

CENTRAL ANTI-CORRUPTION BUREAU

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The CBA inspection at the UMCS ECOTECH COMPLEX. Mismanagement and multi-million losses

From 24 October 2019 to 10 July 2020, the officers of the Control Procedure Division of the CBA Regional Office in Poznań conducted an inspection at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, the subject of which was the project entitled "ECOTECH-COMPLEX - Man, Environment, Production", supported by the Innovative Economy Operational Programme 2007-2013.

The ECOTECH-COMPLEX Centre was built as part of the subsidy for the amount of PLN 145,140,000.00, and it started operating in January 2016. Equipped with the most modern facilities in the country, it was to be a unique place to conduct multidisciplinary, complex research work. It was a joint initiative of the most important units conducting scientific and research activities in the Lubelskie and Podkarpackie Voivodships. The project was to consolidate on an unprecedented scale the research and production potential of the region in the field of environmental management to improve the quality of life and increase the competitiveness of the R&D sector (research and development activity).

In the course of the inspection, it was established that already at the stage of designing and equipping the ECOTECH-COMPLEX Centre, no accurate consultations were carried out in the scope of the planned purchases of research equipment, either with the scientific staff of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University departments or with the staff of other units of the Consortium, which are part of the research profile of the newly established Centre. As a result, unnecessary equipment was purchased, which is not used at all or is used occasionally.

The findings show that the co-financing agreement was breached due to the lack of proper implementation of the assumed main objective of the project, which was to create a centre with high scientific and research potential, and also due to the lack of implementation of project result indicators.

The audit also showed that the Centre's building does not meet the basic requirement set by Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, i.e. it is not a laboratory building. Instead of a laboratory building, the university received a building consisting mainly of technical rooms. Thus, the laboratory area accounts for 35% of the building's area, instead of the planned 60%, the area of auxiliary rooms instead of 15% accounts for over 55%, and the area of teaching and learning rooms instead of about 25% accounts for only 9% of the usable area.

Seven laboratory rooms could not function as specialised laboratories for biological, chemical and medical research at the time of design as they did not meet the criteria for such rooms. The lift for transporting laboratory equipment turned out to be too narrow and is not used as intended.

The rooms for silent work were also incorrectly designed and built. They also failed to meet the criteria for public sanitary facilities. They were designed and built as hotel rooms.

It should be pointed out that the ECOTECH-COMPLEX Centre as a research unit did not work properly in the period inspected by the CBA. Among other things, it did not take effective steps to raise funds, bring researches or obtain research projects. As a result, the ECOTECH-COMPLEX Centre did not receive any funding for scientific activities with the use of 7 Tesla magnetic resonance imaging (MRI 7T), unique on a global scale, worth PLN 32 million. This device is not a standard diagnostic tool commonly used in health care facilities, but a technically advanced resonance imaging device for research and scientific applications in the field of advanced brain research and imaging of other anatomical areas within the whole body. From the information presented to the inspectors and from the materials collected in the course of the inspection, it appears that the use of this unique device for research work is still in the initial stage of preparation of both the equipment itself and the researchers operating it.

Due to the low level of scientific and research activity, the Centre has not yet implemented the main assumption of the project, which was to create a centre with high scientific and research potential, cooperating with various foreign research institutions.

In view of the arrangements made, the audit presentations were sent at the beginning of September 2020 to the National Centre for Research and Development and Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. Subsequently, a notification was sent to the

District Prosecutor's Office in Lublin on the possibility of having committed a crime of fraud and attesting an untruth by 2 persons, including the director of ECOTECH-COMPLEX. These persons misled the National Centre for Research and Development as to the amount of the commercialisation rate achieved, which is the basis for obtaining funding under the Panda 2 project for 2018, thus causing damage to the National Centre of Research and Development property in the amount of nearly PLN 400,000.00.

Furthermore, the District Prosecutor's Office in Lublin was also notified of suspicion of having committed a crime of mismanagement and attestation of an untruth by the then vice-rector of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University and attestation of an untruth by the director of ECOTECH-COMPLEX. They signed the acceptance protocols for the first and second stages of the ECOTECH-COMPLEX design documentation, authorising the contractor to issue invoices even though the design documentation did not comply with the contracting authority's assumptions. By attesting an untruth as to the consistency of the received documentation with the agreement and by making payments for the execution of the project documentation which was not following the assumptions and for performing author's supervision, they caused damage in the property of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in the amount of at least 3,172,000.00 PLN. Moreover, the acceptance of the documentation and consequently the construction of the object which did not comply with the assumptions of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University resulted in further expenditure of not less than PLN 44,868,229.29. Due to the above, the damage caused could have been increased by the indicated amount. Such action could also lead to a threat to the implementation of the Project, the total value of which was PLN 145,140,000.00.



Scientist working at the
laboratory
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