

INDEPENDENT SCIENCE DECLARATION

DEAR SCIENTISTS, ACADEMICS, STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION FACILITIES, AND EMPLOYEES OF R&D INSTITUTIONS IN POLAND

Over the last few years, we have been observing changes gradually introduced by the ruling camp in Poland. Higher education facilities and other R&D institutions have not been spared either. Under the guise of reforms in the Polish higher education system, the ruling authority has been pursuing their conviction that science should not focus on the world around us, but on implementing the ideologic—and frequently antiscientific—vision of the shaping of the society and its elites. At the core of a few the solutions implemented lies an erroneous conviction, detrimental to science as such and to the entire society alike, that higher education facilities and other R&D institutions are factories of innovation and human resources for businesses and that a scientist's key task is to score points according to some program developed by officials. Born more than 10 years ago already, this approach to the functioning of science and to scientists has recently been thoughtlessly transformed into detrimental solutions. In this system, higher education facilities are becoming corporations competing for scores according to some vague ranking rules.

We are already witnessing a catastrophe of many scientific fields and directions and see numerous scientific papers or valuable initiatives fade away, suppressed by ministerial indicators or regulations. We are watching the twilight of universities as spaces of dialogue that aims to seek the truth and addresses fundamental questions of humans. Ambitious and not easy, this task sometimes brings about answers that, although difficult to accept, are indispensable in building a better future.

Pseudoscientific utterances and events tend to break into the confines of Polish higher education facilities with an increasing frequency, and numerous representatives of the authority have taken the liberty of denying scientists' work and destroying the reputation of Polish researchers. Lies and manipulation have become a standard, while the social role of science and intellectual elites has been marginalized and is humiliated daily. The dehumanizing propaganda that is being regularly practiced by the ruling authority utilizes untrue, manipulated information, which oftentimes strikes at the fundamentals of the contemporary science and destroys social confidence in scientists.

OUR APPEAL

- **To all employees and students of higher education facilities and other R&D institutions in Poland: Stand out against the changes that, within a few years, will lead to a catastrophe and will deprive the Polish society of its intellectual and cultural foundations. We are aware of the diversity of the Polish scientific circles and of the existing divisions, which are reflected in this particular social sphere as well, but if we do not speak with one voice, we will never manage to bring these pseudoreforms to a halt. The Polish science is longing for change, but not the one we have been served over the last few years by the ruling authority.**

- **To the unequalled Polish Professors: Speak out your minds; share your opinions with the university/institute community; and speak up in the public debate. Actions of the ruling authority aim at replacing the scientific elites with submissive individuals eager to implement the ideology of reconstructing the Polish society according to the worst nationalist models and prejudices. Please, do not be afraid to defend values impersonated by universities—like the freedom of thought and freedom of conducting scientific research. Do not be afraid to ask inconvenient questions or to criticize the evil you are witnessing.**
- **To all those who have been touched by any disturbing phenomena at higher education facilities in Poland or who have been witnessing events, utterances, or decisions menacing the freedom of science, undermining the basics of scientific research or educational activity, or introducing pseudoscience or religious or political ideologies in universities: Do monitor and document such phenomena, and oppose them both in word and in deed.**
- **To all those who cherish values such as freedom, equality, and justice; to all those who show respect and tolerance to all participants of the public discourse, and who value reliable, science-based development and progress: Please, support scientists and academics in their fight for these values and goals. If science is to make our lives better, it must not be guided by ideologies, prejudice, religious fanatisms, or unrestrained greed for profit.**

A VISION OF HIGHER EDUCATION FACILITIES AND SCIENCE WE DO NOT ACCEPT

1. **We do not accept efforts to incite divisions in the academic and scientific circles or gradual restricting of the freedom of research and of scientific/academic activity, for instance, through manipulations with financing.**
2. **We do not agree to have top managerial offices in the Polish science and higher education occupied by persons with insufficient competences or by individuals lacking the ethical qualifications required from managers in areas so relevant for the state.**
3. **We do not accept ideologic pressure on scientists/academics and educational facilities; or attempts to restrict the freedom of speech; or efforts to pursue the impression that certain subjects or research directions are frowned upon by the state institutions.**
4. **We do not accept manipulation with scientific facts by representatives of the authorities; or the use of pseudoscientific lies in the public debate and equating them with work of several generations of scientists.**
5. **We do not accept underfunding of the Polish science and higher education. It is impossible to conduct world-class research without adequate funds.**
6. **We do not accept a reality in which grants are used as determinants of the quality of science and where officials prioritize the number of grants over scientific research and its effects.**
7. **We do not accept a system in which the rules change almost every single day, also in the middle of contests, recruitment processes, or evaluated semesters. With a strategy like this, nothing can be properly planned or performed and there is no way to adapt to the changing ideas put forward by officials.**

