OMBUDSPERSON FOR ACADEMIC ETHICS AND PROCEDURES OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

ACTIVITY REPORT FOR 2019

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INTRODUCTION

The Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures (Office) was especially focused on increase in awareness of the academic community about the principles of academic ethics and their international practice of implementation in 2019. More attention was drawn to necessity to secure ethics of scientific researches in order to improve *scientific quality*. Similarly to publication ethics, ethics of scientific researches is a significant indicator of science, so concentration on the ethics of scientific researches as one of the elements of scientific quality in the course of preparation of future scientists and continuous updating of knowledge of experienced scientists is undoubtedly significant precondition for the researcher's career. The meetings were organized on this topic, the discussions were conducted, and future cooperation directions between the Office and the academic community were discussed, especially in the area of expansion of the latter's competences in the area of academic ethics.

The Office was also discussing with the students' representatives about the possibility for them to contribute to creation of integral and effective ethical infrastructure in the research and higher education institutions. Participation of the students' representatives in the management-related activities of the research and higher education institutions, organization of single social initiatives and episodical surveys serve as an initial stage for creation of the ethical infrastructure; however, in order to create an integral and effective ethical infrastructure, it is necessary for the academic community to make systemic and long-term efforts.

The formation of academic ethics as a social innovation should bring many changes usually. In order for these changes to be successful, *patient solidarity* of the Office and the academic community may be needed – duration exceeding one year, intellectual leadership, open and constructive dialogue.

This annual report presents the Office's performance results of 2019 and the closest directions of activities that are intended to be complied with consistently in order to increase consciousness of the academic community about importance of academic ethics for academic activities.

Loreta Tauginienė,
Ombudswoman for Academic Ethics and Procedures

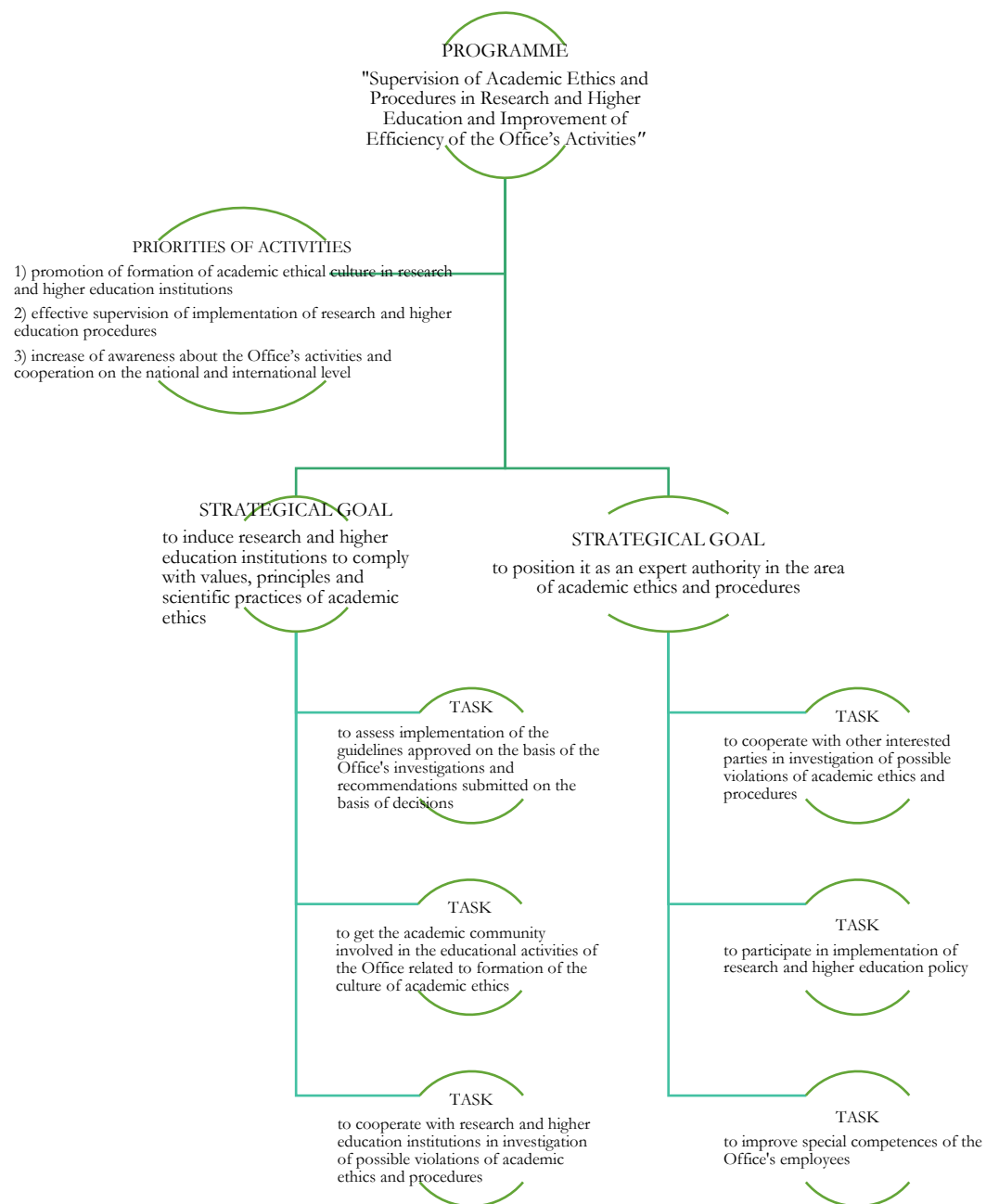# I. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OFFICE'S LONG-TERM PROGRAMME

The *mission* of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania (Office) is to implement the scientific and academic policy by safeguarding compliance with values, principles and scientific practices of academic ethics in application of national and international practices.

