

# Values and aims of the leading universities of the German-speaking countries<sup>1</sup>

Krzysztof Szewior, *University of Warsaw (Warsaw, Poland)*

E-mail: [krzysztofszewior@uw.edu.pl](mailto:krzysztofszewior@uw.edu.pl)

ORCID: 0000-0003-2455-553X

## Abstract

This article is based on the research integrating qualitative approach and the content analysis method. The aim is to analyse the mission and strategy of the higher education institutions, assuming that through the mission and strategy those institutions express their self-identification, describe their current state and indicate the directions of development. The subject of the analysis is the best higher education institutions of the German-speaking countries, operating in national and international environment. The research was based on the content analysis, and on its basis, the values and aims of each university were indicated, and then – using the bottom-up method – the aggregation of the universities' areas of activities was done. In this sense, the selected scopes of activities and points of focus may constitute a generalised reference to the other universities and to the entire academic community in the studied countries.<sup>2</sup>

The analysis of the various types of the universities (full, technical, medical) did not demonstrate any significant differences in their self-identification and the designation of the functions of the university, despite the differences in the language of description and the breadth of the offered career perspectives. The common origin, and cultural and social context were also the important factors in this research. The analysed higher education institutions were much more oriented towards the standards defined by the best universities in the world and the global challenges of civilisation, what allowed them to become the leading institutions in innovation and technology transfer to the economy. Nowadays, the investigated universities represent the highest standards of academic knowledge. At the same time, they express contemporary trends and requirements of a business organisation (e.g. transparency, evaluation, knowledge management, inclusiveness). Moreover, the investigated higher education institutions perceive themselves as the socially responsible universities, what is confirmed by such values as: inclusiveness, *gender mainstreaming*, and sustainable development.

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<sup>2</sup> Research on higher education in German-speaking countries takes into account various cognitive perspectives: pedagogical, sociological, and public policy: C. Jingmin and L. Hendrik (2019), A. Graschopf (2017), S. Brendel et al. (2019). In the Polish scientific community, the problems of German higher education have been discussed by K. Szewior (2006, 2019).

**Keywords:** universities in German-speaking countries, higher education in Europe, European Higher Education Area, contemporary university model, leading institutions in innovation, evaluation, knowledge management, inclusiveness

## Wartości i cele wiodących uniwersytetów państw niemieckiego obszaru językowego

### Streszczenie

Prezentowany artykuł bazuje na badaniach integrujących podejście jakościowe z analizą treści. Ich celem była analiza misji i strategii uczelni, uznając, że w ten sposób uczelnie artykułują samo-identyfikację, opisują obecny stan oraz wskazują kierunki docelowe. Obiektem analizy są najlepsze uniwersytety państw niemieckojęzycznych, funkcjonujące w krajowym i międzynarodowym środowisku. Badania skupiały się na analizie treści i na tej podstawie prowadziły do wskazania wartości i celów działania każdego uniwersytetu, a następnie – metodą oddolną – do zagregowania i wyznaczenia pól ich aktywności. Wytypowane zakresy i ich punkty ciężkości mogą stanowić uogólnione odniesienie dla innych szkół wyższych i całego środowiska akademickiego.

Objęcie analizą różnych typów uniwersytetów (*pełne*, techniczne, medyczne) nie pokazało istotnych odmienności w samoidentyfikacji i wyznaczaniu funkcji szkoły wyższej, mimo iż odróżniał je język opisu oraz szerokość perspektywy. Istotnym był czynnik wspólnego pochodzenia oraz uwarunkowania kulturowo-społeczne. W zdecydowanie większym stopniu uniwersytety orientowały się na standardy definiowane przez najlepsze szkoły wyższe świata oraz na globalne wyzwania cywilizacyjne. Pozwoliło im to stać się liderami innowacyjności i transferu technologii do gospodarki. Dziś przedstawione uczelnie uosabiają najwyższy standard wiedzy akademickiej. Jednocześnie wyrażają współczesne trendy i wymogi organizacji biznesowej (np. transparentność, ewaluacja, zarządzanie wiedzą, inkluzywność). Postrzegają siebie jako uczelnie społecznie odpowiedzialne, co potwierdzają takimi zapisami jak: inkluzywność, *gender mainstreaming*, rozwój zrównoważony.

**Słowa kluczowe:** uczelnie państw niemieckojęzycznych, szkolnictwo wyższe w Europie, europejski obszar szkolnictwa wyższego, współczesny model uniwersytetu, lider innowacyjności, ewaluacja, zarządzanie wiedzą, inkluzywność

## Evolution of the contemporary university model

Changes in **the academic environment** run parallel to and as a result of transformations, as well as social and economic expectations. In the past decades, there has been a growing demand for up-to-date academic research and knowledge about its added value. This is result of the change in the role and function of scientific knowledge and the transfer of research into development and, consequently, into the potential and competitiveness of the economy and the state.

