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— YOUNG POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES PERSPECTIVE**

## ASSOCIATIONS WITH THE UNIVERSITY AS AN EMPLOYER IN THE YEARS 2016–2019 — YOUNG POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES PERSPECTIVE

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### Summary

The article is theoretical and empirical. To prepare the theoretical part, the method of cognitive-critical analysis of world literature in the field of management, personal marketing, etc. was applied. Based on the results of this analysis, it can be concluded that there is a cognitive and research gap relating to research on universities as employers. This applies especially to associations of young potential employees with this group of employers. Therefore, the article aims to achieve the goal, which is to identify associations of young potential employees with the university as a workplace and indicate the changes taking place in them. In order to achieve this goal, three editions of empirical research were conducted, using the survey method to collect primary data. The collected data were subjected to quantitative analysis using statistical analysis methods. Its results indicate that there has been a slight improvement in terms of associations of respondents with the university as a workplace. Still, however, more than half of the respondents did not take into account taking up employment in such institutions. Therefore, it is still not an attractive employer for young Poles, which indicates the need to undertake comprehensive activities related to building a positive image as an employer.

**Keywords: employer, university, associations, potential employee, perception, employer's image**

**JEL kod:** M31; M54



## Introduction

The modern market, including the labour market, is increasingly based on emotions (cf. Magids, S., Zorfas, A., Leemon, D., 2015) and other non-material values, including soft competences. Particularly valuable among them is the ability to solve problems, the ability of harmonious cooperation and communication skills [cf. Chamorro-Premuzic, T., Frankiewicz, B., 2019]. Each of these competences requires a person to have certain characteristics, such as openness to other people, feeling empathy and looking at the world from the point of view of the common good and not only from the point of view of the individual. These are qualities that are more innate than acquired. Therefore, they can be strengthened, but it is difficult to teach them. This makes them extremely valuable because they are even unique.

On one hand, employers are looking for employees with these competences, on the other hand, employees expect them from employers, although these expectations vary depending on various factors, e.g. the age of employees [cf. Reis, G.G., Braga, B.M., 2016, pp. 103–116; Parry, E., Urwin, P., 2011, pp. 79–96]. An employer with such characteristics is perceived as attractive, evoking positive associations among both external and internal labour market representatives. This is extremely important, because the effective attraction of candidates with potential compatible with the expectations of the employer determines the ability to effectively compete with other organisations (cf. Alniaçik, E., Alniaçik, U., Erat, S., Akçin, K., 2014, pp. 336–344).

Potential and current employees feel more trust in the organisation as an employer who sees employees as equal partners who are worth creating conditions for personal and professional development. Shaping a friendly work environment, meeting the expectations of employees not only contributes to meeting their needs as recipients of personal offer but it also stimulates employees to play a much more active function, which is the role of co-creators of this offer and

the accompanying values including the reputation and image of a given employer as a place worthy to associate their professional future.

Positive associations are the starting point for a positive perception of a given employer, on the basis of which its image is formed being the

basis for building a corporate brand of a given organization, including the sub-brand, which is the employer's brand [cf. Sokro, E., 2012, pp. 164–173]. Potential employees are the recipients and co-creators of the external image of the employer whose specificity may determine both their professional decisions and the professional decisions of other participants in the external labour market.

Therefore, it is extremely important not only to take personal actions against employees from a given organization, but also actions aimed at people who create its marketing environment. It should also be remembered that activities undertaken in both these dimensions are mutually conditioned constituting a kind of system of connected vessels. On one hand, the feelings of current employees are passed on by them to other people in the form of positive or negative opinions. On the other hand, these opinions may strengthen the image message created in a formal way by the employer or weaken it when they are inconsistent with its content. It is therefore fundamental to observe ethical principles in the process of formal image creation [cf. Lievens, F., Slaughter, J.E., 2016, pp. 407–440]. Opinions generated by current employees are also confronted with other messages, e.g. concerning the entire industry [cf. Wallace, M., Lings, I., Cameron, R., 2012, pp. 483–502], which is represented by a specific organization or referring to employer-employee relations generally understood. On this basis, specific associations with a specific employer are created.

