



## **STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS**

# **BALSTOGĖS UNIVERSITETO FILIALO EKONOMIKOS-INFORMATIKOS FAKULTETO VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

---

## **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF UNIVERSITY OF BIALYSTOK BRANCH FACULTY OF ECONOMICS-INFORMATICS**

Grupės vadovas: Team leader:	Prof. dr. Terrence Clifford - Amos
Grupės nariai: Team members:	Prof. dr. Mieczyslaw Socha Mr. Bastian Baumann Dr. Juras Eidukas Mr. Rytis Koncevičius
Vertinimo sekretorius: Review secretary:	Ms. Janja Komljenovič

© Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras  
Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education

Vilnius  
2014

## CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	3
II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION.....	5
III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT .....	7
IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING .....	17
V. RESEARCH AND ART.....	21
VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....	24
VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS.....	26
VIII. JUDGEMENT .....	29
ANNEX 1. BASTIAN BAUMANN'S DISSENTING OPINION.....	30
ANNEX 2. UNIVERSITY OF BIALYSTOK BRANCH FACULTY OF ECONOMICS- INFORMATICS RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT .....	32

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The institutional review of the University of Bialystok Branch Faculty of Economics – Informatics (hereafter: the Faculty) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) and authorised by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. An international team of experts visited the Bialystok Branch University Faculty of Economics and Informatics (hereafter: the Faculty) from 2-4 December 2014.
2. The purpose of the institutional review was to investigate compliance of the Faculty with the ‘Evaluation principles, areas and criteria’ as defined in the Republic of Lithuania’s Procedure for the External Review of Higher Education Institutions (22 September 2010) and its associated Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education, as well as to ensure prerequisites for the improvement of the performance and the promotion of the culture of quality, and to offer recommendations for the development of the activities of the Faculty. The review was informed by the following prescribed principles: autonomy and accountability, a holistic approach, stakeholder involvement, unity of internal and external quality assurance, continuity.
3. The International Expert Panel (hereafter: the Review Panel) was provided with a Self-Evaluation Report (hereafter: SER) of the Faculty including the appendices in advance and in accord with above mentioned regulation. The Review Panel, who considered the SER and all accompanying documents, were allocated areas of reading and preparation and submitted to the team leader contributions towards a pre-visit scrutiny document, which, in its entirety was circulated to all review-team members. The designated areas for each member provided the basis for the formulation of further investigation and questions for the interviews to be held during the site visit.
4. The Review Panel found the SER to be rather descriptive, linear and lacking in penetrating analysis, and reflection in particular; however, the main issues facing the Faculty in the future were clearly articulated. The report was also rather less clear to the Review Panel at particular points in that it did not always narrate with clarity descriptions of the University’s regulations and systems with those of the Faculty. Consequently, it was sometimes difficult to differentiate what was happening at Faculty level, in relation to matters pertaining to the University. However, it is appropriate to state here that this is the first institutional review of the Faculty and therefore the first time that such a report was assembled and produced for an external audience. In the light of this circumstance, the Review Panel recognises the effort made, the veracity and openness concerning much of the information submitted and the will to garner as much information currently available within the Faculty. The Review Panel also states that in terms relating to Lithuania, the Faculty has to comply with minimum Lithuanian expectations, but as a Faculty it cannot be evaluated by the SKVC Review Panel as a full University. The Review Panel commend the University and the Dean for their outstanding and purposeful efforts in representing Poland and its needs for higher-education students in Vilnius in particular and in Lithuania more generally.
5. The Review Panel recommends that the Faculty engages more in self-reflective analysis of SER for various audiences in future and, given the difficulty of operating within two sets of legislative frameworks, offer as much illustration and clarification as possible concerning constraints and particular problems. An example here concerns the detail relating to staffing and the associated problems with the ECTS system. However, in relation to one particular issue, the report recognises that due to the absence of acts of legislation in the Lithuanian

law regarding recognition of rights arising from the possession of Branch student ID cards on an equal basis with Lithuanian student ID cards with an entitlement to discounts on public transport, resulting in severe restrictions. The Faculty has stated, for example, that in the Spring of 2008, monetary penalties were imposed for the use of discount tickets on public transport.

6. The Review Panel explored the four principal areas of the Faculty's operation as set out in the 'Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher': strategic planning, academic studies and life-long learning, research and/or art activities, and impact on regional and national development. The Review Panel took into account the sub-criteria specified in the methodology and made appropriate reference in reaching its decision.
7. During the two days of the site visit, the Review Panel was able to interview the Faculty's leadership and representatives of staff and students, external partners of the Faculty, alumni, and representatives of the University of Bialystok. The Panel also gathered additional material throughout the visit and evidence during the site visit and looked at examples of students' theses. The latter task was important for the Review Panel to ascertain the level of this work and whether it corresponded in terms of level to the European Qualifications Framework at Level 6. The Review Panel were able to confirm that the standard of the written work examined was at this level.
8. In all of these requests made by the Review Panel for further information, the Dean and Faculty staff were compliant, helpful, courteous and respectful. More generally, from the Faculty there was in evidence a will and positive spirit towards change and making future improvements.
9. The international expert team comprised the following members:
  - Prof. dr. Terrence Clifford- Amos (chairperson), International Consultant, Visiting Scholar at l' Université Catholique de Lille, France, United Kingdom;
  - Ms. Janja Komljenovič (team secretary), Research Assistant, Marie Curie doctoral fellow, University of Bristol, UK; ENQA evaluator of quality assurance agencies;
  - Prof. dr. hab. Mieczyslaw W. Socha (team member), Associate Professor of Economics, Department of Macroeconomics and Foreign Trade, Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Warsaw, former Vice-President, Polish Accreditation Committee in Higher Education, Poland;
  - Mr. Bastian Baumann (team member), Managing Director of EQAA European Quality Assurance Agency, Independent Consultant - Now Founder and Director of HE Consult, Reviewer of Quality Assurance Agencies, Germany;
  - Dr. Juras Eidukas (team member), director of "ELM project", consultant at "Management Solution Center", lecturer of educational quality management at Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences;
  - Mr. Rytis Koncevičius (team member, student representative), PhD student at Vytautas Magnus university Faculty of Informatics, information technology teacher at Kaunas Maironis University Gymnasium, Lithuania.

## II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

10. The University of Białystok was established in 1997 by an Act of the Polish Parliament that transformed a branch of Warsaw University that had existed for 29 years into a university. It became the thirteenth university in Poland. Initially the branch used to be a teacher's college (vocational school) formed from three faculties: humanities, mathematics and sciences, and primary education. The branch incorporated the Vocational College of Administration in 1969. Steady growth of the branch resulted in the transformation of its status, from the vocational school to the University during the academic year 1972/73 with the legislative and executive right to award master degrees. Structures of the institution changed as well (for example the three faculties changed as well as support units such as the department for pedagogical training, library, sports centre were created). Throughout the following years the branch grew in terms of student numbers, staff, and diversity of study provision. In early 1990s it became the largest tertiary education institution in North-eastern Poland.
11. As the branch grew it became more ambitious and worked towards becoming an independent institution. Finally on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1997, the state granted University of Białystok the status of an autonomous university as of 1<sup>st</sup> October 1997. The University was already at that time promoting itself to act as a "cultural bridge", based on its geographical position and the academic knowledge it accumulated by sitting on the borders of different countries (some of them quite new). From the evidence adduced, the University now sees itself as having the potential to undertake international comparative research and engage in intercultural dialogue, earn respect for tradition and make a contribution to European values. Today, the University has nine faculties in the fields of science, social science and humanities (from which one is in Vilnius); it enrolls in total, circa 17.000 students, and employs circa 900 academic staff.  
(Sources: <http://www.uwb.edu.pl/index.php>; and <http://www.uwb.edu.pl/uniwersytet.php?p=772>).
12. The Faculty in Vilnius was established in 2006 and began enrolling students in 2007. It appears that the initiative to establish this Faculty was rather organic from the cultural mission of the University of Białystok. However, it was the case that the formation process of the Faculty of Economics and Informatics in Vilnius (University of Białystok Branch) was preceded by the need to obtain the consent of the Minister of Science and Higher Education and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and then obtaining permission of the authorities of the Republic of Lithuania. The first recruitment took place between August and September 2007.  
  
The University can very much pride itself in being the only Polish university that has a faculty abroad and educates students in Polish language, which is connected with its mission of joining the East and the West.
13. The main purpose of the Faculty is to educate Polish people in Lithuania and to increase their level of education, living standard, and competences. (Sources: <http://www.uwb.lt/onas/>, <http://www.uwb.lt/en/and> <http://www.uwb.lt/lt/> and SER). The mission of the Faculty is thus very clear – the provision of education for the Polish minority in Lithuania and consequently provide better future opportunities for these citizens.
14. The Faculty currently offers the following study programmes: Economics (1st and 2nd cycle and Informatics (1st cycle) and admits between 150-180 first-year students. It employs 20 teachers and 11 administrative staff. Additionally, there are currently 25 teachers from other faculties of the University of Białystok who are contributing to the teaching process at the

Faculty. The Faculty, however, is working to increase its own academic staff and to build its own sustainable teaching and research base. During the academic year 2014/2015, from the Faculty's own resources, visiting professor (dr. hab.) Zbigniew Oziewicz from Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico in Mexico was appointed.

