



Pandemics as an opportunity to review university values: the case of Masaryk University

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Preparation of the Strategic Plan during the pandemic

- Over one year of preparation (10/2019 – 12/2020), which **continued online** to the full extent in accordance with the plan
- **University-wide debates**: working groups with more than 130 people, meetings with managements of all faculties, presentations of drafts at all academic boards, transparent comment resolution
- **Strong student voice**, especially about social contribution activities
- **Impact of the pandemic**:
 - Multi-scenario planning for all university activities (bigger emphasis on risk consideration)
 - Greater significance of the social role and stress on university's potential (human capacities, expertise) in solving whole-society issues and especially sudden crises
 - Consciousness of our readiness for action, preparedness of IT and other facilities

Revision of values

- Masaryk University values are **ancestry of first Czechoslovak president Tomáš G. Masaryk**
- Defined values, stated in our strategic plans, **are stable** – but their interpretation is modified in reaction to social changes and university needs
- **Interpretations of the values were discussed** during the preparation of the Strategic Plan – the academic community felt the need to debate about their essence, confirm their validity and specify their interpretation for certain contexts in relation to the planned strategic goals and social needs



VALUES / MISSION / VISION

VALUES

Since its founding, Masaryk University has always respected and professed the democratic values of a Free Republic. To this day these values have formed the basis of its internal culture and are widely shared by the university's academic community. These values are:

R E S P E C T

- Respect, as the basis of internal culture, solidarity and partnership in all negotiations. Respect for the principles establishing equal opportunities and transparency, as well as respect for the principles of academic ethics.

F R E E D O M

- Freedom, respected and defended as a social imperative. Also, freedom as a principle of internal organisation of the university in the form of academic freedom of teaching and research or freedom of choice of students' own curriculum profile, but also as a principle of institutional autonomy of the university vis-à-vis the state.

R E S P O N S I B I L I T Y

- Responsibility, emphasizing the role of the university as a co-creator of public opinion, a solver of local and society-wide issues and a provider of a public service open to all. Also, the individual responsibility of students and staff reflected in respect for university rules and belonging to the university.

Responsibility

- Stronger emphasis on **openness of the university** in the definition, formerly defined in the context of minorities and disadvantaged groups but now as **openness to all**
- **The role of the university as a solver of local and society-wide issues**, newly also explicitly stated within the definition of the value
- **Reflection in the mission and vision** and especially in the **practical fulfillment of the Strategic Plan**, as demonstrated in given examples (Case I. Innovations for a Healthy and Safe Society + MUNI BioPharma Hub, Case II. MUNI HELPS Volunteer Centre)



MISSION



MASARYKOVA UNIVERZITA



The mission of Masaryk University is to contribute through its scientific activities, student education and social activities to the high quality and healthy life of all generations, and to a free, cohesive and secure society.



VISION

Masaryk University is and will be

- A university where **teaching, research and social activities** are an **integral part of the professional portfolios** of academic staff
- A university that is an **inspiring community** which, in its principles and daily activities, fully respects and fulfils the **principles of social responsibility** and **contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals**, in accordance with which it leads its students and employees
- A university where **students are perceived as respected colleagues**, with established processes and practices for cooperation with staff in solving important issues of the direction and functioning of individual agendas and the institution as a whole
- A university that is a **model in its internal culture**, in its ability to reach consensus, **in the harmonisation of its components** to the benefit of the university as a whole and **in the integrity** of a work and study environment characterised by high ethical and professional standards

Reflection of the values in operating principles

- Participative management of the university and effort for consensus
- Constant dialogue as means of negotiation and communication
- Effort for financial stability of the university and for equal opportunities for development of all constituent parts
- Inter-university solidarity in the area of investment development
- Professionalization of administration, with awareness of its necessity
- Observation of ethical aspects and transparency of processes as the base of internal culture
- Political neutrality





GRADUATE

A Masaryk University graduate is a **figure** who is in demand and employable in the labour market in accordance with society's needs, because:

- [...]
- **they perceive trends and problems in society**, can think about them and formulate their own attitudes, are engaged in events around them, **understand issues of social responsibility and sustainable development**, and wish to be **active citizens** striving to change society for the better.

CASE I.