The Office is implementing three priorities of activities: 1) promotion of formation of academic ethical culture in research and higher education institutions; 2) effective supervision of implementation of research and higher education procedures; and 3) increase of awareness about the Office's activities and cooperation on the national and international level. These three priorities of activities are implemented through the *Long-Term Programme of the Office "Supervision of Academic Ethics and Procedures in Research and Higher Education and Improvement of Efficiency of the Office's Activities"* (Fig. 1). The purpose of the first part of this long-term programme (*Supervision of Academic Ethics and Procedures in Research and Higher Education*) is to implement one of the strategical goals of the Office – to induce research and higher education institutions to comply with values, principles and scientific practices of academic ethics. Its expedience is comparable to the change in the higher education sector endeavoured at by the Seventeenth Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania – application of ethical principles in the studying process (clauses 125.4 and 143.3), and to the attempt to satisfy the needs of society and the State – to strengthen quality of education and science (clause 128.9). The purpose of the second part of this long-term programme (*Improvement of Efficiency of the Office's Activities*) is to implement one of the strategical goals of the Office – to position it as an expert authority in the area of academic ethics and procedures. Its expedience is comparable to the commitment provided in the Seventeenth Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to increase efficiency of services provided in public sector (clause 195.12) and with an aim to substantiate efficiency of civil service by professionalism and quality, and to induce transparency of civil service (clauses 259, 262, 290 and sub-clause 285.5).

The tasks of the ombudsperson's activities are the following: 1) to induce research and higher education institutions to comply with academic ethics and procedures; 2) to supervise and control, how research and higher education institutions comply with codes of academic ethics; 3) to cooperate with research and higher education institutions while solving problems related to violations of academic ethics and procedures; 4) to safeguard effective and confidential investigation of violations

of academic ethics and procedures; 5) to supervise and control implementation of international agreements of the Republic of Lithuania, legal acts of the European Union, laws and other legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania that govern academic ethics and procedures; and 6) to contribute to quality of research and higher education while fostering principles of academic responsibility and ethical scientific practices, and applying preventive measures of plagiarism, unlawful copying or other unlawful use of results of intellectual property created by other persons, falsification, fabrication or manipulation of scientific research data.

Fig. 1. Long-Term Programme of the Office

PROGRAMME
"Supervision of Academic Ethics and Procedures in Research and Higher Education and Improvement of Efficiency of the Office's Activities"

PRIORITIES OF ACTIVITIES
1) promotion of formation of academic ethical culture in research and higher education institutions
2) effective supervision of implementation of research and higher education procedures
3) increase of awareness about the Office's activities and cooperation on the national and international level

STRATEGICAL GOAL
to induce research and higher education institutions to comply with values, principles and scientific practices of academic ethics

STRATEGICAL GOAL
to position it as an expert authority in the area of academic ethics and procedures

TASK
to assess implementation of the guidelines approved on the basis of the Office's investigations and recommendations submitted on the basis of decisions

TASK
to cooperate with other interested parties in investigation of possible violations of academic ethics and procedures

TASK
to get the academic community involved in the educational activities of the Office related to formation of the culture of academic ethics

TASK
to participate in implementation of research and higher education policy

TASK
to cooperate with research and higher education institutions in investigation of possible violations of academic ethics and procedures

TASK
to improve special competences of the Office's employees

1.1. INDUCEMENT OF RESEARCH AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO COMPLY WITH VALUES, PRINCIPLES AND SCIENTIFIC PRACTICES OF ACADEMIC ETHICS

Implementation of values, principles and scientific practices of academic ethics in research and higher education institutions

The Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures (Ombudsperson) passed 29 decisions in 2019, where and on the basis of which 21 recommendations for measures were submitted in order to remove violations of academic ethics and procedures and their causes (e.g., RHEI internal documents should be improved). 13 (62 percent) of 21 recommendations were implemented in full. RHEI plan to implement several recommendations in near future. Such are the plans for 4 recommendations. At the time, when this annual report was prepared, no information had been submitted to the Office on implementation of 4 recommendations.

The Office prepared one document of recommendatory character for the academic community – *Guidelines for Recognition of Fictitious Scientific Events*[1] (Guidelines), whereby it is attempted to recognize fictitious scientific events and to avoid participation in them and presentation of results of scientific researches. The Guidelines were prepared on the basis of publications, advice from experience and insights of members of international academic community and scientific journalists, who are not indifferent to damage caused by "predatory" publishing and scientific events for science quality and reputation. In order to prepare clear and comprehensive guidelines that would be useful for academic community, the Office invited the

> 44 percent of the surveyed RHEI are implementing the Guidelines for Recognition of Fictitious Scientific Events

interested parties to submit proposals, how to improve the Guidelines. The Research Council of Lithuania, the Lithuanian Junior Researchers' Union, the Lithuanian University Rectors' Conference, and the Lithuanian College Directors' Conference have submitted comments ad proposals on the Guidelines to the Office. In order to recognize a fictitious scientific event, the key characteristics of fictitious scientific events grouped according to the area of event, an organizer and communication were presented to the academic community. The recommendations for implementation were not presented in these Guidelines; however, almost half (N=27; 44 percent) of the surveyed research and higher education institutions (RHEI) are implementing them (Table 1).

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[1] Kapočiūtė, K, 2019. *Recognition of Fictitious Scientific Events*. Vilnius: Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures. Online access: https://etikostarnyba.lt/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Gaires_final.pdf

Table 1. Implementation of the Guidelines for Recognition of Fictitious Scientific Events

Mode of implementation	Number of research and higher education institutions
Introduction of the Guidelines for Recognition of Fictitious Scientific Events to the community (e.g., publicly available on the institution's website or via internal information means)	9
Transfer of the Guidelines for Recognition of Fictitious Scientific Events to the internal documents of the institutions (e.g., integration into codes of academic ethics, etc.)	3

9 RHEI have indicated their intentions to implement the Guidelines for Recognition of Fictitious Scientific Events. 6 RHEI have stated lack of need for the Guidelines for Recognition of Fictitious Scientific Events or lack of information about them.

The Lithuanian University Rectors' Conference (LURC) granted the permit to the Office in the reporting year to monitor progress of implementation of the Guidelines of Publication Ethics prepared by the Office and then to analyse systemic problems of academic ethics and procedures, and to form a supply of training organized by the Office for the academic community. The RHEI survey revealed that more than a half (N=27; 56 percent) of the surveyed RHEI are implementing these guidelines (Table 2).