Recent years have resulted in a paradigm shift in academic teaching, relations with the environment, and the structural and governmental changes inside the higher education institutions. These changes lead universities to redefine their models, as expressed

in their missions, strategies and the development plans. Modern higher education institutions compete on the educational services market with high-quality research and educational services. The main measure of the university's success is being chosen by the applicant students, the effectiveness of education, transparent functioning and the award of international and high-budget grants.

The contemporary model of the university is focused on research and teaching. However, currently a wider range of tasks may include creating skills and social competences that predispose teachers and students to be entrepreneurial, active, and socially responsible (Matusiak K.B., Matusiak M. 2007). The scope and directions of scientific research are modified, and the educational offer is adapted to the development needs. Innovative forces pressure to focus research on solving important ecological and technological issues, on supporting sustainable development. The complexity of issues and challenges obliges universities to approach interdisciplinary and internationally to these challenges. The basic feature of the knowledge created this way will be its universal character, referring to the global issues: climate, ecology and health. Thus, the academic community should express its social responsibility. The above-mentioned way of thinking can be found in the eight functions of the university catalogued by Drucker and Goldstein: knowledge creation, human capital formation, knowledge transfer, technological innovation, capital investments, regional leadership, creating a knowledge infrastructure, impact on the regional environment (see: Olechnicka 2012).

## Hypotheses and research methodology

The main hypothesis of the research is that the everyday functioning of universities is a derivative of their missions, strategies and action plans, and a comprehensive response to social challenges and international standards of the university as an institution. The second hypothesis is that on this basis it is possible to draw general conclusions of an applied nature.

The research focuses on nine best universities in the German-speaking countries as published in international rankings<sup>3</sup>. They are the starting point for the research and the basis for discussion of activity ranges.

Universities covered by this study:

- a) in Germany: *Universität Heidelberg* (UH), *Ludwig Maximilian Universität München* (LMUM), *Technische Universität München* (TUM);
- b) in Austria: *Universität Wien* (UW), *Medizinische Universität Wien* (MUW), *Universität Innsbruck* (UI);
- c) in Switzerland: *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich* (ETHZ), *Université de Genève*, (UG), *Universität Zürich* (UZH).

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<sup>3</sup> Shanghai Ranking of World Universities; QS World University Ranking; Times Higher Education Ranking; Best Global Universities Ranking; U-Multirank; CHE Hochschulranking; Global University Employability Ranking; Ranking „Highly Cited Researches“, THE World University Rankings.

The subjects of the analysis are the universities' missions, strategies and the development plans, but the aim is to understand their self-identification, selected values and aims. The next step of the study is creating on this basis a list of features of the modern university. At the same time, an opposite procedure is used, scrupulously using the *university's language*, in order to use appropriate words, concepts and values. Hence, the result is a narrative model with numerous quotations and references. In this case, the words not only provide meaning in the defined areas of the universities' activities, but also create their image.

Content analysis is a recognised method in the humanities and social sciences (Kaczmarek 2013). Apart from description and interpretation, it allows to capture intentions (to be the best and competitive) and the social context (the European cultural circle in a globalised world). The type of the university remains fundamental for the study, and these are top universities that define the directions and standards of science, as well as arranging relations with the socio-economic environment.

### Values and missions of the universities

It is worth emphasising that none of the studied universities broke with the past, e.g. with the traditionally understood role of the university. Instead, they enrich their self-image with new components. The *Ludwig Maximilian Universität München* (LMUM) has based it on four elements: its own history, academia, internationalisation and differentiation. For *Technische Universität München* (TUM), the motto is to invest in talents, and to analyse them scientifically (see: *Die Universität – Leitbild* WWW). On the other hand, the *Universität Zürich* (UZH) indicates five areas of achieving its own aims in the mission, including references to its members and the environment (see: *Leitbild der Universität Zürich* 2012). The *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich* (ETHZ) presents itself as a regionally and nationally embedded institution, internationally integrated in the academic community (see: *Selbstverständnis und Werte* WWW). The same attitude was equally clearly expressed by *Universität Innsbruck* (UI) as the university is internationally oriented and at the same time regionally anchored ( see: *Leitbild* WWW).