Associations are "a combination of impressions, imaginations and other mental phenomena in such a way that the appearance of one of them in the consciousness of the other causes the awareness of the other". [<https://sjp.pwn.pl/slowniki/skojarzenie.html>]. Therefore, it is extremely important for the employer to seek to arouse good associations by applying a marketing approach to each employee. Still, in practice, there are entities among employers who do not notice or underestimate the importance of fulfilling this role. Of course, such examples are present in practically every industry. In the case of some industries, however, it is particularly visible, as it concerns all or most of their representatives.

These include universities where, for various reasons, including historical ones, attention is focused primarily on fulfilling an

educational, scientific or research role. However, despite formal changes taking place in the legislation, the fulfilment of the employer's role is still a long way off, if at all. The consequence of such an approach are not only clear shortcomings in personnel policy or even its total lack in the case of many Polish universities, but also the fact that these issues are not the subject of theoretical considerations and empirical research.

In relation to universities (not only Polish, but also foreign ones) the opinions and expectations of employers representing other industries in relation to graduates as participants in the external labour market are examined (cf. *inter alia* Chhinzer, N., Russo, A. M., 2018, pp. 104–120; Tóth-Téglás, T., Hlédik, E., Fónadová, L., 2016, pp. 169–188). The opinions of potential employees, especially young people who have not yet become active on the labour market, on universities as employers are not analysed, while the research on students' expectations towards employers from other industries is not analysed [cf. Arachchige, B., Robertson, A., 2011, pp. 25–46]. This is also visible in relation to the employment potential associated with employment at universities, as well as in other institutions, including enterprises, which is rightly pointed out by J. Boschman and others. [2014, pp. 51–59]. It is true that there are not many studies which analyse students' opinions on the role of universities in preparing graduates for their professional careers [cf. *inter alia* Tomlinson M., 2008, pp. 49–61], but these studies do not refer to universities as employers.

It can thus be concluded that there is a cognitive and research gap in this area. Their occurrence makes it difficult, and sometimes even impossible, for Polish universities to compete effectively with their foreign counterparts, but also with other organisations, including enterprises. This is particularly true of talented employees with above-average intellectual, social and emotional potential, whose acquisition and maintenance is a key condition for the efficient functioning of any modern organisation [cf. Boštjanèè E., Slana Z., 2018, pp. 1–10], having strategic importance [cf. Cappelli, P., Keller, J. R., 2014, pp. 305–331], especially in the case of universities.

Therefore, this article attempts to reduce the identified gaps by striving to achieve the goal, which is to identify the associations of

young potential employees with the university as a workplace and the changes taking place in them. In the process of achieving this goal, an attempt was made to find answers to the following four research questions:

- Q1: What associations did the respondents have with the university as a workplace in 2019?
- Q2: How did they change during the time of associations with the university as a workplace since 2016?
- Q3: What was the hierarchy of associations with a university as a workplace in 2019?
- Q4: How did the hierarchy of associations with a university as a workplace change with time since 2016?

Moreover, an attempt was made to check the following research hypothesis: opinions on the perception of people working at a university in comparison with people working in other places differentiate associations with the university as a workplace.

### General characteristics of empirical studies

In order to achieve the aim of the article, find answers to the research questions and check the formulated research hypothesis, 3 editions of the survey were conducted<sup>1</sup>. In the first edition of the survey 150 students finishing their studies at the 1st or 2nd degree of full-time studies as potential employees were included, whereas in the second and third edition of the survey the sample size was 250 people each, representing the above mentioned segment of the labour market<sup>2</sup>. The research was of a direct nature, requiring personal contact between the researcher and the subjects studied. The first edition of the survey was carried out in the first half of 2016<sup>3</sup>, the second edition in the first quarter of 2018 and the third one in the first quarter of 2019. All questionnaires were qualified for quantitative analysis, which was



possible thanks to the use of face-to-face contact with respondents. The collected primary data were analysed using the method of average grade analysis, the method of comparative analysis and the Kruskal-Wallis independence test.

During each edition of the survey respondents were presented with a set of the same 18 statements reflecting associations with the university as a workplace. 10 of them were positive, while the others were negative.