15. Among future plans, the Faculty is hoping to open new study programmes in European Studies and International Relations, depending on the student interest and other general interests in Lithuania.
16. It is important, to acknowledge that this Faculty is legally and structurally included in the Lithuanian higher education system. Students of this Faculty enjoy all student benefits as other national Lithuanian students (degrees are nationally recognised, students have access to grants and loans, have access to other student benefits (like a "student basket") and the Faculty is included in the national electronic admission system.

### III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

17. There are two main specifics that are relevant for understanding the context in which the Faculty works: i. it is part of the University of Bialystok (Poland) and thus it has to adhere to its regulations and strategy, and ii. the Faculty has to follow the legislation of both, Lithuania and Poland. In addition the panel would like to point out that the Faculty is rather young and is consequently in the process of building its own institutional capacity. Moreover, the Review Panel witnessed high motivation and dedication of its staff and students to further develop and improve the Faculty. The Review Panel also recognised strong leadership from the Dean in particular and his senior colleagues. It was evident that much had been achieved in bringing the Faculty to its current state of being and development.
18. The Review Panel finds that the Faculty does not have a fully comprehensive strategy in terms of concrete goals and performance indicators within the strategy, or action plans and monitoring system of its implementation. There is however a strategic plan (Annex 3.3) which holds much promise, but as it stands, it is rather economic and lacking in depth and breadth to serve as a fully-informed instrument for practical working, reporting and national/international communication. While points 4 and 5 in particular are very strategic and highly important to the life and sustainability of the Faculty, there are just 7 target points in total, which in less than one page of outline, need developing and optimising in greater detail and expansiveness with more additional strategic material, towards a high-impact comprehensive document. This plan: Activity Strategy for the Faculty of Economics-Informatics in Vilnius of the University of Bialystok for the years 2008-2015 would benefit from further design and drafting.
19. The Review Panel believes that the Faculty has not yet developed the capacity to create such strategic documents and use them in an actionable and prospective way for its own development. However, the Faculty does have a sense of where it stands, what is its mission and where it wishes to go. A distinctly positive point concerns the small size of the Faculty which permits and encourages good informal communication and flexible and fast decision making.
20. Based on the SER and received documents before the visit, it was difficult to understand the strategy of the Faculty apart from the central mission point, the very successful and developed culture of continuing to offer higher education study programmes to the Polish minority in Vilnius. In this central focus of the Faculty, the Review Panel learned a lot during the site visit; and the interviews provided a good opportunity to understand the Faculty leadership in its thinking and aspects of its planning.
21. The University of Bialystok has 'The Development Strategy of the University of Bialystok 2008 – 2015' which is also a guiding strategy of the Faculty. This strategy consists of two main parts. The first is a rather general direction of the University which is elaborated for the fields of research, education, staff, infrastructure, finance, University internal organisation and University external environment. This part is rather general, research in particular. The strategy outlines general guiding principles such as working in line with the legislation, increasing research quality, increasing cooperation with other research centres. The second part of the strategy is more substantive in a progressive sense and has stated priorities in five areas: research, education, infrastructure, financing and organisation. For example, in the area of research the strategy outlines the University's priorities to secure

rights to award doctoral degrees in the fields of mathematics, computer science, business administration, management and ecology.

22. The Faculty has to follow the first part of the strategy, which a general guiding principle as is described above. In the second part the strategy specifically refers to the Faculty at two points. First, in the area of education, the strategy sees the Faculty developing new study programmes: international relations, European studies, second cycle in economics and informatics and other programmes in humanities according to possible demand. Second, in the area of infrastructure it outlines new facilities and new computers for the Faculty.
23. Two goals from University strategy 2008-2015 have been successfully achieved so far, namely a new computer room at the Faculty and providing education at the level of second cycle study in Economics.
24. The Faculty uses the University strategy as its own and has not developed a detailed, specific or broader one pertaining solely to the Faculty in all areas of future development. The Review Panel appreciates that such delegation may not be possible. For the purpose of this evaluation, the Faculty developed a document in which it summarises its own priorities. The strategic aims were identified as the following:
  - Provide higher education to Polish minority in Vilnius in the fields in which potential students are interested
  - Become part of the processes of the European Higher Education Area (mobility, ECTS, recognition of education and other Bologna Process action lines)
  - Work in line with Lithuanian and Polish legislation
  - Obtain new facilities and infrastructure
  - Increase research and teaching capacity of academic staff at the Faculty
  - Introduce new study programmes and thus increase its study offer
25. The final three priorities above do relate to a Vilnius-orientated strategic plan which could be opened out more systematically. The first three priorities relate more to University-driven goals. The Faculty's 'strategic aims', above, are not elaborated with developed targets, indicators and action plans, but nevertheless are very fully aligned with its mission. The mission of the Faculty is to provide higher education opportunities for Polish minority in Lithuania, being located on borders of different nations and thus acting as a cultural bridge. The Faculty is very aware of the situation of Polish minority in Lithuania, namely its lower educational attainment and associated issues and problems. As a mission and a strategy, the Faculty is aiming to assist and improve this situation, and the goal is to educate the population of Polish minority in Lithuania at least to the same level as national average.
26. The Faculty-stimulated SWOT analysis yielded as main strengths: good cooperation with many organisations and associations in Lithuania (schools, companies, municipality, associations of researchers and such like); Erasmus mobility access; location on the capital of the country and good relations within the Faculty. The main weaknesses in the same SWOT analysis are seen as being: low research activity; only one post-graduate study programme; poor knowledge of foreign languages among staff and no international exchange of lecturers; inadequate facilities and currently no additional funding possibilities. The main opportunities were defined as future access to EU funds; mobility and exchange opportunities for staff; possibilities to increase quality of research; motivation of staff and cooperating with the private sector. The main threats were seen to be lack of patents; attracting research and academic staff; low quality of research work; low cooperation with Lithuanian institutions; demographic decline, and the non attractiveness of post-graduate studies.



27. During the visit the Review Panel learned about the challenges of the Faculty that come from the need to work in line with two legislative frameworks, namely those dictated by the Lithuanian and Polish authorities. There are different demands that the two countries have with regard to the study programme structure: for example 1st study cycle in Lithuania is 4 years long and in Poland 3 years. Moreover, there are different demands in terms of how many hours academic staff have to conduct: for example at the level of 2nd cycle, Polish legislation issues 15 ECTS for thesis and defence of it, while in the Lithuanian legislation it is 30 ECTS. The Faculty must consequently seriously re-structure/re-situate its curricula so that it satisfies demands of both legal systems, currently a huge challenge that the Faculty appears to be gradually accomplishing.
28. A second major problem arises from the lack of Faculty's own staff and its dependence on academic staff commuting from the University of Białystok. This causes not just obvious threats to the Faculty's own academic capacity, but also practical problems of coordinating timetables for practical reasons, for example coping with understandable lateness and last minute cancellation. The Faculty's important aim is thus to increase the number of its own staff based in Vilnius and its concomitant research competence.
29. The indicators for the strategy are not elaborated in the SER, but the leadership of the Faculty specified the following indicators during the visit of the Review Panel: richer study provision in terms of study programmes to accommodate interests of potential students; raising the number of graduates (to improve the education level of Polish minority in Lithuania to the level of national average); more research capacity and increasing the number of foreign universities for cooperation and academic exchange. The Review Panel suggests that the Faculty should elaborate its strategy and such indicators, define which actions are needed to achieve them and then follow (monitor) progress accordingly.
30. In the following numerical passages, there are Review Panel summaries, conclusions and evidence for judgement regarding each specific criteria.
31. Although the strategic plan is not detailed and elaborated, in what was identified as the Faculty strategy, the Review Panel finds it to be fully in line with the Faculty's mission, namely the University strategy and the principles of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area (see particularly paragraphs 22 - 24).
32. The strategy (2008-2015) prioritises the labour market in endeavouring to improve the levels of education for Polish people living in Lithuania. As both Lithuania and Poland are part of the European Higher Education Area, the Faculty wishes to increase its involvement in all aspects of European higher education activity (following study structures in line with Bologna reforms, ECTS, student and staff mobility and the like), whilst preserving the status of a foreign higher education unit operating in Lithuania. Such preservation needs to act in full conformity with requirements of legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania, in particular to ensure that the Faculty's students and future graduates have equal rights as students and future graduates of all Lithuanian higher education schools.
33. The panel finds that the elements of strategic plan that exist are connected and interoperable to a large degree, that is the goals are coherent and in line with the mission. The panel finds that what is lacking are: more elaborated performance indicators of the Faculty's goals (or implementation measures/action plans), projected outcomes, concrete plans as to how to achieve the goals and the timelines deemed necessary to achieve them. It appears that the

Faculty is relying on its small size and believes that knowledge about the current situation and aims is known by everybody at the Faculty so that everybody is clear about the strategic plan. Thus it seems that the Faculty is relying on constant and mostly informal direct communication that is predictably frequent due to the size of staff. The Faculty should however formalize its strategic communications, both for recording purposes and in preparation for its possible future growth.