> 56 percent of the surveyed RHEI are implementing the Guidelines of Publication Ethics of LURC

Table 2. Implementation of the Guidelines of Publication Ethics

Mode of implementation	Number of research and higher education institutions
Introduction of the Guidelines of Publication Ethics to the community (e.g., publicly available on the institution's website or via internal information means)	9
Transfer of the Guidelines of Publication Ethics to the internal documents of the institutions (e.g., integration into codes of academic ethics, approved regulations of publication ethics, etc.)	6

7 RHEI have indicated their intentions to implement the Guidelines of Publication Ethics. 5 RHEI have stated that they do not use this document or that they had not received any information about it.

The Office formed a working group for *Revision of Recommendations on the Adaptation, Implementation and Supervision of the Academic Ethics Codes by Research and Higher Education Institutions* approved in 2015. The working group had representatives of various interested parties – Lithuanian Business

Confederation, Research Council of Lithuania, Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Lithuanian Students' Union, Vilnius University Students' Union, Lithuanian Junior Researchers' Union, Lithuanian College Directors' Conference, Lithuanian University Rectors' Conference, and the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson of the Republic of Lithuania as an observer. The revision of Recommendations on the Adaptation, Implementation and Supervision of the Academic Ethics Codes by Research and Higher Education Institutions has an aim to integrate experiences of all the interested parties in application of academic ethics codes or ethical provisions. For this purpose, the development of ethical codes will be reviewed, the advanced attitude to the ethical codes will be conveyed, certain provisions will be stated clearly and new one will be added, the role and responsibility of the ethical commission/ committee will be purified, and particularity of final works and research reports will be taken into consideration (e.g., containing trade secret, special mark), etc.

It was attempted to implement 20 percent of the recommendations provided in the decisions and guidelines in the reporting year. According to the review of implementation of the recommendations provided in the decisions and guidelines, the achieved value of this strategical goal exceeded the intended value – 62 percent – three times.

Monitoring of systemic problems of academic ethics and procedures

3 analytical studies carried out in 2019 were related to systemic problems of academic ethics and procedures. The aim of the first analytical study[2] was to establish needs for access to text coincidence systems (software) for research and higher education institutions. This review helped to learn better the application scope of systems (software) identifying text coincidence in Lithuania and

> 55 percent RHEI had no access to the software identifying coinciding texts

the software used to identify coinciding texts by RHEI. In the course of the survey (February-March 2019), 17 of 31 (55 percent) RHEI had no access to software identifying coinciding texts, but expressed need for such software. 28 of 31 (90 percent) RHEI justified their need for access to software identifying coinciding texts by the aim to improve identification of possible violations of academic ethics, while smaller part of RHEI (65 percent) – by the aim to educate students and other members

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[2] Juras, R, 2019. *Need for Access to Text Coincidence Software for Research and Higher Education Institutions*. Vilnius: Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures. Online access: https://etikostarnyba.lt/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Tekstu_sutapciu_nustatymo_sistemos_apzvalga.pdf

of academic community. Only 10 percent of RHEI would use the software identifying coinciding texts to improve quality of research works. According to the survey's data, the majority of users of such software would be students of the first and the second cycle, professors and supervisors of students' works, i.e. RHEI would draw major attention to the process of studies. In consideration to the RHEI need to use software identifying coinciding texts, the Office granted an access of one year to the software "PlagScan" to 15 RHEI (29 users) – 5 universities, 8 colleges and 2 scientific research institutes, in order to safeguard academic fairness in organization of doctoral studies and publishing of scientific journals.

The aim of the second analytical study[3] was to assess a contribution of librarians into prevention of plagiarism, taking into consideration the fact that the role of modern library is not simply to safeguard maintenance of funds of information sources, servicing and consultation of users, but also to contribute to education of members of academic community with regard to academic ethics. In the course of the survey, two thirds of the respondents (N=21; 67 percent) stated that members of academic community refer to the librarians regarding plagiarism. The respondents noted that the majority of questions are raised because of security of copyrights (N=23), e.g., *how to check plagiarism?*, *how to avoid plagiarism?,* etc. The remaining respondents stated that other questions are related to the rules of quotation and/or rephrasing (N=7), e.g., *how to quote correctly?*, *what are information management software?,* etc., and gaps in publication ethics (N=6), e.g., *how many percent of plagiarism may stay in the work?*, *how many percent of self-quotation may be used in the work?* Half of the respondents (50 percent) stated that they or their colleagues are conducting sessions on prevention of plagiarism to the members of academic community. The sessions conducted by the librarians are mainly related to quotation of sources, copyrights and prevention of plagiarism, academic literacy, information literacy, etc. The lecturers are trained more rarely than the students. The need of the library as a subdivision to get involved into implementation of the institution's academic integrity policy even more has been noticed, i.e. 90 percent of respondents agree with this completely.

> 80 percent of the librarians tend to get involved into implementation of the institutions academic integrity policy

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[3] Židonė, G, 2019. *Contribution of the Librarians into Prevention of Plagiarism*. Vilnius: Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures. Online access: https://etikostarnyba.lt/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Apklausos-bibliotekininkams-apzvalga.pdf

The aim of the third analytical study [4] was to assess, how and in what scope the co-authors-students contribute to increase of scientific production of professors. This research was one of the first attempts to analyse the aspects of co-authorship of the Lithuanian professors, who get published the most, with regard to academic ethics. The research results revealed that sequence of authors (professors; N=31 from 5 State universities) is usually given according to intellectual contribution of each author into scientific research and scientific publication based on that research; however, the professors, who have published the biggest share of the scientific production, have contributed the least to preparation of scientific publications – the professor is stated as the first author in 11 percent of publications. The analysis of co-authorship with students revealed that 73,2 percent (N=527) of joint publications of professors and students have been published abroad. 63 percent of co-authors-students are students of the third cycle. The supervisor of graduation work was a co-author of the students only in case of 24 percent.

> 80 percent of the librarians tend to get involved into implementation of the institutions academic integrity policy

This research was also used to compare peculiarities of publication of the most productive professors in Lithuania with results of the research conducted by J. W. Osborne and A. Holland (2009) about the most productive scientists with regard to academic ethics. According to the research results, 1 most productive

> 1 professor prepares a scientific publication in 4,3 work day intended for scientific work per year

Lithuanian professor publishes approx. 13,48 scientific works per year on average (Osborne and Holland (2009) – 32 scientific works per year), but 1 professor prepares a scientific publication in 4,3 work day intended for scientific work per year (Osborne and Holland (2009) – 8,07 work days for 1 publication per year).