Innovations for a Healthy and Safe Society

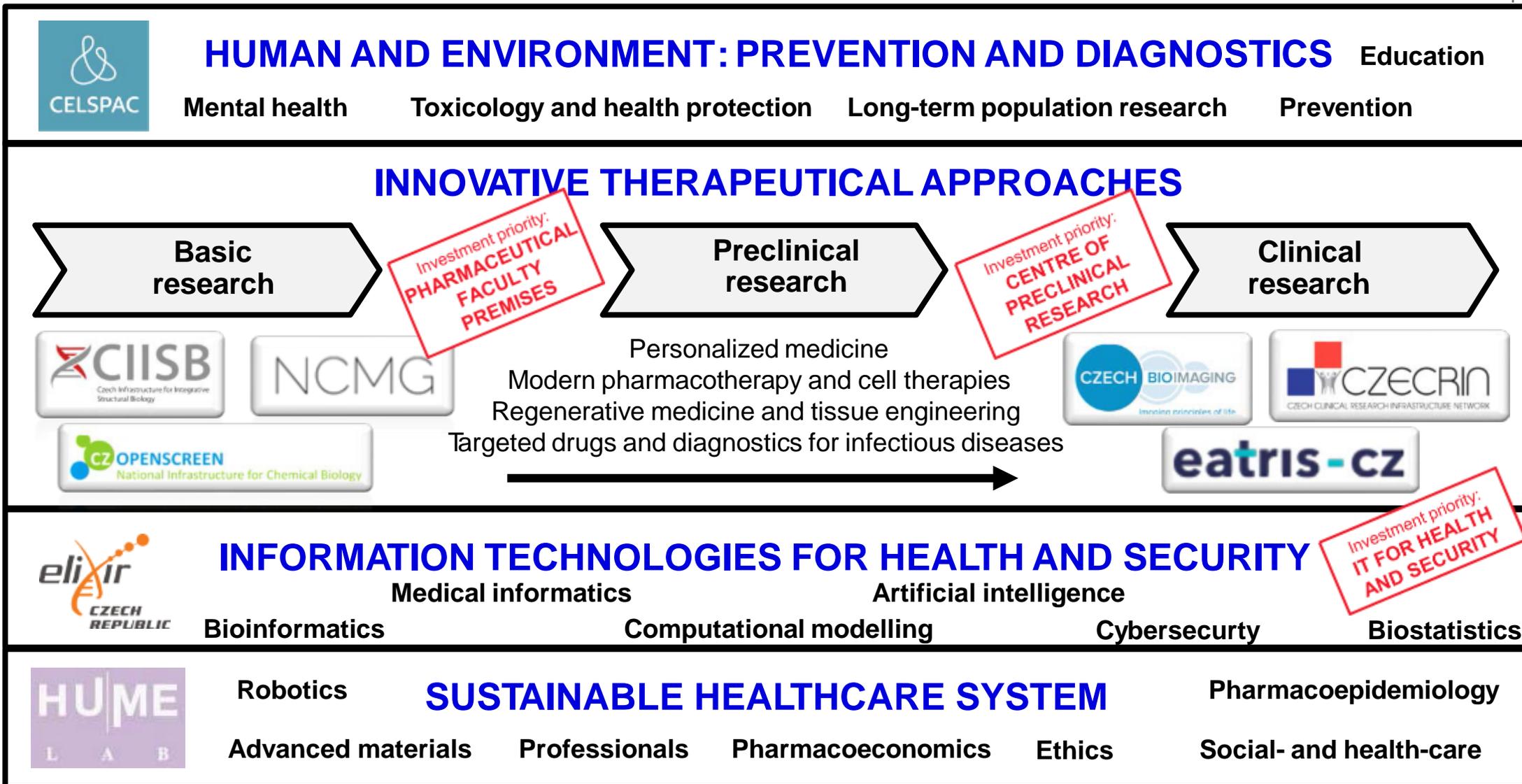
MUNI BioPharma Hub



Strategic Project: Innovations for a Healthy and Safe Society

– outreaching regional,
national and European level

- Strong research providing **complex solutions targeting society's challenges** related to fields ranging from **medicine, biotechnologies, IT / AI to social and economical areas** tackling issues like demographic changes, pandemic threats, new drugs and their application, evidence-based policies etc.
- Link to the **European and national strategies** (Strategic Plan 2020–2024 EC DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION, CZ Innovation Strategy – Country for the Future 2019–2030 etc.)
- Cooperation with industry and public administration using **modern research infrastructures** through targeted **clusters in areas like virology, AI, biotechnologies**
- **New study programmes** – virology, public health, pharmacoconomy etc. using potential / critical mass of education infrastructure in combination with traineeships / internships / education activities provided by partners like university hospitals in the same area etc.