34. As recorded in this report, the indicators of the Faculty's strategy are not written in a coherent document and there are no procedures for monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan, or the professional actions and behaviours of the Faculty's senior staff. During the interviews, the Review Panel were however able to trace and uncover the beginnings of such possible indicators, as illustrated in paragraph 29. The Review Panel here reaffirms its suggestion to the Faculty about developing performance indicators and a monitoring system for goals achievements. However, to some extent, the monitoring of Faculty's accomplishments is achieved through submitting annual activity reports to the Council of the Branch of the UB and through annual work planning and reporting. Annual plans are prepared by heads of Faculty's units and are discussed at the Faculty's Council meetings. This body also checks and evaluates the realisation of working plans for the preceding year.
35. The Review Panel found that all members of the Faculty (staff and students) as well as alumni and stakeholders know what mission is and main goal of the Faculty. They were all also aware of the main strategic priorities, which are new premises and increasing the number of study programmes on offer. Once again, the panel can reaffirm that even if not all elements of strategic management are developed, or are developing, the ones that are functioning are widely known by internal and external audiences.
36. The Review Panel can summarise the following strengths of the Faculty for the criteria 8.1:
  - Flexibility and fast reactions and decision making which is also connected to the small size of the Faculty,
  - Faculty enacting its mission, especially as the tuition fees are lower and thus actually giving chance to underprivileged minorities,
  - Good internal relations and cooperation,
  - All members of Faculty's academic community being aware of Faculty's mission and main aims.
37. The Review Panel can summarise the following weaknesses of the Faculty for the criteria 8.1:
  - The strategy is not well elaborated,
  - The strategy is lacking in targets or performance indicators,
  - The strategy does not project concrete action planning,
  - The strategy implementation is not systematically monitored.
38. The internal quality assurance system of the Faculty as such is not fully and systematically developed. It needs to be said that the Faculty fully follows the University of Bialystok regulations, although the part of the SER that deals with the internal QA system seems, by and large, simply a repetition of the UB Senate's resolution on internal QA.
39. Most important in this respect is Resolution No. 792 of the Senate of the University of Bialystok of 25 March 2009 on implementation of the teaching quality assurance and improvement system. According to this resolution the Faculty has to cover the monitoring

and / or assessment of: academic standards, teaching process, didactics / instruction, teaching conditions, student mobility, graduate careers, and receive feedback from graduates and employers. The University rules elaborate how these areas are monitored or assessed. In practice the Faculty conducts the following:

- Monitoring / auditing of classes of particular teachers,
  - Student surveys which are applied every semester, that is twice per academic year,
  - Student surveys of those who participated in mobility schemes (exchange programme),
  - Graduate questionnaires applied upon graduation,
  - Annual report on the operation of the Faculty in terms of teaching quality assurance and improvement system,
  - Staff assessment through teacher cards.
40. The Faculty also collects feedback from its alumni, employers, and other partners for evaluation and future progress.
41. The Faculty has established the ‘Faculty teaching quality assurance group’ which was formed in 2010 and consists of Dean, Vice Dean, 2 academic staff (one from Economic and one from Informatics) and the Head of Dean’s office. It holds regular meetings and performs evaluations of individual academic staff and relies on the information from student surveys as well as other information: research work, publications and observation of classes. In addition, the issues of teaching quality are discussed once per year at the Faculty Council and the report is sent to the University’s vice rector for teaching affairs.
42. The Faculty thus has several instruments in place that aim to collect information on its quality.
43. The Review Panel, however, finds that the internal quality system is not comprehensive. First, the internal quality assurance system is somewhat scattered. By this, it is meant that all of the existing instruments are not integrated, in the sense that the results of all of these instruments are not situated together in one document, to enable reflection upon them as a whole to be undertaken. Second, the results of these instruments are not made public or presented to students. For example, students or other members of academic community are not presented with statistics of what the scores are that come from student survey on average and how many teaching staff score above the average, how many below and similar such evidence. This is just one example of possible ways of how to present and systematise results. Third, the internal quality assurance system is not systematically evaluating other operations of the Faculty besides teaching; thus research activities, cooperation with external environment, societal impact, the physical plant, support staff and their structures are not systematically assessed. Fourth, there is no quality strategy or transparent quality targets. Fifth, and most vitally, students are not members of the quality committee and therefore not involved in the whole process of internal quality assurance. Finally, it is difficult to locate how the QA system at the Faculty is incorporated into that of UB as a whole and whether the QA system itself is being evaluated, duly amended and progressed. While accepting that the Faculty also has to work with the guidelines recommended by the Senate of the University of Bialystok, concerning engagement of students in the entire process of quality assurance, the Review Panel notes that advice in this report will be forwarded to the Senate Committee on Education.
44. Regarding internal quality assurance system the Review Panel suggest that the Faculty:
- Articulates the quality assurance strategy widely in relation to formative and summative processes across all functions of the Faculty,

- Demonstrably illustrates concrete goals and indicators within its quality strategy,
  - Develops a comprehensive internal quality assurance system that would integrate all of the instruments,
  - Includes students in the whole of quality system (when developing instruments, strategy, analysing results of instruments, writing SER and other pertinent matters).
45. Decision making bodies of the Faculty are the following: the Dean, the Council and Committees. The committees of the faculties are the following: for quality assurance of education (meets once every 2 or 3 months); for scientific stipend (meets once per year); for admission (meets three times per year); for stipends allocated under Erasmus programme (meets twice per year); for stipends (meets three times per year); for staff evaluation (meets twice per year). In addition there is the Student Council. The Dean and Vice Dean are members of all committees, and membership in others depends on the nature and work of the committee. Students are members of committees that deal with different stipends and not in others.
46. The organisational structure of the faculty besides the Dean's office mainly consists of different working posts and assignments due to the small size of the Faculty.
47. The Review Panel believes that the organisational structure is appropriate for implementing the needs of studies, research and Faculty's activities in general. The exception is that students are not members of committees and the Review Panel recommends the Faculty to include students in all of them. Currently, regulations do not permit student involvement in all departmental committees; however, in cases where this is a barrier, it is recommended that regulations be reviewed accordingly, or a recommendation made to review, towards the inclusion of students.
48. The strength of Faculty's organisation is its size and it seems also that there are friendly relations between staff themselves and towards students. Thus, the staff are accessible to students and Faculty decision making is fast and flexible. The Faculty also invites external stakeholders on many occasions: the Faculty seeks feedback from employers and partner institutions or opinions about its work; it invites external actors to visit the Faculty for different purposes, *inter-alia*, to provide speeches, lectures and act as committee members for students' theses.
49. Responsibilities among staff and decision making bodies seem to be well distributed, and they are efficient and flexible towards different situations. Human resources seem to be managed well. Finances are tightly controlled, although not all of the concomitant detail is transparent, for example in relation to annual surplus. The panel noticed, however, that the decision making is studiously centralised. The Dean is a member and head of all decision making bodies. In order to increase transparency and variety of decision making, the panel suggests the Dean in his understandable and pre-eminent concern for safekeeping, to delegate competence among staff and committees, and thus open out some of his professional security more widely.
50. Scale sometimes has also negative effect, that is if one person is responsible for a certain field and he or she cannot come to work, then it is sometimes hard to perform that task for other staff who have completely different working areas. In this and in other areas of Faculty life, the Dean should consider drafting a very detailed risk strategy. The Review Panel considers this to be particularly important, especially in areas of finance and new building prospects.

51. The Faculty has in place some ethical procedures, i.e. student code of ethics and appropriate structures to enact. The University of Białystok also has disciplinary commission of academic teachers, but as yet there have been no cases of dispute to consider at the Faculty.
52. The Faculty is facing problems with space and infrastructure. It does not have sufficient space and the teaching is conducted at several rented locations around the city. The Faculty is in the process of acquiring new premises, but it is not clear when this will be possible. The Review Panel suggest to the Faculty to think if there are any possible ways how to ease the situation, for example in providing some room for students' meetings and dining areas. The physical infrastructure of the main premises is reaching the end of its helpfulness the Review Panel observed; however the Dean is to be commended for managing the enterprise of the Faculty adroitly within increasingly difficult circumstances for all staff and students. The Review Panel recommends that high priority is given to relocation as soon as is possible. Besides solving many physical problems, adequate accommodation will also bring forward the realisation of new horizons.
53. Regarding infrastructure the panel also suggest to the Faculty that it considers partnering with other institutions in the city, e.g. University of Vilnius or private companies, in particular to provide labs and infrastructure opportunities for students (e.g. for students of informatics to use labs and computers of other institutions to practice working with IT tools and programmes).
54. Regarding finances, in the academic year 2013/2014 the Faculty received altogether 2.149,7 thousand Lt. The amount of spending is the same. Approximately 70% of spending goes to the costs of salaries and subsequent taxes and social contributions. The finances are used for very necessary purposes; the Review Panel observed that they are rational and economic.
55. Prime funding incorporates a grant by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Poland. There are also funds provided by the University of Białystok and the Faculty itself. The evaluation period has witnessed the purchase of library and laboratory equipment. With the aid of the University of Białystok funds, purchases have included furniture with equipment (60 thousand zlotys), hardware and software (262 thousand zlotys) for laboratories and the Faculty's library, books, also subscription of publications 91 thousand zlotys). Tuition fees are LTL 1,500 a year and sums from students' contributions for studies are used for the needs of Faculty's material resources, including payment of utility fees for the leased premises located on Kalvarijų str. 135, Aguonų str. 22, Naugarduko str. 76, and Kauno str. 15A. That the Review Panel could not identify knowledge of new building finances and funding sources (besides those that will become available through prospective selling transactions: see paragraph 70) was somewhat perplexing. A vacuous response from senior staff concluded that this matter remained in the hands of the University.
56. The Faculty implemented quality regulations of the University of Białystok and has several quality instruments in place (see paragraphs 39-40). The results of these instruments are to some extent discussed at the group for teaching quality of the Faculty (see paragraph 41) and once per year at the Faculty Council. In addition the report is once per year sent to the Vice Rector of the University of Białystok.
57. The Review Panel identified some quality loops that exist are often working, in the sense that problems are detected, tackled and solved. Two examples are: when two teachers were negatively evaluated consistently for two years, the Faculty terminated their working contract. Students were mature and helpfully strategic when reporting on this matter. When

students suggested restructuring some work tasks and workload, the Faculty reshuffled work to meet students' suggestions.