They were distinguished on the basis of the results of cognitive-critical analysis of the literature on the subject and the results of unstructured interviews preceding the first edition of the research. Each of these statements was to be assessed by the respondents in a five-stage Likert scale, in which the assessment of 5 meant definitely yes, 4 — yes, 3 — neither yes nor no, 2 — rather no, while 1 — definitely not. The use of such a scale is a necessary condition for the use of the method of analysis of average score.

In order to find an answer to the question whether the differentiation in terms of separating particular groups (e.g. separated by opinions on the perception of people working at a university) is statistically significant enough to be able to say that the opinion of respondents determined by the analysed answer is significantly different, the Kruskal-Wallis test (KW), which is a non-parametric equivalent of ANOVA, was used.

From the point of view of statistical criteria, in the case of the KW test, the data do not have to meet many requirements. The only requirements to be met are [<http://www.statystyka.az.pl/test-anova-kruskala-wallisa.php>; [http://www.statystycy.pl/t4997\\_1\\_test\\_rangowy\\_kruskala-wallisa.php](http://www.statystycy.pl/t4997_1_test_rangowy_kruskala-wallisa.php)]:

- the dependent variable should be measured on at least an ordinal scale (it can also be measured on a quantitative scale),
- observations in the analysed groups should be independent of each other, which means that a person in one group should not be in another compared group at the same time (this requirement is met by dichotomous questions allowing to divide respondents into two separate groups and one single choice).

The Kruskal-Wallis test as a non-parametric equivalent of one-way variance analysis is therefore used when the data does not meet the requirements for similar parametric tests and can be ordered according to specific criteria. It consists of verifying whether the number of independent results from the group comes from the same population or from a population with the same median. Individual samples do not have to be of the same size. Input data is a n-elementary statistical sample divided into "k" separate survey groups of  $n_1$  to  $n_k$  numbers.

The interpretation of the test may consist only in comparing the "p" value with the assumed materiality level (usually 0.05) or in analysing the values of test statistics in case it is necessary to assess the "power/power" of differences between groups. The high values of the test statistics indicate that there are differences in individual groups (i.e. against the hypothesis of equality in individual groups), and the higher the values, the greater the difference.

## Results of empirical studies

As in 2016 and 2018, more than half of the respondents still did not consider universities as a future job. In 2019 there were 76.6% of such people. Therefore, for the majority of respondents, the university was still not an attractive employer.

As can be seen from Table 1, in 2019, out of 10 associations with a university as a place of work with a positive resonance, in case of 7 the total percentage of affirmative indications exceeded 50%, in the case of 2 associations this percentage was higher than 75%. It concerns "the possibility of sharing one's knowledge with others" and "the possibility of making a career". As for the eight negative associations, the total percentage of affirmative answers was much lower, although in the case of two associations it exceeded 10%, while in the case of the association with the "necessity of sharing one's knowledge" it was almost 54%. On this basis, it could be concluded that the university, as a workplace, aroused rather favourable associations in 2019. However, one cannot ignore the fact that 3 positive associations were denied by

more than 1/3 of respondents. Moreover, in the case of as many as 12 associations, at least every fifth respondent could not give a clear answer, and in the case of 5 associations, at least 1/3 of respondents responded in this way.

Application of the Likert scale allowed for the analysis of average values of assessments. In 2019, similarly as in the previous edition of the study, only one association received an average score exceeding 4.00, while the value of this rating was the highest in the whole analysed period (Table 2). Each of these 7 associations belonged to a group of positive associations, which could confirm the preliminary conclusion drawn earlier that the university, as a workplace, evoked rather good associations among the respondents representing young potential employees. However, it should be noted that in the case of six positive associations, in 2019, the average grade was lower than in 2016, although this resulted in a deterioration in the hierarchy position only in the case of two associations. It is also worth noting that the value of average scores for the majority of negative associations (5 out of 8) decreased. These included associations with low social prestige, low wages and lack of professional stability, i.e. associations reflecting the aspirations to meet the needs of intangible and material security. Therefore, it can be assumed that the university as a place of work started to associate the respondents with a relatively safer place of work in the broad sense of the word.

