



## **The Strategic Role of the Third Mission in Universities A Concrete Case Study**

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[Doi: 10.19044/esipreprint.4.2024.p39](https://doi.org/10.19044/esipreprint.4.2024.p39)

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Approved: 04 April 2024  
Posted: 08 April 2024

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*Cite As:*

Rusciano R. (2024). *The Strategic Role of the Third Mission in Universities. A Concrete Case Study*. ESI Preprints. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esipreprint.4.2024.p39>

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose** - In addition to teaching and research, the universities aim to contribute to the development of civil society by promoting the direct application, valorisation and use of knowledge. In reality, it is a widespread and shared opinion that it is no longer enough to carry out research within the university perimeter and publish subsequent works in scientific journals, nor can we be satisfied only with teaching children in university courses.

**Design/ methodology / approach** - The methodology used is qualitative as the research question essentially was: how was the Third Mission (TM) included in the strategic choices of the Universities? In light of the new methods of evaluating universities, how can we highlight what they have done in terms of the third mission? Are organizational solutions possible in the approach to TM?

**Findings** - The objective was to verify what the impact and future development of the Third Mission in the Universities will be. In light of its inclusion among the evaluation criteria of universities and teachers, the third mission represents the new frontier of the future in terms of local and national openness and development, as well as their economic and financial sustainability. To this end, the analysis of a case is proposed, as a best practice, and in particular the case of the Department of Business and Legal Sciences of the University of Calabria is presented.

**Originality / value** – The application and implementation of rules and regulations is always difficult in any case and in any field, let's imagine in public administration and universities, bureaucratically "plastered" and not

very inclined to change and innovation, especially regarding performance evaluation.

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**Keywords:** Third mission, evaluation, strategic planning, performance, development

## 1. Introduction

Over the last few years, the Italian university, like that of other countries, has been affected by profound transformations which are affecting both the improvement of the more traditional functions, i.e. training and research, and the introduction of new missions and characteristics for respond more directly to the needs for research, innovative services and training expressed externally, in particular by the territorial systems in which it operates.

Historically, the University's first mission is to transmit knowledge to new generations with the aim of training highly qualified figures. As per consolidated practice, the institutional mandate of the University is the training of the ruling class of a country. Research, the second mission, consists in increasing certified knowledge to respond to the different needs of social well-being.

With the process of corporatization of public administration, all the mechanisms of private companies have been adapted to the public sector and, therefore, also to universities. Addressing the topic of planning and control by referring them to the university system presupposes on the one hand the consideration that the University takes, at least in part, the typical connotations of the company, on the other the need to contextualize the concepts that must be inserted into the peculiarities "of the public university company". Universities constitute a completely peculiar reality in the state sphere, "primarily due to the specificity of the products offered and the management circuits implemented and, secondly, for the particular legal regime of autonomy they enjoy in educational and scientific terms, but also from an organizational, financial and accounting point of view".

In addition to teaching and research, the universities aim to contribute to the development of civil society by promoting the direct application, valorisation and use of knowledge. In reality, it is a widespread and shared opinion that it is no longer enough to carry out research within the university perimeter and publish subsequent works in scientific journals, nor can we be satisfied only with teaching children in university courses.

A historical measure of the impact factor of teachers is given by citations and patent registrations, which are not always precise and indicators of all disciplines. This alone is not enough. We need to open up to the world and spread culture, disseminate knowledge and transfer research results

outside the academic environment, contributing to the social growth and cultural direction of the territory.

Concretely, universities must link up with the world of economy and industry to be considered both as a potential supplier of resources and as a source of demand for highly qualified labour. Furthermore, in this direction, there is the need to satisfy new requests coming from society, namely that of professional updating through the use of continuous training.

Today, knowledge has taken on a central role in society both from an economic and political point of view and in life processes. Knowledge, research and innovation are currently the pillars on which to leverage the growth and competitiveness of our society.

All this is part of the Third Mission of Universities.

The objective was to verify what the impact and future development of the Third Mission in the Universities will be. In light of its inclusion among the evaluation criteria of universities and teachers (ANVUR), the third mission represents the new frontier of the future in terms of openness, local and national development, as well as their economic and financial sustainability. To this end, the analysis of a case is proposed and in particular the case of the Department of Business and Legal Sciences of the University of Calabria is presented.

