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Articles

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Students' Research Activity Based on the Example of the Law Students' Scientific Club at UMCS

Działalność naukowo-badawcza studentów na przykładzie Studenckiego Koła Naukowego Prawników UMCS

SUMMARY

The students' research activity defined as a system of forms aimed at meeting and developing scientific interests of academic youth is pursued mainly in such areas as holding scientific conferences, publishing, running research projects, organisation of competitions, study trips, and expert meetings. This activity cannot only be perceived as a form of student's activity but also as one of the factors that shape the Polish academia by early influencing young scholars. It allows the young people to learn appropriate attitudes and acquire expertise and experience necessary for the development of innovation and internationalisation of the Polish higher education system. This article was written as a contribution for the 60th anniversary of the Law Students' Scientific Club at UMCS.

Keywords: scientific club; student's organisations; Law Students' Scientific Club at UMCS; higher education

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INTRODUCTION

The students' research activity may be defined as a system of forms aimed at meeting and developing scientific interests of university students[1]. It covers both compulsory educational activities and extracurricular activities, the latter being the subject of discussion herein. As a rule, this activity is carried out by students who are members of university student organisations, including research clubs. The legal base for their functioning in Poland is set out in the provisions of the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science[2] and the university's internal normative acts[3].

The subject of scientific interests of research clubs and activities undertaken by their members are determined by the specificity of the field and scientific discipline they cover[4]. The most important areas of activity of law students in research clubs include: organisation of local, national, and international scientific conferences; publishing activities, including the issuing of scientific monographs and journals, implementing research projects, conducting surveys; organisation of competitions, study trips, and meetings with authorities in the given field of study. The cooperation of students in the realization of the aforementioned initiatives is an important factor in shaping the capability to work as a team, to reach a compromise or to learn independently[5].

An example of an organisation that operates in all the above areas is the Law Students' Scientific Club at the University of Maria Curie-Skłodowska in Lublin established in 1959 (*Studenckie Koło Naukowe Prawników Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej w Lublinie*, hereinafter: SKNP UMCS), operating in the Faculty of Law and Administration of the UMCS. For 60 years of its existence, SKNP UMCS has been operating in the realities of fundamental change in the legal system, on the basis of six different laws on higher education as well as many normative acts of the university. The activity of SKNP UMCS is, therefore, an excellent example of the evolution of the student's scientific movement in Poland. According to the authors, such a long tradition stems from the structure of the club and its wide

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[1] J. Dziechciarz, J. Godula, *Studencki ruch naukowy*, Warszawa 1979, p. 7.

[2] Journal of Laws 2018, item 1668.

[3] This concerns in particular any decisions or resolutions taken by governing bodies of higher education institutions. At the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, the student's and doctoral student's organisations operate under the Ordinance of the Rector of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University No. 47/2018 of 28 June 2018 on the Rules for the registration, operation and financial support for the student's and doctoral student's organisations at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University.

[4] Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 20 September 2018 on the fields of study and scientific disciplines and art disciplines (Journal of Laws 2018, item 1818 as amended).

[5] J. Dziechciarz, J. Godula, *op. cit*., p. 8; M. Wysoczyńska, *„Od studenta po adwokata, radcę, rejenta". Model kształcenia prawników na różnych poziomach edukacji w doświadczeniach nauczyciela akademickiego UŁ – radcy prawnego OIRP w Łodzi*, „Edukacja Prawnicza" 2012, nr 6.

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scope of interest, which, with the current increase in the number of scientific clubs, characterized by their short duration and low degree of activity, can set the direction in which their effectiveness may increase. The aim of this article is to analyse the functioning of legal students' scientific activities based on the example of SKNP UMCS and to identify further directions for its development, in the context of a thorough reform of Polish higher education commenced in 2018.

TRADITION AND STRUCTURE OF SKNP UMCS

The Law Students' Scientific Club has operated incessantly since 1959, in a virtually unchanged structure. It is Poland's second-oldest, after the Library Association of Students of Law of the Jagiellonian University (*Towarzystwo Biblioteki Słuchaczów Prawa Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*)[6], legal research club and the oldest research club at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. Its first scientific supervisor was Professor Henryk Reniger. He was replaced in 1965 by Professor Henryk Groszyk, who exercised the function for 44 years, until his death in 2009. Then the function was assumed by Ireneusz Nowikowski PhD, professor at UMCS who exercises this function to this day[7].

