



UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

University Council

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MEETING

27th November, 2020

Participants:

University Council:

Prof. Janusz Bujnicki (Chair)
Prof. Pearl Dykstra
Prof. Poul Holm
Prof. Krzysztof Redlich
Katarzyna Zajdel-Kurowska
Marynika Woroszyńska-Sapieha
Kamil Bonas

University of Warsaw:

Paulina Bełdyga

In the beginning Paulina Bełdyga informed that due to unclear reasons the Google Meet platform does not allow to record the meeting (Appendix No. 1 - print screen of the settings took during the meeting).

(1) Adoption of the agenda

Prof. Bujnicki outlined the agenda and it was passed unanimously as presented below:

17.00-18.00

- (1) Adoption of the agenda
 - [\[1_document_draft agenda\]](#)
- (2) Technical and organizational matters
- (3) **Resolution on granting consent to undertake an additional gainful activity by the Rector of the University of Warsaw**
 - [\[5.1_document_draft resolution\]](#)
- (4) **Resolution on the position regarding a conflict of interest**
 - [\[4.1_document_draft resolution\]](#)
- (5) **Resolution on nominating of persons to represent the University Council in the Steering Committee of the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” program at the University of Warsaw**
 - [\[3.1_document_draft resolution\]](#)
- (6) AOB

(2) Technical and organisational matters

Prof. Bujnicki informed the Council that:

- because some minor mistakes were discovered in the minutes accepted previously, some technical changes were introduced. On request of the members of the Council, the file with „track changes” mode was provided;
- Rector Nowak confirmed including the point „Annual Report from the University Council” in the agenda of the December meeting of the Senate (December 16th);
- Rector also confirmed joining the Council for the meeting on December 14th;
- The procedure of appointing a new university council was briefly presented.

(3) Resolution on granting consent to undertake an additional gainful activity by the Rector of the University of Warsaw

Prof. Bujnicki reminded what were the conclusions from the previous meetings and offered further information provided by the Rector Nowak. The final exchange of views on the matter took place. The voting was ordered and the resolution granting the consent was passed with 6 votes in favor and one abstaining.

(4) Resolution on the position regarding a conflict of interest

Prof. Bujnicki asked for the comments and remarks on the draft position of the University Council on the management of the conflict of interests. The final version of the text was agreed and the resolution passed with all in favor result.

(5) Resolution on nominating of persons to represent the University Council in the Steering Committee of the “Excellence Initiative – Research University” programme at the University of Warsaw

The voting on the resolution was ordered and it was adopted with all in favor result.