Strategic Project: Innovations for a Healthy and Safe Society

– defined research areas
of the project

- To create a **comprehensive infrastructure and skills' axis** that enables development of innovative therapeutic approaches ranging from description of the basic principles, through preclinical research, to clinical testing within **one unique university campus**.
- Based on the understanding of the interactions between humans and environment, contribute to the **efficiency of the healthcare system by developing tools for early diagnosis and prevention**.
- To create **cutting-edge facilities for the use of artificial intelligence and computational techniques** across the innovation cycle within the biological and medical fields, with a stress put on data security and their resilience to the cyber threats.
- Strengthen **multidisciplinary collaboration** between biological and medical sciences, chemistry and physics, computer science and computational sciences, as well as with social sciences and humanities, **in research and education activities** to enable the university to address the **complex human health's challenges** through an effective health care system.

MUNI BioPharma Hub



- MUNI BioPharma Hub project is one of intentions within the MU Strategic development project 2021+ (other intentions were for example within Czechia's recovery and resilience plan – Exceles programme, other Teamings + Excellence Hubs; further investment units within the University Campus Bohunice are also being prepared this way, etc.).
- Creation of the National Hub through integration of the Faculty of Pharmacy to the current structure and providing complex solutions targeting society's challenges in medicine, biotechnologies, pandemic threats, and new drugs and their application.
- During 09/2021 the MUNI BioPharma Hub project is approved as one of the three strategic universities' investments within the CZ National Recovery Plan (supported from the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility).



CASE II.

MUNI HELPS Volunteer Centre

**We are creating an environment where helping others is easy
and motivating for our students.**

**Volunteering has become a natural part of the university life
that contributes to coherent and solidary civil society.**

Creation of the MUNI HELPS Volunteer Centre

- The volunteer centre **was created** during the first wave of the **COVID-19 pandemic** in **03/2020**
- **A network of more than 4,500 volunteers** was established within a few weeks, thousands of requests for help were responded (institutions and individuals)
- The help was provided not only in Brno, but also in many other cities in the Czech Republic
- **Types of help:** hospitals, testing centers, crisis lines, retirement homes, babysitting and tutoring, shopping and other errands, delivery of masks, etc.





MUNI HELPS Volunteer Centre today

- Volunteer centre is an integral part of Masaryk University
- Further volunteer programmes:
 - Help for those affected by tornado in South Moravia
 - Student legal counselling
 - Incubator of help (ideas looking for volunteers)
 - Help for Ukrainian citizens affected by war
- Help specialisations: tutoring and babysitting, psychological counselling, translation, legal advice, IT, logistics, financial counselling
- Developed mobile application as the main tool for effective coordination of help: overview of requests, notifications
- Financial and in-kind collections

Volunteer community building

- Meeting environment within each volunteer programme
- Workshops enabling further education and personal development
- Support for generation of ideas and their further realisation
- Rector's Award for volunteering
- Promotion of motivation for volunteering among MU employees

European Citizen's Prize for MUNI HELPS

- MUNI volunteer centre was awarded the European Citizen's Prize 2021
- MUNI was awarded the prestigious prize for establishing the centre in March 2020, its specialisation in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic, its ability to provide assistance on a stable and long-term basis as well as its system of help coordination
- The centre's **care for its volunteers** and the understanding that volunteering is not only a way of helping others but also a tool for self-development also contributed to the award