For many students, SKNP UMCS is the beginning of their scientific career – many professors of UMCS were activists of the Club[8]. Although SKNP UMCS is now one of the 26 research clubs registered at the Faculty of Law and Administration of UMCS, it continues to play a leading role. Out of the nine students of the Faculty of Law and Administration of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University awarded in 2018 the scholarship of the Minister of Science and Higher Education for outstanding scientific achievements, eight of them were SKNP UMCS' members or authors of an article in the journal "Studenckie Zeszyty Naukowe" published by the Club[9].

Currently, SKNP UMCS operates based on the provisions of the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science, enshrining the right of students to associate, Rector's Ordinance No. 47/2018 of 28 June 2018 on the Rules for the registration, operation and financial support for the student's and doctoral student's

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[6] www.tbsp.wpia.uj.edu.pl [access: 20.06.2019].

[7] See more A. Bączkowski, S. Chomoncik, M. Chrzanowski, T. Lebowa, W. Witkowski, *Historia Studenckiego Koła Naukowego Prawników UMCS*, Lublin 2011.

[8] For example, among Presidents or Deputy Presidents of the Club who became tenured professors were the following scholars: Jan Barcz, Mirosław Granat, Antoni Hanusz, Teresa Liszcz, Mirosław Nazar, Janusz Niczyporuk, Wojciech Orłowski, Anna Przyborowska-Klimczak, Ryszard Skubisz, Wojciech Witkowski..

[9] B. Wielowińska-Pawlak, *Spotkanie z laureatami stypendium MNiSW*, www.umcs.pl/pl/informacje-prasowe,4623,spotkanie-z-laureatami-stypendium-mnisw,73566.chtm#page-1 [access: 15.06.2019].

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organisations at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, and the Charter of SKNP UMCS of 29 October 2013[10].

According to the Charter, the bodies of the Law Students' Scientific Club at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University are the following: General Meeting of Members, Management Board, Audit Committee, Peer Court. The responsibilities of the General Meeting of Members include, among other things, the appointment and dismissal of the Management Board, the Audit Committee and the Peer Court of the Club, reviewing and approval of the reports of the Management Board and the Audit Committee of the Club, adoption of the discharge of the Management Board, adoption of the Charter or amendments thereto. The Management Board consists of the President, Vice-President for Scientific Affairs, Vice-President for Organisational Affairs, Treasurer, and Secretary. The Management Board is primarily responsible for the management of the Club and the performance of ongoing tasks, representation of the Club and acting on its behalf, administration of financial and material resources at the disposal of the Club, keeping the membership register and appointing chairs for sections of the Club. The President of the Club manages the work of the Management Board, represents the Club, supervises the work of particular sections and directly cooperates with the scientific supervisor of the Club. The key role in SKNP UMCS is played by sections, which are units that organise the scientific activity of Club's members. The standing sections include Section of History and Theory of State and Law, Section of Civil Law, Section of Criminal Law, and Section of Public Law. The work of particular sections is managed by the section chairpersons and their deputies, who, together with the Management Board, form the Executive Committee of the Club.

The wide range of scientific interests covered by activities of the Club, encompassing practically all branches of law, the cyclical nature of many of the events organised by the Club, cooperation between the members and representatives of universities from all over Poland result in the integration of major fields of student scientific activity under the umbrella of SKNP UMCS. Hence, the analysis of its activities allows for the formulation of conclusions, which are largely characteristic of the whole student scientific movement in Poland, especially in the field of law studies. Therefore, after the general introduction, the following areas of scientific activity of students will be discussed on the example of initiatives carried out by members of SKNP UMCS.

[10] www.umcs.pl/pl/statut-i-akty-prawne,11664.htm [access: 20.06.2019].

