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Development and Activity of the Institute of Geography, Kazimierz Wielki University in 1995-2016

Abstract: The Institute of Geography of Kazimierz Wielki University, founded in 1996, initially as the Chair of Geography, is the youngest geography research and didactic unit in Poland. The Institute runs two-cycle studies in two fields: Geography as well as Tourism and Recreation (bachelor's and complementary master's studies), and two engineering courses: Inland Waterways Revitalization and Crisis Management in the Natural Environment. After twenty years of student education, graduates of the Institute of Geography have an impact on the natural environment management on a local and national scale, by taking positions at various levels, including managerial positions in local authorities' units, institutions connected with environmental protection as well as private enterprises. The academic research of the Institute of Geography focuses on issues related to physical geography and socio-economic geography as well as tourism and recreation. Currently, the most important topics are: the impact of human activity on fluvial systems, problems related to revitalization of waterways and riverside areas, geodiversity of selected areas in Poland, contemporary socio-economic processes in Poland and other transition countries, tourism development and economics. The scientific research and expert activities of the Institute's employees in the indicated fields include research works both worldwide, nationwide, as well as on a local scale – the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship and the city of Bydgoszcz. The research is carried out within the framework of cooperation with Polish and foreign academic institutions, as well as in the scope of implementation works with local authorities' units, landscape parks and private enterprises. Since 2013, the Institute of Geography has published the "Geography and Tourism" academic journal, which popularizes the results of theoretical and empirical research in the fields of geography and tourism.

Keywords: Institute of Geography, Kazimierz Wielki University, Bydgoszcz, history, bachelor and master degree study, the research in the fields of geography, tourism, waterways, environmental management.

1. Creation and development of the Institute of Geography

The Institute of Geography of the Kazimierz Wielki University is the youngest geography research and educational unit in Poland. Its precursor is the Chair of Geography, created in 1995 at the initiative of Dr hab. Aleksandra Kowalczyk, at the Higher School of Pedagogy in city of Bydgoszcz. In 1998, it launched geography studies with two specialisations – physical geography and tourism geography.

A very important event was the transformation of the Chair of Geography of the Higher School of Pedagogy into the Institute of Geography of the Kazimierz Wielki Academy in Bydgoszcz¹ in 2001 (*Rector's Regulation No.*

41/2000/2001 of 25/07/2001). Analysis of the spatial range of recruitment of students of the Institute of Geography shows that students of geography come mostly from the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship. This fact is a clear proof of the relevance of the education programme in terms of the needs of the regional labour market. It also demonstrates that the young generation of Poles is very interested in geography as an important and interesting discipline.

Staff development is important for the functioning of the Institute in the scientific area. The Chair of Geography started with only three research and teaching staff

¹ Kazimierz Wielki Academy from 2000; Kazimierz Wielki University from 2005.

members. In the following years, the team changed and expanded and the staff members improved their qualifications and research competences. Nevertheless, the Institute of Geography is still one of the smallest geography units in Poland. In 2011, it ranked 13th out of 15 geography centres in Poland in terms of the number of autonomous academic staff members (Kostrzewski, Roo-Zielińska, 2011; Śleszyński, 2013). At the end of 2016, it employed 34 people, including 32 members of the research and teaching staff.

The structure of the Institute underwent substantive changes. When the Chair of Geography was created, it had two departments: the Department of Physical Geography and the Landscape Protection and the Department of Socio-Economic Geography and Spatial Planning. The detailed analysis of changes in the Institute's structure demonstrates the functioning of six departments between the academic years of 2002/2003 and

2015/2016 (seven in 2008/2009 only). From the beginning of the 2016/2017 academic year, the Institute consists of five structural units, i.e. one chair (Waterways Revitalization) and 4 departments: the Department of Landscape History, the Department of Physical Geography and Landscape Architecture, the Department of Socio-Economic Geography, the Department of Tourism Geography. Changes in the structure of the Institute resulted in particular from: the consolidation of research fields, efforts aimed at improving the research effectiveness, the increasing number of research and teaching staff members, and adjustment to current research, teaching, and personnel needs, as well as expanding the education programme. Three of the departments have been operating for approximately 15 years, which proves the relevance of their creation and the importance of their research and teaching role in the structure of the Institute.