8. We do not accept a system in which forced HR mobility is used as a remedy for all ills or diseases, while family and eagerness to settle down are considered excuses rather than actual problems. The ruling authority has inflected the word “family” through all cases, yet scientists/academics are still destined to move from place to place uprooted.
9. We do not accept a system in which a blind eye is turned on the unproportionate incidence of mental disorders in young scientists/academics due to low income, increasing burdens, rapidly changing requirements, and lack of perspectives.
10. We do not agree to have irrational lists of scientific papers and publications that do not reflect the quality of science, but rather the influences of private publishers and corporations.
11. We do not accept a system that shows no understanding of the fact that evaluative scoring algorithms do not promote interdisciplinarity or international cooperation but play a restrictive—or even preventive—role.
12. We do not accept a system that does not consider the necessity to provide funds for short-term consultations with other facilities or for travels to participate in conferences/seek materials, which are obvious to every scientist/academic worker. Without this, there is surely no room for progress in innovation.
13. We do not accept a system in which no one cares about teaching and the quality of education acquired by graduates, or about conversations or discussions with students, as these do not allow universities to earn credits.
14. We do not accept a system in which universities are meant to be managed by dictators and where trade unions and other internal bodies are seen as outdated.
15. We do not accept a system in which there is no place for the university as a cultural institution that focuses not only on following global trends, but also on studying the society and its products and on popularizing and educational activity.
16. We do not agree to see the university becoming a place for disseminating nationalist, xenophobic, homophobic, transphobic, or antiscientific views that incite divisions, harassment, or discrimination due to origin, sex, sexual orientation, or religious confession.

OUR DEMANDS FROM THE RULING AUTHORITY

1. We demand the abandonment of any attempts to bring pseudoscience or ideology to the Polish higher education facilities under the guise of defending the freedom of speech or expressing opinions.
2. We demand the development of methods to evaluate the work of scientists and academic teachers that would be tailored to individual areas and disciplines.
3. We demand the abandonment of any mechanisms of functioning of the Polish science that promote dishonesty and manipulation.
4. We demand transparent, stable funding for scientific research, suitable for planning its development and stabilizing the position of the Polish researchers in the world of science.
5. We demand decent income for the Polish scientists and academics, allowing them to compete with the scientific world.
6. We demand genuine support for young scientists and academics that would make it possible for them to reconcile intensive professional career with family life.

7. We demand that decision-makers abandon any attempts to exert an impact on the functioning of the Polish higher education and R&D institutions through manipulations with financing.
8. We demand that the strategy to divide the scientific circles, depreciate scientific achievements, and destroy intellectual authorities be abandoned.
9. We demand that a modern model of a higher education facility be developed based on the experience of the world of science, warranting reliable and transparent functioning of the Polish science.
10. We demand changes that would mold the Polish higher education facilities into centers of social debate and development promoting respect for diversity and building an open, solidary society and its elites.

OUR INTENTIONS

1. Our intention is to initiate a genuine debate on the future of the Polish science and to create a vision of the same for the decades to come.
2. Our intention is to develop scientific work evaluation mechanisms that would consider specificities of individual fields.
3. Our intention is to restore the role of universities as spaces for discussion and collective quest for answers to fundamental questions asked by the contemporary science.
4. Our intention is to promote partnership between mentors and students, based on mentoring rather than on feudal-like relations.
5. Our intention is to restore social confidence in the world of science and to bring science back to the world of politics, in which the decision-making must be grounded in scientific facts and forecasts.
6. Our intention is to rebuild the education system and make it drive creativity and curiosity of the world in children and young people instead of forcing ideologic visions of politicians.
7. Our intention is to increase expenditure on scientific/academic research in Poland, and in this way make it possible for the Polish scientists and academics to truly compete with scientists and academics from abroad.
8. Our intention is to develop standards for democratic administration of higher education and R&D institutions with a pronounced role of trade unions and other internal bodies.

Independent Science Initiative

Kraków, 20 November 2020