

## **Conclusions From the Questionnaire Survey and Focus Group in the HR-AWARD Project at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering at University of West Bohemia in Pilsen**

### 1) Questionnaire Survey

- Electronic form, 387 respondents approached, return rate 35.4% (137 respondents)
- 25 women, 110 men, 2 persons indicated an alternative gender identity
- 26 persons stated age under 30, 79 persons stated age 31 to 50, 32 persons stated age over 51
- 15 persons worked at administrative positions; 28 persons stated they were doctoral students; 3 persons stated they had postdoctoral status; 69 persons worked as researchers; 80 persons were academic staff; nobody indicated they had “other” positions
- Most of the respondents (98), indicated they had a time-unlimited contract; 39 stated they had a time-limited contract

<b>Do you feel that your research activity at UWB allows sufficient freedom?</b>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	48.18	40.15	2.92	0.73	8.03

<b>Do you think the ethical standards of research and related ethical codes are beneficial for your work? For example: with regard to plagiarism, publications in predatory journals, adding co-authors, citation cartels, etc.?</b>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	27.01	49.64	18.25	2.92	2.19

<b>Do you think that there is a problem related to the ethics of research and publication of results at your Faculty? For example: plagiarism, publications in predatory journals, adding co-authors, citation cartels, etc.?</b>				
	Yes	No	No answer	
%	8	73.33	18.67	-

<b>Do you think that UWB develops enough activity in the area of application of scientific results in practice, whether social or commercial?</b>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	21.17	49.64	17.52	2.19	9.49

<b>Do you think the results of your research are sufficiently presented to the public?</b>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	16.06	44.53	25.55	3.65	10.22

<b>Have you ever witnessed or experienced any kind of discrimination in the workplace?</b>				
	Yes	No	No answer	-
%	13.87	84.67	1.46	

<b>Do you feel that the work performance evaluation is sufficiently transparent and clear at your workplace?</b>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	11.68	51.82	28.47	6.57	1.46

<b>Do you think that the requirements listed within the UWB selection procedure that you passed as a candidate over the previous two years were sufficiently clear and fair?</b>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	5.84	9.49	0.73	1.46	9.49
72.99 % respondents have not attended any selection procedure at UWB during the past two years.					

<b>Do you think that the process of the UWB selection procedure that you passed as a candidate over the previous two years was sufficiently fair? For example: were the questions focused on your skills, experience, contributions, ideas you could offer, etc., and there was not any discrimination and you did not feel ridiculed, etc.?</b>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	10.95	9.49	0.73	0.73	1.46
76.64 % respondents have not attended any selection procedure at UWB during the past two years.					

<b>Do you think that the requirements for the post-doctoral position at the University of West Bohemia for which you applied were adequately and fairly determined?</b>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	22.58	41.94	9.68	6.45	19.35
Note: 31 respondents					

<b>Do you consider the working conditions adequate for the performance of your work? For example: the working environment, facilities and equipment, the possibilities for further education?</b>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	45.26	38.69	10.95	3.65	1.46

<b>In your opinion, do the working conditions enable you to balance work and family life? For example: with regard to the care of children or family members, and the development of your scientific career?</b>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	45.99	42.34	10.95	0	0.73

<b>How do you see the fact that you have a fixed-term contract?</b>					
	I do not mind.	It bothers me.	I do not care.	No answer	Note: 39 respondents
%	35.90	28.21	28.21	7.69	

<b>Do you feel that your workplace adequately supports mobility to foreign institutions?</b>					
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	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	34.31	39.42	14.60	1.46	10.22

<b>Do you feel that while ensuring student education you have sufficient opportunities (in terms of time, finance and capacity), to perform research activities as well?</b>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	12.41	40.88	29.20	8.03	9.49

<b>Should you experience or witness any unfair behaviour at your workplace, do you think you have enough opportunities to complain about such behaviour?</b>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	34.31	45.99	11.68	6.57	1.46

<b>Do you feel that you have enough opportunities to influence events at your workplace and in a wider institutional context, e.g. using various advisory and decision-making bodies for such purposes?</b>					
	Yes	Rather yes	Not really	No	No answer
%	16.06	42.34	31.39	7.30	2.92

#### **List any employee benefits you know of:**

The respondents most frequently indicated the meals allowance (the possibility of having a lower price at the University canteen and obtain meal vouchers). The second most mentioned were various courses and activities for the employees and their family members (such as language courses, tickets to culture and sports events, sports activities, fitness, etc.). The third most frequently mentioned item was the length of holidays, which is longer than required by law. The following benefit was the Flexi Pass, which is an annual contribution to various culture and other events, and flexible working hours. All other benefits were mentioned rather marginally.