2. Education of students and the education programme of the Institute of Geography

The education programme of the Institute of Geography of the Kazimierz Wielki University is very extensive. The first faculty to be opened in 1998 was geography, which had a five-year long-cycle programme. The Institute of Geography offered the following specialisations: physical geography and environment protection, tourism geography, and socio-economic geography. The first 42 Masters of Science in geography (full-time and part-time studies) graduated in 2003. During the functioning of the long-term programme, 947 students graduated from the Institute. As of 1 October 2007, the first-cycle (Bachelor's level) programme was launched in accordance with the European Union requirements. The second-cycle (Master's level) programme was launched three years later. Currently, two of the three specialisations are being launched within the first-cycle (Bachelor's level) programme (with regards to students' declarations): physical geography and geo-information, social geography and regional development, socio-economic geog-

raphy. Within the Master's programme, the following specialisations are offered: physical geography and natural environment protection and waterways geography (as a continuation of the first-cycle engineering studies in waterways revitalization).

Since 2010, 299 students have graduated from the Bachelor degree studies in different geographical specialisations. The number of Masters of Science in geography (since 2012) is slightly higher, i.e. 348³. The analysis of changes in the number of students in particular years shows that the Institute had the largest number of students in the 2006/2007 academic year – 730 persons (Fig. 1). Due to the demographic decline, the number of students decreased in the following years.

In recent years, the most popular faculty has been tourism and recreation (first-cycle programme) launched on 1 October 2008. The successful first recruitment in 2008 (a total of 166 full-time and part-time students) proved the relevance of the curriculum. The first

³ Until the end of the 2015/2016 academic year.

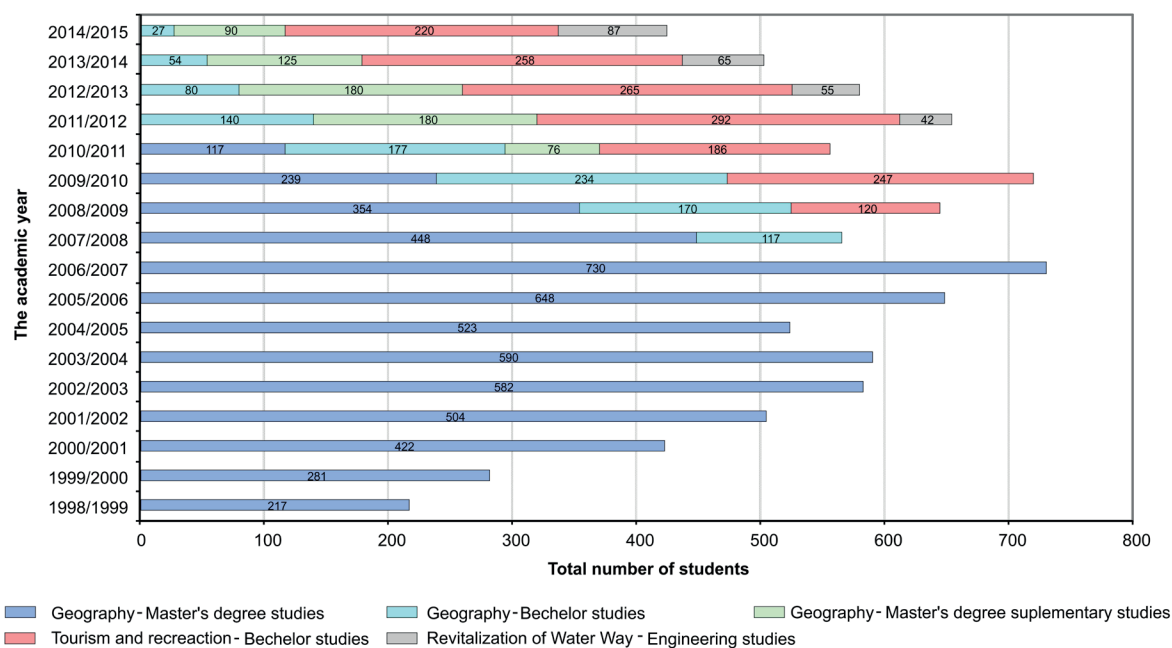


Figure 1. Changes in the number and structure of students of the Institute of Geography, Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz in 1998-2014

