science and research. MU was exceptionally successful in national and international grant competitions (National Recovery Plan: Program for Public Research & Development Support for Priority Areas of Medical Sciences and Related Social Sciences – EXCELES, where MU participates in all the five projects of National Research Institutes, and is a coordinator of the National Institute for Research on Socioeconomic Impacts of Diseases and Systemic Risks (SYRI); the number of ERC grants won by MU significantly increased). As a principal investigator, the university is also involved in the implementation of major projects under operational programs in the Czech Republic in the 2014–2021 program period. MU became the most successful organization in the CR within Horizon 2020, the eighth EU Framework Programme, in terms of participation in the supported projects. We also contributed to other important events and activities which increased international visibility of our university: let me mention the international Mendel Genetics Conference, commemorating the 200th birth anniversary of G. J. Mendel, or the ICRI conference, which confirmed our position on the world map of major research infrastructures. Changes within MU include GAMU innovation, introduction of career restart grants after parental leave or internal evaluation of research and doctoral studies in 2022; all this represents a substantial investment into research excellence of our university. The opening of MUNI Award in Science and Humanities to the junior research community, introduction of follow-up transition funding for ERC grant holders and other incentives are examples of targeted support that continues to promote the prestige of our university.

- **Student and employee care:** The halls of residence are being gradually renovated; the university hotel was converted into student accommodation, whereby the capacity increased by 130 beds. We have a strategy for the development of halls of residence ready. It will mean the renovation of the existing as well as building new accommodation (funds are intensely being sought, including European grants). In September 2022, a nursery school was opened at Komenského náměstí, the building that also houses “Spolkovna”, a place for activities of student clubs and associations. The Collective Agreement was concluded in 2022, stipulating the increase of salary rates (by 10% in 2022, by another 5% in each year of 2023–2024). All the faculties and university institutes obtained the HR Award; the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) was adopted and has been gradually implemented. All of this, in my view, is very important for our students and employees. I must also mention the expansion of activities of the MU Student Advisory Center (covering e.g. study-related issues or sexual harassment, which needs due attention and education), psychological help or activities of the CERPEK and Personnel Management Office, which support education and development. We are planning to launch the institution of the university ombudsman. Doctoral scholarships are going to increase substantially beyond the state contribution from September 1, 2023 (further increase in doctoral scholarships is planned for 2024).

- **Preparation, approval and implementation of the MU Strategic Plan for 2021–2028:** The Strategic Plan reflects the social, cultural and historical position of MU and contains, among other things, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), quality indicators in education, science and research, and sets the basic frameworks for the HR policy, internal administration and infrastructure development of our university (muni.cz/media/3326734/strategic_plan_mu_2021_2028.pdf). This document was discussed in much detail (and was prepared by many people, including student representatives) and outside the university is considered as highly progressive and ambitious. The Strategic Plan is supplemented with the MU 2021+ Strategic Development Project “Innovation for a Healthy and Secure Society”, approved in 2021, which presents a long-term vision of the development of key areas where MU can substantially contribute to the addressing of societal challenges (muni.cz/en/about-us/strategic-projects).

- **Preparation of new budgetary rules:** The new rules reflect specific features of the respective MU constituent parts, accentuating the quality in education and research. It is the open and constructive debate on funding partially based on internal contracts respecting each faculty, and the determination of key performance indicators in research that justifies our position of a leader among Czech HEIs. The budgetary rules are transparent, take into account the university's strategic goals, deviate from the breakdown of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) (which is recommended by the ministry itself), are predictable and do not require major annual changes to many indicators. The MYES statistics show that our average salaries are high in comparison with other public HEIs in the CR (in many categories, we have the highest salaries).

- **Internationalization at MU:** MU is part of the European Digital UniverCity (EDUC), a university alliance comprising eight members that was formed in 2019. Together, we succeeded in the first call of the European Commission, an achievement (not fully appreciated within MU) which was repeated in a new call and brought a grant of EUR 12.8 million for another four-year period. We passed the international evaluation Monitoring Internationalization of Czech Higher Education (MICHE 2021). Our actions within the framework of Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU were well visible. I also consider as important my participation in a prominent European event of the year in science, research and innovation "Research and Innovation Days 2021", where I was a keynote speaker invited by the European Commission to represent the Czech Republic and had the opportunity to present the strategic development priorities of Masaryk University. In conclusion, we can say that MU holds a prestigious position in the sphere of internationalization among Czech universities. We continue to form and develop cooperation with new regions abroad that have high potential for research and innovation, and we foster cooperation with our alumni and compatriots at foreign universities.