## **2. Methodology**

The methodology used is qualitative. Starting from the theoretical framework, focused on the strategic planning process in universities, we asked ourselves the following research question: how was the Third Mission included in the strategic choices of universities? In light of the new methods of evaluating universities, how can we highlight what they have done in terms of the third mission? Are organizational solutions possible that are useful for achieving good results? The relevance of the topic covered will ensure that the study will certainly contribute to increasing the literature and starting a discussion and reflections on what has been done and how much still needs to be done in this direction.

After an examination of strategic planning in the public sector and in particular in universities, the third mission was defined precisely by virtue of the strategic plan in force. We then moved on to outline the salient points for the third mission of the University of Calabria and in particular of the Department of Business and Legal Sciences. The intent was to verify the state of the art in terms of implementation of the Department's Third Mission.

In fact, on the basis of the indicators identified in the strategic areas of the third mission, what has been done so far by the Discag department was analysed, in order to define a "Disag model".

### 3. Strategic planning in universities

Law 43/2005 provides that universities, also in order to pursue objectives of efficiency and effectiveness of the services offered, adopt, every year, three-year programs connected with the general guidelines defined by decree of the former MIUR, now MUR. The legislation also provides that university programs are evaluated by the Ministry and monitored periodically in accordance with parameters and criteria identified by the Minister, making use of the National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System (CNVSU), after consulting the Conference of Rectors of Italian universities (CRUI). Finally, it provides that university programs are taken into account in the distribution of the universities' Ordinary Financing Fund (FFO).

The three-year planning system for the activities and development of universities and the entire university system provides:

1. the preparation of the general guidelines defined by decree of the Minister;
2. the preparation of three-year programs by each university;
3. the evaluation of these programs by the Ministry;
4. periodic monitoring of university programs based on parameters and criteria identified by the Minister;
5. the preparation of a three-yearly report on the results of the evaluation of the programs that the Minister presents to Parliament;
6. the definition of the methods with which to take university programs into account in the distribution of the ordinary university funding fund.

With this legislation, strategic planning finds a concrete application within Italian universities. It therefore becomes important to understand what the phases and actors of the planning process are, the content of the documents and their formalization as established by the legislation. Generally, by statute or regulation, universities require the Academic Senate to definitively approve the strategic plan, as it is the highest internal policy-making body.

It is essential to consider how the State Universities over the years have been affected by a regulatory overlap which has required them to draft numerous planning documents, including the three-year planning, the economic-financial plans, the personnel planning plans, the three-year construction plan, the performance plan, the plan for the prevention of corruption and transparency and, lastly, the integrated plan of activity and organization, a real novelty and concrete simplification of the bureaucracy of this last year.

Provided for by article 6 of Legislative Decree no. 80 of 2021, public administrations from 30 June 2022 must draw up a single planning and governance document, called the Integrated Activity and Organization Plan (PIAO). It includes many of the plans that until now public administrations were required to prepare annually: performance, staff needs, gender equality, flexible working, anti-corruption.

One of the reasons that generated the preparation of a single document is the high number of rules that regulate the system. Unfortunately, however, even if each of these regulations has objectives of high social and civil significance, their combination over time has shown strong limitations, to the point of generating an overload of obligations without producing the desired improvement effects or severely limiting them.

#### **4. Third Mission**

Historically, the first mission of universities is to transmit knowledge in order to train highly qualified figures. The institutional mission of universities is precisely to train the ruling class of the future. Research, the second mission, is aimed at increasing certified knowledge with the aim of responding to social well-being needs.

The Third Mission is defined as the set of all the activities with which universities dialogue and interact with society, coming into direct contact with the surrounding world through interaction methods with very variable content and form and dependent on the context.

It is therefore necessary to distinguish, according to the definition given by ANVUR, two types of interaction:

- a) Third Mission of economic valorisation of knowledge,
- b) Third cultural and social mission.

As regards the first point, we are referring to the economic valorisation of knowledge in the event that the Third Mission is made useful for productive purposes, i.e. we are referring to all technological transfer activities aimed at and addressed to the evaluation, protection, marketing and commercialization of technologies developed as part of research projects conducted by the academic world and, more generally, the management of intellectual property in relation to the same projects (patents, trademarks, etc.).