Source: based on the data from the Institute of Geography, Kazimierz Wielki University

undergraduate students (106 students) finished their studies in 2011. Between 2011 and 2015, 550 students graduated from that faculty. Its curriculum (both part-time and full time) is carried out in cooperation with the Institute of Physical Education. The first-cycle programme offers two specialisations: tourism economy and physical recreation.

In the following years, the education programme was extended to include new faculties. In March 2010, the Council of the Institute of Geography accepted the request to make efforts to open a new engineering studies faculty – waterways revitalization. Due to the fact that such a field of study did not exist in Poland, it was not included in the register of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, hence the Institute of Geography had to apply for its inclusion in the relevant register and education standards. The faculty (unique in Europe) was launched in the summer semester of 2011/2012. Currently, it offers two specialisations: waterway management and inland waterway transport. The first group of engineers graduated in 2015.

In cooperation with the Institute of History and International Relations of the Faculty of

Humanities and the Institute of Physical Culture, the second-cycle programme (cultural and heritage tourism) was launched. Initially, it was very popular, but due to a gradual decrease in the number of candidates, it was not launched in the 2016/017 academic year. One year earlier, efforts accepted by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education were made to launch the second-cycle programme of tourism and recreation studies in October 2016. This faculty, the specialisations of which are tourist management, fitness and recreation, is a continuation of the first-cycle studies, which is the most popular of all the faculties.

The successful works on the curriculum on the second engineering faculty called emergency management in the environment resulted in the first-cycle programme. In this case, two specialisations were offered: emergency management in atmospheric environment and emergency management in aquatic environment.

Moreover, to make the offer more attractive and increase the employability of graduates, all full-time and part-time studies (engineering, bachelor, and master) have a practical profile from the 2016/2017 academic year.

3. Research and teaching activity of the Institute of Geography

Funding and international cooperation are very important for the development of scientific research activity. The first international research project in the Institute of Geography was initiated by Professor Dr hab. Zygmunt Babiński. It concerned changes in the natural environment in Central and Western Mongolia, with particular attention to the permafrost processes. The employees of the Institute participated in projects of the VI and VII framework programmes (2004-2007, 2013-2016), financed by the European Commission and through the COST fund (2012-2015).

Many grants were financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the National Science Centre. Numerous research, training, and equipment projects were financed by the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship Marshal's Office and Regional Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management in city of Toruń. The main subjects of the statutory research were projects related to landscape perception and analysis of contemporary riverbed processes. These two research directions had a significant impact on the research profile of the Institute.

Along with the personnel development of the Institute, the research scope has also expanded, reflecting the scientific interests of the staff of particular departments. Analysis of the scientific activity of the Institute's staff showed that research on the following physical geography subjects has been conducted: human impact on natural environment; contemporary riverbed processes; impact of barrages on erosion and accumulation processes in rivers; revitalization of rivers and channels; water management in the valley of the Vistula and its tributaries; local and regional variability in climate conditions; climate of invested areas (including of urban areas); morphology, morphogenesis, and protection of landscape; physiographic and eco-physiographic studies. The employees interested in sustainable development study natural and economic aspects of sustainable development (Tuchola Forest region), regional problems of sustainable development, evolution and mechanisms of landscape changes under human influence, and verify the criteria of sustainable development in selected urban

areas and forms of natural resources use. In the field of socio-economic geography, the following aspects were researched in the recent years: current socio-economic processes such as urban, regional, and business competitiveness, socio-economic changes in rural and urbanised areas, the role of airports in local and regional development; socio-economic transformation in Bulgaria, contemporary socio-economic processes in Bydgoszcz and its suburbs, spatial behaviours and social preferences in urban areas. As for tourism geography as well as tourism and recreation, the following aspects have been researched: types and spatial structure of tourist values, tourist traffic, tourism economy in tourist destinations, administrative units; multisensory perception of landscape; tourism in environmentally valuable and rural areas; tourist potential, development of cultural tourism and thematic villages, which are a new tourism development product in the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship.

