



ELECTION PROGRAMME

of a candidate for
Rector of University
of Ostrava for the term
2023 - 2027



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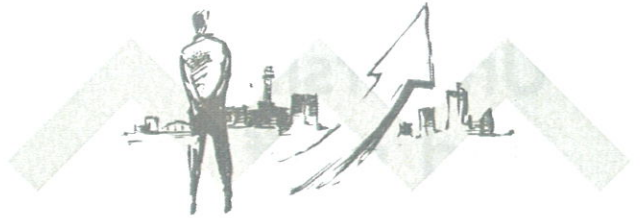


The University of Ostrava has the Strategic Plan of its development approved and valid until the year 2025. It is a comprehensive and sophisticated document. As the Dean of the Faculty of Science, together with a number of other colleagues, I actively participated in its preparation. Its goals are ambitious, meaningful and important for the University, and if I am elected I will of course build on them. However, the situation in society and in the world has changed since it was created and some areas will now have a higher priority, requiring greater effort, work commitment, innovative solutions and, above all, a professional and experienced team. We must constantly see the Strategic Plan as a dynamic document responding to the dynamics of time and the dynamics of the University. In my election programme, I would like to bring up challenges that the University is facing and also outline long-term priorities beyond 2025.

The current situation requires, in my opinion, a change in the way we should run the University. I want to emphasize communication internally and more vigorously promote the interests of the University on the outside. We need to move towards more focused explaining of the steps that lie ahead for the University, to demonstrate the importance and necessity of individual decisions, and to take a more active role at the regional and national level. The various Rector 's departments must be managed by strong personalities with the ability to listen, to work intensively on their entrusted agendas, and with a network of contacts to promote the interests of the University. Stronger communication with the management of individual faculties is a means of reaching a possible consensus. Nevertheless, as a potential Rector, I do not renounce the right to make decisions and to be held accountable for them.



Why should I become the Rector?



I am a convinced academic who firmly believes in the power of a university as an important part of a democratic society. I believe in the power of ideas and in the importance of education and the potential of scientific findings. I have held a number of academic positions and have experienced a role of a young academic as well as the Head of Department. I have been a member of teams (including scientific ones) and I have also led teams. I have been in the role of an Academic Senator and also the Chairman of the Faculty Academic Senate. I have been through two elections for the Dean and have been leading the Faculty of Science for eight years. I am linked to the university world at home and abroad. In my role of a Vice-Chairman of the Association of Deans of Faculties of Science, I try to change national mechanisms in their approach to universities and to influence, by my views, those who also decide our future by virtue of a political office. I am trying to find new ways and build an environment to achieve set goals. I am involved in both scientific and purely practical projects and I try to find ways to practice in my field and I also realize interdisciplinary collaboration. I listen carefully and move suggestions to the implementation phase if their content speaks to me as well. I like sharing my experience with young people, I am keen on debating with them and I try to pass my vision of the world on them. I do not like pretence, on the contrary, I prefer a direct and honest behaviour. I am a person who likes the dynamics of youth and the wisdom of old age. I am very happy to give my time to those who are sincere and thoughtful in their endeavours. All of my experience and competence come from what I have personally been through and have experienced. I consider these skills and knowledge as essential to be able to serve well in the position of the Rector. I know our University and I truly enjoy working for its benefits.

How do I perceive the role of the Rector?



I see the Rector as a person who brings the views of the University as a whole into the public space, both within the University and on the outside. I consider him, with a certain level of exaggeration, as an ambassador who represents the University in meetings at top events and who also serves as a representative of the University within the regional and local area. I see him as a carrier of important ideas in terms of the University development and a person who is also good in communication, both internal and external. He is a person who carries a lot of responsibility on his shoulders, but on the contrary he has largely limited possibilities in direct management of the University units. In this regard, his ability to show and explain the importance of setting the right path and his ability to mediate discussions on crucial issues among all the parties play a significant role.

University and staff



The University is formed by a community of academics, scientists and administrative and technical staff. Thanks to their mutual cooperation, an environment for education of not only the young generation can arise. One of the most important long-term goals of the university management must be creating ideal conditions for the work of each of the above-mentioned groups. In this respect, it is impossible to ignore the fact that wage conditions are an increasingly growing problem within not only our own University. It is no longer possible to accept a situation in which teachers at lower levels of the Czech education system have often higher financial remuneration than our academics and scientists, even those with the highest academic degrees. My main mission in this regard will be trying to remedy this situation.