**Identification of the universities** often includes the following features: science, freedom and responsibility of research and teaching activities, and – referring to the UZH – *universitas*. The idea of **universitas** means that all disciplines are aimed to the scientific understanding of reality. Accepting the multiplicity and diversity of disciplines, what means recognition of their distinctiveness and subjectivity, as well as a need for discourse oriented towards cooperation and the aims achievement (see: *Leitbild der Universität Zürich* 2012). According to the LMUM's Rector opinion, his university is a "big city university" situated in the centre of Munich. Being a true *universitas*, it focuses on research and solutions of complex problems related to: people, society, culture and technology (see: *Über Die LMU* WWW). Similarly, the University of Geneva is based on versatility. It focuses on the quality of the offer, interdisciplinary research, the decompartmentalisation of knowledge, and it follows changes taking place in the society (see: *Selbstverständnis und Werte* WWW).

In the **field of science**, it is emphasised that contemporary university is a place of free and open activities. Thus, science is about collecting, analysing, and communicating the results methodically and critically. The *Universität Heidelberg* (UH) follows the principle of *Semper Apertus* (always open). Today "always open" is understood as an internationalised research and teaching institution, based on tradition and co-shaping the future, using a wide spectrum of disciplines and directions. The global dimension is also the experience of ETHZ, because only in global environment it competes and cooperates with the best universities in the world (see: *Selbstverständnis und Werte* WWW).

**Freedom and responsibility** suggest that academia needs free space for its development without external, ideological influences and pressures. The status of a university requires unhindered research and teaching. This condition determines their social and environmental responsibility (see: *Politique generale* WWW). It includes ethical reflection on the means and effects in relation to people and the natural environment. For example, *Universität Heidelberg* (UH) develops knowledge and opportunities in an open and unbiased attitude towards people and ideas, and it makes the knowledge useful and passes it on to the future generations (see: *Das Profil der Universität* WWW).

Being a full university (germ. *Volluniversität*) obliges to secure freedom of research and teaching, as well as honesty towards people, society and nature. The obligations, arising from this postulate were outlined very precisely by the UH, where they refer to the simultaneous development of disciplines, interdisciplinary activities and transferring them into teaching. At the same time, cooperation between disciplines is necessary to solve important issues concerning people, societies and states. Relation to this value is the third requirement, i.e. providing research results to the public and supporting their application in all areas of public life (*Das Profil der Universität* WWW). The *Université de Genève*, (UG) made the service of the city (*Politique generale* WWW) one of the dimensions of its involvement, which is justified by its history and current global political functions.

The mission of a full university is implemented, for example, through *Fields of Focus*, as well as research and cluster initiatives under the *Excellence Strategy* (see: *Exzellenzstrategie...* WWW). This utilitarianism echoes the position of the *Medizinische Universität Wien* (MUW). Its teaching goals stem from the statement that knowledge has become the most important resource of a post-industrial society. The science and research sector is expanding, and the level of education has become a measure of social development. What is important for MUW is not so much the knowledge that "goes back to the archives and the school bench", but the knowledge what gives a competitive advantage and supports innovation. According to the university, the creation and transfer of knowledge have become the basic task for well-developed national economies (*Strategie und Vision* WWW). The *Universität Wien* states, that tradition and self-understanding require being visible, participating in global life and scientific competition, winning projects and students, being an attractive partner for the research, teaching, and socio-economic environment (see: *Universität Wien 2025* WWW).

The **key objectives and tasks of the university** are summarised as the provision of research and teaching work as well as other services, which need to be perceived as

a world-class scope and a high quality (see: *Leitbild der Universität Zürich* 2012). The university should attract leading scientists and students in order to optimally support young people in pursuing science. UZH has prioritised research and teaching, with particular focus on scientific requirements and the societal needs. Responsible designation of the areas of exploration and teaching determines the wide scope of basic research and, thus, its interdisciplinarity (see: *Leitbild der Universität Zürich* 2012). The UZH emphasizes the presence of many equal research cultures, both within disciplines and interdisciplinary. Each of them is obliged to conduct independent and unbiased research, and national and international cooperation (*Strategische Grundsätze* WWW).

Due to its specificity, the *Medizinische Universität Wien* (MUW) included three basic principles and tasks: knowledge creation (research), its transfer (didactics) and application (clinics). This innovative knowledge creates conditions for the development of the "medicine of the future". MUW implemented its knowledge approach within the *Triple-Track-Strategie*. The university is also looking after its associates. One of its founding principles (in 2004) was to build on the map of Austria not only a leading research and education centre, but also one of the most attractive European employer in the field of medicine (*Strategie und Vision* WWW).

## Universities' areas of activity

The analysis of strategic and framework documents of the universities allowed the identification of several areas of activity. They refer to the university as an institution, its internal and external functions and the management model that is implemented. They will be presented in points below.