The scope of the research conducted by the employees of the Institute of Geography has changed, but the projects of theoretical and practical importance are still continued. The analysis of the Institute's projects and publications shows that the specificity of teaching and research activity is reflected through the prevalence of physical geography-related subjects over these related to socio-economic geography and tourism. This is a direct consequence of the personnel structure and interests of the staff. Currently, the most important subjects are: the impact of natural factors and of human activity on fluvial systems; problems of waterways and riverside areas revitalization; geodiversity of the Krajna Lakeland and Tuchola Forest Area; contemporary socio-economic processes in Poland and other transforming countries (based on the example of Bydgoszcz, Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship and Bulgaria), tourism development in Bydgoszcz and Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship.

These research and scientific interests are reflected in the structure of publications. Numerous studies, including monographs, focus on physical geography. The number of socio-economic geography and tourism geography publications is lower, although the latter

has increased since the launch of tourism and recreation faculties. It is worth emphasising that an increasing trend in the percentage of publications related to these two fields of study in the total number of publications of the Institute has been observed in the recent years.

The constant growth in the number of publications affiliated by the Institute of Geography, Kazimierz Wielki University is also observed. Analysis of the publications shows that the majority of papers by the Institute's employees were published in Polish academic journals (77%). Papers in English (16.6%), Russian (2.9%), Bulgarian, Ukrainian, and German (3.5% in total) were much less frequent. However, it is worth mentioning that the percentage of publications in English published in journals from the ISI *Master Journal List* and in journals with an impact factor (according to the *Journal Cita-*

tion Reports database) has increased in recent years. Between 2012 and 2016, the employees of the Institute also published 17 monographs (in Polish, English, Ukrainian and Bulgarian)³. The significance of the scientific achievements of the Institute is also reflected in the number of citations in Google Scholar. According to P. Śleszyński (2013), during 3 decades (1971-2000) the number of Institute author's citations was systematically increasing (75 between 1971 and 1980; 123 between 1981 and 1990; 494 between 1991 and 2000), and between 2001 and 2012 it slightly decreased (407). It is worth mentioning that in comparison with other geography centres in Poland, the total number of citations in the analysed period was small, but it must be taken into account that the Institute of Geography is the smallest and the youngest unit. The citation index is 137 per person, which puts

- ³ **Dłużewska A., Gonia A., Michniewicz-Ankiersztajn H., Podgórski Z.**, 2015. Współczesne problemy turystyki, Ośrodek Rekreacji, Sportu i Edukacji w Poznaniu, Bydgoszcz-Poznań [In Polish].
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the Institute in a better position than the total number of citations (Śleszyński, 2013). It is also worth noticing that physical geography studies have the largest number of citations of all the publications of the Institute.

In the last period, some of the papers were published in two series of the Institute of Geography. Within the "Promotio Geographica Bydgostiensia" series, 9 volumes were published between 2005 and 2012. Four of them contained physical geography research results concerning natural environment transformation and waterways revitalization. Papers on socio-economic geography, including tourism development, were published in five volumes⁴. Three volumes entitled "Rewitalizacja drogi wodnej Wisła-Odra szansą dla gospodarki regionu" [Revitalization of the Vistula-Oder waterway as a chance for the economy of the region] published in the series "Przyroda i turystyka regionu Pomorza i Kujaw" [Nature and tourism of the Kujawy and Pomerania region] under the aegis of the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship Marshal's Office and the Institute of Geography of the Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz, were more specialised⁵.

The "Geography and Tourism" journal published since 2013 by the Institute of Geography is also important for its publishing activity. It popularises the results of theoretical and empirical research in the fields of geography and tourism. It is an interdisciplinary journal available at www.geography.and.tourism.ukw.edu.pl. It has been published in English since 2017, which allows for popularising the research results outside of Poland.