Besides, the Office contributed to revision of the questionnaire on index of academic integrity that was carried out by the Lithuanian Students' Union (LSS) in 2019. The Office suggested to revise formulations of questions and answers and to add additional possible options of answers to the questionnaire. LSS took the Office's suggestions into account. The results of research "Index of Academic Integrity" show growing consciousness of the students about academic integrity. However, numerous problems remain in the academic community. According to the respondents, appropriate

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[4] Židonė, G, Kapočiūtė, K, Juras, R, 2019. *Co-Authorship: Publication Aspects of Professors*. Report on research. Vilnius: Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures. Online access: https://etikostarnyba.lt/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Tyrimo-ataskaita_final.pdf

distribution of tasks and their performance in group, as well as evaluation by lecturers according to individual contribution into performance of the tasks remain among the most significant problems encountered when trying to safeguard implementation of the fairness and responsibility principles in the process of studies. Active copying culture remains in higher education schools (approx. 30 percent of respondents gave affirmative answer): 1) the tasks are received beforehand from other students; 2) the answers are copied from another student during exam or other tests; 3) various means are used during exam or other tests. Although this phenomenon has decreased significantly, when compared to previous years (to compare, in 2013 – 54 percent, in 2015 – 45 percent, in 2017 – 40 percent), and positive change has been noticed in the area of purchase of written works and their presentation to the higher education school as own, yet this problem is still escalated in public space and is not controlled. Besides, according to the results of research "Index of Academic Integrity", competition for better evaluations and value-based foundation of the student are the main reasons of dishonest behaviour. The students respect academic integrity rather because they are afraid of consequences. More than 70 percent of respondents are afraid to be expelled and to lose a higher education diploma.

The index of academic integrity has remained even since 2015. This may presuppose that academic ethics is still separated from quality of studies and science, although it should become one of the underlying elements to create environment of academic integrity in the higher education schools, as well as to form values of students as a society. On the other hand, although efforts of higher education schools to promote ethical behaviour of the academic community are little effective, but students' initiatives have been noticed in social networks to respect academic ethics (Fig. 2.).

Fig. 2. Examples of initiatives of the students' unions of universities

Mykolas Romeris University	Vilnius University

Vytautas Magnus University	Vilnius University

VDU Studentų atstovybė
2019 m. gruodžio 2 d.

#sesija
VDU SA Akademinių reikalų komiteto koordinatorė Kristina pasakoja apie tai, ką vertėtų žinoti prasidedant egzaminų sesijai: akademinį sąžiningumą, apeliacijas ir egzaminų perlaikymą.
Video: Vytautas Valaitis

Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto
Studentų atstovybė

▶ ————————————●   -0:01 ⚙ ▢ ⤢ 🔊

VU SA
2019 m. rugpjūčio 27 d.

VU SA programa „Sąžiningai" kviečia skatinti akademinio sąžiningumo kultūrą Vilniaus universitete! 👀🔍
Atsiskaitymų registravimas stebėjimams 🔜 vusa.lt/lt/saziningai-registracija
Studento registracija atsiskaitymų stebėjimams 🔜 vusa.lt/lt/saziningai-uzregistruoti-egzaminai
📍 Taip pat galima registruoti rugsėjo 3–13 dienomis vykstančius perlaikymus.

PUOSELĖK AKADEMINĘ ETIKĄ VU!
REGISTRUOK IR STEBĖK TARPINIUS BEI GALUTINIUS DALYKŲ ATSISKAITYMUS.

The preparatory works in relation to barometer of responsible education were also carried out in the reporting year – a questionnaire was made and validated by experts. The aim of the barometer of responsible education is to review present practice of performance of scientific researches and announcement of their results in the Lithuanian universities, colleges and scientific research institutes. This research will help to analyse, how much attention is given by the Lithuanian academic community for education about ethics of scientific researches and publication, whether the academic community is ethically sensitive, what violations of scientific researches and publication ethics are noticed in the academic environment, and how they are resolved. The research results will supplement results of the LSS research "Index of Academic Integrity" about implementation practice of academic integrity in higher education schools that was carried out two years ago. The results of both researches will help to assess more thoroughly the situation of academic ethics in Lithuania.

It was attempted to monitor 3 systemic problems of academic ethics and procedures in the reporting year. According to the analytical studies, this strategical goal was achieved by 100 percent.

In order to achieve the Office's strategical goal – to induce research and higher education institutions to comply with values, principles and scientific practices of academic ethics – 10 products were planned (Table 3).

Table 3. Implementation of the tasks of the first strategical goal

Task > product	Planned for 2019	Achieved in 2019	Achievement level (%)	Notes about achievement level
To assess implementation of the guidelines approved on the basis of the Office's investigations and recommendations submitted on the basis of decisions				
Number of analytical studies of the Office	2	3	150	
Number of the Office's topical guidelines	1	1	100	
To get the academic community involved in the educational activities of the Office related to formation of the culture of academic ethics				
Number of open-access useful links entered in the Office's website	3	4	133	
Number of events to publicize the Office's activities intended for academic community	2	6	300	
Number of participants in the events to publicize the Office's activities	70	181	259	
Number of downloaded documents of the Office (e.g., decisions, guidelines, analytical studies)	500	513	103	Total number of downloaded documents of the Office is indicated
Number of newsletters	1	4	400	
Number of subscribers for newsletters	50	9	18	New website of the Office https://etikostarnyba.lt/ was launched in the end of November 2019 being partially functional. The service provider has not installed functionality for registration to subscription on time.
To cooperate with research and higher education institutions in investigation of possible violations of academic ethics and procedures				
Number of invitations to the Office's employees to get involved into self-regulation processes of research and higher education institutions	2	2	100	
Number of consultations (e.g., frequently asked questions, inquiries)	3	5	167	

Publicizing of activities. The Office organized independently 4 events for the academic community – 1 conference, 1 seminar, and 2 trainings. One of the most important events of the Office was conference *"Ethics in the Academic Environment"* intended to commemorate the Global Ethics Day.