#### **Which of these benefits are you using?**

In contrast to possessing knowledge of various benefits, fewer respondents claimed to be using them; certain benefits (such as the university kindergarten) were not used at all. Four respondents declared they were not using any benefits whatsoever.

#### **What kind of employee benefits do you think are missing at UWB?**

Among the benefits the employees missed the most were financial benefits and pension insurance. Financial benefits included various allowances and compensations (13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> salary). Frequently present was support to sports and culture, which included contributions to various sports and culture activities and organising sports events by the employer, higher level of civil amenities on the campus (more restaurants, on-campus kindergarten, a nice meeting point, etc.) and a wider choice of language courses and special training.

**Would you like to have some additional training at UWB beyond your work assignment and position, (e.g. training for starting your own spin-off company, training on ethics of research and publishing, career development, etc.)? Please write down what you would be interested in, and, if appropriate, write about the idea in detail.**

Highest in demand were training sessions on the topic of starting and supporting spin-off companies, career development, development of soft skills, i.e. how to deal with people. Interest was also shown in training on publication and research ethics, and language courses.

## **2) Focus Group**

- A contact form with 10 participants representing various types of persons (gender, age, doctoral student/employee, time-limited/unlimited contracts, and academic/non-academic staff)
- On May 29, 2018, 10 participants, under supervision of a discussion moderator
- The discussion looked into the aspects which appeared as the most problematic from the preceding questionnaire survey

## **Research Ethics and Publication Ethics**

- The problem is the settings of science evaluation which is based on compensation against the quantity of publication, forcing the employees to publish more outcomes at the expense of their quality.
- Participation in conferences is often not possible, which means no impacted outcome is generated as the employee does not receive funding for the travel as their employers state the activity is economically useless.
- The inclusion of co-authors has been marked negative, especially in those cases where outcomes mention persons who do not know about the outcome and never participated in their preparation. On the other hand, the participants also considered inclusion as co-authors as a necessary strategy for “survival” – to obtain good reviews and, subsequently, projects.
- Doctoral students are in a difficult situation as they are required to publish, also in impacted journals, immediately upon hiring, which for them is highly limiting and often also unrealistic. The entire situation therefore requires that a doctoral student be included as co-author in publications so that they enter the academic field and improve the chance for publishing as sole authors.

## **Activities in Application of Outcomes in Practice**

- Technology transfer and popularisation of outcomes do not process very well at the University, as the people who are in charge of those activities do not have much experience with that type of activity; they do not know how to present the outcomes, so they appeal to other subjects, subsequently all processes are very lengthy.
- The onus is also on the side of the employees, as they often do not embrace the culture of communication, do not forward information, and do not bring to attention

interesting outcomes which the Faculty and University might transfer further. This is related to the fact that UWB does not possess a strong media presence, nor does it systematically engage in establishing it. The University is practically not present in the media, which reflects poorly in its prestige and its being seen in the light of expert contribution; this applies to many fields.

- The experience with the Technology Transfer Department (OTT) has so far been rather negative. In the perfect case, OTT should generate opportunities for transfer of outcomes by active monitoring of projects and outcomes; it should also collect input from the employees whom it should assist in finding good opportunities and offer services.
- The Project Centre (PC) is often not fully used by the employees; it also fails in performing its role as it does not offer adequate services to project investigators during the project application and investigation stages. Quite often the problem could be the fact that the employees themselves do not seek assistance from the PC in preparing their projects; they rather prepare the project themselves and ask for it to be checked at the last instance.
- In general, the problem with PC and OTT is the fact that it is not quite clear what the responsibilities of the people are, or what the individual job descriptions are; those descriptions often change, making it quite complicated for the investigators to keep track of the process.
- A proposition has been made for the Faculty and University to keep broader contact with its alumni who could assist in building the media presence and participate in the popularisation of the Faculty and University in general.

