

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

The vision of the Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology of the Polish Academy of Sciences is to maintain the position of one of the leading centres of competence in Central Europe specializing in biomedical research.

Research conducted at the Institute focuses on issues directly related to health protection and improving the quality of life. The Institute's main mission is to learn the mechanisms and develop innovative therapies and diagnostic methods for cancer, diabetes, neurodegenerative diseases, neurological disorders and other civilization diseases. In addition to basic biological research, the Institute provides expertise in the field of translational research, including pre-clinical research. The Nencki Institute is open to cooperation with industry, aimed at introducing new products to the pharmaceutical, biomedical and biotechnological market.

The development strategy of the Nencki Institute for the last fifteen years has been focused on the creating of infrastructure enabling the effective use of the latest biological and biomedical imaging techniques. The Institute conducts interdisciplinary research at a global level in the field of imaging, using high-resolution and high-throughput techniques. Gathering the infrastructure and scientific expertise in the field of bioimaging enabled the Institute to obtain the status of the Polish Euro-BioImaging Node and to offer users, internal and external, advanced techniques of structural and functional imaging of biological material. In addition, the Nencki Institute has extensive experience in the construction and management of national research infrastructure, as exemplified by the participation in the key Innovative Economy Operational Programme project: Center for Preclinical Research and Technology (CePT), which was the largest biomedical and biotechnology undertaking in Central and Eastern Europe and the largest research investment in Poland. As part of this project, the Neurobiology Center (CN) was created at the Nencki Institute in newly built premises, successfully functioning as a group of open core facilities, based on the world-leading European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) model. All laboratories are intensively used by both the Institute's employees and external users (scientists and industry representatives), building the scientific potential of the Nencki Institute and Poland. Since January 1, 2020 the Institute has been implementing the project entitled NEBI - National Centre for Image Research in Biological and Biomedical Sciences. The main objective of the project is to establish the National Centre for Advanced Image Analysis in Biological and Biomedical Imaging. The project will create an advanced IT infrastructure for data collection and processing and will create a state-of-the-art integrated platform for multidimensional imaging of biological processes that condition both the proper functioning of the organism and the underlying diseases of civilization.

We collaborate with scientific institutions from around the world. Currently, the Nencki Institute employees conduct over 60 research projects in scientific cooperation with research units from 25 countries, participating in 26 scientific consortia and 8 research networks. We implement 7 projects under the Horizon 2020 program (including two ERC Starting Grants), over 170 projects financed from the National Centre for Research and Development, the National Science Centre, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and

the Foundation for Polish Science (including a grant for the creation of the International Research Agenda – the Center of Excellence in Research on Neural Plasticity and Brain Diseases BRAINCITY), as well as a prestigious grant under the Human Frontier Science Program.

Since 2019 the Nencki has been running a PhD school in cooperation with 9 scientific institutions in Warsaw. The school offers interdisciplinary education in 4 scientific disciplines: biology, chemistry, physics, and medicine. We also offer multi-disciplinary international PhD training programmes, such as the recently completed Bio4Med fellowships funded by Marie Curie COFUND grant: Biology for Medicine, International PhD Programme in Biological Bases of Human Diseases. The main objective of the project was to create international, interdisciplinary, and inter-sectoral PhD studies in the field of biological bases of human diseases. The program was implemented by 22 leading research groups from the Nencki Institute and their research partners from world-class laboratories located in the EU Member States, Switzerland, Japan, Canada, the USA, and Ukraine. The Bio4Med project aimed to support the career development of young scientists through research and training in the area of molecular biology, biochemistry, cell biology, physiology, behavioural studies, and bioinformatics. The Bio4Med objectives were implemented through diverse activities including practical laboratory training, advanced training courses to enhance understanding of the topics of doctoral projects, as well as courses developing research-oriented generic skills.

We educate with respect for freedom, human rights, and tolerance. We believe that building a strong international cooperation network with special emphasis on the European dimension of studies is an important part of nowadays education. The Institute prepares students for careers in an increasingly global economy and society, putting stress on earning international experience.

International cooperation, education, and mobility of the researchers is also enhanced by cooperation in global initiatives like SPARK. SPARK was launched in 2006 at Stanford University to improve public health through collaboration between scientists and industry experts, ensuring an effective translation of scientific discoveries. More than 40 leading institutions around the world have already joined this unique community. The Nencki Institute is one of the first institutions to participate in this important initiative, which, through cooperation with experts from industry and academia from all over the world, enables faster transfer of basic research results to the clinic, and stimulates translational research.

The Institute's international strategy is focused on strong integration into the European Research Area (ERA) as a valuable partner in basic and applied research. The Nencki Institute management is aware that, for such integration to be effective, the Institute needs to maximize the support provided to individual scientists in their mobility and in all phases of international project preparation and implementation.

The Nencki Institute is very active in organizing and participating in various international and national scientific events. Over the past years the Nencki Institute has organized or co-organized 7 national and 27 international conferences.

The Nencki Institute Office of International Relations and Project Management facilitates and coordinates planning, preparation, and submission of applications for international teaching and training projects. The Office also supports project management and reporting.