Ways to achieve this:

- a) In a close cooperation with the faculty management and other universities, creating targeted and sustained pressure on the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the Government to fix this situation. Insist on systemic changes, not just ad hoc resources and funds to overcome critical situations.
- b) Seeking additional sources of funding within the University and individual units to strengthen the economic health of our University. To do this, it is important to systematically use the funds from the pools.
- c) Not to be afraid to open up critical points in terms of costs and their optimization, including strategic documents.

In addition to improvement of the financial conditions, I will strive to improve conditions in the context of the wellbeing of our employees. As employees, we spend a significant part of our lives at work. It is therefore important to take care of working conditions and create an environment that people enjoy coming to. This is primarily based on good interpersonal relationships.

Ways to achieve this:

- a) Careful selection and training of managers, who are key drivers of the development and working conditions of individual departments.
- b) Preparation and implementation of new employee programmes (educational, sports, cultural, etc.).
- c) Opening up the newly built sports facilities also to our employees.
- d) Taking care of our employees also in the form of social events and activities at individual units and work places, but also within the whole University (continue with the

established events that we organize at the OU and which have a good response).

- e) To the extent possible, setting up a bilingual environment at the University so that both Czech and foreign employees feel part of the University community.

One of the important factors of a positive employee-employer relationship is to enable continuous personal growth. In this respect, as a university, we have a great potential which, unfortunately, we are not always able to fulfil.

Ways to achieve this:

- a) Preparation and implementation of training courses in various development areas.
- b) Linking targeted career growth with tools for the development of employees' competences, also according to the employee's personal choice.
- c) Targeted search and communication with employees on areas of potential development.

For all of the above-mentioned activities, it is necessary to create a background and raise funds. We must certainly not resign ourselves to the bargaining power of the University. I am convinced that we can only fulfil our social mission in a quality manner if we demand adequate financial resources, but also seek them collectively, and together as individuals, teams, and the management will become proactive and wise finance managers in each particular field.

University and students



The events of the last two years have further emphasized the importance of quality university education, the content of which must be the formation of professionally proficient, but also critically thinking graduates who can understand the problem and find a solution, who are not afraid to communicate and assert their views on the world based on quality arguments and facts. At the same time, our goal should be to educate empathetic professionals who are not indifferent to the state which our society, Europe, and the world are at, but at the same time graduates who do not miss the issues of the state of the environment, who can perceive the importance of art for the development of personality, and who can openly discuss contemporary problems, think critically about them, and collaborate on ways to their solution. I see the development of critical thinking in our students as quite crucial. It should not be an activity separate from professional education, but a full-fledged part of it, embedded in the teaching of all study programmes and supported by the University management. We should also be aware of the Snowflake phenomenon in the youngest

generation entering universities. We should not try to reinforce it, but use our awareness in adapting our teaching style and counselling services.

I am glad to see that the University is finally experiencing an unprecedented development of student societies, which not only connect students but also create and bring innovations to a wide range of other University activities. They bring an important essence to university studies – a quality student life. I see its development in the symbiosis of activities and ideas of student members of the academic community and their support from the University – infrastructural, economic and socio-cultural. I consider the socio-cultural support as essential. Creating an environment at the University where student opinion is heard and listened to and is taken for granted as part of the functioning of the University. We already have many mechanisms for students to be ‚heard‘, but we have not yet succeeded in fully ‚hearing‘ them. Programme Boards can serve us as one of the examples, as they oversee the development of degree programmes and their members must be student representatives. In many cases, this is still only a fulfilment of a formal obligation. Therefore, I still behold a significant opportunity to push the level of student participation further. And not only theirs, but also our graduates‘. In this respect, we are very much behind the curve and the feedback role of our alumni is being quite neglected. Moreover, this is the most important group also in terms of our presentation among future applicants.

