

## **Report of the Dean of the Branch of the University of Bialystok in Vilnius on the activities of the Branch in the academic year 2024/2025**

### **Introduction**

The academic year 2024/2025 was a time of intense activity for the new dean's college in the new seat of the UwB Branch in Vilnius. During this time, a series of actions were carried out related to the diagnosis of needs, identification of strengths, challenges, and potential factors inhibiting the development of the Branch. It was a year of intense teaching, scientific, and organizational work. The activity of the Branch focused on ensuring high quality of education, developing academic cooperation with universities in Lithuania and Poland, and strengthening the position of the University in the environment of the Polish community in Lithuania. Furthermore, the UwB Branch in Vilnius implemented guidelines and common directions of action set out by the University of Bialystok. The priority of the Dean's activity was the implementation of the improvement plan within the guidelines of the *Studijų Kokybės Vertinimo Centras* (English: Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, Polish: *Centrum Oceny Jakości Kształcenia*).

### **Actions taken according to SKVC recommendations (Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education)**

In the field of management and quality assurance, a working group on the mission and strategy of the UwB Branch in Vilnius was established. On February 24, 2025, the Branch Council approved the "**Development Strategy of the Branch of the University of Bialystok in Vilnius for the years 2025-2030**" along with KPIs and a new vision for the Branch, understood as a pursuit of: *High quality of education and scientific research across borders*.

In the academic year 2024/2025, actions were implemented in the following areas:

- **Management:** (e.g., participation of an administrative employee and a student in monthly Branch Council meetings; participation of a Branch representative with voting rights in monthly UwB Senate meetings; defining human resources policy and a development plan for scientific and administrative staff, annual evaluation, individual talks with employees about development);
- **Quality assurance:** (e.g., informing employees about actions taken in the Branch and their results, as well as resolutions of the Branch Council; systematic information meetings with employees; increasing the number of Polish language repititorium

hours in study programs; defining minimum requirements for individual administrative positions; developing a guide for 1st-year students; establishing group supervisors for 1st-year student groups (5-8 people); organizing an Academic Day for the 1st year; creating student support groups for the 1st year; extending the scope of duties of selected administrative employees to include data analysis regarding the activities of the Branch; conducting a survey among employees about the deficits of 1st-year students; organizing regular meetings every two weeks with administrative employees on current problems; updating the Branch's websites);

- **Studies and research:** (e.g., appointing a vice-dean for development and cooperation; creating field-specific teams within the Consulting Council (composed of employees, students, and employers); cyclical meetings of the Consulting Council; regular meetings of Field-specific Teams within the Consulting Council (at least once a semester); introducing a subject in English into the study programs of economics and European studies from the 2025/2026 teaching cycle; information meetings on projects; hiring a visiting professor; identification of new institutional partners, concluding new agreements, including within the Erasmus program);
- **Impact on the environment:** (e.g., conducting a survey among employers on the competencies of Branch graduates; review of study programs by Consulting Council teams; analysis of needs in terms of further education in short forms (employees, students, graduates, companies, institutions, schools, etc.); processing results of employer surveys on graduate competencies; conducting a survey on the impact of the Branch on the environment (companies, universities, schools, etc.); organizing conferences, seminars, and workshops in cooperation with business and institutional partners, including entrepreneurs, teachers, and other interested groups of participants).

In order to verify the actions taken, a meeting with experts from SKVC was scheduled for October 2025.

### **Educational Activity**

In the academic year 2024/2025, full-time studies were conducted at the UwB Branch in Vilnius in four fields:

- **economics** (1st and 2nd cycle studies, practical profile),

- **European studies** (1st cycle studies, practical profile),
- **informatics** (1st cycle studies, practical profile),
- **preschool and early childhood pedagogy** (long-cycle master's studies, general academic profile).

The diversity of fields determines the specificity of the Branch and is at the same time a clear response to the needs of the Polish community in Lithuania.

The ceremonial Inauguration of the Academic Year 2024/2025 took place on October 4, 2024, in the new seat of the Branch at 22 Aguonų g. street. On behalf of the University of Białystok, the ceremony was attended by: His Magnificence Rector prof. dr hab. M. Popławski, Vice-Rector for Education dr hab. K. Korotkich, prof. UwB, Vice-Rector for Development dr hab. T. Bajkowski, prof. UwB, T. Zalewski Chancellor of UwB, A. Grajewska – Director of the Rector's Office, as well as representatives of science from Poland and Lithuania: Dean of the Faculty of Educational Sciences of UwB, dr hab. A. Korzeniecka-Bondar, prof. UwB, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Law for teaching, dr hab. T. Dubowski, prof. UwB, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Sociology dr A. Karpińska, prof. dr J. Urbanowicz from *Mykolo Romerio Universitetas* in Vilnius, and dr Barbara Stankiewicz from *Mykolo Romerio Universitetas*.