**Structural framework conditions** mean that universities create and permanently secure their optimal overall position. They do it, because when developing their strategies, they generally rely on their own research and teaching departments. In turn, access to knowledge and information is provided by technology platforms, libraries, and digital services (*Strategische Grundsätze* WWW). Through **management** (eg. UZH), efforts are made to ensure a high level of identity, self-governance and shared responsibility of individuals and groups of co-workers/stakeholders. At the same time, the requirements and standards of management structures of academic organisations are taken into account. In line with the culture of the Rhine states, universities adhere to the following principles: subsidiarity, participation, transparency, and equalising stakeholders' interests. Stakeholders at all levels are involved in these activities. **Administration** (at UZH) is focused on service-oriented thinking, therefore, the responsibility for public funds and the efficiency of their spending should be prevailing (see: *Leitbild der Universität Zürich* 2012). At the same time, the university should become familiar with the international standards of conducting scientific research and providing (other) services (*Das Profil der Universität* WWW).

**The university and its members.** For example, *Universität Heidelberg* (UH), the collegiality of the university was emphasised by students, researchers, educators,

technical associates, and the administration alike. These groups, as well as the whole organisation, are self-organising and self-managing. Members of the university community are subject to the principles of good scientific practice (see: *Leitbild der Universität Zürich 2012; Das Profil der Universität WWW*). UZH promotes the intellectual, professional and personal development of its employees. It supports equal opportunities for men and women and welcomes representatives of other cultures and nationalities. Non-discrimination and the affirmation of diversity is adopted, which seems natural in the face of advanced internationalisation. Diversity is considered as an asset, therefore, it is important to provide financial support to the best students and employees, and to keep their career path leading to university and professorial status.

**The university as an employer.** For example, MUW focuses on employee's success. All internally integrated departments and intra-university processes should contribute to this. Their main goal is to implement the strategy, to organise and improve the work (processes). Employee development is treated as an in-house qualification upgrading, and more broadly, it is about strengthening and developing employees, passing them know-how, skills and adjusting to Life-Long-Learning. From the university's perspective, it is contributing to resource development and building organisational culture and its image. A good employer creates conditions for effective work, for progress, and it is an advisor in a career progress and building an academic CV (see: *Strategie und Vision WWW*).

**Financial framework conditions.** The university manages its own and public funds in a transparent and socially responsible way. It takes into account the aims and outcomes of research, as well as its societal usefulness. UZH argues that development and promotion require budgetary resources, which are used for financing independent research and education. Such approach generates a special responsibility towards: deliberate, economic and long-lasting engagement of public money. Universities strive to diversify their sources of financing by bidding for external funds. It is emphasised that the support from external funds must not violate the freedom of research and teaching, nor affect institutional autonomy. Clearly, transparency and financial reporting are contemporary requirements (see: *Leitbild der Universität Zürich 2012; Strategische Grundsätze WWW*). For MUW, a strong position in the centre of international competition is a way to obtain external funds and to attract the best scholars (see: *Strategie und Vision WWW; Leitbild der Universität Zürich 2012*).

**"University in its environment"** means that the institution remains a member of a living and pluralist society, seeking and promoting research collaboration with all groups of society. It has responsibility for science and society, and the duty to provide scientific foundations for "self-reflection of society", and significant contributions to societal development. Through popularising scientific findings, UZH shapes the public discourse, takes up contemporary challenges, including sustainable development and a democratic state ruled by law. UZH informs the public about its current activities through teaching and research offer, as well as cooperation with museums and libraries (see: *Leitbild der Universität Zürich 2012; Strategische Grundsätze WWW*). Another significant engagement with external

partners happens in the form of open / public ventures and commitment to the immediate urban environment (e.g. *Université de Genève*, see: *Services à la cité* WWW). The *Technische Universität München* (TUM) writes explicitly about its responsibility for dialogue with society and the public sphere. One of these dimensions is teaching social commitment to change processes. At the same time, new and better channels of communication with the public are constantly being sought to inform about what science and technology is doing for the future and the society. This dialogue helps TUM to identify and develop leading research and teaching areas (*Die Universität – Leitbild* WWW). Similarly, the *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich* (ETHZ), in addition to its inter- and transdisciplinary research initiatives / teams, creates thematic research fields, orienting them to the various levels of social needs (*Thematische Schwerpunkte* WWW).

