

Overview of the IIRPS VU Strategic Plan 2016-2019

In 2015, a strategic plan was adopted for the period 2016-2019 with objectives in the areas of studies, research, community, and IIRPS VU relations with society.

A wide-scale research aim was indicated:

A responsible and internationally-renowned research community, generating new knowledge of regional and national importance;

Objectives:

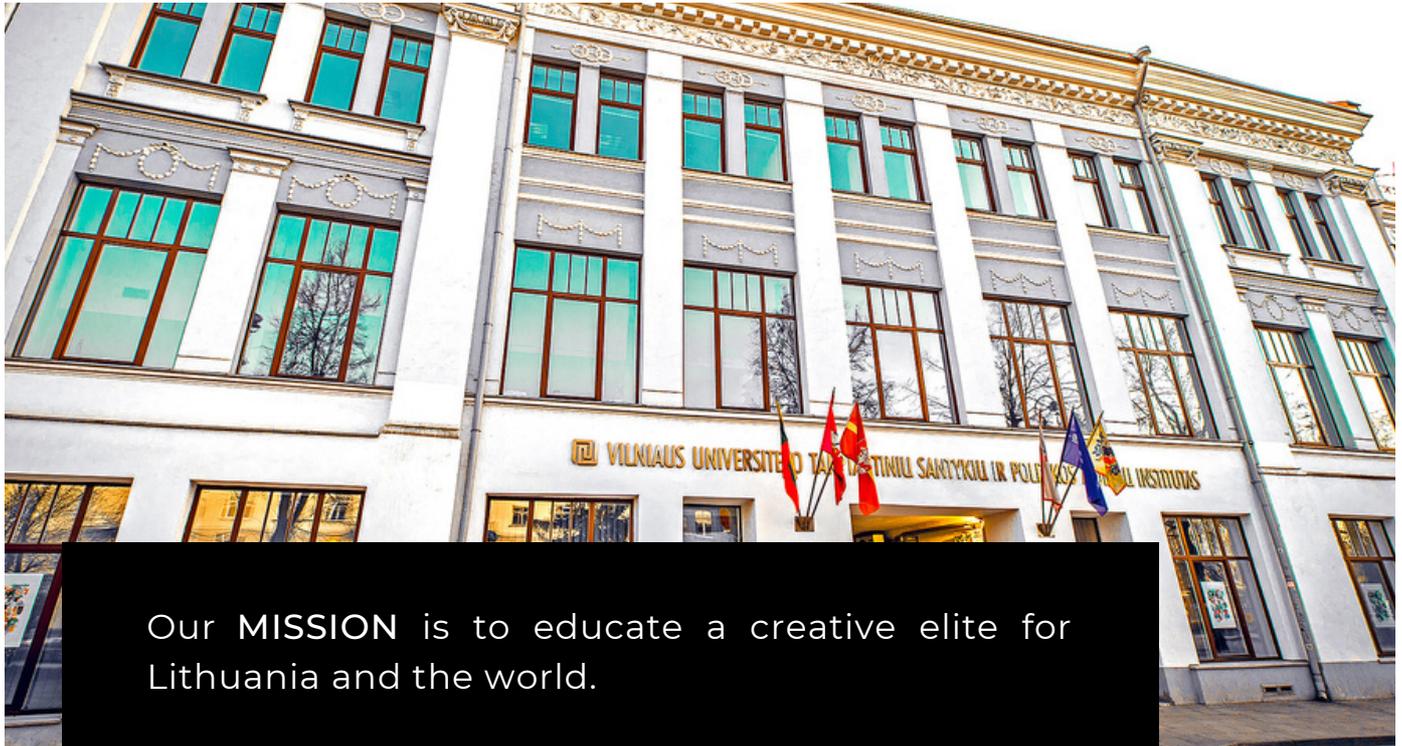
1. Mobilize a vibrant pool of highly qualified scientists and researchers;
2. Carry out high-level, relevant research;
3. Actively engage with the international academic and nonacademic community in Lithuania - create new and strengthen existing collaborations and networks.



INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2024

IIRPS VU



Our **MISSION** is to educate a creative elite for Lithuania and the world.