58. Learning outcomes of study programmes and qualifications are in line with Lithuanian and Polish legislation and national as well as European qualification frameworks. The evaluation of study programmes is performed thorough programme accreditation, student and graduate surveys, consultation with employers and staff evaluations. Staff are evaluated accordingly. The Review Panel also suggests to the Faculty to evaluate whether assigned learning outcomes are in fact rightly allocated, to look at the division of ECTS in terms of their realistic allocation.
59. Students receive a very high-level of support: class sizes are small; there is a virtual learning environment (Blackboard); staff have working hours specifically for students and are responsive; communication is prompt and there are good staff/student relations.
60. Many elements of this criteria are in place; however, there is room for improvement regarding how to better integrate all the elements. In addition, to reinforce good practice, quality targets and monitoring of their implementation would importantly benefit the Faculty's quality assurance system. Such matters are considered to be highly important if the quality mechanisms are to benefit from a transparent, self-regulating and prospective system, capable of becoming a Faculty-wide culture. In reality this means achieving a qualitative realization of planned activities (across all departments both academic and non-academic) without relying exclusively on periodic evaluation.
61. The Review Panel finds that the Faculty is well organised to undertake teaching and research and to cooperate with society. It also has the Career and Marketing Centre that was established in 2009 which is responsible for coordinating student internships, cooperation with companies and other organisations, marketing performance, advertising, communication with the public and the organisation of festivals and events. Additionally, the Dean's office was restructured in 2011 and the Head of Dean's office is coordinating many activities.
62. Major decisions are taken by the University's Senate. The Faculty Council has internal powers. The Dean is the overall Head, whose term of office is four years. All matters connected with recruitment and exchange are handled by the Dean and subsequently approved by the Rector. The Vice Dean acts in the absence of the Dean. The Dean may answer on the acquisition of material resources to a value not exceeding EUR 30,000.
63. The Dean and Vice Dean submit periodic reports to the Faculty Council on matters pertaining to material and financial resources, the process of optimisation and quality assurance measures and evaluative mechanisms.
64. As mentioned earlier, the decision making is rather centralised and the Dean is a pivotal figure in all decision making; however, the Review Panel discovered the Faculty is very flexible in its decision making, can act fast and in efficient way. Resources are very carefully and adroitly managed.
65. The Faculty has established cooperation with many external partners (schools, associations, companies and the like). It also uses these partners for open lectures, events, internships, consultations about Faculty's activities and study programmes, and is including them in defence committees for students' theses.

66. The Faculty currently employs 20 teachers (4 of whom are part time) and 11 administrative staff (of whom 1 is part time). In addition there are currently 25 teachers from other faculties of the University of Białystok that are contributing to the teaching process at the Faculty due to lack of its own staff. The Faculty is working on increasing numbers of its own employees which is in line with its strategy. The Faculty recognises that research quality and competence needs to be increased.
67. The decision making bodies of the Faculty are elaborated in paragraph 45. The main issues are presented and discussed at the Council meetings. However, as this report recommends, the Faculty could decentralise decision making and improve its transparency.
68. The Faculty has several employee motivation elements in place. Academic staff receive bonuses that are consisting of regular and variable parts. The regular part is distributed permanently and the variable is distributed per year with a possibility for it to become permanent. The main factors taken into consideration are results of student surveys and attestation results, research works and organisational activity. Administrative staff receive occasional bonuses, based on the quality of their work. In addition, staff can participate in seminars and training, and receive financial support for travel supporting their academic work.
69. The decision making process has been already elaborated above. Here the panel would like to point to the risk analysis which is not promoted and achieved in a systematic way. The Review Panel realises that the Faculty needs to adhere to the University of Białystok financial planning and reporting regulations and that the final decision making body is the University's Senate. In addition, change in study programmes and similar activities are lengthy due to the need of following two frameworks of legislations. However, the Faculty could better develop processes in terms of its own needs, set against a very full assessment of risk.
70. The Review Panel re-asserts that the Faculty is facing serious problems with space. Thus one of the strategic goals of the Faculty is purchase / construction of own premises. The branch received a permit from the Senate of the University of Białystok to sell the immovable property located in Vilnius on Aguonų str. 22 in order to purchase a new building with a land plot. Currently the Faculty is in the process of collecting offers for these premises and plans to proceed with finding new and appropriate premises following selling.
71. Currently, the situation is that the Faculty is renting premises in three other locations around the city. It is facing serious lack of space and the Review Panel very fully supports the Faculty's quest for new premises in the belief that the current provision has reached critical point.
72. The Faculty has good learning resources in the sense of virtual learning environment (Blackboard), access to main databases and electronic journals, computer software and the like.
73. The University has ethics procedures in place (see paragraph 51). The University of Białystok has adopted and applies a Student Code of Ethics and a PhD Student Code of Ethics. In addition there are three committees formed at the level of the University: Disciplinary commission of academic teachers, Disciplinary Appeal Commission of students and PhD students, and Disciplinary Commission of Students and PhD Students. The Faculty also uses software programmes for plagiarism detection.

74. The Review Panel can summarise the following strengths of the Faculty for the criteria 8.2:
- Good relations among staff, and staff and students within the Faculty,
  - Very good and dynamic relationship of the Faculty with external stakeholders and alumni,
  - Effective and flexible decision making within the Faculty,
  - Rational and economic financial management,
  - A variety activities that are organised by the Faculty (open lectures and speeches by external guests, events, and so on),
  - Possibility of using Faculty's premises by stakeholders when available which is also a sign of good cooperation,
  - Small infrastructure is appreciated, i.e. small size of institution is positive in the sense of accessibility of staff,
  - Effective student feedback demonstrating evidence of loop closure (for example 2 staff members were released due to consistent negative evaluation of students and other negative evaluation with no sign of improvement over 2 year period; or opening times of the library were changed based on student suggestion),
  - Good relationships of students with teachers,
  - Lower fees which actually gives better chance and accessibility to underprivileged minorities and implementing Faculty's mission,
  - The Faculty took efforts to cooperate with other organisations (for example the use of premises of other institutions like the gym of one of the gymnasiums).
75. The Review Panel can summarise the following weaknesses of the Faculty for the criteria 8.2:
- Lack of coherent internal quality assurance system with all the elements as described above,
  - Students are not included in all committees and also in analysis of internal quality and preparation of SER,
  - Dependence on commuting academic staff from the University of Bialystok,
  - Centralised decision making and sometimes lack of transparency in management,
  - The strategy is not well elaborated, is lacking in targets or performance indicators, its implementation is not monitored and therefore the strategic loop is not used for Faculty's decision making.
76. ***Judgement on the area: Despite some particular reservations, notably, but not exclusively, in relation to areas pertaining to quality assurance, Strategic Management is given a positive evaluation.***



#### IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

77. The Faculty offers three degree programmes, in: information technology (first-cycle studies) and in economics (both first and second cycle). These qualifications are consistent with the Faculty's mission and strategy as well as the legal regulations concerning higher education in Poland and Lithuania, and both national qualification frameworks. All programmes are accredited by relevant authorities in Lithuania and Poland.
78. The fields of economics and informatics were chosen based on the analysis of research undertaken among school students of 40 schools with Polish language in Lithuania that was completed in 2006 by the Association of Polish Scholars in Lithuania with the help of Lithuanian Labour and Social Research Institute. This large research (1.144 11<sup>th</sup> form and 976 12<sup>th</sup> form schoolchildren were surveyed) found that 33% of respondents from 11th form schoolchildren declared economics was one of the three fields they would wish to study and 72% out of those indicated they would like to study in the Polish language. The situation was similar when graduates (12th form schoolchildren) answered this question: 35% respondents from 11th form schoolchildren declared informatics was among the three fields they would like to study and 71% of those indicated they would wish to study in the Polish language. The situation was similar when graduates (12th form schoolchildren) answered this question. Lithuanian labour market analysis also yields evidence declaring that there is a need for informatics specialists in future.
79. Masters in Economics was launched based on the desires of Faculty's bachelor students who wished to continue their studies at the Faculty.
80. The Review Panel found that the choice of study offer was based on identified student interest. The Faculty also plans to introduce new study programmes (see paragraph 15) based on the same rationale, that is, student interest. The Faculty consults employers about the content of study programmes and conducts graduate surveys to collect feedback and opinion on content and competences. The Review Panel, however, suggests that the Faculty continues to increase its efforts to detect future labour market and societal needs in its curricular planning for the future.
81. The Faculty is part of the European Higher Education Area by definition, both Poland and Lithuania are member counties; and the University of Bialystok has implemented the Bologna action lines. ECTS is implemented, learning outcomes are defined and linked to the national qualification framework; credits attained at other universities are fully transferable; the diploma supplement is issued; the quality of teaching is assessed, as discussed above; the Faculty undergoes external evaluation by Polish and Lithuanian agencies; emphasis is put on student employability and there is the aim of increasing internationalisation. The key EHEA weakness of the Faculty is the relatively small number of partnerships with foreign universities, and consequent low student and staff mobility.
82. The Faculty is working towards increasing and intensifying internationalisation and has succeeded to be included in the Erasmus mobility programme and MOST which is a student exchange with Polish universities. The Faculty also has a signed agreement with Comenius University in Bratislava. Notwithstanding these developing strands, the student mobility has so far been low, but as developments exist: 9 students have been mobile in international exchange (7 have studied in Bratislava and 2 have undertaken internships in London) and 1 has attended exchange through MOST programme. There have been no incoming students

on mobility programmes yet, and the biggest barrier is said to be the language matters. It is obviously and evidently difficult to attract foreign students to study in the Polish language