- **Social contribution activities of MU:** The MU Center for Culture, Art and Events facilitates closer cooperation between university units in the fulfilment of the university's social and cultural role of cultivating the internal and external environment. In spring 2020, we started a new university tradition of Masaryk Days, followed by Mendel Days in autumn 2020. There are other social events that attract ever increasing attention of the academic community (a traditional November memorial ceremony at the Kounic Residence Hall since 2019, commemorations of important anniversaries, among others an October gathering at the Tree of the Republic, end-of-summer concert etc.).

Despite the above mentioned achievements, I must admit that there are several areas where we have not made much progress or the progress I hoped for: I expected larger numbers of applicants for study, a higher graduation rate, a faster preparation of the Study and Examination Regulations, stricter restriction of internal competition and the related strengthening of complementarity of individual workplaces. The university's communication campaign has its imperfections, for instance regarding our alumni. We should improve networking and fundraising in order to build an independent mechanism of university funding. We are one of the best Czech institutions to win prestigious international grants (e.g., ERC grants), but we lag behind European and world competition. The capacity of our halls of residence and canteens is insufficient. University sports facilities deserve improvements. Some of the mentioned shortcomings were, at least partially, caused by unexpected external circumstances that had to be addressed (the COVID-19 pandemic and the refugee crisis); some tasks require a longer time; however, there is not much time to lose.

What I truly value is the open and constructive communication I have had with both chambers of the MU Academic Senate, the deans, the Board of Trustees and many others. I think that promoting the esprit de corps of the university's students and staff is a vital task and I will try to continue in its fulfilment, among others through cultural, social or sports events, such as this year's novelty – MUNI Day, a university-wide sports event, ice hockey matches, the Advent Concert, the newly planned "breakfast with the Rector" etc.).

University strategy

As far as the university-wide strategy is concerned, I intend to continue in the implementation of the **Masaryk University Strategic Plan for 2021–2028** (and its annual updates): (muni.cz/media/3326734/strategic_plan_mu_2021_2028.pdf)

My goal of MU becoming the best university in the Czech Republic and moving up in international rankings (which it has accomplished in certain parameters) by 2030 is ambitious and still valid. I am aware of current societal challenges as well as of the potential and strength of our university, our ten faculties and two university institutes, which manage to find common strategic themes and contribute to their solution. We must stress the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), embedded in the MU Strategic Plan; our university applies a highly responsible approach, which is reflected in international rankings that have started to focus on this issue in recent years, and the position of MU has been improving every year: timeshighereducation.com/impactrankings; topuniversities.com/university-rankings/sustainability-rankings/2023; greenmetric.ui.ac.id/rankings/overall-rankings-2022. We are committed to implementing the priorities set in the MU 2021+ Strategic Development Project “Innovation for a Healthy and Secure Society”, which include the MUNI BioPharma Hub, MU Research and Technology Park and strategic projects supported from international grant schemes (Horizon Europe, Johannes Amos Comenius Programme and others).

Note: This Policy Statement builds on my previous statement presented in 2019, on the basis of which I was elected to the Rector's office. I do not find it appropriate to copy the entire Strategic Plan of MU in this text. Therefore, the list of the below mentioned measures is not exhaustive and complete.

Study at MU and student affairs as a priority

In the 21st century, education must be an utmost priority for each university that deserves its name. This priority poses many challenges that need addressing and measures that must be adopted in order [to improve the quality of studies and attract motivated and gifted applicants](#) (MjUNI, for example, is a suitable and a timeless undertaking; Olympiads, Students' Professional Activities and other forms of cooperation with secondary schools should be promoted). Continuous innovation of admissions procedures is the right action aiming at the consideration of applicants' motivation and use of modern tools (adaptive testing, online enrolment etc.). One of the greatest societal challenges (and a great opportunity too) is the rising number of 18/19 year olds, including the associated funding and legislation. Degree program boards, microcredentials, recognition of foreign education, emphasis on lifelong and modern forms of learning for the 21st century (short programs, distance learning) and reduction of student dropout at all levels of studies – all of these are essential tools that should lead to the increase in the quality of studies and in the overall level of education at this university.