It is worth noting that among all the 18 analysed associations, the greatest drop in the average value of the assessment occurred in relation to "the necessity of sharing one's valuable knowledge", which should also be assessed positively. Sharing knowledge is a fundamental assumption of scientific, research or didactic work and its perception as a threat contradicts the very essence of fulfilling the role of an employee of an institution such as a university. On the other hand, the greatest increase in the value of the average grade concerned associating work at a university with high salaries. This confirms the conclusion of a slight relative improvement in the perception of the university as a place of work, which starts to be associated with a greater sense of security offered to employees. The discussed tendencies are clearly visible in Figure 1, which presents the development of average grade values of particular associations in 2016–2019.

Table 1. Associations of respondents with a university as a place of work in 2019 (in %)

Analysed association	1	2	Total negative answers	3	4	5	Total positive answers	Average score
Very easy and pleasant work	7.8	31.2	39.0	35.5	23.4	2.1	25.5	2.808511
High social prestige	1.4	7.1	8.5	19.9	50.4	21.3	71.7	3.829787
High wages	0.0	12.9	12.9	30.0	42.9	14.3	57.2	3.585714
Career opportunities	1.4	7.1	8.5	14.2	50.4	27.0	77.4	3.943262
Employment security and job stability	0.0	7.1	7.1	25.5	44.0	23.4	67.4	3.836879
Opportunity to share your knowledge with others	0.0	1.4	1.4	6.4	15.7	76.4	92.1	4.671429
Possibility to impress others	2.9	7.3	10.2	31.4	31.4	27.0	58.4	3.722628
Opportunity to "be young forever" through continuous contact with young people	10.0	25.0	35.0	33.6	24.3	7.1	31.4	2.935714
More free time than in other places	7.1	29.3	36.4	42.1	16.4	5.0	21.4	2.828571
Very responsible and difficult but rewarding job	1.4	8.5	9.9	29.1	50.4	10.6	61.0	3.602837
Low social prestige	38.3	47.5	85.8	12.1	1.4	0.7	2.1	1.787234
Low wages	21.3	47.5	68.8	24.1	6.4	0.7	7.1	2.177305
Lack of career prospects	37.0	46.4	83.4	11.6	5.1	0.0	5.1	1.847826
Uncertainty about job retention and job instability	20.0	50.7	70.7	21.4	5.7	2.1	7.8	2.192857
The need to share your valuable knowledge with others	9.4	16.5	25.9	20.1	34.5	19.4	53.9	3.381295
Shame about the place of work	56.8	36.0	92.8	5.0	1.4	0.7	2.1	1.532374
Fast burning of professional and life energy	12.1	46.1	58.2	33.3	5.0	3.5	8.5	2.41844
Less free time than in other places	13.5	34.8	48.3	37.6	12.1	2.1	14.2	2.546099

where: 5 — definitely yes; 4 — rather yes; 3 — neither yes nor no; 2 — rather no; 1 — definitely not

Source: Own calculations based on the results of conducted research.

Taking into account the values of average scores, it is possible to conventionally divide all the analysed associations into 5 groups, which have been included in the analysis of the results obtained in both previous editions of the study. This makes it possible to make a comparative analysis of the hierarchy of associations with a university as a workplace from 2016. The following groups of associations have been included in this division:

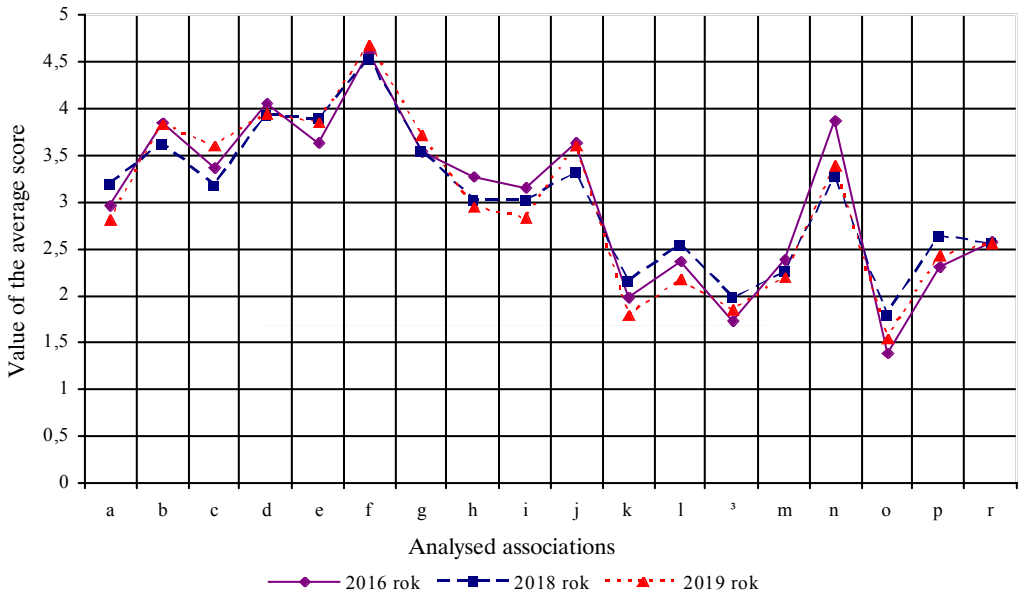
Table 2. Comparison of the hierarchy of associations with a university as a workplace in 2016–2019