83. The Faculty offers foreign language support and preparation for students before their exchange. It also takes care of recognition of study completed elsewhere by carefully aligning which courses will be taken by the student while on a mobility programme.
84. Teaching staff of the Faculty may be mobile through the Erasmus+ programme. There have been no such exchanges yet, although and the Faculty is working towards encouraging its staff to travel. Two agreements have been signed– with the University of Gdańsk and Comenius University in Bratislava. An agreement is also prepared with the University of Lodz. The goal of these agreements is to strengthen international cooperation in the field of research in particular and develop exchanges.
85. From evidence provided during interviews, the Review Panel believes that the Faculty’s deliberate policy move in employing established and well-networked scholars will assist towards prove to help in further internationalisation efforts.
86. The teaching process within the Faculty is well supported. Sufficient teaching staff are guaranteed, who are augmented with the help of 25 commuting staff from the University of Bialystok and 3 people working on agreements), class sizes are favourable with good student/teacher ratio; in supplement there is virtual student support (Blackboard) and resource infrastructure (virtual library with access to journals and databases) and the Review Panel found that teachers are accessible and responsive. There is also evidence of innovation in learning (for example teaching of entrepreneurship and the introduction of practice profile teaching, individualised programmes and student education plans, the appointment of group supervisors and one-to-one consultations with teachers). Academic support is provided for the students during consultations with teachers and optional courses of some subjects.
87. The Faculty is able to guarantee a certain number of places for internships of students. However, many students have to find companies for internship through their own initiative. The Review Panel suggests that the Faculty increases its efforts to support students in researching and securing internship opportunities.
88. The current premises of the Faculty are problematic (as previously mentioned in paragraph 52) in that there is a palpable lack of basic facilitative space. The corollaries of this mean that there are problems concerning study spots, library room, leisure activities, canteen, personal services and refreshment facilities. The building of the House of Polish Culture located on Naugarduko str. 76, where halls are rented for exercise, is fully adapted to disabled students; however, teaching classes mostly take place in the rented premises on Kalvarijų str. 143 that are not adapted for disabled students. Therefore, students with locomotion have no possibility to study at the Faculty.
89. The Faculty monitors employment and careers of its graduates. The Faculty conducts two surveys that are relevant to report here: i. the survey of students upon graduation for the overall assessment of studies, ii. graduate surveys and career monitoring. Results of both surveys are analysed discussed. Additionally, the Faculty is in touch with its alumni. They are invited to Faculty events and are consulted for quality of studies.
90. In the Faculty’s survey of 156 of its graduates in the field of economics and among 150 respondents, it found that 9 work abroad, 10 continue education (II cycle), 11 were job

seekers, or change a job, 5 were not available for work because of personal reasons (are on maternity leave), 2 remained at the university for engaging in didactic work, 2 did not respond the questionnaire on employability, and 117 found positions in Lithuania. Thus, the Faculty in Vilnius demonstrates a commanding and impressive employment record for its graduates. There are no Faculty graduates registered as unemployed at the job centre. Additionally, the Review Panel found that employers evaluate and rate the competences of students and graduates very highly, which is a considerable strength for the Faculty.

91. The Faculty has been discerningly active in life-long learning provision with reasonable success. Among the initiatives, the Review Panel found that in 2010, while cooperating with Vilnius city municipality, free courses on the basics of Informatics were organized for senior citizens attended by 20 individuals. In 2013, two computer literacy courses were prepared for everyone willing to attend which were cancelled due to a small number of interested individuals. In 2013, it was planned to open informal post-diploma courses; however, this was not achieved due to the lack of interest by the public. The Faculty view that the concept of life-long learning has been slow to gather pace in Lithuania, was met with a positive response by the Review Panel, in that there is belief that there could be an opportunity to persevere and pioneer this purposeful field of study in Vilnius. The Faculty could improve its focus on the Polish minority, for example those with the lowest socio economic status through its provision of lifelong learning courses, in particular the poorer and less educated communities of the Polish minority who are not fully integrated into formal education.
92. The Faculty has signed agreements of cooperation with 5 associations or foundations, 4 higher education institutions in Poland and 1 in the Slovak Republic, 4 secondary schools. In addition it cooperates with 40 schools with Polish teaching language in Lithuania. Korona is one of the associations with which the Faculty cooperates, which is the Polish business forum in Lithuania. This cooperation is particularly relevant as it connects many different companies. The organisation is asked to give opinion about study programmes and also provides speakers for open lectures at the Faculty. There is then the opportunity for students to undertake internships, and more generally, connect and network with businesses.
93. The Review Panel can summarise the following strengths of the Faculty for criteria 9.1. and 9.2.:
- Many open lectures and talks by external partners,
  - Small infrastructure is appreciated - small size of institution, there is accessibility of staff (administration, academic, leadership),
  - Good relationships between students and teachers,
  - Very strong employment record of graduates,
  - External stakeholders, students, alumni and statistical data confirm that quality of graduates and their competences are high,
  - There is evidence of good relations with society and service to community,
  - Energy and attitude of stakeholders towards the Faculty is high; they are keen to increase and further develop cooperation with the Faculty,
  - The Faculty has good connections with environment providing for dynamic partnerships,
  - Very effective contemporary innovations in teaching,
  - External individuals and stakeholders involved in commissions for defence of student theses,
  - Strong learning support for students (such as the Blackboard),
  - Good didactic and professional support for teachers (for example bonuses in remuneration, buying books),
  - Efforts to cooperate with other organisations (for example using premises of other institutions like the gym of gymnasium),

- Employing experienced senior academic staff with established connections which will have positive impact on research capacity building and internationalisation,
  - Motivation and preparedness for positive change of Faculty community,
  - Allowing stakeholders to use Faculty's premises when available,
  - External stakeholders showing interest in further increasing the level of cooperation with the Faculty.
94. The Review Panel can summarise the following weaknesses of the Faculty for the criteria 9.1 and 9.2.:
- Low level of internationalisation and lack of strategy in how to increase it,
  - Insufficient help in ensuring an adequate number of internship places for students,
  - Commuting professors,
  - Serious issues concerning lack of space and services with regards to premises and building.
95. ***Judgement on the area: Academic Studies and Life-Long Learning is given positive evaluation.***

## V. RESEARCH AND ART

96. The Faculty realistically assesses its current position concerning research, as presented in its SWOT analysis. Closer inspection indeed suggests that the much of the scientific output is published in the Polish language by local, or more frequently university publishers. The situation looks stronger for publishing in informatics. Very few researchers publish in international journals and in that case in journals with low or no impact factor. In the cases of teachers linked to the economics and other social sciences, there are practically no citations in the Web of Science.
97. Parts of strategic aims of the Faculty are connected with research, towards increasing research capacity of academic staff, improve scientific cooperation with other universities and research institutes, and improve access to research infrastructure. Thus far, the Faculty has indeed showed improvements in its research capacity which is identified by the fact that the Faculty was ranked in the B category of research centre classification by Polish ministry. Previously it was awarded by lower category C. Moreover, employees are scientifically active in their respective fields as seen by publications. The majority of publications are connected to courses offered by the Faculty.
98. The Faculty organizes scientific conferences including in cooperation with other institutions. Furthermore, staff are attending conferences elsewhere (in Poland, Lithuania and abroad). The Faculty is also showing motivation to further increase knowledge exchange, for example it is planning to introduce seminars in the field of informatics with invited Polish and Lithuanian academics. In line with its capabilities, the Faculty is financially supporting staff to attend scientific events to present their work and to buy needed literature and other needed resources supporting research.
99. The Faculty is active in research relevant to its mission among other research activities. Thus some of research topics are related to the Polish minority in Lithuania, Lithuanian and Polish economic and political reforms including their integration in the European Union and social reforms. In addition, staff of the Faculty jointly published with staff from other universities, for example from the Faculty of Economics of the University of Gdańsk, and Warsaw Higher School of Economics.
100. The Faculty realises the fact that it is classified as a foreign university branch – thus does not qualify for Lithuanian government subsidies – as being one of the barriers to accelerating its research capacity. Nevertheless, the Faculty is increasingly active in endeavouring to exploit funding applications. Last year an application was submitted to Lithuanian Sciences Council (“Object detection and segmentation in medical images”). In his last annual report, the Dean states that two researchers obtained a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Lithuania Republic. Moreover, the Review Panel learned at the site visit that a substantial research application is predicted to be submitted to the Polish Research Council, which will connect the fields of economics and informatics and will include other universities from Poland. The Review Panel sees such attempts as very important, particularly because they bring together the two fields of the Faculty and show potential of innovations as well as helping to predict broader scientific cooperation across universities.