Our goals:

1. To make training programs at the Institute more interesting for future students and more valuable for the business market.
2. To improve the quality and relevance of higher education at the Nencki Institute.
3. To strengthen our quality through mobility and cross-border cooperation. The staff and students of the Nencki Institute work and study at institutions in other countries. Staff and students from abroad work and study at the Institute.
4. To link higher education, research, and business for excellence and regional development. The students at the Nencki Institute are eligible for placements in non-academic institutions, such as private businesses and research companies. This provides them with valuable experience regarding the functioning of business and research enterprises. The alumni of the Institute start to work in the business sector, while private companies benefit from employing our graduates as they are very valuable employees. These relationships with businesses are also explored in other ways. For example, we envisage that they will help us in translating our research into practical applications.
5. To improve the Institute's management and get more funding. Our administrative staff is welcome to enrol in courses and other forms of international exchange. The knowledge and expertise gained in that way help improve the governance of our Institute and make it more efficient. New funding opportunities are naturally developed as a result of better links with businesses and foreign higher education institutions.

The basic policies and activities related to our international strategy will continue in the upcoming years.

Our goals for 2021-2027:

1. To encourage more students to study and undertake internships abroad to gain international experience.
2. To establish new forms of international cooperation, in particular joint projects and curriculum development.
3. To attract more international students to join our projects.
4. To continue developing the placement program and to review curricula for the needs of the international labour market.
5. To link with industry experts due to the development of transfer of basic research results to the clinic, and to stimulate translational research.
6. To increase staff and students' mobility. Participation will create a framework for embedding cross-border cooperation into the academic curriculum and staff development programme.

7. To promote knowledge transfer at all levels and active participation in the local cross-sectoral enterprise partnership.
8. To prepare for the development of solutions to meet national and local needs through transnational partnerships and projects.

Our goal is to enable students/doctoral students to visit partner institutions for the part of the studies and placements and the Institute's staff for teaching and training in partner institutions as well as to accept incoming students and staff from partner institutions. The unit coordinating the programme activities will be the International Cooperation and Project Management Office and the Programme Committee appointed by the Director of the Institute. The Committee's responsibilities include:

1. Coordinating the whole project at the Institute
2. Contact with partners and external institutions
3. Project monitoring through preparing the Institute's eligibility criteria regarding visits, preparing application forms, rules of budget distribution, reporting, archiving project documentation, current control of project implementation, anticipating and preventing potential risk situations. The selection procedure of candidates will be clear and available on the Institute's website. The application in the case of doctoral students will include the submission of a set of documents regarding mobility, which after a formal assessment by the programme coordinator will be forwarded to the Programme Committee. The Committee will make the final evaluation and selection of the candidates. The evaluation criteria will include: scientific achievements, the similarity between the curriculum or internship, and the research subject (based on the agreement on the curriculum or training program), motivation for the visit. The results of the evaluation of the application will be forwarded directly to the applicant. The decision may be appealed against in writing to the Director of the Institute within 2 weeks from the date of the results. The eligibility of staff members will be based on the submission of documents that, following a formal assessment by the coordinator of the Institute, will be forwarded to the Committee for evaluation. The evaluation will cover the motivation and purpose of the visit, the curriculum (in the case of teaching assignments), or training (in the case of staff training trips). The results of the evaluation will be forwarded directly to the applicants. The decision may be appealed against in writing to the Director of the Institute within 2 weeks from the date of the results. Before the mobility starts, each participant will receive organisational information, will sign an agreement, and will be informed how the settlement of the mobility will look like. The Institute will guarantee full recognition of the mobility. Each person coming from abroad within the programme will receive logistic and organisational support from the staff of the International Cooperation and Project Management Office and other units involved in the programme.

Mobility of students/doctoral students and staff will contribute to the implementation of the Institute's strategy as follows. Students/doctoral students will gain international experience and desired qualifications in the European labour market. They will be attractive to potential

employers. This will bring science closer to the commercial sector, contribute to technology transfer and innovative solutions. Strengthening the image of the Institute's graduates will also facilitate dialogue at the local and national levels, the aim of which will be to meet the current needs of society and the economy. The mobility of employees will increase their competences, knowledge of foreign languages, professional development, and transfer of good practices. We assume that, indirectly, as a result of the above achievements, the Institute will increase its recognition in the European arena, which will contribute to the increase in the number of foreign students studying at the Institute and interested in training programs and internships. The number of projects involving international partnerships will increase. Attractive curricula will be developed in response to the current needs of society and the dynamic labour market.

The qualitative objective of the programme is to increase the participants' knowledge and skills, acquire competencies and language skills, increase the attractiveness of the Institute at the European level and promote it abroad, improve the quality of the educational offer, strengthen the quality, expand international cooperation, create a strong relationship between research and business, improve management through the transfer of good practices. The qualitative indicators include: - the increase in the number of students and employees declaring the acquisition of new competencies, experience, and satisfaction with participation in the programme;- the increase of the Institute's recognition at the European level;- the increase in the number of foreign students completing studies and training at the Institute. Quantitative indicators:- implementation of the planned number of mobility.