Its main topic in 2019 was authorship problems in the Lithuanian research and higher education institutions. It is planned to discuss one of the sorest problems of academic ethics in this event every year.

2 trainings for target groups – librarians, editors of scientific journals, supervisors of students of the first cycle, and other members of academic community – are attributed to the events organized independently by the Office. In cooperation with such institutions as the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania, the Research Council of Lithuania, and such RHEI as Kaunas University of Technology or Mykolas Romeris University, the Office organized 2 more seminars.

The Office contributed to the science festival "Spaceship Earth" by organizing the seminar "To run, not to be caught in" on the pre-University level for pupils above 15 years old. The pupils of secondary schools accompanied by teachers took part in this seminar. The pupils tried the tasks of escape room in the Office and attended the lecture on the forms of dishonest behaviour at school (e.g., use of unauthorized material in tests, reliability of sources, plagiarism, purchase of written reports, copying of exercises), in daily life, and how these forms are transformed in the academic world. The aim of that seminar was to explain that the literacy habits are formed not in higher education school, but still in progymnasium or gymnasium, when pupils start getting assignments to write a written report. Therefore, higher education schools often encounter manifestations of students' dishonesty as consequences of poorly formed literacy habits, the cause of which should be searched for in much earlier times, before the university.

Besides, 7 invited persons read their presentations, 2 of them in international events organized in cooperation with the European Commission and the European Network for Academic Integrity. 11 informative presentations were made, 1 of them in the international event. 7 of 11 of these presentations (meetings) were intended to strengthen cooperation with research and higher education institutions, especially with commissions/ committees/ colleges of academic ethics (committee of ethics). It is planned to cooperate more intensively with the committees of ethics in the future.

In order to increase effectiveness of publicizing of the Office's activities, a new and more functional website was created for the Office: https://etikostarnyba.lt/. For example, participants to an event register online, newsletters on the Office's activities are sent to subscribers in the automated mode.

Work with projects. The Office is implementing two international projects under the programme COST– *"Citizen Science to Promote Creativity, Scientific Literacy, and Innovation Throughout Europe"*

(CA15212, https://www.cs-eu.net/) and *"Mobilising Data, Policies and Experts in Scientific Collections"* (CA17106, https://www.mobilise-action.eu/).

In implementation of project CA15212, the Office will contribute to preparation of recommendations for enabling of citizens for scientific projects, including with regard to ethics of scientific activities. These recommendations will be used to draw attention to challenges, how to safeguard ethics of scientific researches through involvement of citizens as equal researchers in those scientific researches. Citizen enabling science is an innovative approach to scientific researches, so as methods of performance of scientific researches are changing, the methods to safeguard their ethics are also changing. When this citizen enabling project is initiated and implemented, the researcher has to make big efforts to avoid conflict of interests, to improve accessibility to the data, to comply with ethical authorship, to search for other methods and forms for consent of informed person, etc. When citizens are included as equal researchers of the scientific projects, the researcher's role also changes. It is necessary to respond to all of the above challenges by getting prepared beforehand.

In implementation of project CA17106, the Office will acquire competences, how to digitize, collect, process and make the data public, and will use such competences to promote these practices in the Lithuanian research and higher education institutions. It should be noted that Lithuania, as well as other Member States of the European Union, are encouraged to contribute more actively to implementation of O3 (Open to the World, Open Innovation, Open Access) provisions. With regard to the content, these provisions induce not only to guarantee accessibility of data to all the interested parties, but also to create conditions for innovations on the basis of these data, and presuppose growing openness of society through implementation of responsibility and integrity, i.e. safeguarding of ethics of scientific researches and publication.

Besides, the Office also submitted an application together with its foreign partners under the programme Erasmus+. The application was evaluated very well, although it did not receive financing.

1.2. OFFICE AS AN EXPERT AUTHORITY IN THE AREA OF ACADEMIC ETHICS AND PROCEDURES

In order to achieve the Office's strategical goal – to position it as an expert authority in the area of academic ethics and procedures – 7 products were planned (Table 4).

Table 4. Implementation of the tasks of the second strategical goal

Task > product	Planned for 2019	Achieved in 2019	Achievement level (%)	Notes about achievement level
To cooperate with other interested parties in investigation of possible violations of academic ethics and procedures				
Number of cooperation agreements and memberships	1	1	100	
Number of inquiries regarding possible violations of academic ethics and/or procedures	30	35	117	
Amount of written information provided by the interested parties of publication process (e.g., presentation of full-text publication, expert conclusion, consultation)	5	5	100	
To participate in implementation of research and higher education policy				
Proportion of submitted and accepted initiatives (e.g., proposals) regarding national documents related to safeguarding of quality of science and studies (percent)	40	0	0	
Number of press releases prepared by the Office, interviews and public speeches	8	12	150	
To improve special competences of the Office's employees				
Implementation of annual training plan (percent)	45	126	280	
Number of training hours per one employee	22	64,5	293	

Membership. The Parliament (Seimas) of the Republic of Lithuania allowed the Office to enter the European Network of Research Integrity Offices (ENRIO), i.e. to become one of the founders and a member of this association. The main mission of this network that was operating informally earlier is to encourage exchanging information and experience, sharing good practice in promotion of integrity of scientific researches, investigation of violations of scientific researches, consulting the member states that have poorly developed national research integrity system, etc.

This membership is important for the Office because it opens wider opportunities to learn policy of solution of cases of dishonesty in scientific researches applied by other European countries and to improve own policy and preventive measures of dishonesty in academic environment. The membership of the Office in ENRIO creates conditions to improve effectiveness of the Office's activities and to react timely to international tendencies.

Inquiries about possible violations of academic ethics and/or procedures. The Office received 35 complaints/reports/ started an investigation (complaints) about possible violations of academic ethics and/or procedures in the reporting year (Fig. 3). The majority of complaints (82 percent) were related to possible violations of academic ethics and/or procedures at universities.