101. The Review Panel found that there are elements of monitoring staff research output that assist the evaluations of staff. The Dean has an important role also, in acting as the main point of motivation. For example, it is he who interviews each employee about performance and more generally monitors their work. As previously mentioned (see paragraphs 94 and 99) there is also a reward scheme for staff. On the other hand, however, the Faculty does not have a concrete research strategy of its own with specific aims and indicators. Individual staff conduct research based on their fields of specialisation and in line with academic freedom. The Review Panel believes that the research capacity of the Faculty would improve faster with delegation of research coordination from the Dean to another person or committee. This would contribute to stronger focus on research activities, the better coordination and consolidation of research possibilities, the increase support for research funding and in the preparation of research aims, indicators and goals. The Review Panel suggests that the Faculty introduces a position such as Vice Dean for research or perhaps Coordinator of Research.
102. The Faculty relies on the University of Bialystok's strategy regarding research and consequently the Faculty's major objectives are strengthening of importance of research and its position in the international research community. The orientation of the University resides within the harmonious development of diverse research disciplines and aims to support most efficient research groups as well as those groups that will focus on innovative scientific research and move towards interdisciplinary research.
103. The University of Bialystok's and consequently the Faculty's strategic aim defines three goals:
- Main organisational units to achieve the status of highest research categories as determined by the Polish research authorities,
  - Improve the level of research in comparison to other Polish research institutions,
  - Enhance research efficiency.
104. Within the second bullet point from the previous paragraph special attention is to be given to:
- Increasing efforts to obtain international research projects,
  - Enhancing mobility of academic staff,
  - Especially supporting research that is of highest quality within the University,
  - Foster a range of research topics meeting the national and European priorities.
105. Last, but not least, the link between research and teaching process is emphasised in the University strategy which the Faculty endeavours to follow.
106. The Review Panel can summarise the following strengths of the Faculty for the criteria 10.1. and 10.2.:
- Good synergy of predicted research programmes/projects (predicted application to connect economics and informatics),
  - Employing experienced senior academic staff with established connections which will have positive impact on research capacity building,

- Research support for academic staff (access to databases and journals, financial support for attending conferences, buying literature etc),
  - Good cooperation with stakeholders and environment.
107. The Review Panel can summarise the following weaknesses of the Faculty for the criteria 10.1 and 10.2:
- Acceleration in Research performance and overall coordination,
  - Mobility of academic staff,
  - Knowledge of foreign languages by academic staff,
  - Lack of concrete strategic goals, action plans and performance indicators.
108. ***Judgement on the area: Research and Art is given positive evaluation.***

## VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

109. The Faculty primarily focuses on providing higher education to the Polish national minorities in Lithuania. It has several positive effects on the region, for example providing higher education, educating highly employable graduates, organising events for different audiences, cooperation with businesses and other partners. It is in constant communication with different organisations of the social community. Additionally, the Faculty teachers delivered a report to the embassy of Poland Republic in Vilnius regarding the correlation between the level of residents' education and the GDP of the region in 2013. The representatives of municipalities, business persons and officials attended the meeting.
110. The Faculty organises several projects that connect it with society. The Faculty is organising an international conference that results in a publication summing up the conference's key points. In addition, the Faculty is organising a several-day student festival *Juwenalia* during which many events and concerts take place. This event is open to public. During *The Battle of Minds* project, non-traditional and engaging lectures are held in order to draw students' and high school students' attention. *The Music Unites People* project is meant to expose and introduce the distinctiveness of various European cultures to students. The project *Job experience for young people* enabled 12 students to undertake internship of three months in Eastern Polish companies in 2014.
111. Staff are also participating in social activities and involved in volunteering. The Faculty's academic and administrative staff actively participate in public activities at the Forum of parents from Polish schools in Lithuanian, in Parents' Committees at secondary schools, and in the electoral commission of Vilnius city municipality. Faculty teachers are also members of the Association of Polish Scholars in Lithuania (SNPL) which connects scholars from public organizations and aims to fulfil common interests and goals, develop research and art, and raise the level of youth education. The Faculty could improve further by informing society about its impact and achievements.
112. The Faculty cooperates with the municipalities of Vilnius city and Vilnius district. Twice a year, students voluntarily take care of cemeteries. The local community may use services provided by the Faculty's library. The Faculty has organised a course on the basics of informatics for seniors. The Faculty is open to anybody willing to participate in conferences, open lectures, and cultural events.
113. The Faculty is also trying to reach out to some less privileged parts of society. In the 2014/2015 academic year it enrolled a student who is in prison who wished to study economics. The Faculty communicates with this student through the internet and the detention officer transports necessary literature and documents between the Faculty and the student.
114. The Review Panel can summarise the following strengths of the Faculty for the criterion 11.:
- Many open lectures by external partners and events at the Faculty,
  - Evidence of good and dynamic relations with society and service to community,
  - Positive attitude of stakeholders and interest in further cooperation with the Faculty,



- Lower fees than other higher education institutions in Vilnius resulting in better access for students.
115. The Review Panel can summarise the following weaknesses of the Faculty for the criteria 8.1:
- Not offering sufficient opportunities for student internships.
116. ***Judgement on the area: Impact on Regional and National Development is given positive evaluation.***

## VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Strategic management**

#### **Positive features**

- Flexibility and fast reactions in decision making which is also connected to the small size of the Faculty;
- Faculty is enacting its mission, especially as the tuition fees are lower and thus actually giving chance to underprivileged minorities;
- Good relations among staff, and staff and students within the Faculty;
- All members of Faculty's academic community are aware of Faculty's mission and main aims;
- Very good and dynamic relationship of the Faculty with external stakeholders and alumni;
- Rational and economic financial management;
- A lot of different activities that are organised by the Faculty (open lectures and speeches by external guests, events);
- Possibility of using Faculty's premises by stakeholders when available which is also a sign of good cooperation;
- Small infrastructure is appreciated, i.e. small size of institution is positive in the sense of accessibility of staff;
- Effective student feedback demonstrating loop closure (for example 2 staff members were dismissed due to consistent negative evaluation of students and other negative evaluation with no sign of improvement over 2 year period);
- The Faculty's efforts to cooperate with other organisations (for example the use of premises of other institutions like the gym of one of the gymnasiums).

#### **Recommendations**

- Develop a coherent and elaborated strategy comprehensive strategy, with concrete goals, performance indicators and implementation monitoring in order to systematically assess its progress or lack of it;
- Develop risk assessment strategy for finances and new infrastructure;
- Articulate an integrated quality assurance strategy widely in relation to formative and summative processes across all functions of the Faculty;
- Develop a comprehensive internal quality assurance system that would integrate all of the existing quality assurance instruments;
- The quality strategy to have concrete goals and indicators;
- Include students in the whole of quality system (when developing instruments, strategy, analysing results of instruments and writing the SER );
- Articulate the internationalisation strategy in far more detail;
- When thinking about which study programmes to offer not to look solely at the student interest (surveying potential students what they would be interested to study), but also the needs of the environment (labour market projections and societal challenges) and Faculty's capacities. In other words, not to look just at future input (students), but also needs of the output (labour market and needs of society) and context (capacity of the Faculty);
- Re-energise efforts towards securing new premises;
- Try to find any interim measures to alleviate student services problems until the new premises are acquired (facilities, infrastructure, common room and so on);
- Better develop a reflexive analysis and SER for various audiences in future;

- Dean to consider delegating managerial competence among staff and committees;
- Increase transparency of decision making and finance;
- Develop a strong and thorough risk strategy/policy;
- Ensure that there is full cooperation with Lithuanian quality requirements (SKVC) and engage more fully with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*;
- Engage in an informal study of comparative systems in Polish, Lithuanian and European HE universities more generally.

## **Academic studies and life-long learning**

### **Positive features**

- Very strong employment record of graduates;
- External stakeholders, students, alumni and statistical data confirm that quality of graduates and their competences are high;
- Effective contemporary innovations in teaching;
- External individuals and stakeholders involved in commissions for defence of student theses;
- Strong learning support for students (such as the Blackboard);
- Small infrastructure is appreciated - small size of institution, there is accessibility of staff (administration, academic, leadership);
- Good relationships of students with teachers;
- There is evidence of good relations with society and service to community;
- Many open lectures and talks by external partners;
- Energy and attitude of stakeholders towards the Faculty is high, they are keen to increase and further develop cooperation with the Faculty;
- Good didactic and professional support for teachers (for example bonuses in remuneration, buying books);
- Efforts to cooperate with other organisations (for example using premises of other institutions like the gym of gymnasium).

### **Recommendations**

- Increase efforts to anticipate future labour market and societal needs when deciding about which study programmes to offer in future;
- Increase efforts to find internship opportunities for all students;
- Find measures to increase internationalisation of the Faculty;
- Employ enough of own academic staff to avoid as much as possible dependence on commuting staff from the University of Białystok;
- Improve learning, support, and staffing in the library.

## **Research and/or art activities**

### **Positive features**

- Good basic research support for academic staff (access to databases and journals, financial support for attending conferences, buying literature etc);
- Employing experienced senior academic staff with established connections which will have positive impact on research capacity building;
- Good synergy of predicted research programmes/projects (predicted application to connect economics and informatics and including other universities);
- Good cooperation with stakeholders and environment.

## **Recommendations**

- Create strategy for research and goals;
- Dean to delegate research coordination to another individual or committee;
- Organise English language training for staff to allow better research cooperation and staff mobility; and when employing new staff to pay particular attention to the mastery of English or other foreign languages;
- University of Bialystok to better help in increasing research capacity of the Faculty (e.g. including academic staff from the Faculty in research projects of other faculties of the university or joint publications).

## **Impact on regional and national development**

### **Positive features**

- Many partners and organisations with which the Faculty cooperates;
- Evidence of good and dynamic relations with society and service to community;
- Positive attitude of stakeholders and interest in further cooperation with the Faculty;
- Many open lectures by external partners and events at the Faculty open to public;
- Lower fees than other higher education institutions in Vilnius resulting in better access for students.