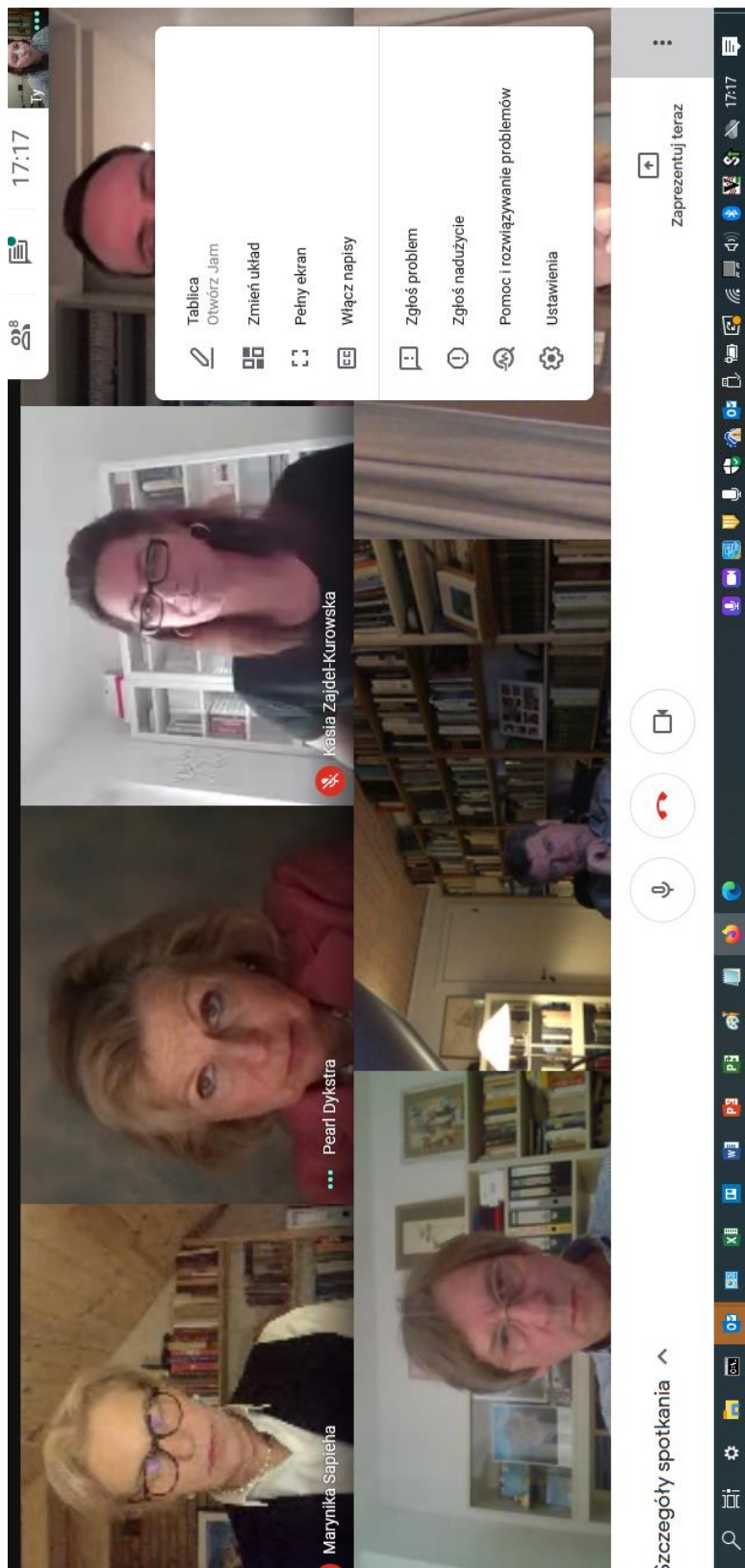
(6) AOB

Two matters were raised at this point.

The first one regarded the Times Higher Education piece on the situation in Poland (appendix No. 2 to the minutes). The situation in Poland was presented by Prof. Bujnicki. A short discussion took place. It was suggested that a common position of different university councils across Poland on the matter of the autonomy of universities and freedom of research could be considered.

The second matter was the issue of granting a financial prize to the rector on the occasion of the University Day (Święto Uniwersytetu). Prof. Bujnicki explained that the Director of the HR Department (Biuro Spraw Pracowniczych) contacted him and informed that the prizes are granted by the rector every year to the employees who contributed the most to the University development in the previous year; however since the Rector is not allowed to grant a prize to himself, it was suggested by the Director of the HR Department that the Council could consider doing it. As there was no formal request presented to the Council, and the Council did not identify a firm legal basis for such a move, the Council decided to leave this issue unrecognized.

Appendix No. 1 to the minutes of the University Council meeting
held on November 27th , 2020



<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/poland-trying-destroy-universities-independence-warns-rector>

Poland trying to destroy universities' independence, warns rector

New education minister threatens to withdraw funding from universities following abortion law protests clash

November 23, 2020

[Ellie Bothwell](#)

Twitter: [@elliebothwell](#)

Polish universities are on “a collision course” with the government, according to a university leader who has claimed that “the last fortress of democratic society” in the country was under attack.

Universities have been caught in the crossfire of the recent protests against a court ruling that would outlaw almost all abortions, after 15 institutions decided to cancel classes on one of the days of the demonstrations – the largest in Poland since the fall of communism – thus enabling students and academics to attend.

The new education and science minister responded by [threatening to withdraw funding](#) from those universities.

“Please do not forget that I am competent to distribute investment funds for universities, research funds and other grants. The ministry will take into account the recent actions of the authorities of these universities,” warned Przemysław Czarnek, a member of the ruling Law and Justice party who has been in the post for a month and is known for his opposition to LGBT and women’s rights.

Przemysław Wiszewski, rector of the [University of Wrocław](#), one of the institutions that cancelled classes, said he wanted to give students and academics the choice of whether to take part in the protests and avoid “quarrels and violent speech” taking place within the campus community.

The minister’s threat has been interpreted as largely rhetorical as the majority of university funding in Poland is not administered by the education ministry, but Professor Wiszewski said he was concerned that it was part of a broader attack against the independence of higher education. The education minister, who is a professor at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, also wants to reorient curricula “towards the teaching of the church and the national vision of history and culture”, Professor Wiszewski said.

“We are in trouble because he’s setting values and aims that are absolutely different from ours as researchers. So we are on a collision course,” he said, adding that the erosion of the independence of the country’s justice system began as “small changes and then it snowballed”.

“We are the last fortress of democratic society. I’m afraid we are just the last element of this puzzle.”

Professor Wiszewski said that the middle of a pandemic was “a good moment for the government to charge and to destroy what’s left of democratic society”.

“I don’t have any illusions that when the government wants to destroy the independence of the university, the whole nation will stand up and say: ‘That’s not allowed.’ Absolutely not – people have greater worries than the future of the university,” he said.

Weronika Grzebalska, an assistant professor in political studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences, who researches nationalism and right-wing politics from a gender perspective, said that the government was attempting “a serious power grab on higher education”.

“All of this creates a hostile atmosphere around academia and around certain strands of research. This might push academics towards self-censorship because they are concerned if they write about gender, for example, they might not have state funding, and some institutions may think twice before giving money in certain areas,” she said.

Dr Grzebalska added that an “ideological reshaping of higher education” was made possible by a “broader neoliberal turn in the last 15 years” that has put more power in the hands of rectors, at the expense of the academic community, and placed more emphasis on competitiveness rather than academic freedom.

“Most probably the new minister will use this already de-democratised neoliberal system of academia and pursue a number of chaotic ideology-driven interventions,” she said.

ellie.bothwell@timeshighereducation.com