Fig. 3. Number of complaints in 2014–2019
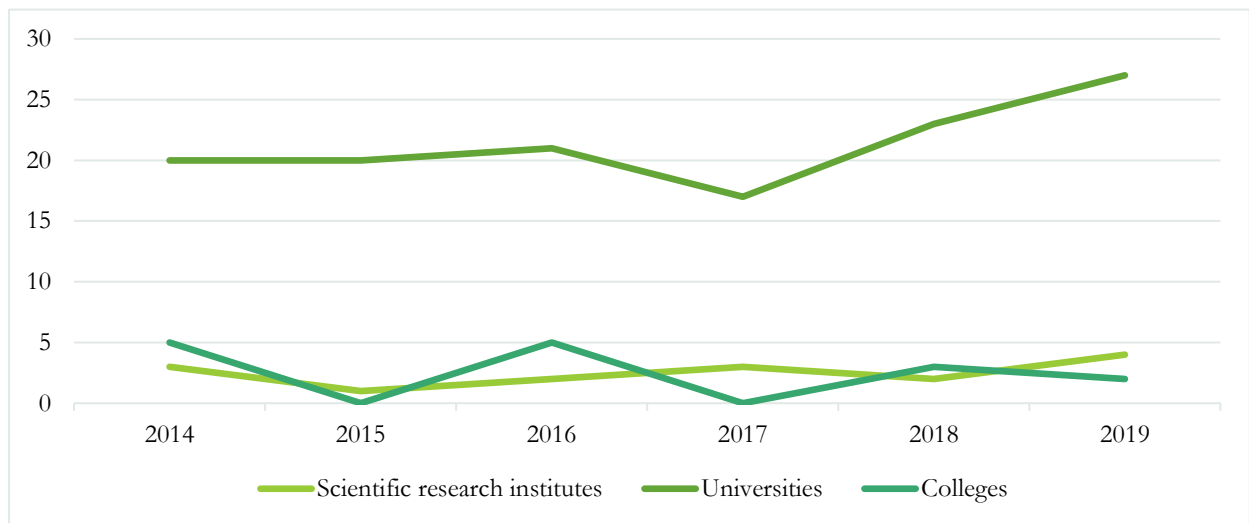
The Office rejected 7 complaints on the reason of limits of the Ombudsperson's competence. 3 complaints were forwarded for self-regulation of RHEI, and 2 complaints were forwarded to another institution according to the competence (e.g., ombudsperson of equal opportunities). The Office determined violations of academic ethics related, for example, to falsification of information, misleading information, donated authorship, negligence and procedural violations with regard to implementation of the Law on Research and Higher Education and RHEI legal acts.

In consideration to the part of complaints examined before referral to the ombudsperson, it is evident that in the reporting year, 86 percent of complaints, on the basis whereof the decisions were made, had not been considered before. This index reflects situation of year 2016 (88 percent). In 2019, the trust in committees of ethics operating in research and higher education institutions decreased by 20 percent, when compared to year 2018. Besides, the tendency was notices to apply more often to the Office with regard to issues of equal opportunities and labour law. This means that applicants confuse the ombudsperson's competence with competence of other institutions when violations related to activities of research and higher education institutions are examined.

Participation in implementation of the research and higher education policy. In the reporting year, the Office made 16 suggestions for revision of the legal acts related to implementation

of research and higher education policy – Regulations of Doctoral Studies in Science (10 suggestions), Description of Evaluation Procedure of Applications for the Right to Doctoral Studies in Science (1 suggestion), Description of Minimal Qualification Requirements for Research Workers of the State Research and Higher Education Institutions (1 suggestion) and Law on Copyright and Related Rights (4 suggestions). When making suggestions, the Office identified gaps in ensuring ethics of scientific researches, ambiguous and even misleading provisions (that create conditions to violate academic ethics). Only some suggestions regarding Regulations of Doctoral Studies in Science were considered in the reporting period.

Besides, the proposal, how to improve sub-clause 3.1 of the licence agreement, was submitted to eLABa consortium. It was suggested not to apply the conditions of the work's use (e.g., graduation work) provided in the appropriate licence agreement, when the information about the work is presented to the ombudsperson for examination of possible violations of academic ethics and/or procedures.

International input. The Office had several opportunities to make suggestions, how to promote and ensure ethics of scientific researches on the international level. One of the first opportunities was related to the Hong Kong Manifesto for Assessing Researchers: Fostering Research Integrity that was drafted by the organizers of the World Conference on Research Integrity. The Office suggested to revise the applied terminology and related content and to distribute clearly responsibility for research integrity.

The Office also had suggestions for the document drafted by the European Council "Countering Education Fraud and Promoting Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education". It drew attention to the definitions of terms, their supplementation, defamatory reports, need to form academic writing skills, and need to monitor systemic ethics and integrity in the academic environment.

Moreover, the Office expressed its intention to take part in the discussions and meetings of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) about the Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers adopted by UNESCO in 2017 (Recommendations). According to its competence, the Office would be able to contribute to evaluation of implementation of the 8th recommendation and to provide certain part of information on the progress of implementation of the 8th recommendation (The Recommendation calls for scientific integrity and ethical codes of conduct for science and research and their technical application) for the periodical national report on implementation of the Recommendations.

Improvement of special competences of the Office's employees. In the area of academic ethics, two public officers raised their competence abroad – about protection of speakers in the conference held in Utrecht (Kingdom of the Netherlands), and about research integrity – in the sixth World Conference on Research Integrity held in Hong King (special administrative region of China). Besides, two public officers and one employee hired under an employment contract were improving their special competences in the course of 9 events held in Lithuania.

Six employees – three public officers and three employees hired under an employment contract – improved their competences additionally in the course of 8 events intended to improve administration of activities in the areas of personal data protection, prevention of corruption, organization of public procurements, and management of documents.

Two partially employed employees hired under an employment contract were not raising their competences.

Increase of effectiveness of the Office's work

It is stated in Paragraph 10 of Article 17 of the Law on Higher Education and Research that "the ombudsperson shall examine the complaint (report) or carry out an investigation, make a decision and notify the applicant in writing thereof not later than in 30 days after receipt of the complaint (report) or start of the investigation. The term for examination of the complaint (report), investigation or decision-making may be extended up to 3 months after receipt of the complaint (report) or start of the investigation if circumstances of the complaint (report) or investigation are complex or if additional information is received in the course of investigation." This provision gives at least 30 and not more than 92 calendar days for the ombudsperson to make a decision. In 2018, this provision would be implemented in 233 calendar days on average. Thus, in 2019, it was endeavoured at making the ombudsperson's decision within the period not exceeding 190 calendar days.