**Organisational culture and staff promotion** are based on balancing leadership and participation. Chancellors of universities act in a legitimate manner as long as they make decisions in line with the strategic guidelines, and ensure their implementation. Universities are based on incentives and participatory culture. This includes anti-discrimination practices and promotions of the selected groups, a climate of loyalty and solidarity (*Strategische Grundsätze* WWW). The University as an organisation recognises the problems of both genders and makes optimal decisions at all levels and scopes. Women and men both have their personal representatives and an equal presence in "functions and bodies" (*Verhaltenskodex Gender Policy* WWW). UZH, considering itself a scientific organisation, solves its own affairs with the involvement of management. This requires a proper degree of self-organisation and establishing co-responsibility. This, in turn, requires an appropriate management culture, which ensures two things at the same time: research and teaching freedom, as well as the efficiency of operation and management of the university as an economic entity. Moreover, good management optimises the conditions and outcomes of work, and builds a proper working environment for colleagues (*Strategische Grundsätze* WWW).

Academic **support for the younger generation** applies to people of all qualification levels. Universities give opportunities to start research and teaching early. Systemic conditions for the obtaining qualifications at the highest possible academic level are guaranteed. The task of the institution is to support scientists in their own responsibility and to ensure that the university's dependencies do not affect adversely their professional development. Hence the need to ensure the permeability of many career paths while respecting equal opportunities and compliance with various competency profiles, focusing on the family and private sphere of employees and their stage of life (*Führungsgrundsätze* WWW).

In the area of **scientific research**, UZH aims at broadening and deepening scientific knowledge by conducting research at the highest world level (*Leitbild der Universität Zürich* 2012). Like other mentioned institutions, it considers itself as a research university that enables, supports and expects relevant results of the scientific activity of its employees. It also plays a leading role in the international research community. It enables and supports excellent research, and develops the existing and future fields of

exploration (*Strategische Grundsätze* WWW). For MUW, research is crucial in bringing the best level of medicine. For UZH, research remains the focus activity, and it also carries out work of an applied nature. Through such broad spectrum (eg. LMUM), universities of this type have great potential for innovative research and high-quality value-adding teaching. They use them in *Exzellenz-Wettbewerb*, but also to strengthen their research profile as *universitas* and to improve their leading international position (see: *Porträt* WWW). The *Universität Innsbruck* indicates that it is guided by the unity of science and disciplines (germ. "Das tun wir"). Their scope and nature determine the specificity of research and teaching carried out in the spirit of responsibility for society. Embedding didactics into research is the starting point for university education, supporting research activities and the researchers themselves. These institutions are strongly integrated with the region, but they cooperate and compete in research all over the world (see: *Leitbild* WWW). Virtually all of them pursue their scientific goals through knowledge/research clusters. They constitute an excellent centre for the concentration and transfer of knowledge, they promote leading research projects, and generate paths for the commercialisation of scientific research (see: *Excellence de la recherche* WWW).

The *Technische Universität München* (TUM) writes about the **internalisation** of the best international standards. It transfers them to its scientific, structural and organisational space through networking and close cooperation with the best research and teaching departments in the world. It is used, i.e. cooperation, to search for and expand new areas of own development – *Emerging Field Policy* (see: *Die Universität – Leitbild* WWW). Another quite effective route of research profiling in the Rhine countries is the initiatives of excellence (germ. *Exzellenzinitiative*), due to the requirement to formulate development strategies and to create dominant research fields. Later, they became research projects under the initiatives/strategies of excellence (see: *Exzellenzstrategie...* WWW; *Forschungsprofil* WWW). The city of Heidelberg with its metropolitan region, a highly internationalised city with representatives of global tycoons from various industries (germ. *Metropolregion Rhein-Neckar*) has a very good experience in this field. And for this reason, the university treats high theoretical and methodical competence as an important distinguishing feature of its scientific conduct.

The mission of the *Technische Universität München* (TUM) states that the research is directed **to support an innovative society**. It reaffirms the scientific commitment to innovative progress, which should lead to improving people's life. The university expresses commitment to responsibility for the next generation and demonstrates it by its research focus – on health and nutrition, energy and raw materials, environment and climate, information and communication, mobility, and infrastructure (see: *Die Universität – Leitbild* WWW). The *Universität Innsbruck* (UI) also expresses concern for its region, striving to combine research of local issues, but they are "globally tailored". Its research activities include alpine space – people and the environment; and cultural meetings – cultural conflicts (see: *Leitbild* WWW).

**Academic education**, regardless of the type of the university, remains a pillar of activity. Today, however, it is extended to include training and promotion of lifelong

learning. It is widely acknowledged that academic teaching must be based on research. This model of studies results from the community of learners and educators. It is focused on the ability to take on challenges and to solve them, to obtain methodical results and new scientific understanding, to critically evaluate and further transfer knowledge and research experience (*Leitbild der Universität Zürich* 2012). TUM writes on its website that goals of education should be defined through professional competence, awareness and responsibility, intellectual and emotional creativity, and cultural sensitivity. However, at the same time, it emphasises that openness to the world and social competence are just as important as professional independence and entrepreneurship.<sup>4</sup> Students are expected to have initiative and readiness to achieve results. Thus, through education, students are motivated to undertake responsible social roles and are being prepared them for various career paths (*Strategische Grundsätze W/W/W*).