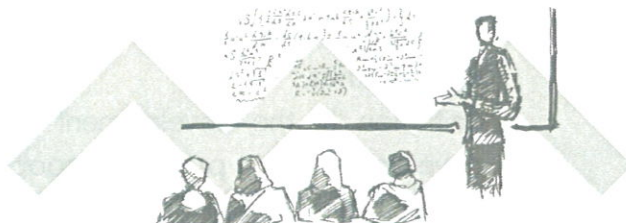
One of the basic pillars of quality education is mutual trust and mutual responsibility – of the teacher and the student. It is building of a culture of mutual responsibility for teaching and studies, the teacher’s adherence to clearly stated and meaningful rules for course completion, and the search for new topics and ways of teaching that can significantly eliminate the negative phenomenon of academic failure and excessive stress level on the students’ side. Creating meaningful, motivating challenges to introduce students to new solutions to interesting problems based on practical experience, reinforces learning and exposes students to positive stimuli that will enable them to become graduates ready for the challenges of today and especially of the future.

Ways to achieve this:

- a) Systematic support of the implementation of elements of critical thinking in all curricula.
- b) Creating and improving conditions for the functioning of student societies – edification and support during the process of their establishing and subsequent support of their activities.
- c) Regular informing about the opportunities for students to collaborate, not only in the educational process, but in the whole life of the University (including the framework of existing participation formats).
- d) Developing a framework of student ambassadors.
- e) Initiating a formation of student working groups to help develop selected areas of student life and particularly wellbeing.

- f) To the extent possible, setting up a bilingual environment at the University so that international students feel like equal students because they bring experience from a different cultural background that can positively shape us.
- g) Establishing regular meetings between the Rector and students, open to all students.
- h) Preparation and implementation of a project for communication and permanent collaboration with the alumni of our University.

University and education



The world is changing, the applicants are changing and the demands regarding our educational goals and our skills in the educational process are changing. Large universities can have a disadvantage of inertia so it can take longer to implement necessary changes. In this respect, I consider our University to be an institution with great potential for flexibility and a relatively short reaction time to the challenges ahead.

The number of students at the University of Ostrava is increasing. This is an encouraging trend showing that there is interest in studying at our University. However, a fundamental issue is the structure of individual types of study programmes. Once again, there is a moment when the target ratio of individual types should be formulated, also with regard to the real possibilities of the University and individual faculties to provide study programmes in terms of personnel and budget. All changes in the study area have obvious budgetary/economic implications. A fundamental goal of the University must be increasing quality of the admitted applicants, continuous work to reduce the drop-out rate (not equal to the principle of reducing demands!). Students must be made aware of the fact that they are as important part of the educational process as the teachers, if not even more. Participation in the process itself must be continuously complemented in terms of evaluation and giving feedback through other channels. In principle, we have a number of systemic measures in place, but we do not make full use of them. (What a surprise that even relatively engaged students are unaware of the existence of Programme Boards and the representation of the student community on them.)

It still holds true that the University must be able to accelerate the creation of attractive and modern study programmes. I perceive that a younger generation is looking for challenges and study topics not only according to an appealing title, but they are more often looking at competences they will acquire and whether they will help them succeed in their working careers.

Special attention should also be paid to the area of doctoral studies which is closely linked to the area of scientific development. In this respect, I see a close linking of dissertation projects to ongoing scientific projects, ideally with the direct involvement of doctoral students as employees, and the emphasis on the quality of supervisors as a fundamental condition for quality doctoral programmes.

Ways to achieve this:

- a) Opening an inter-faculty strategic debate on the mix of types and forms of study programmes.
- b) Initiation of the development of the Faculty strategic management in curriculum development and provide a space for university-wide initiation of potential changes through the already established strategic development fund.
- c) Continuous work to raise awareness of opportunities for students to have a say in curriculum matters.
- d) Consistent monitoring that the scientific/research projects and activities of doctoral programmes supervisors are evaluated.
- e) Developing and promotion of new trends in university teaching. Using the initiative of the newly formed „All Together“ learning community to bring about university-wide change in undergraduate teaching.

University and science



The University of Ostrava must provide more opportunities for young scientists, starting from undergraduate studies, and this fact must be a major asset of our University. Giving early opportunities to the best ones and to those who want to work hard on themselves. Smaller study groups allow students to encounter scientific activities in our University more quickly. We already have wonderful examples of this phenomenon working organically in a number of departments. High-quality training in doctoral programmes is a major tool for forming competitive postdocs. The upcoming transformation of doctoral studies will mean a major change in funding and numbers of doctoral students, and the University must be prepared for this. The quality of doctoral studies relies on motivated students and branch boards which make good choices of supervisors and dissertation topics. Without quality facilities and financial covering, we cannot compete with quality training of young scientists abroad.