At the same time, we should put more emphasis on an [open access to education](#) for all prospective applicants regardless of their socio-economic situation. Of course, we must be interested in studies and their quality, but also in all aspects of student life at the university. Therefore, we should pay more attention to the quality of accommodation, catering and overall wellbeing of students, financial possibilities of the university permitting.

Our university must take better and more active care of safe and tolerant environment, where any form of intolerance, discrimination or sexual harassment has no place. Respect for the principles of academic integrity is one of the long-standing values of MU and it must be adhered to and promoted in the day-to-day operations of the university and all its constituent parts.

Overview of concrete actions in education:

- Simplifying the portfolio of degree programs, flexible options.
- Innovation of the campaign targeted at potential applicants. We need to communicate everything the university has to offer and can be proud of in an authentic, modern and attractive way (not limiting the presentation to degree programs).
- Support for inter-faculty degree programs reflecting the societal challenges of the 21st century. The university has a unique potential to create and develop highly attractive programs linking natural sciences, social sciences and the humanities.
- Adjustment of final state examinations and theses so as to reflect technological developments and changes to legislation.
- Clear communication of the fact that MU is both a high-quality university and an organization which can provide support and help students, and which offers many opportunities for self-realization. It is desirable to motivate those who doubt themselves but have good prerequisites to study (the post-covid period poses new challenges in this respect).
- A new web presentation targeted at potential applicants, which would show the strong and unique features of our university in an attractive and comprehensible way (stressing the high-quality education where students get many-sided support, an image of MU as a motivating, supportive and respectful environment).
- Further development of targeted academic counselling that aims at raising motivation to successful completion of studies.
- A responsible debate on socially relevant degree programs in the context of a changing society (reaching beyond the impacts of the coronavirus crisis).
- The quality of pedagogical work must be promoted and emphasized within the university. It is the practical experience of students from their classes that forms the reputation of the university vis-à-vis prospective applicants.
- Reasonable use and flexibility of scholarship funds.
- Adoption and approval of new study and examination regulations that will respond to new legislation, among others.
- Adding microcredentials to the lifelong learning portfolio; striving to be a university which has a valid offer for applicants throughout their professional life; ongoing support for U3A and MjUNI.
- Encouraging doctoral students to complete their PhD in the standard period; increasing the financial support for doctoral studies; support for employment of doctoral students at MU (in addition to their scholarship).
- Utilizing the experience gained during the coronavirus pandemic to efficiently and reasonably use information and communication technologies in synchronous and asynchronous teaching.
- Preparing the strategy for the development of degree programs as a base for institutional evaluation by the European University Association (a voluntary procedure providing feedback from European leaders) and subsequent application for the extension of institutional accreditation in all relevant fields of education at MU.

Science and research at MU – a research university

It still holds true that the [development of top-notch research performance at all MU constituent parts](#) in line with the strategic goals is vital for long-term sustainability and financial stability of our university. The quality of research output must be preferred to quantity, bearing in mind the parameters of national and international evaluation of research performance. (Chapter 2 of MU SP 2021–2028: Research and Doctoral Studies).

We will continue to increase the number of projects within Horizon Europe, the ninth EU Framework Programme, and to promote [international visibility of research](#), which includes raising the number of ERC grant holders. I am well aware that MU is bound to mediate its outputs and successes to the professional and general public in a more efficient way (it proved essential during the coronavirus period that the public perceive the strategic nature of science and research). I am convinced that it is essential for MU to join all the five National Research Institutes supported from the National Recovery Plan, which should fundamentally enhance the communication of science and research results to the professional and general public; and also to contribute to the formulation of high-quality public policies while adhering to the principle of evidence based policy (an important role of SYRI, an institute coordinated by MU).

At the same time, we will intensify the cooperation with external entities in [applied research](#), a domain where e.g. the Faculty of Science, the Faculty of Informatics and the Faculty of Pharmacy contribute significantly. The maintenance and further development of the university's research infrastructure (including IT) cannot be overlooked. The principle of Open Access/Open Science is bringing a new dimension of data protection and use as well as the need for a strategy to create interdisciplinary research teams and publications. Other important themes undoubtedly include standards of research ethics and publishing ethics, especially in the light of increasingly available artificial intelligence tools.