**Services and transfer** have their subjective and objective dimensions (according to UZH, see: *Leitbild der Universität Zürich* 2012). For UZH, supporting the transfer of knowledge and "external" influence makes research and teaching more useful and socially accessible. In TUM's opinion, the principle of competitiveness through results should be applied in this area. By proactively transferring research to market-oriented innovation processes, it supports the entrepreneurial spirit in all areas of the university activities. Thus, the importance of initiating the establishment of new companies, their growth and development is emphasised. TUM's activities are focused on having a leading position in Europe among the universities, and on the development and growth of technological start-ups originating from the academic environment (see: *Die Universität - Leitbild W/W/W*).

Universities consider the **balanced involvement** of their employees in scientific work and the life of the university as an important institutional task. At the same time, the universities acknowledge the importance of the external dimensions like private life of employees and the social and natural environment. Proper recognition of the universities' location and role allows them to make appropriate use of local potential and, thus, to contribute to its development. That is why partner cooperation is supported, for example by the university hospitals, other academies, and civil society institutions. At the same time, an excellent example of which is *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich* (ETHZ), the principles of social responsibility and sustainable development are practiced within the university as an institution and human community (see: *Selbstverständnis und Werte W/W/W; Nachhaltigkeitsbericht W/W/W*).<sup>5</sup> Another example of linking socially sensitive areas is provided by the *Universität Zürich* (UZH). It considers equal opportunities, diversity, and sustainable development to be central values of the university life and of the university departments. The university is committed to their effective and efficient implementation through policy and its own recommendations. UZH emphasizes the importance of

<sup>4</sup> Podejmowane w TUM inicjatywy rozwijania tychże cech: Junge Akademie, TUM Graduate Schoole, TUM Institute for Advanced Study.

<sup>5</sup> Zasady zrównoważonego rozwoju i społecznej odpowiedzialności praktykuje się np. wobec zużycia energii elektrycznej, zarządzania odpadami, aranżacji przestrzeni.

ethical standards and cultural contexts. It recognises social justice, individual and collective responsibility and considers the needs of future generations (*Strategische Grundsätze* WWW). In its documents, UZH directly indicates that its functions, structures and management culture remain oriented towards sustainable development, and that it functions in this paradigm (*Sustainability Policy* WWW).

**Networking** seems to be the basic tool for fulfilling external functions of the universities. It contributes to three activities: cooperation, coordination, and competition. It allows universities to cultivate **cooperation** at all levels and areas of activity (studies, research, mobility, management, quality assurance system). Moreover, membership in networks and associations not only adds splendour to the image, but also helps mutual recognition, knowledge transfer and cooperation. It is also a measure of the quality standard (*Porträt* WWW).<sup>6</sup> These aspects are emphasised by MUW, where about half of all publications are based on international co-authorship (*Strategie und Vision* WWW). The cooperation of universities also includes non-academic institutions and the wider economy. Having a multilateral dimension, it serves both the transfer of knowledge and the acquisition of financial and intellectual support (*Leitbild* WWW). In the context of the above-mentioned collaboration, UZH sees its role as an expert in the understanding of scientific reflection, innovation, and active knowledge transfer. At the same time, it undertakes initiatives to promote the transferred competences (*Strategische Grundsätze* WWW).

Universities ascribe a different value to external involvement depending on the university type, level, and the character of the relationship. The *Universität Wien* appreciates cooperation on the national and regional level, as it contributes to a better use of infrastructure, increasing the synergy of research and teaching. This is done, among others, through mobility programmes, strategic partnerships, membership in networks (see: *Universität Wien 2025* WWW). At the *Universität Heidelberg* cooperation and partnership have two goals: the transfer of knowledge with generating research outcomes, and the definition of university's role in the scientific environment, especially regionally. Mainly the latter aspect allows to combine basic research with its application by the industrial partners.

Contemporary universities cultivate **stable relations with their alumni**, treating them both as ambassadors of the "university brand", stakeholders and patrons. Their role is in promoting the young generation in taking up employment, organising internships, sharing professional contacts, and also in financing research and awarding prizes. This is well illustrated by the term (germ.) *lebendiger Generationenvertrag*, borrowed from TUM. This living intergenerational agreement makes it possible to benefit from the mutual support and connection of the former and present members of the academic community, and the representatives of various disciplines and communities (see: *Die*

<sup>6</sup> Warto wskazać, że np. LMUM jest założycielem trzech ważnych europejskich sieci i instytucji wymiany: LERU – League of European Research Universities, VIU – Venice International University, EUA – European Association of Universities. Oprócz tego uczelnie należą do licznych stowarzyszeń, centrów, zarówno w kraju, na kontynencie europejskim i poza nim.