Science comes in two forms - good or bad. The University of Ostrava must accentuate and maintain the trend of quantitative and qualitative growth of science. The set strategy of science evaluation within the Czech Republic (M17+) also allows our University to achieve a shift. We must not be afraid to submit projects and more often enter international competition for European research projects. The competition is high, but in some fields the chances are relatively significant. However, in this respect, a quality project support is crucial so that scientists are not burdened with too much administration. I also see a growing interest in a collaboration in the field of applied projects and it is clear that this area will also be a significant challenge for the University, even in the implementation of some very specific project calls.

A very important moment that the University is facing is a preparation and implementation of the Open Science strategy, without which we are not able to stand up to a number of new project calls.

Ways to achieve this:

- a) Increase in the critical mass of quality scientific workforce. The new strategic projects LERCO, REFRESH and OP JAK Excellence must use the funds in a targeted way to acquire new scientific capacities, which will also enable a higher degree of internationalisation of our research teams and interconnection with world science.
- b) Preparation of projects - the University must have a high quality and flexible project team at the University - wide level and systematically use the overhead funds to fund it.
- c) Consistent applying of control mechanisms in the area of doctoral training and adequate responses to critical points.
- d) DKRVO resources should be continuously used in a targeted manner for the long-term conceptual development of a scientific capacity.
- e) Promotion of the area of collaboration between scientific teams and practice, acceleration of collaboration and confidence in fields with a high degree of application competitiveness.
- f) One of the important research areas that Ostrava University should strengthen is research in the field of didactics which should be directed towards strengthening the quality education of future teachers.
- g) Preparation of an Open Science strategy at UO and developing the action plan for its implementation.

University and its premises



High-quality buildings, laboratories, teaching, sports and artistic facilities as well as accommodation represent the absolute standard for a full functioning of a modern university. If we look around Czech universities, most of them, even the regional ones, have built essential facilities and are largely just fine-tuning further development. The University of Ostrava has taken a step in the right direction by building modern facilities for the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Education, or by implementing SimLek. Unfortunately, other buildings still remain in a state unfit for teaching and other university activities of the 21st century. I am referring primarily to the facilities of the Faculty of Arts, but also to the already inadequate Building C of the Faculty of Science and, of course, the archaic-looking building of the Faculty of Fine Arts on Podlahova Street. I very much welcome the efforts to renovate the Jan Opletal Dormitories, because without modern accommodation facilities we cannot compete with other universities. We want to be not only a strong magnet for domestic students but also for international students of English degree programmes. If we want to stand up to the vision of an open internationalised university, then we cannot succeed without modern halls of residence. One of the significant transformational potentials of the UO is the teachers training. In this respect, I see an open discussion of a possible implementation of a so-called clinical school as a strategically correct way to initiate a qualitatively different direction in pedagogical research and education.

Services provided by central departments are also part of the University quality facilities. Over the last eight years, a number of areas have emerged. They help the University fill some of the missing services that a modern university should provide and can hardly do without. To name a few, we can mention the areas of PR and marketing, the analytical unit or the development in staff training. Certain areas of university-wide services certainly deserve more attention if properly directed (the investment management, the project management or the buildings management).

The latest development in the field of energies has caught the University unprepared in terms of building energy reduction and energy management strategies. Going forward, we need to focus more on the systematic use of grant funding that is now starting to emerge, so that we do not face increased energy costs in the future at the expense of development funding (especially for human resource strengthening).

Ways to achieve this:

- a) Finishing up and starting the renovation of remaining unsuitable buildings, consistent requiring for additional funding from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (existence of a deep historical debt).

- b) Finishing up the project documentation for the Jan Opletal Dormitories in Hladnov and securing funding from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports subsidy programme.
- c) Finishing up the project documentation for the construction of the LERCO research facility and starting the construction.
- d) Working on the preparation and possible implementation of the clinical school project in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.
- e) Continuous preparation of other projects for the revitalization of remaining UO buildings on an ongoing basis, discussing these projects and developing implementation plans based on clear priorities.
- f) Thorough endeavour of the passporting of buildings and their optimal use across the University.
- g) Undertaking an audit of services provided by central UO units and initiating structural changes to make these services more efficient towards the faculties, linked to budgetary possibilities.
- h) Systematic use of subsidies for energy measures and consistent incorporating of energy saving solutions in the renovation and construction of new buildings.