Since the creation of the Institute of Geography of the Kazimierz Wielki Academy in Bydgoszcz (now Kazimierz Wielki University), the staff has cooperated with many research and scientific units from many countries, mainly: Russia, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Austria, the United Kingdom, Sweden, San Marino, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Romania. The staff cooperated particularly closely with Mongolian researchers, which (among other things) resulted in the First Bydgoszcz Research and Scientific Expedition "Mongolia 05" and the Second Bydgoszcz Expedition to Mongolia in 2013. The Institute of Geography is also a member of diverse international institutions, including the Interuniversity Council for Erosion and Fluvial Processes. In

- ⁴ Babiński Z. (Eds.), 2005. Środowisko przyrodnicze w badaniach geografii fizycznej. Promotio Geographica Bydgostiensia II. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego, Bydgoszcz [In Polish].
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- ⁵ Babiński Z. (Eds.), 2008. Rewitalizacja drogi wodnej Wisła-Odra szansą dla gospodarki regionu. Seria Przyroda i Turystyka Regionu Pomorza i Kujaw I. Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Kujawsko-Pomorskiego, Instytut Geografii Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego, Wydawnictwo „LOGO”, Bydgoszcz [In Polish].
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2013, the cooperation between the Institute of Geography KWU and the Faculty of Geography of the Moscow State University was given the status of an international agreement within a scientific and technical cooperation programme between the Republic of Poland and the Russian Federation. The extended international institutional cooperation increases the mobility of the employees of the Institute of Geography through, among other things, Erasmus and Erasmus+ programmes.

The majority of international symposia and scientific conferences in the Institute of Geography were focused on waterway revitalization (from 2007). Since 2013, these meetings have been organised as field workshops in cooperation with the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship Marshal's Office in city of Toruń. Moreover, several international events concerning tourism and socio-economic geography were organised by the Institute.

4. Application aspects of the scientific activity of the Institute of Geography

The cooperation of the employees of the Institute of Geography with different local administration units and private business included advisory, project, and documentation works, as well as research and development. Applied studies of the employees of the Institute cover mostly two fields. The first is scientific research and expert activity related to evaluation of the natural environment state and environmental protection policy, whereas the second is the assessment of possibility of revitalization of the Vistula and the Polish section of International Waterway E70. These fields include research works concerning the entire area of Poland and – more and more frequently – the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship as well as the city of Bydgoszcz. The main emphasis of the environment-related applied activity was always on this region. The specialists from the Institute have cooperated with the the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship Marshal's Office in Toruń, the Provincial Inspectorate for Environmental Protection in Bydgoszcz, Tuchola Forest National Park authorities, and the authorities of several landscape parks, such as Tuchola Landscape Park and the Wda Landscape Park. The important achievements include: studies defining long-term ecological policy for Bydgoszcz (1995); results of research conducted in Tuchola Forest National Park related to e.g. tourism (1999, 2001); assessments of the conditions of sustainable agriculture and rural areas development in the the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship and in particular municipalities (Czersk, Osielesko, Mrocza, Gąsawa, Kruszwica, 1998); assessment of the natural environment

state in this Voivodeship in different years (e.g. 2000, 2001); designing a network of protected landscape areas for the the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship (2003); elaboration of the Protection Plan (2008) and the GIS Database for the Wda Landscape Park (2009); elaboration of the designed Pałuki Landscape Park plan; research on the “Myślęcinek” Forest Park of Culture and Recreation (2011), etc. Specialists from the Institute also participated in the elaboration of eco-development policy assumptions, several documents regarding environmental protection, as well as maps of protected areas in the the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship .

The analysis of the applied science activity of the Institute shows two new trends after 2010: expansion of the spatial scope of scientific research outside the Voivodeship and intense cooperation with institutions and privately held companies. It is worth emphasising that more and more private companies use the services of specialists from the Institute in various types of expertise. Furthermore, other important projects were carried out for external institutions such as: the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship Marshal's Office, Pomerania Voivodeship, Mazovian Office for Regional Planning in Warsaw, Municipal Road Administration in city of Toruń. The projects concerned: revitalization of the shipping function of the Vistula-Oder waterway; diagnosis and evaluation of changes in the geographic-natural environment within the construction zone of new facilities connected with the effective use of the Vistula river in the Voivodeship; determination and evaluation of navigation and shipping con-

ditions in the Polish section of the E70 International Waterway (Oder-Havel Canal-Brda estuary), etc. Moreover, the employees of the Institute of Geography have been actively supporting the Marshal's Advisory Team of the the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship for revitalization of waterways in its territory. In 2016, Professor Dr hab. Zygmunt Babiński participated in the creation of the Parliamentary Group for Economic Revitalization of Rivers at the Polish Parliament.

