



**DECISION
OF THE CENTRAL ACADEMIC ETHICS COMMISSION
OF VILNIUS UNIVERSITY**

On the appeal of a former academic employee of Vilnius University of 2 January 2024

The Central Academic Ethics Commission (hereinafter the ‘Commission’) received an appeal registered on 2 January 2024 from a former academic employee and alumna of Vilnius University (hereinafter referred to as the ‘Applicant’ and the ‘University’) regarding potential violations of academic ethics at the /Unit/ of Vilnius University. The Applicant worked as a lecturer at the University until 13 November 2023. The Applicant's employment relationship with the University was terminated after the Vilnius Labour Dispute Commission of the National Labour Inspectorate under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania approved a settlement agreement between the Applicant and Vilnius University, despite which, in the Applicant's opinion, there remained circumstances that had not been evaluated from the point of view of academic ethics in relation to the non-disclosure by the administration of the /Unit/ of the information of relevance for the Applicant and other related circumstances. The Applicant indicates that the information she is asking the Commission to assess from the point of view of academic ethics only came to her attention from the conclusion of the Commission for the Prevention and Investigation of Cases of Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Violence and Persecution at Vilnius University which was submitted to her on 15 June 2023. In accordance with Article 5(5) of the Statute of Vilnius University, the Code of Academic Ethics of the University, and Item 13(5) of the Regulations of the Central Academic Ethics Commission, the Applicant requests an assessment of potential violations of academic ethics in the situations identified in her appeal.

Upon familiarising itself with the Applicant’s appeal and its accompanying documents, the Commission hereby points out that:

1. In its activities, the Commission is guided by the Code of Academic Ethics of Vilnius University approved by the Senate of Vilnius University (current version approved by Resolution of the Senate of Vilnius University No. SPN-54 of 21 October 2020) (hereinafter the ‘Code of Academic Ethics’) and the Regulations of the Central Academic Ethics Commission of Vilnius University (current version approved by Resolution of the Senate of Vilnius University No. SPN-55 of 21 October 2020) (hereinafter the ‘Commission Regulations’). The Code of Academic Ethics describes

the standards and principles of ethical behaviour of community members, which must be observed both within the University and outside of it (Item 1 of the Code of Academic Ethics), and also provides examples of unacceptable behaviour at the University and guidelines for the examination of cases of possible violations of academic ethics. The Commission Regulations define the Commission's competency, the decisions that it can possibly make, and describe the Commission's operating procedures. In accordance with the competency specified in these legal acts, the Commission shall examine only issues related to potential violations of academic ethics and shall not make any comments on other issues, including those related to labour dispute resolution or those assigned to other University or external structures based on their competency.

The Commission notes that the Applicant's appeal relates to a conflict between the Applicant and the administration of the /Unit/ and its structures, which arose following the Applicant's participation in a programme on the OPTV internet television channel. This conflict was subject to a detailed administrative investigation; the Commission, the Commission for the Prevention and Investigation of Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Violence and Persecution of Vilnius University, and the National Labour Inspectorate spoke on specific separate aspects related to it; and the conflict was formally ended by a settlement agreement between the Applicant and the University on 10 November of last year. The circumstances referred to in the Applicant's appeal which are requested to be investigated from the point of view of academic ethics relate to the relationship between the administration of the Unit (the employer) and the Applicant in her capacity as an employee and therefore also, first and foremost, belong to the area of labour relations (i.e. relations between the administration and the employees subordinate to it based on their job positions). In the light of the foregoing, the Commission concludes that the Applicant's appeal under Item 1 of the Code of Academic Ethics does not fall within the competency of the Commission.

2. In accordance with Item 13(7) of the Commission Regulations, the Commission shall have the right to investigate appeals submitted directly to the Commission regarding potential violations of academic ethics that took place at the units of Vilnius University. Such appeals, like all the other appeals, in accordance with Item 21 of the Commission Regulations, may be lodged to the Commission no later than within one month from the date when the possible violation of academic ethics was committed or established. This is essentially a limitation period (i.e., if it is missed, the Commission shall not have the right to examine the appeal) and it can only be renewed if there are important reasons for the missed term and a reasoned request from the applicant, if no more than six months have elapsed since the potential violation was committed or established. The Commission hereby points out that in the present case, the events in question took place in the autumn of 2022 and the first half of 2023, i.e. more than a month before the Applicant's appeal to the Commission. In her

appeal, the Applicant also states that the information she is asking to investigate came to her knowledge from the conclusion of the Commission for the Prevention and Investigation of Cases of Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Violence and Persecution at Vilnius University that was submitted to her on 15 June 2023. More than one month (the period within which, in accordance with the Commission Regulations, an appeal may be lodged with the Commission in respect of potential violations of academic ethics) has elapsed from the aforementioned date until the Applicant's appeal to the Commission, as well as the period of more than six months (within which, in accordance with the Commission Regulations, the Commission may, if there are important reasons for the missed term and a reasoned request from the applicant, renew the aforementioned period). In the light of the foregoing, the Commission hereby takes a decision not to investigate the substance of the Applicant's appeal, since it was submitted outside the time-limits for submitting an appeal to the Commission set out in Item 21 of the Commission Regulations.

3. The Commission hereby notes that, in accordance with Item 39 of the Commission Regulations, the depersonalised decisions of the Commission (or summaries thereof) are published on the University's website. The Commission explains that it is done with the aim to more clearly define the ethical standards applied at the University, to make the University community aware of the examples of inappropriate and intolerable behaviour, the examples of good practice in the activities of commissions, and to promote following the principles of academic ethics introduced and fostered by the University in their activities at the University and beyond.

In the light of the foregoing and in accordance with Item 1 of the Code of Academic Ethics of Vilnius University and Items 21 and 39 of the Regulations of the Central Academic Ethics Commission, the Central Academic Ethics Commission hereby d e c i d e s :

1. To refuse to investigate the appeal by the former academic employee of Vilnius University.
2. To publish the depersonalised decision of the Commission on the University's website.

Chairperson

Assoc. Prof. Dr Vigita Vėbraitė