

" CONTRACT " - STRATEGY FOR RESEARCH AND DOCTORAL STUDIES (2022-2027)

FACULTY OF LAW

The contract is a strategic document based on the Internal Research and Doctoral Evaluation (IRDE) carried out at Masaryk University (MU) in 2022. The content of the contract is linked to recommendations obtained from the IRDE, to MU's priorities and shared values, or to the faculty/institute's own strategies in research and doctoral studies. With this document, the faculty or university institute enters into an agreement with the Rector of MU and undertakes to implement the strategy for research and doctoral studies.

The contract contains the faculty's mission and a more detailed description of the implementation of the main goals by which the faculty wants to fulfill the individual strategies. Complementary materials are

- Annex 1: An overview of objectives in the form of a table to serve as an action plan; and
- Annex 2. A strategy, a presentation that summarizes the MU management's statement on the IRDE recommendations and shared values in research and at the same time on the relevant benchmark.

1. MISSION AND MAIN OBJECTIVES

The mission of the Faculty of Law in the field of science and research is based on the specific position of legal science, the aim of which is not only to contribute to the expansion of knowledge on an international scale, but also to traditionally provide support for (especially national) legal practice. The strategy for the period covered by the contract intends to activate and develop all available professional personnel resources in a way that will strengthen the leading position of the faculty in the field of the impact of its research on Czech legal practice and at the same time lead to the expansion of the hitherto limited excellence in the international research environment.

Aims:

- 1) Adoption of an inclusive, transparent and motivational system for the evaluation of scientific research activities, which will be appropriately linked to financial instruments for the remuneration of academic staff.
- 2) Maintaining the existing excellent research teams (Judicial Studies Institute, Institute of Law and Technology) and transferring the skills and experience they have acquired to other faculty workplaces (departments).
- 3) Maintaining and improving the quality of PhD studies through a systemic combination of tools aimed not only at setting but also at enforcing qualitative and quantitative standards

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAIN OBJECTIVES

The Faculty of Law is already a workplace with a very good evaluation in the field of science and research. This is evidenced not only by the general positive conclusions of the IRDE, but also by the regularly best results within Modules 1 and 2 of the Methodology 2017 from all Czech law faculties or the receipt of two ERC grants. On the other hand, the merits for the aforementioned achievements are not evenly distributed and there are people and the entire workplace at the faculty whose scientific performance is low or without significant impact. Also, the overall level of internationalization and multidisciplinary of research is below average compared to similarly sized faculties in the EU-15 countries.

The priority of the Faculty of Law is to provide professional legal education in the Czech language, which, together with a chronic lack of funds, makes it largely impossible to employ foreign researchers more widely. Additionally, excellent graduates of law faculties often prefer a more financially lucrative career than in science and research. The Faculty's mission enshrined in this contract therefore primarily focuses on the Faculty's existing personnel resources, assuming that the vast majority of academic staff have sufficient professional background to be able to work scientifically within their field, at least in terms of the development of legal doctrine at the national level. However, a significant number of these people do not use their potential sufficiently. The chosen strategy envisages the adoption and application of a number of tools that will motivate academics to research activities with a real contribution to knowledge or social relevance. In short, with regard to the above-mentioned circumstances of the mission, the Faculty of Law prefers to activate and support a large circle of below-average researchers, rather than prioritizing a circle of several already excellent people.

Key steps to achieve the goals:

The main objectives defined above will be implemented through lower-order sub-targets, defined together with the relevant implementation tools and relevant indicators in the attached table. Since it would be useless to copy the parts, the following section contains only the linkage of the main and partial objectives.

Main objective 1: Adoption of an inclusive, transparent and motivational system for the evaluation of scientific research activities, which will be appropriately linked to financial instruments for the remuneration of academic staff – sub-objectives 1, 3.

Main objective 2: To maintain the existing excellent research teams (Judicial Studies Institute, Institute of Law and Technology) and transfer of their skills and experience to other faculty workplaces (departments) – sub-objectives 2, 4, 5, 6, 7.

Main objective 3: To maintain and increase the quality of PhD studies through a systemic combination of tools aimed at setting and enforcing qualitative and quantitative standards – sub-objectives 8 to 13.

Possible barriers to implementation:

As the main axis of the mission focuses on existing academic staff, the biggest potential obstacle to implementation appears to be the rejection of the proposed goals and tools by (at least a part of) this group, as few of them may require an increase in existing standards, and thus adjustments to the long-term approach to research as such. The implementation of the strategy may also be undermined by the inconsistency and instability of the system of national evaluation and funding of research, which often contributes to the disillusionment of many academics and their questioning of proposed changes.

As far as doctoral studies are concerned, the main obstacle may be the insufficient funding of scholarships for full-time students (in terms of volume) and its insufficient stability and predictability (for the possibility of any long-term planning and development of excellent teams with the involvement of students), including the preservation of the existence of „specific research“ (specifický výzkum) grant support.

Benchmark institutions:

The selection of a suitable institution is complicated by various strategies in the field of legal science and research, which make comparisons between countries deceptive. At the national level, the main "competitor" is undoubtedly the Faculty of Law of Charles University in Prague, whose results are, however, slightly worse on average. On the other hand, it is not realistic to achieve the level of similarly large faculties in Austria (e.g. the Faculty of Law of the University of Graz) or Germany (e.g. the Faculty of Law of the University of Regensburg), especially in the international dimension of research, within the time horizon of the contract. It is therefore more appropriate to be inspired by certain measures or trends from entities with a comparable situation, such as the law faculties of the universities of Ljubljana (Slovenia) or Tartu (Estonia).