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AREAS OF ACTIVITY

1. Scientific conferences

Conference may be defined as a meeting of two or more persons for discussing matters of common concern[11]. Participation in scientific conferences is primarily aimed at establishing cooperation between scientists, presenting research results, and exchanging experiences. Conference proceedings are often published in the form of post-conference publications, which provide a detailed and systematic representation of the views presented[12]. According to the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 27 October 2015 on the criteria and procedure for the award of scientific categories to scientific units[13] (not any more in force), for the Conference to have an international status, at least one-third participants delivering papers had to represent foreign academic centres from at least five scientific entities. The current Regulation of 22 February 2019 on the evaluation of the quality of scientific activities[14] no longer points to this criterion.

Conferences organised by the research clubs bring together both students and academics. The selection of speakers is based on abstracts submitted in application forms and evaluated by academic staff. Conferences organised by students are generally one-day events, covering about 30–40 papers the length of which should not exceed 10–15 minutes. Some organisers also admit the possibility of extending the papers to the form of full written conference proceedings.

A cyclical conference organised by SKNP UMCS is the Convention of Administrative Lawyers, nationwide in some editions and in some international. On 11–12 April 2019, it was held for the 9th time, and its main subject was "The Constitution of Business – Problems and Challenges of the Reform of Public Economic Law". The changing subject matter of particular editions of the Convention concerns current problems and reforms, e.g. trends in administrative law, constitutionalisation of administrative law, or legal-administrative restrictions on undertaking and conducting business activity. Moreover, every academic year, each section of the Club organises one or two conferences related to the subject of their activity. In the academic year 2018/2019, it was a conference on "Cooperation of Judicial Experts with Law Enforcement and Judicial Authorities"[15] (11 January 2019), "The Role of

[11] *Conference*, [entry in:] *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conference [access: 17.09.2019].

[12] T. Burdzik, *Drapieżne konferencje: nieetyczne praktyki konferencyjne zagrażające nauce* „Konteksty Społeczne" 2017, nr 2, p. 118.

[13] Journal of Laws 2015, item 2015.

[14] Journal of Laws 2019, item 392.

[15] D. Kozub, M. Wróblewski, *Współpraca ekspertów sądowych z organami ścigania i wymiaru sprawiedliwości*, „Casus" 2019, nr 92, pp. 79–81.

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International Organisations in the Modern World" (18 January 2019), "The Culture of Positive Law and Other Contemporary Legal Cultures" (21 January 2019), "Appeal Measures in Civil Procedure" (1 March 2019), and "The Issues of Electoral Law and Elections in Poland and in the World" (29 March 2019).

In the last five years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of scientific conferences in Poland, with a simultaneous decrease in the level of papers delivered. The problems faced by this form of scientific activity include the following: mass "production" of conferences, poorly selected thematic scope, high fees, not recorded conference proceedings, too short time for speeches with too many speakers, form and level of speeches, plagiarism. This type of degeneration of scientific conferences was pointed out by the participants of the debate "Student Activity in the Era of Reforms" organised by SKNP UMCS on 6 June 2019 at the Faculty of Law and Administration of UMCS. Representatives of research clubs indicated, as the root of these problems, the scoring systems for granting scholarships and recording scientific achievements[16].

2. Publishing

Verba volant, scripta manent ("Spoken words fly away, written words remain") – according to the authors hereof, enabling the students to conduct scientific activity in the form of publishing the results of their research is one of the most important forms of support that can be provided by the university. Not only may the publications open the way for students to be granted prestigious scholarships, but also prepare them for their role as researchers. This is particularly visible in the case of legal studies, where the skills acquired during scientific work are directly correlated with the requirements imposed on graduates in the labour market. The proficiency in the use of sources and argumentation skills thus acquired is essential for effective and efficient legal practice.

According to § 4 of the Charter of SKNP UMCS, the Club implements its objectives through publication activities, among other things. This activity is carried out on many levels – in particular, scientific monographs, jubilee, and commemorative books and the journal "Studenckie Zeszyty Naukowe"[17]. Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 22 February 2019 on the evaluation of the quality of scientific research defines monograph as a peer-reviewed book publication presenting a specific scientific problem in an original and creative manner, with footnotes, bibliography, or other scientific apparatus appropriate to

[16] E. Kulczycki, *Siedem grzechów polskich konferencji naukowych*, http://historiaimedia.org/2011/08/31/siedem-grzechow-polskich-konferencji-naukowych/index.html [access: 21.06.2019]; T. Burdzik, *op. cit*., pp. 118–122.