*Universität – Leitbild* W/W).<sup>7</sup> This support is bilateral and pro-investment, e.g. ETH Zürich promotes professional development as a transfer of knowledge and technology between the university and practice, which allows not only to develop intellectual and social capital, but also to permanently enhance the competitiveness of the economy, the labour market and the career paths (*Weiterbildung* W/W).<sup>8</sup> The *Universität Innsbruck* collaborates with alumni through a network (germ. *Alumni-Netzwerk*) and its initiatives included staff exchanges, publications, publishing newsletter, research magazine distribution, events, sharing contacts and promoting its graduates (*Das Alumni Netzwerk* W/W).

**Internationalisation.** Universities perceive themselves as the institutions with national presence and influence. They treat internationalisation as an integral part of their functioning. In many cases, the principle of regional anchoring and international orientation was adopted. Generally, three dimensions of activities can be identified: development of strategic partnerships, international mobility (incoming and outgoing), internationalisation at home (see: *International* W/W). Seeing internationalisation as a cross-cutting task for research, teaching, administration and personal development, top universities use it to strengthen their activity, potential and profile (see: *Universität Wien 2025* W/W). They recruit excellent staff from around the world, develop research and teaching cooperation and promote the co-production of publications. The University of Innsbruck can be commended for almost 1.6 thousand publications in Web of Science (including over 73% with international co-authorship) (see: *Auf einen Blick* 2020). The number of foreign students is translated as a measure of the importance of an academic centre (Innsbruck – 44% of students) (*Zahlen und Fakten* W/W), but also of the city and the region (Vienna, Munich, Geneva). The level of internationalisation is part of the overall quality management strategy (*Universität Wien*). The advantage of the university is the range of services provided, i.e. not only encouraging students to come to Europe, but also building joint programs, operating on a franchise basis, offering research programs for particularly gifted young scientists (e.g. *Junior-Year Programme* at LMUM for students from the USA) (see: *Porträt* W/W). For TUM, internationalisation is a combination of a small homeland (*Heimat*) with the world, a way of acquiring talents. However, as a condition, it is based on the freedom and open canon of values of an enlightened society. According to TUM, links to the wider world should at the same time respect the identity of people from other civilisation, cultural and religious circles. It is also seen as a bridge of understanding between nations (*Porträt* W/W). The universities promote student exchange in a variety of formats. For example, through the *global events: ETHMeetsYou, Global Lecture Series, Cybathlon, Digital Platform*. It is worth emphasising that experts from politics and the economy are involved in such events, and these relations take a form of a dialogue on current challenges. These activities are also supported by other events (in on-line format) like exhibitions, and lectures (see: *Globale Präsenz* W/W; *Globale Events* W/W).

<sup>7</sup> TUM w działaniach na rzecz integracji społeczności akademickiej ale i promocji oraz transferu wiedzy wykorzystuje m.in. AlumniVerband oraz TUM Emeriti of Excellence.

<sup>8</sup> Działania te ETHZ realizuje w ramach *School for Continuing Education*.

**Diversity** is a nurtured academic value (e.g. for UZH, see: *Diversity Policy der Universität Zürich* WWW) located in economically strong and multicultural academic centres (Munich, Vienna). German-speaking *Vielfalt* can be found everywhere: in diversity management, family friendliness, gender, healthy university, inclusion, participation in cultural heritage. The *Ludwig Maximilian Universität München* (LMUM), while respecting the idea of diversity, considers it as a factor and a condition for success. As a result, it supports communities, where diversity can manifest itself. It also serves as means to find talents from different and distant regions of the world. The *Universität Innsbruck* (UI) in its declaration „*We stand for it*“ (germ. „*Dafür stehen wir*“) emphasizes support for a multitude of biographies, ideas, concepts of life, opinions and methods. Thus, it is for an open society (see: *Leitbild* WWW). MUW is positioning itself well through the promoted diversity of academic staff. In addition, it expresses social responsibility with a focus on *gender mainstreaming* and *gender medicine* (see: *Strategie und Vision* WWW).