Additionally, the employees of the Institute of Geography actively participate in different popularising events concerning teaching as well as research and scientific activity, such as Bydgoszcz Science Festival, Bulgaria Day, GIS-day, Earth Day, Tourist Day.

Within the Bydgoszcz Science Festival, the Institute of Geography offers shows, exhibitions, lectures and workshops intended for people of all ages. These presentations cover the subjects of geography, tourism, waterways,

and physical activity. Since 2006, the Institute has been organising the Bulgaria Day. An interesting event for students and lecturers is the GIS-day, organised in cooperation with ESRI. The Earth Day (referred to by the Institute of Geography as "Geographer's Day") has been organised in the Institute since 2013, and the Tourist Day – since 2016. Students and lecturers actively participate in both events.

The examples of excellent cooperation with regional institutions are methodology- and content-related conferences for teachers supported by the Institute of Geography, ecology seminars for schools in Bydgoszcz, ecological contests (18 literary anthologies on ecology and environmental protection were prepared by Dr hab. Mieczysław Wojtasik from the Institute of Geography). Moreover, the employees of the Institute of Geography gave many lectures at the University as well as in schools of Bydgoszcz and other towns of the Voivodeship.

5. Conclusion

Numerous short- and long-term activities are undertaken to develop and improve the functioning of the Institute of Geography. Their scope was decided pursuant to the *Resolution of the Senate of the Kazimierz Wielki University No. 5/2016/2017* dated 25 October 2016, which sets out four University development directions for 2016-2020, i.e. *Assuring the highest quality of education; Strengthening the scientific position of the University; Effective cooperation with socio-economic environment and Effective University management*. In December 2016, the Council of the Institute of Geography decided that achieving these four strategic objectives requires the staff of the Institute of Geography to implement a number of tasks, i.e.:

- Verification of the main research directions and extension of scientific cooperation, including international cooperation (continuation of ongoing and undertaking new scientific research projects within the scope of competences and scientific interests of employees and their needs resulting from the obligation to obtain further academic degrees and titles; defining priority research

objectives; strengthening the collaboration with local administration authorities, institutions and enterprises of the Kujavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship .

- Development of the research and teaching staff (i.e. strengthening the teaching and research potential by increasing the number of autonomous academic staff members and assistant professors; assuring optimal conditions for obtaining academic degrees and titles; improving scientific competences of the staff through scientific internships, gaining the right to award academic degrees and titles in Earth Sciences);
- Increasing the number of research projects that involve local and foreign partners, including interdisciplinary projects (e.g. applying for research grants to the National Science Centre; intensification of interdisciplinary research; preparation of innovative interdisciplinary research projects concerning tourism and applied science);
- Increasing the number of papers published in national and foreign scientific journals (intensification of individual and team research, improvement of the effective

- supervision of younger employees by heads of faculties and departments);
- Organisation of international scientific conferences (e.g. series of scientific conferences with presentation of scientific achievements in geography, waterways revitalization, tourism and recreation, and environmental emergency management);
- Improvement of the education program and internationalization of studies (e.g. adapting the curriculum to current legal requirements and labour market needs; undertaking educational initiatives supported by EU funds; expanding the list of classes taught in English, improvement of promotional activities aimed at encouraging more candidates (including particularly talented young people) to start and/or continue their studies at the faculties of the Institute of Geography);
- Modernisation of the scientific and teaching base (e.g. undertaking measures aimed at modernisation and development of the existing infrastructure in order to adapt it to new and constantly evolving standards; acquiring modern teaching aids and financial resources for expanding the book collection in accordance with the educational and scientific research profile of the Institute).

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