[17] https://journals.umcs.pl/szn/index [access: 20.06.2019].

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the discipline. The category of scientific monograph includes also translations of scientific works and scientific editing of source texts. Due to the wide range of activities of the Club, the monographs published by SKNP UMCS cover many areas. Monographs of a purely scientific nature are, e.g., *Współczesne przemiany państwa i prawa w krajach Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej* (*Modern Changes of State and Law in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe*)[18] or *Wokół problematyki dowodów i postępowania dowodowego w postępowaniu cywilnym* (*Around the Issues of Evidence and Evidence-Taking in Civil Proceedings*)[19]. The publications of SKNP UMCS comprise also jubilee or commemorative books such as *Profesor Stefan Buczkowski. Libri Iuristarum Lublinensium* (*Professor Stefan Buczkowski. Libri Iuristarum Lublinensium*)[20] or *Historia Studenckiego Koła Naukowego Prawników UMCS* (*The History of the Law Students' Scientific Club at UMCS*)[21]. Special attention should be given to "Studenckie Zeszyty Naukowe" – a journal published regularly since 1998. The subject-matter scope of the periodical covers all disciplines of legal science, as well as interdisciplinary issues – in the assumptions of the editors, the publications can also address issues of history, political science, sociology, and economics[22]. In "Studenckie Zeszyty Naukowe", articles are published by students, doctoral students, and academia members from Polish and foreign academic centres. The launching and over 20 years of operation of the journal should be considered an unquestionable success of the Club. It is currently indexed by the Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (CEJSH), Index Copernicus Journals Master List, BazHum, Central and Eastern European Online Library (CEEOL). The journal is also on the list of ranked journals – the Minister of Science and Higher education awarded it the score of 7.

3. Research projects

Another sphere of students' scientific activity is research projects. The term "scientific research" can be defined as a special form of intellectual work, which involves seeking a solution to a problem in the area of science or technology, using the scientific method[23]. The term "research work" can be used to describe all law-

[18] *Współczesne przemiany państwa i prawa w krajach Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej*, red. M. Grochowski, J. Kostrubiec, E. Streit, Lublin 2009.

[19] *Wokół problematyki dowodów i postępowania dowodowego w postępowaniu cywilnym*, red. J. Bodio, M. Mierzwa, K. Niewęgłowski, Lublin 2018.

[20] *Profesor Stefan Buczkowski. Libri Iuristarum Lublinensium*, red. M. Chrzanowski, A. Kidyba, A. Niewęgłowski, t. 2, Lublin 2012.

[21] A. Bączkowski, S. Chomoncik, M. Chrzanowski, T. Lebowa, W. Witkowski, *op. cit*.

[22] *Ibidem*, p. 76.

[23] *Komercjalizacja i transfer wyników badań naukowych i prac rozwojowych z uczelni do gospodarki. Komentarz – nowe regulacje*, red. J. Sieńczyło-Chlabicz, Warszawa 2019.

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ful actions that are directed at obtaining intangible assets in the form of research results[24]. During 60 years of SKNP's activity, students under the leadership of academics have many times conducted research work covering many fields. Examples include the study *Kontakty skazanych ze środowiskiem rodzinnym i innymi osobami bliskimi* (*Contacts of Convicts with Their Families and Other Relatives*) of August 1977[25] or the historical research on the General Governorate of 2015[26]. In addition, SKNP UMCS participated, together with the Scientific Club of Sociology of Law and the Scientific Club of Legal Professions, in the organisation of the study "Preferencje zawodowe studentów prawa" ("Professional Preferences of Law Students"), which was attended by nearly 1,000 law students at the Faculty of Law and Administration of UMCS[27]. It is also worth mentioning the research on current problems and prospects of changes in the area of evidence and evidence-taking in civil proceedings, which resulted in the publication of a scientific monograph *Wokół problematyki dowodów i postępowania dowodowego w postępowaniu cywilnym* (*Around the Issues of Evidence and Evidence-Taking in Civil Proceedings*).