#### **Discrimination and Possible Solutions**

- Although the participants have not experienced discrimination per se, they may have experienced various forms of injustice and the feeling of fright to express some of their opinions. Most frequently, the reason was a poor communication culture where supervisors do not have a strong habit of listening while the employees are not used to presenting their views.
- A specific problem can be the non-existence or malfunction of information channels. Therefore, it is necessary to make communication in the Faculty and its departments more transparent, to communicate issues more openly and frequently for instance via regular meetings which are currently absent in the structures.
- A specific situation is held by doctoral students who are subject to high demands (as all other employees), where they have to study and demonstrate working activities. This is very demanding and makes successful delivery of both components; their development and studies, contribute to high turnover.
- A problem is that researchers cannot vote in the Academic Senate; this is formally correct, yet it is seen as an unfair condition for they participate equally in the operations of the Faculty albeit their vote carries less weight. The identification of a solution is a complicated task as it is effectively barred by current legislation in force.

A temporary solution might lie in offering highly reduced part-time positions to those researchers who would be interested, allowing them to become members of the academic staff.

#### **Transparent Assessment of Performance**

- For the most part, employees do not receive any feedback from their supervisors. A system of assessment is not present. Typically, supervisors do not want to offer verbal assessment to their subordinates.
- A problem has also been the absence of communication regarding the expert and academic plan of an employee; this has resulted in situations where a number of employees engage in activities while not considering them sensible and being unable to visualise how they would capitalise on those activities in the future.
- It would be fitting, therefore, to establish regular meetings of supervisors with the employees of the departments and discuss their future and possible development of their expertise so that the employees see the meaning towards their future in the activities they are performing. Doctoral students often fail to recognise perspective of staying at the Faculty after they have completed their study programs.
- A problem is that assessment is often based on academic bibliography and not on the contribution individual employees deliver from other activities; the evaluation is often very generalising and not individual. This raises questions, as academic and research activities are both very different fields and rigid criteria for evaluating them cannot be established. A solution might lie in the Career Regulations that would act as an indicator where an employee might be headed and what they would have to accomplish for that goal; however, the response to that policy has been mixed (limitation of academic freedom, categorisation of employees, etc.).

#### **Influence on Activities at the University and the Faculty**

- Suggestions and requests to address or improve a certain aspect can be raised; however, a problem lies in the fact that those suggestions are not followed or reflected upon. No feedback exists on what has happened to the suggestions. This is often frustrating. In order to deliver a suggestion, the presenter needs to hold a corresponding position or an influence network. As such, it is necessary to promote permeability of suggestions and communication, to engage further in dialogue, feedback and regular discussion, especially from the part of the supervisors and the management of the Faculty.

#### **Time-limited Contracts**

- This is related to the overall culture of the Faculty, especially to human resources policy which ought to be based on the perspective prospects as the main criteria. As such, new employees should have this type of contract for no more than a few years so they could develop and offer perspective prospects for the Faculty and the University.

#### **Mobility Support**

- One of the causes of insufficient mobility support is the exaggerated emphasis on academic metrics which often regards impacted outcomes as conditions to mobility

(especially in terms of conferences). This is highly problematic due to the fact that mobilities are often rather research stays which are supposed to finalise the outcome; only then efforts for publication can be employed.

- The cause is apparently absence of awareness and lack of relevant information. Higher support to mobility for employees and doctoral students would assist in promoting the overall culture of the Faculty as those returning from such stays would bring new, varied stimuli to the office, which could then develop further.

#### **Coordination of Research and Teaching**

- This issue was highly mentioned especially by doctoral students who currently do not possess many opportunities to coordinate their study, teaching, projects, and other activities.
- In this aspect, one of the problems could be insufficient building of relationship of some employees to the office, Faculty and University; meaning they approach their positions solely on the material level, to earn as much money as possible. This means they often engage in project activities in seclusion. In result, those who also hold an immaterial approach to their positions have to engage in other necessary activities, especially teaching, and become overloaded.

#### **Miscellaneous**

- Another problematic issue is related to electronic information and data systems, which have been confusing and unfriendly to the users, such as the internal database for project records, which makes the retrieval of any relevant data highly complicated. It is necessary to attempt, in cooperation with the other parts of the University, to establish discussion on the improvement of the electronic systems and on specific requirements of the Faculties and constituent parts.

This document reports on the results of the questionnaire survey and the focus group and was prepared by: Ing. Kateřina Newton  
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