Analysed associations	Symbol	2016		2018		2019		Difference between 2016 and 2019	
		Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank
Very easy and pleasant work	a	2.96	11	3.20	8	2.81	10	-0.15	+1
High social prestige	b	3.85	4	3.61	4	3.83	4	-0.02	0
High wages	c	3.36	8	3.17	9	3.59	7	+0.23	+1
Career opportunities	d	4.06	2	3.93	2	3.94	2	-0.12	0
Employment security and job stability	e	3.64	5	3.89	3	3.84	3	+0.2	+2
Opportunity to share your knowledge with others	f	4.60	1	4.51	1	4.67	1	+0.07	0
Possibility to impress others	g	3.53	7	3.54	5	3.72	5	+0.19	+2
Opportunity to "be young forever" through continuous contact with young people	h	3.26	9	3.01	11	2.94	9	-0.32	0
More free time than in other places	i	3.15	10	3.02	10	2.83	11	-0.32	-1
Very responsible and difficult but rewarding job	j	3.64	5	3.30	6	3.60	6	-0.04	-1
Low social prestige	k	1.98	16	2.15	16	1.79	17	-0.19	-1
Low wages	l	2.36	14	2.53	14	2.18	15	-0.18	-1
Lack of career prospects	ł	1.74	17	1.99	17	1.85	16	+0.11	+1
Uncertainty about job retention and job instability	m	2.38	13	2.25	15	2.19	14	-0.19	-1
The need to share your valuable knowledge with others	n	3.87	3	3.26	7	3.38	8	-0.49	-5
Shame about the place of work	o	1.39	18	1.79	18	1.53	18	+0.14	0
Fast burning of professional and life energy	p	2.30	15	2.64	12	2.42	13	+0.12	+2
Less free time than in other places	r	2.57	12	2.55	13	2.55	12	-0.02	0

where: „+” means increase; „-” means decrease

Source: Own calculations based on the results of conducted research.

Figure 1. Associations of respondents with the university as a workplace in 2016–2019



where: letter designations from „a” to „r” as in Table 2.  
Source: Own calculations based on the results of the research.

1. key — group "A" — values of average score 4.00 and above;
2. very important — group "B" — values of average score from 3.50 to 3.99;
3. valid — group "C" — values of average score from 3.00 to 3.49;
4. medically important — group "D" — values of average score from 2.00 to 2.99;
5. unimportant — group "E" — values of average score of 1.99 and below.

As can be seen from Table 3, the key associations in 2019 included only one association, which was the only one to create this group also in 2018, taking first place in each edition of the study. In 2019, the 'B' group included as many as 6 associations, i.e. more than in both previous editions of the study. The size of group "C" decreased significantly, because now there is only one association in it, whereas a year earlier it was created by 6 associations, and in 2016 it included 3 associations. In addition, a total of 10 associations in 2019 were in

groups "D" and "E", including 7 associations in group "D". Currently, therefore, the number of associations playing an average or even small role from the point of view of respondents representing young potential employees has relatively increased.