In the reporting year, 11 of 29 decisions of the ombudsperson were made within the term set in the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania – within the period of 68-89 calendar days. Two decisions of the ombudsperson took more than 400 calendar days. The average duration of the ombudsman's decision making was 173 calendar days.

The decision making by the ombudsman required more time than indicated in the legal acts because of the following reasons: 1) complexity of the examined case (e.g., regarding safeguarding of ethics of scientific researches); 2) safeguarding of the term for submission of information by RHEI

and other interested parties set in the Rules of Examination of Applications and Complaints and Servicing of Persons in Public Administration Bodies approved by Resolution No 875 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 22 August 2007 – 20 work days; 3) seasoned activities of RHEI (e.g., it is not possible to provide information in summer and in holiday period because of vacation of the administration employees); and 4) determination of contacts of the parties of the complaint (report) or investigation for communication in order to evaluate objectively the circumstances in question (e.g., written inquiry to the Centre of Registers; failure to determine contacts; sending of the Office's letters by post).

As the ombudsperson's decision-making required much more time, the Office submitted proposals to the Committee of Education and Science of the Parliament (Seimas) of the Republic of Lithuania to amend Paragraph 10 of Article 17 of the Law on Higher Education and Research and to set longer term for decision-making – from 90 to 153 calendar days (3-5 months). The Office based this proposal on the Danish practice, where the term of 12 months is set for investigation of violations of research ethics and respective decision making after receipt of the complaint. The proposal was not discussed in 2019.

In 2018, the Office received the case forwarded by Utena District Prosecutor's Office of Panevėžys Regional Prosecutor's Office regarding administrative offence provided in Article 123 of the Law on Administrative Offences. In 2019, the representative of the Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania was consulted about case law of administrative offences and the actions were performed regarding possibility to use the Register of Administrative Offences. The Office encountered some technical problems in attempt to log in to the Register of Administrative Offences, so the administrative offence was not registered in 2019. Besides, the Office referred to the Committee on Law and Law Enforcement of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania for application of Paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 123 of the Law on Administrative Offences and explained that the persons, to whom administrative liability should be imposed under the above articles, can be outside the academic community, while the ombudsperson has competence with regard to the activities of research and higher education institutions in the areas of academic ethics and procedures, as specified in Article 17 of the Law on Higher Education and Research and the Office's Statutes. With regard to legal regulation of the ombudsperson's responsibility, application of Paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article 123 of the Law on Administrative Offences should be also assigned to other subjects, e.g., police.

Fig. 4. Results of the judicial proceedings of the Office's decisions in 2014–2019
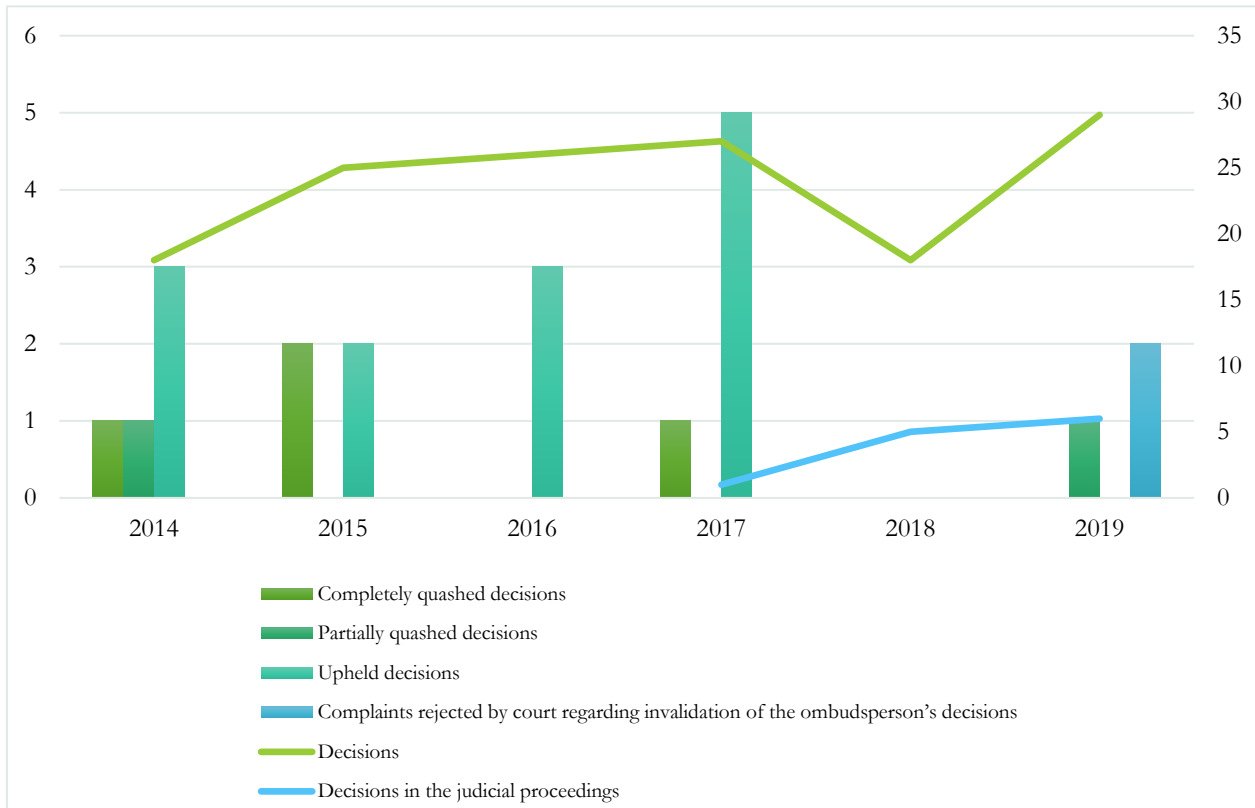
Three decisions made by the ombudsperson were appealed to the court in 2019. Two complaints out of three were rejected by the court. The administrative judicial proceedings regarding refusal to examine the complaint and regarding 6 decisions of the ombudsperson (including 1 decision of the ombudsperson made in the reporting year) were conducted in the end of 2019 (Fig. 4).