### **Recommendations**

- Develop more proactivity towards finding sufficient internships places for all students;
- Further develop offer of lifelong learning opportunities serving needs for graduates and the needs of public at large;
- Track socio economic status of its potential students and enrolled students; develop projects that would attract the most underprivileged of them; develop ways to specially support them and similar actions to make even better impact on the most needy and underprivileged part of the Polish minority.

## VIII. JUDGEMENT

University of Bialystok branch Faculty of Economics-Informatics is given positive evaluation.

Grupės vadovas: Team leader:	Prof. dr. Terence Clifford-Amos
Grupės nariai: Team members:	Prof. dr. Mieczyslaw Socha
	Mr. Bastian Baumann
	Dr. Juras Eidukas
	Mr. Rytis Koncevičius
Vertinimo sekretorius: Review secretary:	Ms. Janja Komljenovič

## ANNEX 1. BASTIAN BAUMANN'S DISSENTING OPINION

### SKVC External Evaluation Dissenting Opinion

The review panel's judgement in area 1 – Strategic Management – is positive, even though major shortcomings have been identified. According to panel member Bastian Baumann, the Faculty does not fulfil requirements to be evaluated positively against this standard.

In the panel review report, it is correctly stated that there are several shortcomings in relation to strategic management. There is no system of strategic management in place that conforms to the basic features one would expect from a higher education institution.

In particular, the lack of a specific strategic plan for the faculty does not allow the faculty to be managed in a strategic manner. The situation of the Faculty is very specific and different to the main campus. Therefore, the Faculty should have a strategic plan of its own.

Furthermore, the lack of indicators, benchmarks or similar features hinders a focused development of the faculty. In addition, there is no system in place for judging the progress made in terms of monitoring.

With regard to quality assurance, the review report refers to some basic features of internal quality assurance. Indeed, some elements are in place, but there is no system of internal quality assurance. Basic requirements stemming from the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) are not existing. In particular, there is no policy and no strategy for quality assurance.

Already the SAR was indicative of a lack of analytical activity within the faculty. The SAR was in major parts, but especially in relation to the quality assurance system solely descriptive, basically just repeating the text of a resolution passed by the University. The SAR did not provide information about lessons learned and changes undertaken as a result of quality assurance. This is an indication of a lack of quality culture or possibly an unawareness of what constitutes a functioning quality assurance system within the university.

As the report points out, students are excluded from the quality assurance activities, apart from providing feedback through questionnaires.

The elements that are in place regarding internal quality assurance are only in the area of teaching. There is no quality assurance of research activities or services to the community or the administration and management of the Faculty.

The Faculty has not undertaken an assessment of the quality assurance activities.

### Conclusion

It would be important for the Faculty to receive support in improving its strategic management so that it will install a system that is in line with SKVC requirements and general good practices in the area of strategic management in HEIs.

The Faculty needs to develop a robust internal quality assurance system, including all features expected from such a system in line with the ESG. Simply relying on questionnaires and annual reports does not constitute an effective quality assurance system.

Currently, the Faculty does not meet the minimum requirements in the area of strategic management, both due to lacks in strategic management and especially in the area of quality assurance. It appears that these shortcomings are not due to a lack of willingness but due to a lack of information and expertise.

## ANNEX 2. UNIVERSITY OF BIALYSTOK BRANCH FACULTY OF ECONOMICS-INFORMATICS RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT



### BALSTOGĖS UNIVERSITETAS FILIALAS VILNIUJE EKONOMIKOS-INFORMATIKOS FAKULTETAS

Užsienio juridinio asmens ir kitos organizacijos filialas.

Duomenys Juridinių asmenų registre: kodas – 300975749. Adresas – Naugarduko g. 76, LT-03202

Fakulteto adresas – Kalvarijų g. 135, LT-08221 Vilnius, Tel. (8~5) 2766739. Faks. (8~5) 2766739.

<http://www.uwb.edu.pl>. El. p. [bufilialas@gmail.com](mailto:bufilialas@gmail.com)

A.s. LT59 7044 0600 0611 0812. SEB “Vilniaus Bankas”. Banko kodas 70440.

Bialystok, 2015.02.25

**Centre for Quality Assessment  
in Higher Education  
A. Gostauto g. 12  
LT-01108 Vilnius  
Lithuania**

#### REPLY OF THE BRANCH OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BIALYSTOK THE FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND INFORMATICS IN VILNIUS TO THE FINDINGS OF THE ASSESSMENT

We would like to thank the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter referred to as SKVC) for the extension of the deadline for the submission of the reply to the report from the visit of experts “Conclusions of the assessment of the activities of the University of Bialystok Branch of the Faculty of Economic and Informatics in Vilnius” from February 22 to March 2, 2015.

Referring to the comments made in **subsection 5** (of the **Introduction**) we have a request to the group of experts before they make the final conclusions, to take into account the fact that due to the absence of acts of legislation in the Lithuanian law regarding recognition of rights arising from the possession of Branch student ID cards on equal basis with Lithuanian student ID cards entitling to discounts on public transport, resulted in severe restrictions. On a large number of the Branch students in the Spring of 2008 monetary penalties were imposed for the use of discount tickets on public transport despite the assurance of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania of the right to exercise such powers. The following students of the Branch were penalized: 1. Student of the Branch Zubrickaja Zana (Protocol No. 1159031-3 - controller Erika Komorovskaja, date 20 February 2008) - 20 Lt; 2. Student of the Branch Tunkevič Alina (Protocol No. 1170156-3 - controller Aistris Juška, date 5 May 2008) - 15 Lt; 3. Student Viltorija Liadovskaja (Protocol No. 1169471-9 - controller Aistris Juška date, 24 April 2008) - 15 Lt; 4. Student of the Branch Daniel Stankevič (Protocol No. 1164520-8 - controller Olga Fiodorova, date 18 April 2008) - 10 Lt; 5. Student of the Branch Mackevič Viktorija (Protocol No. 1160876-8 - controller Borisas Kacas, date 14 April 2008) - 15 Lt; 6. Student of the Branch Makovska Sabina (Protocol No. 1169085-7 - controller Liubov Siatino, date 14 April 2008) - 15 Lt; 7. Student of the Branch Edvin Volosevič (Protocol No. 1169386-9 - controller Angelė Staniienė, date 20 April 2008) - 10 Lt; 8. Student of the Branch Vitalij Kurmin



(Protocol No. 1164650-3 - controller Vidmantas Pečiulis, date 14 April 2008) - 15 Lt; 9. Student of the Branch Ruslan Klusovski (Protocol No. 1169106-1 - controller Leena Penkauskienė, date 14 April 2008) - 15 Lt. It's just part of the financial sanctions targeting our students for the use of discounts on public transportation based on student ID cards of the University of Bialystok. In the case of students who did not pay the fines, their cases were submitted to the bailiff - as an example we can cite the case of Zany Zubricki (bailiff Antstolis Dainius Šidlauskas, vykdomoji no. 0178/08/00756 of 21 April 2008), the penalty increased from 20 Lt to 87,86Lt. As the cause in all cases, the protocols mentioned the use of student ID cards of the University of Bialystok Faculty of Economics and Informatics in Vilnius.

**Re. subsection 10** of the Chapter "Basic information about the institution" allow ourselves to make a correction regarding the statute of the University of Bialystok.

University of Bialystok was established in 1997 under the Act of the Polish Parliament on 19 June 1997. University as an independent higher education institution came into existence as a result of transformation of the Branch of University of Warsaw.

**Re. subsection 12** of the Chapter "Basic information about the institution" we would like to explain that the formation process of the Faculty of Economics and Informatics in Vilnius (University of Bialystok Branch) was preceded by the need to obtain the consent of the Minister of Science and Higher Education and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and then obtaining permission of the authorities of the Republic of Lithuania. The last permission, ending the process of creation of this institution, was received by the Branch on 8 August 2007. Only after completing the procedure described above, the Branch could begin recruiting for studies in the academic year 2007/2008. Hence, the first recruitment lasted from 8 August 2007 to 30 September 2007.

**Re. subsection 13** of the Chapter "Basic information about the institution": correct website addresses containing the information referred to in subsection 13 are: <http://www.uwb.lt/o-nas/>, <http://www.uwb.lt/en/> and <http://www.uwb.lt/lt/>

**Re. subsection 14** of the Chapter "Basic information about the institution": allow ourselves to form the following correction.

In the recent few years, the Faculty has been accepting about 150-180 students for the first year of studies, and not 900 students as reported. Upon presenting the Branch team of faculty, please also note that in the academic year 2014/2015 we hired visiting professor PhD with habilitation (dr hab.) Zbigniew Oziewicz from Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico in Mexico - from Branch's own resources.

