



THE OMBUDSMAN FOR ACADEMIC ETHICS AND PROCEDURES OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

DECISION ON THE TERMINATION OF THE INVESTIGATION INITIATED ON 21 JULY 2017

8 November 2017, No. SP-23

Vilnius

The Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter - the Ombudsman), in accordance with Part 1 of Paragraph 17 of the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania and with Subparagraph 1 of Paragraph 13 of the provisions of the Office of the Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania, approved by the Resolution No. XI-1583 of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania of 15 September 2011 “Regarding the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania and the approval of the provisions of the Office of the Ombudsman for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania“, and after starting the investigation in accordance with the statement of the Lithuanian Human Rights Defense Association (hereinafter - the applicant) of 17 July 2017 forwarded by the Committee on Education and Science of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on 21 July 2017 regarding possible academic ethics violations at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University (hereinafter – TSPMI),

determined:

The applicant indicated in his statement that “on 15 May 2017 the first year students group <...> of the [TSPMI]¹European Studies Master's Program submitted to the TSPMI administration the request to change the status of the course taught by prof. [V. R.] from compulsory to optional. <...> TSPMI administration satisfied this request of the students, even without considering the details, although later an alternative request of the TSPMI students and Alumni was also received - to leave the course obligatory. The first request of the students was satisfied without considering the consequences (or clearly perceiving them) in accordance with the rights granted to the students by Article 30 of the Law on Higher Education and Research [of the Republic of Lithuania] No. XII-2534.

Such a decision of the TSPMI administration greatly worsens the position of prof. [V. R.] at the institute and even makes him eligible for work as a non-sufficient workload (because the course is optional). It should be noted that similar things are happening in many Lithuanian universities due to the “baskets” allocated to students.²

In the statement, the applicant also noted that “the decision of the TSPMI administration <...> has all the features of a person's discrimination based on beliefs or opinions <...>”.

¹ The comments of the Office are given in the square brackets.

² The language quoted here and hereinafter in the Decision is unedited.

The Ombudsman, having assessed the content of the statement, commenced an investigation and on 7 August 2017 applied by the letter No. S-336 to the TSPMI with the request:

- 1) to submit the description of the course <...> taught by [V. R.] (hereinafter - the course);
- 2) to submit the students' request and / or other documents relied upon when considering the change of the course status from compulsory to optional;
- 3) to submit the decision of the Committee setting up the study program on the change of the status of the course;
- 4) to provide summary information on how the course was evaluated in student surveys;
- 5) to indicate whether there were other replies or requests related to the course taught by [V. R.];
- 6) to submit legislation governing the change of the status of a course.

On 17 August 2017, the TSPMI by its letter No. 2700S-59 submitted to the ombudsman the available documents and pointed out that “we are not able to submit the information on the evaluation of the course <...> because [V. R.] did not provide the course evaluation questionnaires to the students, while the students themselves expressed their opinion on the course in the letter to the [TSPMI] director [R. V.]. Also we would like to note the fact that the theme of the course was different from the description of the course, therefore, in response to point 1 of the request, we also add the document sent by [V. R.] to the students, referring to the orientation course topics - indicative exam questions.”

On 7 August 2017, the Ombudsman applied to [V.R.] by the letter No. S-337 requesting “to indicate the circumstances of the event <...> known [to him]” and pointing out that “you may submit the explanations in writing <...>, also upon arrival to the Office <...>.”

On 25 September 2017, the Ombudsman repeatedly applied to [V.R.] by the letter No. S-395 requesting to submit the explanations in writing or upon arrival to the Office.

V.R. never addressed to the Office before the date of adoption of this decision, he did not provide any explanations about possible violations of his rights, he did not arrive upon invitation.

After the analysis and evaluation of the collected information, in accordance with Paragraph 9 of Part 11 of Article 17 of the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, the Ombudsman

decided:

To terminate the investigation.

The Ombudsman's decision may be appealed in the order set by the Law on Administrative Proceedings of the Republic of Lithuania.