It was endeavoured at making the ombudsperson's decision in 190 calendar days in the reporting year. According to the review provided in this annual report, it is evident that this strategical goal was achieved by 109 percent.

II. MANAGEMENT OF THE OFFICE

2.1. HUMAN RESOURCES

No subdivisions (working groups) were established in the Office, so all the employees are directly subordinate to the ombudsperson. Two types of employees are present in the Office – public officers and employees hired under and employment contract. There are the following jobs: chief advisors,

advisors and chief specialists (Fig. 5). 5 of 7 employees have an opportunity to work in remote mode part of the work time. The part of remote work per week varied from 17 to 100 percent. The majority of employees were working according to the individual work schedule.

8 jobs were provided to safeguard the Office's activities, but in 2019, only 4,35 staff were present because of insufficient financing. On 01 January 2020, the Board of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania determined that the number of public officers and employees hired under an employment contract in the Office and receiving remuneration from the State budget and the State money funds would be 10. No financing was awarded for new jobs.

The Office was searching for three employees to work as a chief advisor, an advisor, and a chief analyst in the reporting year. The selection procedure was performed regarding two of three employees; one selection did not take place, so the competition to that place was announced repeatedly.

Fig. 5. Management scheme of the Office
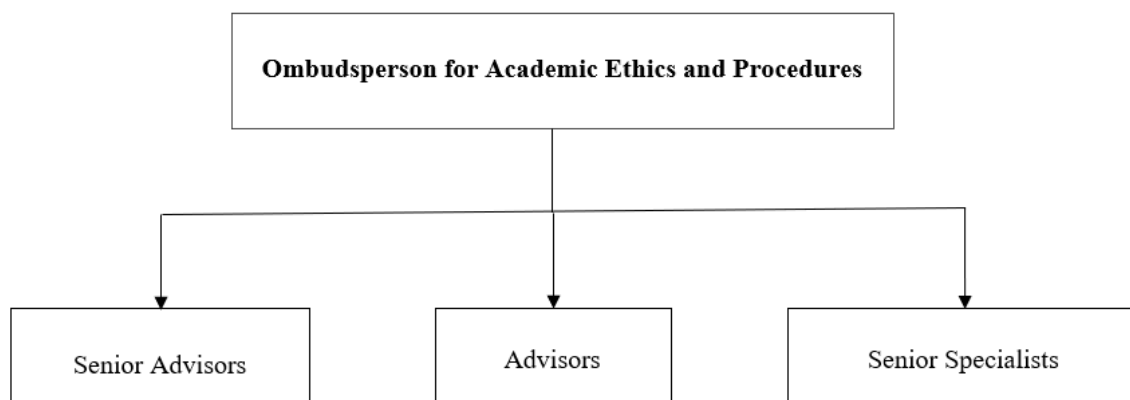
All the employees of the Office have higher education: 2 employees have doctoral degree, 5 – qualification of the Master or equivalent degree, and one – qualification of the Bachelor or equivalent degree. 4 employees have completed more than one higher education. The employees with education in the area of social sciences make majority of the Office's employees. The higher education qualification varies from law, political sciences, sociology, management, communication and information to philology, information science and mathematics.

3 public officers were motivated in the reporting year – by qualification improvement (1), reward (1) and by single benefit in the amount of 1 salary (2). Besides, 3 employees hired under an employment contract were motivated by the bonus of fixed part of 1 salary.

The average age of the Office's employees is 39 years. One official, 3 public officers and 4 employees hired under an employment contract (6 women and 2 men) were employed in the Office on the 31st of December of the reporting year.

Two students performed practice in the Office in the reporting year – one from Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, who studies Multimedia and Computer Design (student of the first cycle) and one from Kazimieras Simonavičius University, who studies law (student of integral studies). Besides, four volunteers from Avižieniai Gymnasium in Vilnius Region and Vilnius Martynas Mažvydas Progymnasium helped to coordinate smooth registration of participants to the events organized by the Office.

2.2. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Funds of the State budget. 191 thousand euros from the State budget were assigned to the Office's programme "Supervision of Academic Ethics and Procedures in Research and Higher Education and Improvement of Efficiency of the Office's Activities" in 2019. 118 thousand euros were meant for salaries. The Office used 98,9 percent of the funds of the State budget according to the aforementioned programme, where funds for the salaries made 60,87 percent and introduction / updating of information sources cost 23 percent.

Foreign funds. Six business trips were funded from various financing sources. Their resources were late used to compensate other business trips of the Office's employees. Two business trips (EUR 1666,18) were financed from the resources of the knowledge exchange initiative implemented by the European Commission "Mutual Learning on Research Integrity". One business trip was financed from the resources of the European Council's Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education, ETINED. Three business trips were funded from project CA15212.

2.3. INFORMATION RESOURCES

The effectiveness of the Office's activities was increased by introduction of new information systems and their connection to present information systems. The software identifying coinciding texts, the system of automatic recognition of spoken language, and the system of management of documents were instilled in the Office. Two of them were started to be used right away.

The Office received an access to such information systems as the Register of Administrative Offences, Register of Pedagogues, and the Register of Students. The information system of the Lithuanian Academic Electronic Library eLABa is still inaccessible to the Office because of management peculiarities of consortium eLABa.

New and more functional website of the Office in compliance with legal acts was created: www.etikostarnyba.lt. The computer work places were modernized by updating software and technical capacities of computers.

III. PRIORITIES OF THE OFFICE'S ACTIVITIES FOR YEAR 2020

It is planned to continue consistent implementation of the priorities of the Office's activities of 2019:

1) Organization of preventive measures of unethical behaviour of the academic community (quarter I-IV);

2) Improvement of effectiveness of investigation of possible violations of academic ethics and procedures (quarter I-IV);

3) Strengthening of cooperation with the academic community, services and institutions, international organizations, and academic networks (quarter I-IV);

4) Strengthening of spread of the Office's activities on the national and international level (quarter I-IV);

5) Improvement of qualifications of the Office's employees (quarter I-IV).