**Re. subsection 17** of the Chapter ("Strategic Management") We do not agree with the categorical statement that "Faculty does not have a specific strategy on the specific objectives and expected performance indicators or performance plans and the monitoring system of their implementation", because a document was presented "Strategy for the years 2008-2015 of the Faculty of Economics and Informatics in Vilnius of the University of Bialystok" in which point 4 has the following meaning: "to strive to ensure that students and future graduates have the same rights as students and graduates of higher education institutions in Lithuania. To fulfill this objective steps must be taken towards the integration of the Faculty with the higher education system of the Republic of Lithuania, while at the same time retaining the status of the foreign university Branch in Lithuania". As a reminder, it needs to be stressed that on May 12, 2009 a Law on Science and Studies was passed by the Parliament of Lithuania ([http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc\\_l?p\\_id=343430](http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=343430)), in which article 69 point 2 states the following: "2. For Branches of foreign universities, established in Lithuania, the state budget funds are not granted (lit. 2. Užsienio aukštųjų mokyklų filialams, įsteigtiems Lietuvos Respublikoje, valstybės biudžeto lėšos studijoms neskiriamos)". This meant that the students of the Branch could not count on any support from the State of Lithuania. Only thanks to the *Studijų kokybės vertinimo centras*

actions of the authorities of the Faculty and the intervention of the European Commission, decision of the Constitutional Court resulted in the deletion of this adverse point on 28 January 2012 (<http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/oldsearch.preps2?a=417228&b=>). This made it possible to grant social scholarships to the students of the Branch, it also resulted in so called student shopping basket, preferred student loans, as well as in the acceptance of the Branch to the Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (LAMA) and the possibility of access to the national system of recruitment (LAMA BPO). This is an example of strategic management that enabled the integration of the Branch with the Lithuanian higher education system, which was only briefly noted in subsection 16 of the Conclusions. Out of entitled legal rights the Branch still did not receive the status (lit. gavėjo paramos statusas) allowing for accepting donations and income tax deductions of 2% from individuals. All higher education institutions in Lithuania have this status except the Branch. Because of the above mentioned reasons, we also do not agree that the above document "is too economic in nature" as point 4 talks about equal rights that should be enjoyed by the students of the Branch - the right to receive social grants, right to obtain preferred loans, the right to social care.

**Re. subsection 27** of the Chapter "Strategic Management" in section "- the strategy does not have enough targets and performance outcome indicators", please take into consideration explanation contained in the annotations to subsection 17 ("Strategic Management").

**Re. subsection 43** of the Chapter "Strategic Management": we agree with the statement that it is necessary "- to develop a clear strategy for quality assurance, including all the basic and essential functions of the Faculty", but it cannot be in conflict with adopted by the Senate of the University of Bialystok Resolution No. 792 of 25 March 2009 setting out the areas for action of Institutional Assurance System and Quality Improvement of Education. Authorities of the Branch will strive to create a detailed procedures for the approval, monitoring of education programs and learning outcomes, while ensuring the continuity of the program concept and the proper quality of academic standards. Referring to the recommendation of experts concerning engagement of students in the entire process of quality assurance, the experts suggestions will be forwarded to the Senate Committee on Education with a request to take them into account when modifying the internal system of quality assurance and improvement of academic standards.

**Re. subsection 46** of the Chapter "Strategic Management" The statement "It is a disadvantage that the students are not members of the committees, that is why experts recommend the Faculty in all the [committees] to also include students," requires clarification. Branch will take steps in this direction, but not in all departmental committees it is possible to involve students. As an example, the Faculty Evaluation Committee is worth mentioning, which is appointed by the Faculty Board from among independent research staff, where regulations do not provide for student representation. Nevertheless, when assessing the staff, the Committee takes into account the results of student surveys regarding the evaluation of classes conducted by academic teachers.

**Re. subsection 65** of the Chapter "Strategic Management": in the content of this section it is stated: "At the Faculty there are currently working 20 lecturers (including four working full-time)" it should be: At the Faculty there are currently working 20 lecturers (including four others working part-time).

**Re. subsection 85** of the Chapter "Studies and lifelong learning": in the content of this section it is stated: "There are enough lecturers, they are assisted by 25 commuting lecturers from the University of Bialystok and 4 persons employed under a contract of employment" it should be: There are enough lectures, they are assisted by 25 commuting lecturers from the University of Bialystok and 3 persons employed under a contract for services.

**Re. subsection 91** of the Chapter "Studies and lifelong learning": in the content of this section it is stated: "Faculty has signed cooperation agreements with five associations or foundations, with

four higher education institutions in Poland and one in the Czech Republic" it should be: Faculty has signed cooperation agreements with five associations or foundations, with four higher education institutions in Poland and one in the Slovak Republic.

We also wish to refer to the matters set out in the attached to the experts report SEPARATE OPINION OF THE EXPERT TEAM MEMBER BASTIAN BAUMAN.

With regard to the text contained in the lines 5-6 and 7-8 from the top of Annex 1: "There has not been implemented a strategic management system that would meet the basic features required of higher education institution" and "Faculty does not have a specific strategic plan, which makes management impossible." We do not agree with such a categorical statement as Branch presented a document entitled "Strategy for the years 2008-2015 of the Faculty of Economics and Informatics in Vilnius University of Bialystok," which contained the basic points of strategic management. It should be emphasized that the University of Bialystok is a public higher education institution funded through grants from the State budget. The main act of legislation regulating public higher education system is the Law on Higher Education and a number of implementing provisions of the Act. These documents also established competence of various authorities of the higher education institutions also in the domain of strategic management and the limits of their autonomy in this range.

In the years 2011-2014, the Act was amended twice, in connection with the above, for obvious reasons, most of the internal regulations were changed and revised. University of Bialystok Senate under Resolution No. 1645 of 17 December 2014 adopted an amended development strategy of the University of Bialystok in the years 2014 to 2024. This document contains a detailed description of the mission of the University, the SWOT analysis, the strategic, operational and detailed objectives regarding different areas of activity of the University, strategic cards and the description of the methodology and work stages. Thus, this document is the basis for strategic management understood as information and decision-making process, which is supported by the functions of planning, organization, motivation and control. Its primary purpose is to assist in resolving key issues related to the activities of the University and the prospects of its development with particular emphasis on environmental impacts and opportunities of its scientific and didactic potential. On the basis of this document individual organizational units develop a functional strategy coherent with the fundamental document, that is Strategy of the University. Faculty of Economics and Informatics in Vilnius is an integral part of the University of Bialystok, therefore, all solutions in the field of strategic management also apply to this unit with the provision that implementation of these assumptions should take into account the specific conditions of the unit located outside the home country and operating at the level of the two legal systems (Polish and Lithuanian).

In regard to the text in lines 8-9 from the top of Annex 1: "The situation of the Faculty is very specific and differs from that of the primary headquarters of the university, that is why it should have its own strategic plan." We fully agree with this statement and the Branch presented such a plan in the document "Strategy for the years 2008-2015 Faculty of Economics and Informatics in Vilnius of the University of Bialystok," and will gradually amend it in the view of the changes in the Development Strategy of the University of Bialystok.

With regard to the text contained in line 10 from the top of Annex 1: "Lack of indicators, standards or other such things hinders the intentional development of the Faculty". A document was presented "Strategy for the years 2008-2015 of the Faculty of Economics and Informatics in Vilnius of the University of Bialystok" in which point 4 has the following meaning: "to strive to ensure that students and future graduates have the same rights as students and graduates of higher education institutions in Lithuania. To fulfill this objective steps must be taken towards the integration of the Faculty with the higher education system of the Republic of Lithuania, while at the same time retaining the status of the foreign university Branch in Lithuania". As a reminder, it needs to be stressed that on May 12, 2009 a Law on Science and Studies was passed

by the Parliament of Lithuania ([http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc\\_l?p\\_id=343430](http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=343430)), in which article 69 point 2 states the following: "2. For Branches of foreign universities, established in Lithuania, the state budget funds are not granted (lit. 2. Užsienio aukštųjų mokyklų filialams, įsteigtiems Lietuvos Respublikoje, valstybės biudžeto lėšos studijoms neskiriamos)". This meant that the students of the Branch could not count on any support from the State of Lithuania. Only thanks to the actions of the authorities of the Faculty and the intervention of the European Commission, decision of the Constitutional Court resulted in the deletion of this adverse point on 28 January 2012 (<http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/oldsearch.preps2?a=417228&b=>). This made it possible to grant social scholarships to the students of the Branch, it also resulted in so called student shopping basket, preferred student loans, as well as in the acceptance of the Branch to the Association of Lithuanian Higher Education Institutions (LAMA) and the possibility of access to the national system of recruitment (LAMA BPO). This is an example of strategic management that enabled the integration of the Branch with the Lithuanian higher education system. Referring to the statement regarding the "lack of indicators and standards ..." it should be noted that all the indicators and standards are included in the amended "Development Strategy of the University of Bialystok," adopted by the Resolution of Senate No. 1645 of 17 December 2014 and will be included in amendment of the Strategy of the Faculty of Economics and Informatics in Vilnius.

With regard to the text contained in lines 20-23 from the top of Annex 1: "The PS does not provide information about drawn conclusions and the current changes which resulted in quality assurance. This indicates the lack of quality culture or maybe even lack of knowledge of how should university quality assurance system work". We do not agree with such a categorical statement, because thanks to a system of quality assurance in the reporting period, one lecturer at the Faculty (mgr Renata Magor (MA)) received a negative evaluation, which resulted in termination of the contract of employment with that teacher, and another teacher (dr Barbara Bakier), due to objections raised by the Polish Accreditation Committee and the negative opinions of the students, has been removed from the teaching activities at the Branch. The argument for demonstrating high quality of studies at the Branch can also be a high employment rate among graduates of the Branch (as noted in subsection 92).

With regard to the text contained in lines 30-40, from the top of Annex 1: "Conclusions (...)". On the basis of the arguments presented in this part of the reply, we do not agree with these statements.

To sum up the reply we would like to extend our thanks to the Group of Experts and the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education for the in-depth evaluation of the activities of the University of Bialystok Faculty of Economics and Informatics in Vilnius Branch and any observations and recommendations contained in the summary document. We hope that the work done on both sides will serve to improve the functioning of our institution and will help to solve the problems this institution is facing.

Yours faithfully,  
Prof. Leonard Etel