The **VISION** of the IIRPS VU is to be an intellectual and creative excellence center, conducting high-quality social sciences research and educating students who actively contribute to solving the complex challenges of the modern world.

In its activities, IIRPS VU is guided by the following **PRINCIPLES**: academic freedom, respect, professionalism, innovation and social responsibility.

Things to preserve



IIRPS VU is one of the most attractive higher education institutions in Lithuania in the field of social sciences, which is highly ranked for its high level of studies, research, and activities promoting political literacy. For many who have worked or studied at IIRPS VU, the Institute is more than just a workplace or a school. It is a place where ideas are born, and like-minded people are found, allowing the creation of collaborative projects. **A strong and loyal community** is one of the Institute's greatest strengths.

IIRPS VU is not only **open to different ideas and innovations** but also to **discussions with both community members and the outside world**. These are the strengths we strive to preserve and foster.

We will also **maintain a high level of excellence** by recruiting motivated and excellent students, **continuously improving our study programs**, and ensuring that **motivated academics and experts** teach these programs.

In the field of research, we will continue to implement the current initiatives to promote the **continuous involvement of academic staff in research** activities and projects, and the production of high-level academic publications. We will continue to **strengthen doctoral studies** and the performance of doctoral candidates.

What we need to address

Over the past decade, a number of negative trends have emerged that inevitably affect the Institute and will continue to affect it in the near future. Firstly, the declining number of graduates and university students in Lithuania (graduates choosing to study the increasingly popular biomedical sciences or information technology studies, or to study abroad) is leading to a declining number of applicants to the Institute. Secondly, insufficient and student-based funding creates a paradox whereby professors have to write more high-quality research papers to compete internationally and nationally, but at the same time are required to teach an increasing amount. This leads to fatigue among academic staff, and a decreasing motivation to work at the Institute.

Today's education and studies are no longer localized, higher education institutions compete internationally. The top positions in global university rankings are held by universities where at least 20 percent of students and faculty are foreigners. In Lithuanian universities, these figures are very low, with only 2 percent international students and staff. One of the reasons for the low interest of foreign researchers in Lithuanian research institutions is low salaries. Another factor is the low inflow of foreign students - the environment is not competitive and innovative enough.

To respond to adverse environmental trends and remain one of the most attractive Lithuanian academic social sciences institutions, and increase its visibility beyond Lithuania, specific innovations and an enabling environment are needed.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

What we will focus on

On 6-8 November 2019, the IIRPS VU community took part in a strategic session (Future Search), where we agreed on four strategic directions:

1. **International studies:** creation of an international study environment and education of students who are versatile individuals, who act professionally in a global world and successfully solve complex problems.
2. **International research:** development of an internationally-renowned research environment, where most of our researchers produce high-quality international publications, and actively participate in international projects and research teams.
3. **Workload balance:** development of a transparent system of individualization of the academic workload to achieve a balance between the needs of the community and the institution.
4. **Community empowerment:** support of environments and relationships where community members encourage each other, are accountable to each other, seek mutual understanding and act together.

The working groups that worked on these strategic directions have identified key measures and indicators to see whether we are succeeding in achieving our goals. This strategic plan focuses on priorities and initiatives that will receive additional attention and resources and does not mention the day-to-day work that is already being done at IIRPS VU. The Strategic Plan is designed for a five-year period and the measures will be reviewed annually in the light of the indicators and the feasibility and success of their implementation.



International studies

Strategic direction: creation of an international study environment and education of students who are versatile individuals, who act professionally in a global world and successfully solve complex problems.

Indicators to see if we are moving in the right direction: numbers of foreign lecturers and students (permanent and short-term visitors), good and very good feedback from lecturers and students about working/studying at the Institute, stable or increasing enrolment rates, the high alumni employment rate (>80%), good and very good alumni feedback.

