

## Jagiellonian University in Cracow

### Assessment report in the first competition under the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme

#### 1<sup>st</sup> criterion - substantive quality of an application:

- a) the quality of a SWOT analysis with respect to the objectives referred to in paragraph 4 of Communication from the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 26 March 2019 on the first competition under the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme, including the quality of the analysis used to identify priority research areas;
- b) conciseness and concreteness of the SWOT analysis and the plan;
- c) relevance of the identification of the specific objectives referred to in paragraph 6(2)(a) and paragraph 8 of Communication from the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 26 March 2019 on the first competition under the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme in relation to the SWOT analysis results;
- d) appropriateness of the indicators chosen to describe the university’s potential and to measure the extent of the objectives’ attainment;

#### Substantiation

The Jagiellonian University Krakow (JU) is a leading university on the national level and is already internationally visible and competitive in some of its research areas. The application submitted is relatively clear, well-structured and convincing. The JU had chosen a professional way for the comprehensive SWOT analysis. It is very extensive and could have been more focused. Using five main objectives in separate SWOT analyses JU has identified seven POBs. Each of them involves several disciplines, cooperating on a socially relevant and rather broad topic. All POBs have a high level of interdisciplinarity and include several internationally visible researchers and projects. The wide range of subjects in the seven POBs covers the whole spectrum of faculties and seemingly all principle investigators of the JU. This indicates a potential lack of selectivity among the tackled areas and raises the question if true profiling and prioritization can be reached with this strategy. The SWOT shows strength in internationalization of education and a leading position in national rankings. The JU presents in detail its objectives in relation to the strengths and weaknesses, and the 27 actions are designed to implement these objectives. The plan proposed is solidly crafted, the objectives appear sound and are presented in a structured way. There is a distinct opportunity for cooperation with high-tech industry due to the unique surrounding in Krakow, which has been taken on successfully. In terms of the ‘competences’ JU sees weaknesses in low ambition in research, in high teaching load and structure of academic staff (age, hierarchy). Threats are seen in lack of

stability in legal regulations and a systemic problem in retaining talented researchers. An efficient governance structure in the university needs to be implemented to overcome these weaknesses. JU, however, does not yet present a convincing new governance model in response to the new university law.

**2<sup>nd</sup> criterion - relevance of assumed objectives to enhancing the international significance of the university's activity:**

- a) the extent to which specific objectives contribute to attaining the objectives referred to in paragraph 4 of Communication from the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 26 March 2019 on the first competition under the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme;**
- b) sustainability of specific objectives after the plan implementation period, taking into account, in particular, actions to be carried out in 2026.**

Substantiation

The JU strategy is driven by the ‘Principle of four I’s’: internationalization, interdisciplinarity, integration and innovation. Under this umbrella, six major objectives have been defined. All of them strongly build on internationalization and suitable to enhance the international significance of JU. The specific objectives presented in the plan are adequate, convincing and comprehensive. Each specific objective is linked to particular actions to make its achievement possible. The additional specific objectives show that JU has a vision on its relation to society, which does not only consist of relationships with the private sector. The research activities should prioritise international projects and international fundraising, as well as open access publications. Research cooperation should be strengthened by partnerships with reputable international research institutions. Moreover, the focus lies on enhanced recruitment of young foreign scientists and expansion of international education programs. Staff and leaders should be stimulated to actively support the development of an international research culture and management concepts should be more professional and internationally orientated. The structure of university leadership and governance can be further improved. In this direction an interesting set of objectives focusses on the improvement of the university governance.

**3<sup>rd</sup> criterion - adequacy of described actions to the assumed objectives:**

- a) appropriateness of the actions selected, including actions of ground-breaking and innovative nature, in the context of the specific objectives’ implementation;**
- b) feasibility of the activities given the university’s potential and budget;**

Substantiation

The 27 actions of the plan are sound and meant to be complementary. They serve all major points and serve all objectives. The application lacks, however, a clear time schedule or prioritization of

activities. The first listed action ‘New Blood’ is extremely important and should be pursued with great emphasis. The highest amount of funding is earmarked for this action. Strategic research infrastructure and the implementation of the open science program are highly relevant actions as well as the various funding programs for fellowships, seminars or outgoing researchers or students. Management objectives are covered and internationalization runs as a red thread through part D.3. Actions are also designed for educational activities and skills training at all the different levels of education. The training in digitization and data science is under-represented in the plan. Research for society is equally important as the actions for a sustainable university. Managing structures have to be adapted to the need of an international research university, including a system for monitoring and regularly evaluating the strategy. Last, but not least, it is important to communicate the strategy and the actions clearly in the university and beyond. For the implementation of the actions, a rough time schedule would be helpful. The comprehensive set of actions will be partially funded by the university itself.