In the canon of *Wertschöpfung durch Wertschätzung* of TUM is stated that the culture of respect for (different) values makes a significant contribution to the value creation within the university and its academic community. It promotes women and gender equality, among other reasons, in order to become an attractive technical college for women. Engagement in *familiembewußt* activities is to convince about the possibility of reconciling work, family and studies (*Die Universität – Leitbild* WWW). *Universität Heidelberg* also openly declares its commitment to gender equality and the work–life balance. Universities, paying tribute to the diversity and equality of all their members, extend their initiatives beyond university walls and country borders (*Das Profil der Universität* WWW).

TUM emphasises that young “talents with an awareness of values” are at the centre of the university’s involvement. The continuity of knowledge development is important, hence the emphasis on integrating young people with experienced scientists and key people of previous generations. According to the *Universität Heidelberg* (UH), this alliance of learning from different environments creates an excellent basis for identifying new challenges and deliberately addressing them (*Das Profil der Universität* WWW). The *Universität Zürich* (UZH) supports legitimate differentiation in research and education and in its daily life. By rejecting discriminatory behaviour, it promotes a culture of multiplicity, assuming social responsibility, freedom from discrimination: space, language of communication (*Verhaltenskodex Gender Policy* WWW).

Institutions manage diversity with a wide range of specialist advice and services. In international academia, this factor is taken into account in the evaluation and accreditation process, which sometimes is a prerequisite for bilateral and multilateral cooperation and mobility agreements (*Porträt* WWW; *Die Universität – Leitbild* WWW).

**Evaluation** is a standard procedure at the universities, it aims at ensuring the optimisation and long-term quality assurance in important areas of the university’s functioning and its relations with the external bodies. The evaluation should be comprehensive, systematic, regular, as well as using appropriate diagnostic methods

and tools. These activities are dedicated to the permanent improvement of quality management. This is done in so-called closed circles. Proper evaluation involves stakeholders and maintain an open dialogue. Access to information and all-important matters without barriers, to an appropriate degree and in multiple languages is an integral part of this process (*Strategische Grundsätze WWW*). It is a commonly accepted norm to associate evaluation with the overall development of the universities (e.g. versatility and innovation – Geneva) (see: *Enseignement WWW*) and with the management model and the decision-making structures. Thus, it is woven into the creation of the university's quality culture (*Qualitätsentwicklung UZH WWW*).

**Transparency and activity reporting** are standard practices at Western universities. The *Universität Zürich* (UZH) emphasised particularly the importance of three levels of transparency, i.e., projects financed from public funds, professorships sponsored by external entities; personal ties / interests of university representatives with external institutions (see: *Qualitätsentwicklung UZH WWW*). The *Universität Innsbruck* (UI) makes research results available to the public in order to initiate further development, debates in the academic community and about academic community itself (see: *Leitbild WWW*), while UZH in its *Code of Conduct...* emphasizes the fact that data is compiled, collected and analysed, taking into account the gender factors and use in the current operations (*Verhaltenskodex Gender Policy WWW*).

## Conclusions

The conducted analysis of the leading universities of the German-speaking countries confirmed the assumption, that the traditional mission of the university encompasses flexible entry into the new management models and areas of institutional activity, as well as research fields of special social importance. The catalogue of aims and values, expressed in various ways, refers to *universitas* and the modern "knowledge enterprise". The postulate of autonomy, freedom and self-governance is continuously reiterated. Hence, empowering its stakeholders and representing their interests. Universities shape their external relations in similar way. They strongly emphasize their own contribution to civil society, the economy and the knowledge society. Their social responsibility focuses on solving contemporary social problems and sustainable future. The modernity of universities is reflected in the university as an institution, relations with the environment, social responsibility, knowledge management and the organisation of the scientific community.

These research outcomes can be the starting point for the further, in-depth and extended research on the operational model of the best universities in Europe in the context of global educational and socio-economic challenges. This would allow weaker universities to optimise their management and increase the level of competitiveness.

**Krzysztof Szewior** – habilitated doctor, assistant professor at the Department of Politics of the European Union at the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies at the University of War-

saw. His research interests and non-university experience relate to the higher education and social issues in the German-speaking countries and the EU. He is the author of numerous publications on the above-mentioned subject, including the monograph *Akredytacja w niemieckim szkolnictwie wyższym. Systemowe ujęcia zagadnienia* (2019).

**Krzysztof Szewior** – doktor habilitowany, adiunkt w Katedrze Polityk Unii Europejskiej na Wydziale Nauk Politycznych i Studiów Międzynarodowych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego. Zainteresowania badawcze i doświadczenie pozauniwersyteckie odnoszą się do szkolnictwa wyższego oraz problematyki społecznej państw niemieckiego obszaru językowego i UE. Autor licznych publikacji z tej tematyki, m.in. monografii *Akredytacja w niemieckim szkolnictwie wyższym. Systemowe ujęcia zagadnienia* (2019).

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