The organisation and participation in research projects is, in addition to publishing activities, an important element of students' research activity. The initiative to undertake research attempts on a given topic can come from both the university and students who are particularly interested in the topic. Their effects can be presented in a variety of ways: in the form of a scientific conference, monograph, or research report. It is worth mentioning that research carried out by young scientists, including students, is the subject of support from the National Science Centre, in the form of competitions such as OPUS[28], PRELUDIUM[29], or ETIUDA[30].

4. Conducting competitions

Contests form an integral part of student activity. This is a form of competition of students, among which the competition committee chooses the best ones. The incentive to engage in this type of event are prizes. In the case of competitions offered to law students, the most common prizes are cash prizes, in-kind awards,

[24] A. Niewęgłowski, *Wyniki prac badawczych w obrocie cywilnoprawnym*, Warszawa 2010, p. 36.

[25] A. Bączkowski, S. Chomoncik, M. Chrzanowski, T. Lebowa, W. Witkowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 48–49.

[26] R. Borowiec, M. Bubicz, K. Dąbrowski, A. Potocki, M. Węcławska, E. Wlazło, *Generalne Gubernatorstwo 1939–1945. Dokumenty archiwalne z okresu okupacji w zasobie Archiwum Państwowego w Lublinie*, Ryki 2015.

[27] See M. Kępa, S. Pilipiec, *Preferencje zawodowe studentów prawa. Raport z badania*, Lublin 2018.

[28] Resolution No. 27/2019 of the Council of the National Science Centre of 14 March 2019 on the condition for the OPUS competition.

[29] Resolution No. 29/2019 of the Council of the National Science Centre of 14 March 2019 on the condition for the PRELUDIUM competition.

[30] Resolution No. 109/2018 of the Council of the National Science Centre of 8 November 2018 on the condition for the ETIUDA 7 competition for doctoral scholarships.

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in the form of traineeships, or in the form of an exam exemption. Competitions are organised at the university, local, national, or international levels. They are carried out in various ways: testing in oral or written form, classifying participants based on their performance in public speaking, or assessing the scientific-language qualities of the text (e.g. essay, article, work, paper).

The Law Students' Scientific Club at UMCS, from the beginning of its activity, has offered the students development opportunities in the form of competition. Since 1973 it has continuously organised the Legal Oratorical Competition, which enjoys recognition and reputation in the local community of lawyers while being the oldest contest of its kind in Poland[31]. In 2019, its 47th edition was held[32].

The competition consists in delivering the final speech in a criminal, civil, and administrative judicial trial on the basis of pre-prepared cases, created on the basis of the actual file of the case. The participants are assigned cases and procedural roles on a random basis, and their performances are later assessed by the academic staff of the Faculty of Law and Administration of UMCS, as well as representatives of the Lublin judicial institutions and local bar associations[33].

Though with shorter tradition, the Local Competition in the Knowledge of Ombudsmen held by SKNP UMCS is also popular. In the first editions, it concerned only the Polish Ombudsman (*Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich*), in the fifth edition it was extended to the Children's Rights Advocate (*Rzecznik Praw Dziecka*), and in the seventh edition, for the academic year 2018/2019, the subject matter also included the Patient's Rights Advocate, Financial Ombudsman, and the Ombudsman for SMEs[34].

5. Study trips and meetings with experts

The support for student education by student organisations may also take the form of organising trips to institutions related to the activities of the organisation[35] or holding lectures, seminars and expert meetings. According to the report from the study report "Działalność kół naukowych w UMCS w roku akademic-

[31] M. Bonarek, *Ważny etap kształcenia akademickiego. XLVI Środowiskowy Konkurs Krasomówczy, Wydział Prawa i Administracji Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej*, „Casus" 2018, nr 89, pp. 62–63.

[32] See M. Mierzwa, K. Strzelecka, *Odwaga i determinacja. XLVII Środowiskowy Konkurs Krasomówczy, Wydział Prawa i Administracji Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej*, „Casus" 2019, nr 92, pp. 87–88.