The ceremony was attended by a large group of representatives of the Polish community, state and local government authorities of Lithuania and Poland: R. Tamašiunienė – member of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, E. Tamošiūnaitė – vice-mayor of the Vilnius District Municipality, D. Narbut – vice-mayor of the Vilnius District Municipality, E. Kiuraitė – representative of the Department of National Minorities under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, A. Dudziński – chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Vilnius; U. Grebieniow – counselor of the Embassy of the RP in Vilnius, K. Dzierżyńska-Loch – coordinator for public diplomacy at the Embassy of the RP in Vilnius, Ł. Prokorym – marshal of the Podlaskie Voivodeship, T. Klim – vice-president of the city of Białystok, M. Siemieniuk – deputy head of the Dobryńewo Duże municipality, G. Sakson – councilor of the Vilnius City Municipality, I. Krzemińska – Masovian Local Government Center for Teacher Training; representatives of entrepreneurs: dr Marcin Adamczyk, P. Giliauskas, A. Łuksza, K. Z. Zadykiewicz-Sokół, A. Narel; representatives of social organizations: prof. dr hab. R. Brazis, I. Geben, E. Trusewicz, R. Cytacka, A. Ludkowski, W. Stankiewicz, K. Kwiatkowski, K. Kwiatkowska, as well as representatives of students and staff.

The inaugural lecture was delivered by prof. dr hab. J. Nikitorowicz, rector of UwB (2005-2012).

As of December 31, 2024, 343 students were studying at the Branch:

- Economics 1st cycle: 79
- Economics 2nd cycle: 29
- European studies: 82
- Informatics: 55
- Preschool and early childhood pedagogy: 98

On July 18, 2025, 34 graduates received their diplomas. Since its beginning, the Branch has seen 975 graduates. In recruitment for the academic year 2024/2025, 190 students were admitted.

Classes were conducted primarily in stationary form, with some synchronous remote options for higher years. Staff raised their competencies through trainings such as "ChatGPT and other language models," "Non-violent communication," and "Cyber-resilience." Teaching innovations included 11 open lectures with experts and 5 flipped lessons.

### **Employees of the UwB Branch in Vilnius**

Classes were conducted by 19 Branch employees (4 independent scientific workers, 6 PhDs, 9 MAs). 12 are in research-teaching positions and 7 in teaching positions. The Dean appointed Plenipotentiaries for institutional contacts (dr D. Narbut), external funds (dr M. Wenclik), special needs (dr E. Majewska), gender equality (dr R. Lašakevič), quality of life (mgr J. Lewko), and Erasmus (mgr S. Pilžys).

The Branch functions within four departments:

- Informatics (Head: prof. dr hab. M. Muraszkievicz)
- European Studies (Head: prof. UwB, dr hab. M. Zdanowicz)
- Economics (Head: prof. UwB, dr hab. Anna Grześ)
- Pedagogy (Head: prof. UwB, dr hab. Urszula Wróblewska)

Support was provided by 44 people from other UwB faculties and 15 external instructors on civil law contracts.

### **Scientific Activity**

Actions focused on defining research potential and determining research areas. The Dean participated in over 17 diagnostic-consultative meetings. Key scientific successes in 2024/2025 include:

- 16 scientific publications;
- 18 international conferences with staff participation;
- 5 organized international conferences (including "Pedagogy of Silence");
- 4 scientific internships;
- Admission of mgr S. Pilżys to the Doctoral School;
- Hiring of visiting professor prof. dr hab. Huseyin S. Kyuchuk;
- Awarding of the "Merit to the University" title to dr Elżbieta Majewska.

The Branch hosted the *2nd International Staff Week Erasmus* with representatives from 10 countries (including Kosovo, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Ukraine).

### **Student Activity**

The Student Council and four scientific clubs are active. Students participated in six scientific conferences and co-authored articles in journals like *"Podróżnik historyczny"*. Initiatives included a visit to the Polish Senate, a Christmas party for an orphanage, and the establishment of the Branch Choir under Wioleta Leonowicz. 120 people per semester received NAWA scholarships.

### **Cooperation and Impact on the Environment**

Staff and students held cyclical meetings with Polish schools in Lithuania. The Branch signed 8 letters of intent and 13 cooperation agreements (e.g., with the Vilnius District Municipality and various Gymnasiums). 6 projects received funding, including "MentorPol" from the Institute for the Development of the Polish Language (PLN 117,370).

The dean's authorities held meetings with key figures, including: Justas Nugaras (Vice-Minister), Robert Duchniewicz (Mayor), Waldemar Tomaszewski (MEP), and representatives of the Polish Embassy and the Polish Institute.

### **Summary**

The academic year 2024/2025 was a time of diverse activities that highlighted the potential of the Branch's employees. Key challenges for the coming years include developing the teaching offer, acquiring research projects, and intensifying international cooperation. The achievements constitute a solid foundation for the Branch's role as a vital academic center for the Polish community in Lithuania.

dr hab. Urszula Wróblewska, prof. UwB Dean of the Branch