Key initiatives:

1) Attraction of foreign lecturers for short-term visits or permanent positions at the Institute;

2) Attraction of foreign students for short-term visits or permanent studies at the Institute (organization of summer and/or winter schools, active work with prospective students, increasing the number of electives in English, active participation in the international COIMBRA and ARQUS networks in order to create joint study programs, assessment of the possibilities of creating an innovative undergraduate program in English);

3) Establishment of a system for integrating foreigners into the community (ensuring constant dissemination of information, establishing a mentoring program for foreigners, preparing and presenting guidelines for lecturers on the smooth integration of foreigners into the study process, ensuring that academic and administrative staff working with foreigners have sufficient knowledge of the English language, and adapting the doctoral study process for foreign students);

4) Establishment of an Executive Master in Public Administration (EMPA) program (starting with the development of a single module in English, with a view to the future validation of the EMPA degree and the creation of a prestigious international program for experienced public sector managers from the surrounding region);

5) Promotion of good teaching and learning practices (seminars and courses for lecturers, both by sharing knowledge among themselves and by inviting external lecturers, additional training on the supervision of theses and especially doctoral dissertations, rewarding the development of high-quality interdisciplinary courses);

6) Development and implementation of a new communication plan - effective delivery of key information to target groups.

International research

Strategic direction: development of an internationally-renowned research environment, where most of our researchers produce high-quality international publications, and actively participate in international projects and research teams.

Indicators to see if we are moving in the right direction: an average of 7 publications with citation index (IF CA JCR) per year over 5 years, an average of 11 international high-level publications in recognized journals per year over 5 years, an average of 4 international R&D applications per year or at least 8 researchers involved in an international R&D project every year.

Key initiatives:

- 1) Enhancement of financial incentives for high-level publications;
- 2) Attraction and involvement of postdoctoral researchers in the research and study processes (through project funding);
- 3) Establishment of a secondment fund for networking;
- 4) Identification of key research themes reflecting the current challenges and research directions as well as mobilization of research groups on these themes and communication of their activities (including through annual interviews with Heads of Departments);
- 5) Establishment of an International Advisory Board consisting of renowned foreign scientists and/or experienced scientific administrators to advise the Institute on strategic research development issues;
- 6) Raised visibility of IIRPS VU researchers in the international arena (training for researchers on the preparation of academic profiles, communication and dissemination of the scientific outputs and increased accessibility of information on research(ers) on the IIRPS VU website).



Workload balance



Strategic direction: development of a transparent system of individualization of the academic workload to achieve a balance between the needs of the community and the institution.

Indicators to see if we are moving in the right direction: lecturers' satisfaction with the workload balance system (feedback gathered through annual interviews), very good and good feedback from students on the experimental courses, numbers of lecturers participating in experimental initiatives.

Key initiatives:

- 1) Establishment of a framework for workload balance (expected minimum base of academic, scientific and expert activities, institutional prioritisation, overview of best practices in workload balance);
- 2) Annual interviews with the Director of the Institute and her deputies (discussing the needs of the staff members and the institution's capacity to adapt to them);
- 3) Review of academic performance planning and procedures for awarding financial incentives;
- 4) Establishment of research positions (draft of a description of procedures);
- 5) Establishment of a fund to support research field trips;
- 6) Establishment of sabbatical leave (development of a description of the procedure for granting sabbatical leave).

Community empowerment

Strategic direction: support of environments and relationships where community members encourage each other, are accountable to each other, seek mutual understanding and act together.

Indicators to see if we are moving in the right direction: at least 3 new spaces for informal communication (for students, lecturers, and administration); a support system for community initiatives; a communication strategy involving all groups of the community.

Key initiatives:

- 1) Renovation of the Institute's spaces (visualization of values in virtual and physical space, creation or renovation of common spaces for informal interaction);
- 2) Revision of the traditional concepts of community events in order to make them more inclusive, and new events on issues of relevance to the community (academic ethics, the relationship between political science and political participation, generational change issues, psychological well-being, emotional growth, volunteering, etc.);
- 3) Development a communication strategy involving all sections of the community (mobilizing the community through social networks, expanding and adapting forms of information);
- 4) Development of a system aimed at the integration of new members of the community;
- 5) Improvement of the cooperation with the IIRPS VU Alumni Association;
- 6) Renewal of the Board of Trustees and more active involvement of its members in the life of the Institute (joint events, consultations on strategic issues, seeking synergies in the areas of innovation or experimentation).