[33] *Ibidem*.

[34] D. Mąkosa, K. Michalska, *Konkurs wiedzy o Rzecznikach*, „Casus" 2019, nr 92, pp. 85–86.

[35] See N.F. Nawi, A.F. Azmi, *An assessment of the effectiveness of field trips as a teaching and learning strategy: A case study of field trip to the parliament*, "Journal of Academia UiTM Negeri Sembilan" 2016, No. 4, pp. 1–11.

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kim 2013/2014" ("Activities of Scientific Clubs at UMCS in the Academic Year 2013/2014"), most students consider their "participation in a research club as a complement to their studies. In their opinion, this activity helps them acquire practical knowledge and experience that will affect their labour market situation in the future"[36]. Organising trips and meetings with experts in the field of activity of the organisation undoubtedly fulfil this objective.

SKNP UMCS, in order to bring closer activities of the most important courts to law students, periodically organise study visits to the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Tribunal. In addition, sections of the Club regularly organise meetings with experts and debates on current topics related to legal culture in Poland. These include expert meetings organised in 2019: "Kiedy zabić siebie to za mało – samobójcy i osoby trzecie" ("When Killing Oneself Is Not Enough – Suicide and Third Parties"), "Jak pomaga Rzecznik Finansowy?" (How Does the Financial Ombudsman Help?), or "Fake newsy, czyli jak walczyć z dezinformacją" ("Fake News or How to Fight Disinformation").

DIRECTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' ACTIVITY

The student scientific movement is subject to the same processes as the whole system of higher education, so it is now noticeable, first of all, its growing mass character and commercialisation. In Poland, in the 1930s functioned about 100 scientific clubs, in the1960s approx. 300 clubs operated associated within the Polish Students' Association, while in 2013, more than 2,200 scientific clubs functioned at the 15 largest only. At the same time, the proportion of people involved in scientific activities to the total number of students is decreasing. In the Second Polish Republic, almost 100% of the students were members of the scientific movement. In the middle of the period of the Polish People's Republic, this proportion fell to 30% and decreased to approx. 6% in 1990. It is currently estimated that no more than 3% of the total number of students are involved in the activities of research clubs[37]. The marginalisation of student activities has further been deepened by the atomization of student organisations. The number of research clubs increases with decreasing number of members. Furthermore, there are no organisations forming inter-university links modelled on the pre-war National Academic Association of

[36] *Działalność kół naukowych w UMCS w roku akademickim 2013/2014. Raport z badania*, oprac. Zespół ds. Analiz Jakości Kształcenia, Biuro ds. Kształcenia, Centrum Kształcenia i Obsługi Studiów, Lublin 2014, https://phavi.umcs.pl/at/attachments/2014/0314/100450-kola-naukowe-raport.pdf [access: 24.06.2019].

[37] M. Smużewska, *Studencki ruch naukowy w polskich uniwersytetach z perspektywy zmian zachodzących we współczesnym szkolnictwie wyższym*, „Nauka i Szkolnictwo Wyższe" 2015, nr 45, pp. 216–220.

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Scientific Clubs or the subsequent Union of Polish Students. There is no organisation with a university-wide or faculty-wide coverage either, e.g. forums and committees of research clubs enabling the exchange of information on club's activities and facilitating cooperation and promotion of events to be held. Another trend in students' activity is its commercialisation. The activity in a research club is intended to acquire tangible benefits, e.g. organisational skills, certificates, contacts[38].

The above-mentioned trends directly translate into differentiated activity in the areas described above. An increase in the number of scientific conferences or interdisciplinary monographs is noticeable, with the marginalisation of long-term studies and scientific research projects. The initiatives being undertaken are usually of a local nature, less often nationwide, but only exceptionally dedicated to representatives of other countries. A large number of small research clubs means that information about organised events often reaches a relatively small number of recipients. Moreover, student organisations, which usually operate based on membership fees, are not able to undertake more costly initiatives. Although there are grant programmes, students often do not know how to apply for financial support, the procedures necessary to obtain them are too complicated and the amounts of funding are too small[39].