In terms of places in the hierarchy, the biggest change in 2019 compared to 2016 was in the case of "having to share valuable knowledge". On the other hand, in the case of 4 associations, their position in the hierarchy did not change during the whole analysed period. These are 3 positive associations, which all the time occupied the first, second and fourth place, and 1 negative association, which from 2016 was the last one, i.e. the eighteenth position. Respondents to take up a job at a university were associated invariably with "the opportunity to share their knowledge with others"; "the possibility of making a career" and "high social prestige", while the relatively weakest decision was associated with "shame because of the place of work", which is also positive.

This should not, however, make universities less vigilant as employers, as research shows that it still evokes many unfavourable associations. However, the confirmation of the necessity to undertake comprehensive actions aimed at changing this state of affairs is primarily the fact that, unfortunately, most of the respondents are still not interested in the university as an employer, wanting to work in other organizations.

The conducted research indicates that 53.2% of respondents believed that people working at universities are perceived better in Poland than people working in other institutions, 46.1% of respondents believed that they are perceived in the same way, while only 0.7% of respondents believed that they are perceived worse. The next stage of the analysis aimed at verifying whether the respondents' opinions on the perception of people working at a university compared to those of people working in other institutions differentiate associations with the university. Taking into account the fact that the percentage of people expressing opinions about worse perception was very small, for the purpose of the analysis these answers were merged with the answers about the same perception of university staff as employees of other institutions.

Table 3. Comparison of the classification of associations with a university as a workplace in 2016–2019

Analysed associations	Symbol	2016			2018			2019		
		Average score	Rank	Group	Average score	Rank	Group	Average score	Rank	Group
Opportunity to share your knowledge with others	f	4.60	1	A	4.51	1	A	4.67	1	A
Career opportunities	d	4.06	2	(Key)	3.93	2	B	3.94	2	B
The need to share your valuable knowledge with others	n	3.87	3	B	3.26	7	C	3.38	8	C
High social prestige	b	3.85	4	(Very important)	3.61	4	B	3.83	4	B
Employment security and job stability	e	3.64	5		3.89	3	B	3.84	3	B
Very responsible and difficult but rewarding job	j	3.64	5		3.30	6	C	3.60	6	B
Possibility to impress others	g	3.53	7		3.54	5	B	3.72	5	B
High wages	c	3.36	8	C	3.17	9	C	3.59	7	B
Opportunity to "be young forever" through continuous contact with young people	h	3.26	9	(Important)	3.01	11	C	2.94	9	D
More free time than in other places	i	3.15	10		3.02	10	C	2.83	11	D
Very easy and pleasant work	a	2.96	11	D	3.20	8	C	2.81	10	D
Less free time than in other places	r	2.57	12	(Medium important)	2.55	13	D	2.55	12	D
Uncertainty about job retention and job instability	m	2.38	13		2.25	15	D	2.19	14	D
Low wages	l	2.36	14		2.53	14	D	2.18	15	D
Fast burning of professional and life energy	p	2.30	15		2.64	12	D	2.42	13	D
Low social prestige	k	1.98	16	E	2.15	16	D	1.79	17	E
Lack of career prospects	ł	1.74	17	(Not very important)	1.99	17	E	1.85	16	E
Shame about the place of work	o	1.39	18		1.79	18	E	1.53	18	E

Source: Own calculations based on the results of conducted research.



**Table 4. Analysis of the significance of differences between the respondents' answers concerning associations with a university as a workplace due to their opinions on the perception of a person working as a lecturer in a university in Poland**

<b>Analysed associations</b>	<b>Perception of the working person as a lecturer at the university</b>	<b>KW test value</b>	<b>Significance level of „p”</b>
Very easy and pleasant work	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	64.97 65.03	0.992
High social prestige	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	80.61 48.13	0.000
High wages	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	72.45 56.95	0.012
Career opportunities	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	71.81 57.64	0.019
Employment security and job stability	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	64.90 65.11	0.972
Opportunity to share your knowledge with others	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	68.96 60.73	0.086
Possibility to impress others	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	71.74 57.72	0.026
Opportunity to "be young forever" through continuous contact with young people	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	65.50 64.46	0.870
More free time than in other places	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	59.27 71.19	0.056
Very responsible and difficult, but rewarding job	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	66.29 63.60	0.655
Low social prestige	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	51.35 79.75	0.000
Low wages	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	53.61 77.31	0.000