Overview of concrete actions in science and research:

- Implementation of key legislation into internal processes of MU (Higher Education Act, Act on the Support of Research etc.)
- Continued measured approach to Methodology 17+; specifics of individual scholarly disciplines must be taken into account, which the national methodology logically cannot do.
- Implementation of projects from the EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESF/ERDF) and promotion of research priorities with societal impact, using the unique expertise of MU in the preparation, winning and successful implementation of ESF/ERDF projects (link to the MU 2021+ Strategic Development Project “Innovation for a Healthy and Secure Society”).
- Successful implementation of projects under the National Recovery Plan, including fundamental changes to MU infrastructure (MUNI BioPharma Hub, obtaining further funds with a special focus on sustainability issues).
- Consistent preparation for the comprehensive international evaluation of research: the next International Evaluation Panel's procedure will take place in 2025 and we strive for the best result possible (one of the reasons being the impact on the funding of MU in the area of science and research).
- Closer cooperation with the International Scientific Board of MU (ISAB) in the evaluation of research, publishing standards, doctoral study standards etc.
- Careful registration of doctoral students' stays abroad and support for long-term mobility to leading international institutes.
- Winning prestigious projects under Horizon Europe, an EU Framework Programme – ERC, Teaming, Twinning or ERA Chairs.
- Preparation of the SYRI National Institute for the period following 2026, i.e. after the funding from the National Recovery Plan ends.

External relations and MU internationalization

During my work as the Rector, I learnt how important it is to raise awareness of the [Masaryk University](#) brand, how important it is to enter public space and to help foster a greater sense of belonging between the University and its students, staff and alumni (for example, through social events, culture and sports). Chapter 3 (Internal Culture and Social Contribution Activities) of MU SP 2021– 2028 sets strategic goals and corresponding indicators of accomplishing the social mission of the university.

The internationalization of the university is reflected in all chapters of MU SP 2021– 2028, and I personally see it as a key tool if we wish to succeed in global competition. We should attract more applicants to English degree programs and foster cooperation with our alumni. This means I will continue to support opportunities for gaining international experience through internships at all levels of studies (which also applies to employees) or through more intensive involvement in international consortia. We are part of the European Digital UniverCity (EDUC), a project of the European Universities alliance, which has gained new dynamics thanks to two new partner universities. We will also use the Utrecht Network for a deeper analysis and further fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Overview of concrete actions in external relations and internationalization:

- Addressing a sufficient number of gifted and motivated young people interested in studying at MU, intending to be a selective university.
- A more efficient use of data from surveys focused on potential applicants, students and graduates.
- Designing a concept of a year-round communication campaign aiming at potential applicants to Czech and English degree programs.
- More systematic work with alumni, whose potential for the development of MU has not been fully used.
- Active search for quality potential employees outside of MU.
- Further development of contacts with foreign universities and research institutions, which is one of the ways to improve MU's position in selected university rankings.
- Promoting the cooperation with foreign universities within TOP300 (according to THE, QS or ARWU) and others in areas like education, science, research and innovation as well as in the fulfilment of the “Third Mission” of universities (mainly in addressing societal challenges).
- Support for university sports, which can play a significant role in the building of the university esprit de corps.
- Further promotion of activities of the MU Center for Culture, Art and Events and other university-wide social and cultural occasions.
- Pursuing the idea of naming significant premises or buildings after historical figures associated with the university.

Internal administration and communication

The internal administration of the university rests on the milestones outlined in the MU Strategic Plan (Chapter 4: HR Management and Staff Development, Chapter 5: Information Systems and IT Support, Chapter 6: Institutional Management and Infrastructure). The university must continue to prudently create an appropriate environment for faculties and other constituent parts, which means to consider external circumstances when it distributes its budget, but at the same time to reasonably disregard every minor change in external parameters (this currently applies to budgetary rules concerning the Faculty of Pharmacy, or CEITEC in the past). The currently applicable budgetary rules take into account the specific features of faculties teaching social sciences and humanities, which gives us a competitive advantage over other universities (e.g., regarding average salaries); I would like to continue with this approach.

The external environment has been undergoing significant changes and the university should continue in its intensive growth, supported by the budgetary rules, among other things. I will want to continue in the discussion on the centralized costs and levies of individual constituent parts, and to guide the university towards internal division of labor with the aim of making it strong as a whole and well positioned to succeed in national and international competition. Safeguarding and prudent management of university funds at a time of anticipated stagnation of public funds (and significantly higher inflation) is now of paramount importance. I will continue to advocate measures leading to the achievement of professional goals while maintaining a work-life balance.

I will ensure, with even greater sensitivity and resolution than before, that ethical conduct is observed throughout the university. Past weeks' events show that these issues require a truly comprehensive approach to dealing with individual cases, but most importantly in terms of prevention and general cultivation of MU's internal environment.