**4<sup>th</sup> criterion - potential of the university in terms of:**

- a) the impact of the university’s research activity on the development of world science, especially in priority research areas;**
- b) research collaboration with research institutions of high international reputation, especially in priority research areas;**
- c) the quality of education provision for students and doctoral training, especially in fields of study and disciplines of science related to priority research areas;**
- d) the solutions deployed for the professional development of the university’s staff, especially young scientists;**
- e) the quality of university governance and management;**
- f) other specific objectives to raise the international significance of the university’s activities if these objectives have been determined in the plan.**

Substantiation

The starting position of the JU is positive since it is currently among the strongest research-oriented Polish universities. Its seven POBs are selected through a thorough and convincing process and are innovative in nature. JU is already internationally visible. Due to its international connections, there is a great potential to further develop its international standing and cooperations. In some of the POBs, there is the potential to reach high impact on the development of world class science. Some of the POBs have highly relevant international institutional research collaborations. The quality of education will be improved by the development and implementation of modern education formats. This is a rather comprehensive and innovative approach with several actions. With the explicit mentioning of research-led learning there is a high potential that the quality of education related to the POBs will be increased. The objectives and actions for the improvement of transversal

competences include fostering the creativity of young researchers. Individual talent management and development programs induce high potential for the future generations. Since a university can only develop internationally with well-trained administrative staff, the action research for administration is important for the training in science management. The actions in the area of ‘third mission’ include the evolution of strategic partnerships with institutions from social and economic environment, as well as strengthening the social impact of the university. To assess the potential for the successful implementation of the various actions it would be helpful to better understand the leadership structure, currently a rather weak point in the application. Altogether, the JU has the clear potential to develop further as an international competitive research university with an outstanding research profile and regional societal relevance.

### Summary of assessment

The application clearly shows the strength of the Jagellonian University Krakow (JU) and gives a good insight into its strategic objectives and actions. The application presents the university’s specific objectives, implementation and sustainable actions, indicators and monitoring approaches in a very convincing way. The POBs are well chosen. Because of their high interdisciplinarity, their international cooperation dimension and the quality of the principal investigators, they have the potential to compete at an international level and contribute to the international knowledge in the respective fields. An open question remains, i.e. whether JU’s excellence strategy allows for a focused profiling or rather includes the whole university without priority areas. The JU has an active student exchange already and selected the right actions to further increase internationalization in education. The planned actions in education moreover concentrate on training in digitization and data science, both not yet fully implemented. The JU makes use of its economic environment in Krakow and develops cooperation with social and economic partners. Altogether, JU intends to further strengthen the social impact of the university. For the implementation of the strategy documented in the application, a strong central leadership and governance structure is necessary. Here is a weak point in the application. The new Polish law for universities allows a great independence, also in the development of a new governance structure. The JU did not use this chance and presented a rather diffuse governance model in the application. In the interview, the lack of clarity about the intended governance development at the JU could not be solved. The leadership structure was left open and the process was described as an evolutionary one, without a recognizable time schedule. While the application was generally very good, the interview with the delegation showed in several points that not all details were thought through adequately. JU is currently one of the few Polish universities with a strong research orientation and its potential to become a truly international research intensive university is beyond doubt. The university, however, should be aware of the challenge in the implementation of the actions and the excellence plan and

should make sure that it has a proactive, professional leadership and governance structure in place. The panel recommends specifically to:

- further focus the university's scientific profile (priority research areas),
- ensure development of education concepts, especially in digitization and data science,
- develop and establish a new leadership and governance structure,
- demonstrate a convincing concept for the full implementation of the proposed actions.

### Total score

34.0 / 40

### Recommendation

Positive

### Position on the ranking list of positively assessed applications

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