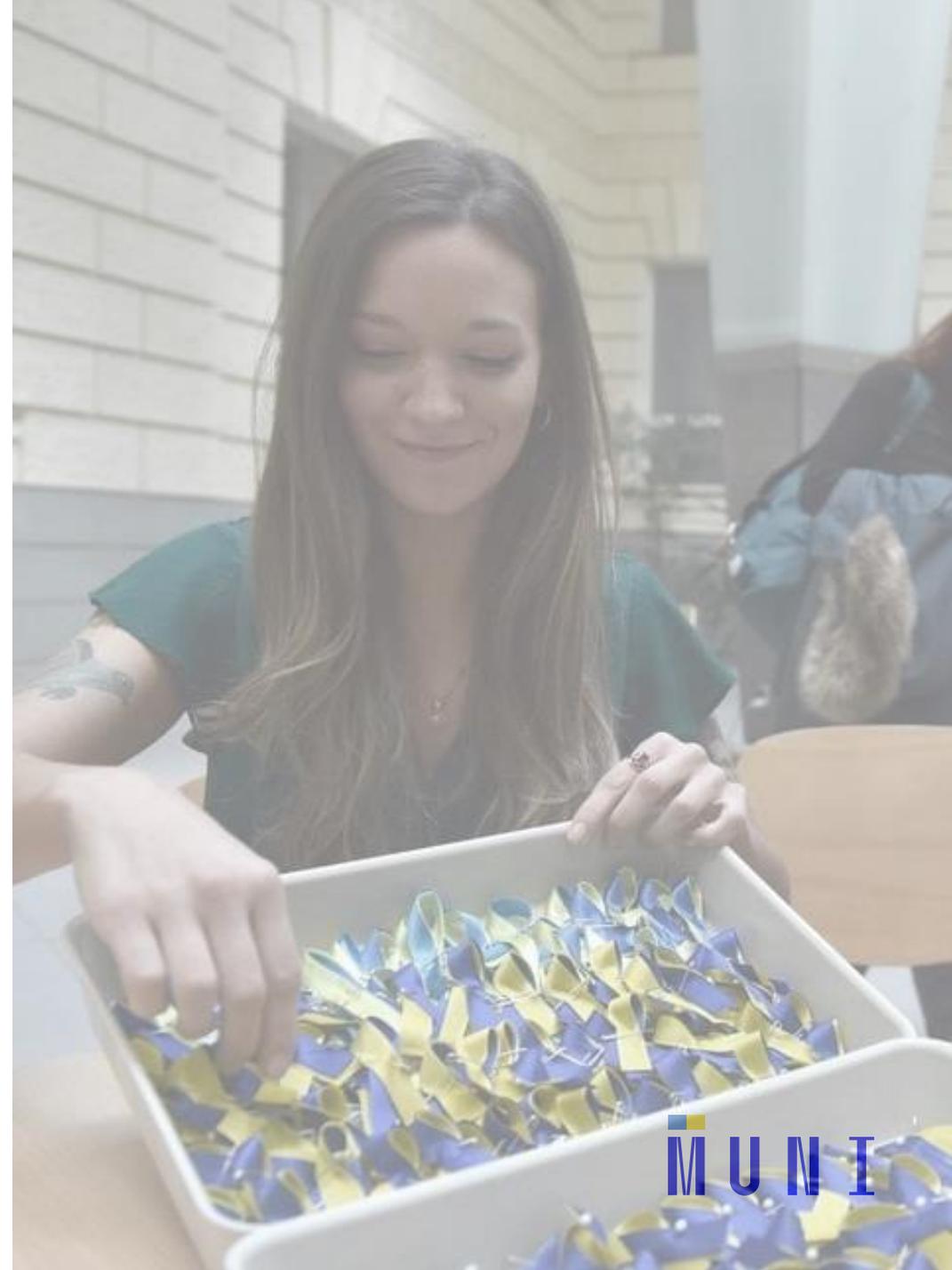
Masaryk University is helping the citizens of Ukraine

Ukrainian students, academics and researchers, non-academic staff, families and children, involvement of volunteers



Help for students, employment at MU

- Up to 1000 places available for Ukrainian students fleeing the war
- Preparation of a [special admissions procedure](#) (no application fee, outside of regular admissions)
- Possibility for current MU students from Ukraine to apply for [MU scholarship](#) for students in difficult life situations
- Support for [academics and researchers](#) from Ukraine via an HR policy programme
- Employment of [non-academic staff](#)



Further types of help

- **Accommodation** is currently offered for Ukrainian students in MU dormitories
- **Financial aid** for educational and humanitarian purposes
- **Language courses** – Czech for foreigners
- **Babysitting**, organisation of leisure activities for children



Involvement of volunteers

- Regional Centre for Help and Assistance to Ukraine – interpreters, psychological first aid
- Centre for Foreigners JMK – preparation of Czech courses, interpreters, translations
- Association Brno for Ukraine – provision of in-kind collections
- Institutions and NGOs – interpreters, translations





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