Cont. table 4

Analysed associations	Perception of the working person as a lecturer at the university	KW test value	Significance level of „p”
Lack of career prospects	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	59.11 71.36	0.042
Uncertainty about job retention and job instability	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	60.74 69.60	0.143
The need to share your valuable knowledge with others	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	64.92 65.09	0.979
Shame about the place of work	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	58.67 71.84	0.022
Fast burning of professional and life energy	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	64.33 65.73	0.818
Less free time than in other places	better than persons working in other institutions as well as persons working for other institutions	69.22 60.44	0.160

Source: Own calculations based on the results of conducted research.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test presented in Table 4 indicate that the occurrence of statistically significant variation due to the aforementioned feature was identified in the case of 8 associations, as evidenced by the value of the significance level "p" lower than the accepted limit value of 0.05. The statement contained in the research hypothesis is therefore true only for these associations. The relatively greatest difference can be observed in the case of associations with "high social prestige". It is also worth noting that the statistically significant difference was not identified in the case of associations, which have consistently been ranked first in the hierarchy since 2016. This means that regardless of the respondents' opinions about the way of perceiving people working at universities, they associated universities with "the possibility of sharing knowledge with others". On the other hand, statistically significant differences occurred for the

association, which in the whole analysed period took the last place, i.e. for "shame about the place of work". However, it was relatively weaker than in the case of associations with high social prestige.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test presented in Table 4 indicate that the occurrence of statistically significant variation due to the aforementioned feature was identified in the case of 8 associations, as evidenced by the value of the significance level "p" lower than the accepted limit value of 0.05. The statement contained in the research hypothesis is therefore true only for these associations. The relatively greatest difference can be observed in the case of associations with "high social prestige". It is also worth noting that the statistically significant difference was not identified in the case of associations, which have consistently been ranked first in the hierarchy since 2016. This means that regardless of the respondents' opinions about the way of perceiving people working at universities, they associated universities with "the possibility of sharing knowledge with others". On the other hand, statistically significant differences occurred for the association, which in the whole analysed period took the last place, i.e. for "shame about the place of work". However, it was relatively weaker than in the case of associations with high social prestige.

## Summary

On the basis of the presented considerations it can be stated that although there has been a slight improvement in terms of associations of respondents with the university as a workplace, still over half of them (almost 80%) did not take into account taking up employment in such institutions. Confirmation of the conclusion drawn is a decrease in the value of the average marks of most negative associations and a simultaneous increase in the value of the average marks of some positive associations. Thus, one can speak of a certain improvement in the way universities are perceived as employers, and certainly of the fact that it has not deteriorated.

Moreover, 53.2% of respondents believed that in Poland people working in universities are better perceived than those working in other institutions. This variable was a feature differentiating in a statistically significant way opinions concerning 8 out of 18 analysed associations. This means that in the case of most of the analysed associations, regardless of the opinion on the perception of a person working at a university in comparison with employees of other institutions, the associations with the university as an employer were similar. The statement presented in the research hypothesis turned out to be true in the case of 8 associations.

It is worth noting, however, that the results of the analysis of associations with a university as a workplace still reflect its image, which is difficult to consider as desirable by the employer. It is certainly not attractive enough to attract attention and interest of young potential employees. On the other hand, as many as 5 negative associations had average grades, whose values were higher than 2.00. Thus, it can be stated that Polish universities as employers still face an extremely important, difficult and at the same time urgent challenge related to the need to undertake comprehensive actions aimed at creating and consolidating the image of universities as an attractive place to work, allowing to satisfy both material and non-material needs. The results of the conducted research indicate that so far such activities have not been undertaken or have been ineffective, which makes it impossible to compete with other institutions for the unique potential created by employees with their knowledge, experience and abilities.

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<sup>1</sup> The first edition of the study was preceded by unstructured interviews conducted among 50 people.

<sup>2</sup> Each time a random sample selection was used [Szreder, M., 2010, pp. 168–174].

<sup>3</sup> The results of the research carried out in the first edition concerning associations with the university as an employer were analysed in detail in the articles: A. Baruk, [2016, pp. 1–18]; A. Baruk, A. Goliszek [2017, pp. 79–96]

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