Apart from the growing mass character and commercialisation of studies, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education identifies, as the cause of such a situation, excessive bureaucratisation resulting in the fact that the effort to meet numerous formal requirements replaces the care for the actual quality of education and blocks an innovative approach to teaching. The Polish higher education system lacks research universities that are able to compete effectively with the best universities in Europe and the world in terms of breakthrough research, and which at the same time provide education at the highest level, i.e. universities that are sufficiently attractive to attract both talented students and outstanding scientists to Poland, including those who start their scientific careers[40].

The explanatory note to the draft Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education identified a number of key problems in higher education. To solve them, the reform of 2018 was introduced, covering changes in the functioning of the system, management, financing, and quality assessment of higher education institutions, which will ultimately affect three traditional areas of academic activity, i.e. research, education, and dissemination of knowledge and culture[41]. The activities of student

[38] *Ibidem*; *Działalność kół naukowych w UMCS*...

[39] *Działalność kół naukowych w UMCS*...

[40] Explanatory note to the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws 2018, item 1668).

[41] *Opis prac nad Programem rozwoju szkolnictwa wyższego do 2020 r. i jego najważniejsze elementy*, red. J. Woźnicki, Warszawa 2015, p. 19.

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organisations, including research clubs, are directly related to each of these areas. It constitutes a kind of work at the grassroots level by enabling future researchers, already at the stage of studies, to acquire experience and competences[42] in the areas indicated herein.

CONCLUSION

Student organisations as an integral part of the higher education system should not only be perceived as a form of student's activity but also as one of the factors that shape the Polish academia by early influencing young scholars. The areas of activity of such organisations as research clubs coincide with areas the stimulation of which is a *sine qua non* condition for the development and strengthening of the position of Polish universities internationally. Overall, the low position of Polish universities in international rankings stems among other things, from organisational and work culture[43] – an area that is extremely difficult to change through systemic reforms, but properly functioning and supported student organisations will facilitate the shaping of appropriate attitudes among future academic staff.

The scope of the activities of organisations such as the Law Students' Scientific Club at UMCS is directly linked to the traditional areas of academic activity. The 60 years of tradition and the wide range of activities of the Club forms part of the development of Polish higher education. Integrating active students around such institutions streamlines the process of transferring the knowledge and experience needed to fulfil the goals of Polish science. The support for this type of activity, both from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and various universities and their bodies, should be targeted not on the mass character and repeatability, but on key areas of research activity – innovation and internationalisation. These criteria should be an overriding feature in evaluating the academic activities of students whose effects are scholarships, grants, or prizes awarded. This work at the grassroots level will enable the young scientific staff to be appropriately formed and oriented towards work in key areas for the development of Polish higher education and Polish science.

[42] See M. Jelonek, M. Kocór, *Efekty kształcenia – rynek pracy – interwencje publiczne*, [in:] *Program rozwoju szkolnictwa wyższego do 2020* r., cz. 3: *Diagnoza szkolnictwa wyższego*, red. J. Górniak, Warszawa 2015, p. 198.

[43] *Ibidem*, p. 236.

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STRESZCZENIE

Studencka działalność naukowa, definiowana jako system form zaspokajania i rozwijania zainteresowań naukowych młodzieży akademickiej, odbywa się głównie w takich obszarach, jak organizacja konferencji naukowych, działalność wydawnicza, prowadzenie projektów badawczych, organizacja konkursów, wyjazdów i spotkań eksperckich. Działalność ta nie powinna być postrzegana tylko jako forma aktywności studenckiej, lecz również jako jeden z czynników kształtujących rozwój polskiej nauki poprzez wczesny wpływ na młodych naukowców. Pozwala ona na kształtowanie odpowiednich postaw oraz na zdobycie kompetencji i doświadczenia niezbędnego do rozwoju innowacyjności i umiędzynarodowienia polskiego szkolnictwa wyższego. Artykuł powstał z okazji jubileuszu 60-lecia Studenckiego Koła Naukowego Prawników UMCS.

Słowa kluczowe: koło naukowe; organizacje studenckie; Studenckie Koło Naukowe Prawników UMCS; szkolnictwo wyższe