University and region/city



We are a university in the city and the city is our campus. We are a university anchored in the region, but also connected to the world. We are not here for ourselves, but for our immediate and more distant surroundings. However, neither of the above geographical aspects must limit our expansion and ambitions for further development. On the contrary, they should bring incentives and synergies that will lead to improvements in the city and the region. We want to make a lasting contribution to help move towards the developed areas of the European Union not only the city of Ostrava, but also other cities in the region and the region as a whole. Universities can stimulate positive changes, whether they are new ideas, the implementation of cooperation or positive changes in the educational and economic structure of the population. In the same way, as we strive for University of Ostrava with a larger number of students, the common goal should be also to try to contribute to the growth in the population of the city. I am convinced that the hallmark of a university city can help Ostrava greatly. Quality education is an important stimulus for the development of the city and the region, in addition to quality health care, affordable housing and a good environment. In this respect, the University of Ostrava must also play a positive role on a permanent basis, which, in my opinion, includes also a role of a constructive critic. The economic burden arising from the social need for products of a

university environment cannot be transferred to universities. I am referring, for example, to an increased demand for quality graduates from teaching, medical or other degree programmes. In the future, the University will be able to meet the demand for the missing professions only to the extent that it is capable economically and employee-wise.

Ways to achieve this:

- a) The University must be involved, through members of the management (including the Deans), in all key city and regional level committees and forums where long-term strategies and initiatives are born.
- b) The University must actively promote strategic topics and initiate their implementation.
- c) The University must reflect changes in society and should respond to them to the extent possible.
- d) The University and its units must act together with partners and jointly promote the interests of the University.

University and the world



Our University is on the scientific and educational map of the Czech Republic. However, it should have a global dimension. In this direction, our efforts have certainly fallen short of the set goal. We have been falling down in the global university rankings for several years. Among other things, this is because we have not cared much about this area and, more importantly, we do not have a strategy on handling this sphere. That is not a criticism! The University had much more fundamental tasks, stabilising and developing research teams, new accreditations, stepping out into the world of major investments, creating more professional support teams and managing them, not to mention finance and human resources. Perhaps that is why this area of activity has taken up only a fraction of the effort over the last eight years. But we should certainly be interested in this matter and work on it.

On the other hand, as a university, we must initiate discussions on a national scale. In the long term, we are not competitive as a country in recruiting foreign professors. We are not able to be an attractive country because we do not provide comparable position conditions like other countries do. A quality candidate cannot aspire to be a full-fledged professor, even if they held that position abroad, but must go through the entire graduation process. In this regard, extraordinary professorial institutes are a good but not a full-fledged state. At the University level, we also need to achieve that we have a very comprehensive adaptation program for incoming foreign staff, from a doctoral student to

postdoc, to research and academic staff at the highest level. Even with these small steps, we are opening the University to the world.

Ways to achieve this:

- a) Analysing more thoroughly the nature of the functioning of international rankings.
- b) Monitoring and analysing trends in the international university world. Getting inspiration and seeking opportunities for further partnerships.
- c) Setting a University strategy that is long-term and must be organically linked to all core activities.
- d) Building on contacts and not abandoning the NEOLAiA platform, on the contrary, trying to make the most of it.
- e) Opening a discussion to change some graduations to systematized positions in the universities.
- f) Developing and implementing a comprehensive adaptation programme for international students and staff.



Finally, I would like to thank all of my supporters. All those who have been willing to give me their opinions and feedback during my academic and Dean's career. I especially appreciate the critical insights, because they make us think over and move forward. I would like to thank the current University management, especially the Rector Jan Lata and his team, for bringing the University of Ostrava from a remote corner to the centre of University events. I would like to thank all the potential opposing candidates for the opportunity to discuss their views on the future development of our University.

What you can expect from me:

Straightforward and constructive approach, looking for solutions not problems, professionalism, hard work, insight, discussion and courage to make decisions in real time.

The University of Ostrava has been and will remain my main work priority.