Overview of concrete actions in internal administration and communication:

- Further debate about the costs of operation (including centralized funds) of MU and its constituent parts at a time when energy prices and rents increase.
- Strategic management of university funds.
- Strengthening the image of MU as a reliable employer offering good working conditions, stability and interesting work with a social impact in difficult times, competitive salaries, career growth and opportunities to reconcile work and family life (including caregivers).
- Further enhancement of soft skills of employees and students (e.g., using modules generated as part of the MUNI 4.0 project), strengthening the fixed part of salaries, support for young families with children (e.g., through flexible working hours, playgroups, nurseries and kindergartens).
- Implementation of HR Award principles, preparation of the GEP for 2025–2028, ensuring wider awareness of the MU Code of Ethics, and addressing the issues of non-discrimination and gender balance at individual constituent parts of the university.
- Further internationalization of the university environment, a mobility support scheme, application of best practices from abroad, a program for the support of sabbaticals, promotion of the internal culture aiming at employee satisfaction, motivation and esprit de corps.
- HR marketing with international outreach, promoting HR policy support programs, issues of associate professorship and full professorship as positions.
- Improvement of communication with students so that they have better opportunities to present their views and expectations in an easier and efficient way, whether concerning the quality of studies or internal culture of the university. Overall “demythization” of senior faculty and university officials and access to them (e.g., by organizing discussions over breakfast or evening get-togethers, sports or cultural events). Personally, I am very interested in students' views of conditions for studying, student facilities and their improvement, including main problems and shortcomings; I have always been interested what students think; as a Rector and previously as a dean, I was always open to their ideas and informal discussion.
- A detailed evaluation of suggestions following from the external audit of the Rector's Office (RMU) in 2020; further debate about the distribution of powers between the RMU and the constituent parts that would respond to the rapidly changing external environment and the growing demands on strategic management (with emphasis on funding educational and research priorities).
- A new generation of the enterprise resource planning system.
- Strategic development of halls of residence, their gradual renovation and construction of modern large-capacity buildings on the Bohunice campus.
- Strengthening the role of MU as a leader in digitization and cybersecurity through the enhancement of the university IT infrastructure, information systems and services in response to anticipated changes in legislation (amendment to the Higher Education Act, bill on further computerization of public authority procedures, single digital gateway, amendment to the Cybersecurity Act).
- Further improvement of the facilities and infrastructure for university sports.
- Joint opening of the academic year together with other HEIs based in Brno (a cultural and sports event).

In conclusion

The present Policy Statement summarizes the many achievements of our university, describes how we managed to contain serious and unprecedented crises, lists projects, grants, international partnerships and prestigious international awards won by Masaryk University. Sometimes, it seems incredible to me how we prosper as an institution, given the difficult time and challenges we have to face.

All the more reason to remind ourselves frequently and regularly that none of these results and achievements would have been possible or even conceivable had we not lived in a free world and been embedded in Western organizations. Looking at the public space in this country and preferences of certain groups of citizens, I sometimes get the feeling that we as a society fail to sufficiently realize this context. That we are not able to fully appreciate our privileged position including the most important value – our freedom.

Despite all the crises and current problems, we are a privileged generation. We live in times of freedom. We are free to decide for ourselves, to say what we think, to reflect and criticize, we are free to travel. However, we should bear in mind that our freedom is not to be taken for granted and that we are responsible for its preservation.

What does this responsibility entail? The world today is very sketchy and superficial in many respects. Public space has become easily colonized by superficial information, misinformation and manipulation, which naturally affects the quality of public debate and the nature of public opinion. All this contributes to the nature of democracy and governance and thus to the course of the entire society. Our responsibility entails, inter alia, the discernment of and sensitivity to all phenomena and actions that undermine or threaten the roots of freedom in the broadest sense. I believe that the role of universities and other higher education institutions is indispensable here. Who else should be the authority and voice of reason in this situation? Who else should help others recognize the risks and defend themselves against impending threats and dangers? This is a foremost responsibility of universities and higher education institutions. This is a responsibility that Masaryk University must never abdicate.

I can promise that if I win your trust in the election and become the Rector for the second term, I will continue to act in a way ensuring that Masaryk University lives up to this commitment and this responsibility. I will do my best to defend the enduring values of freedom, democracy and humanity upon which our university was founded 104 years ago.

Martin Bareš

In Brno, February 20, 2023