In reference to the Third Cultural and Social Mission, however, the concept is that "public goods are produced that increase the well-being of society". For example, we refer to cultural events, scientific dissemination, management of museum centers, public health, continuing education, public debates and controversies, scientific expertise, adult education. Generally,

there is no payment of a price for the use of these goods, or a market price. In any case, these are numerous activities.

Precisely for this reason, the indicators that describe them are not and cannot be standardized and consequently less comparable and, therefore, are less shared. ANVUR requests periodic monitoring of the **evaluation of the third mission** of a socio-cultural nature.

This second point includes all initiatives for the production and management of cultural heritage, research infrastructures, clinical trials and medical training, continuous training or Public Engagement. By “ *Public Engagement we mean the set of non-profit activities with educational, cultural and social development value. The business and benefits of higher education and research can be communicated and shared with the public in numerous ways* ” (ANVUR 2015).

Indeed, today a distinction is made between public and social engagement. The word engagement is here understood as psychological, individual, motivational, context-dependent involvement.

The following are considered Public Engagement initiatives:

- informative publications signed by the teaching staff at a national or international level;
- participation of the teaching staff in radio and television broadcasts at a national or international level;
- active participation in public meetings organized by other entities (e.g. scientific cafés, festivals, science fairs, etc.);
- organization of public events (e.g. Researchers' Night, open day );
- publications (paper and digital) dedicated to the external public (e.g. university magazine);
- organized communication training days (aimed at PTA or teachers);
- interactive and/or informative websites, blogs;
- use by the community of museums, hospitals, sports facilities, libraries, theatres, historic university buildings;
- organization of concerts, exhibitions, exhibitions and other public events open to the community;
- participation in the formulation of programs of public interest (policy- making );
- participation in committees for the definition of standards and technical regulations;
- health protection initiatives (e.g. information and prevention days);
- initiatives in collaboration with entities for urban development or territorial enhancement projects;
- orientation and interaction initiatives with high schools;

- information initiatives aimed at children and young people;
- participatory democracy initiatives (e.g. consensus conferences , citizen panels).

## 5. The Unical

Established in 1968 with law n. 422 of 12 May, the University of Calabria represents a strategic resource for the development of Calabria, capable of creating prospects of cultural, social and economic growth for its students and their families.

For about 10 years the University of Calabria has started a process of improving strategic planning and operational programming processes.

As reported in the 2023-2025 strategic plan, adopted on 25 October 2022, after a first part that introduces the mission and vision of the University, we move on to the presentation of the University and its characterizing elements.

Some of its own peculiarities that allow Unical to be distinguished from other universities can essentially be summarized in its being considered a "Campus" University model which introduced the Departmental Structure and the Residential Center in Italy for the first time. Another characteristic distinctive feature was the creation of an environment conducive to the promotion of close relationships between all the components of the institution (teachers, students, technical and administrative staff), with the creation of a residential area, according to the Campus model, typical , until then, only in the Anglo-Saxon world. In fact, the current university structure is characterized by an equipped "bridge" axis, along which buildings (called "Cubes") in which Departments, Administrative Offices, Laboratories, Classrooms, Libraries, Cinemas and Theaters are located. The university residences, sports facilities and canteens for student and staff catering are located in the surrounding hilly area.

Today, over 50 years after its establishment, 14 Departments are active, which employ around 800 teachers divided between full professors, associate professors and researchers. The administrative, financial and technical activities are organized and managed by approximately 650 units of technical-administrative staff. There are 5 Common Service Centers active in the University: the Music and Entertainment Arts Center (CAMS), the Publishing and Book Center, the University ICT Center, the University Language Center (CLA), with the presence of 4 Museums: the Museum of Paleontology, the Museum of Natural History and Botanical Garden ( MuSNOB ), the Museum of Zoology, and the Museum for the Environment/ RiMuseum , located outside the Campus. The Residential Center, however, is responsible for the provision of services to students, providing

approximately 1,800 beds and a canteen service that provides approximately 2,377 meals a day.

To date, Unical boasts approximately 24.000 enrolled students, thus positioning itself among the main academic institutions in our country.

The University of Arcavacata has activated a guesthouse service, with 168 apartments, and a "Residenza Socrate" hotel structure equipped with 44 rooms ready to host visitors. Finally, there are numerous sports facilities organized in a multifunctional CUS centre, near which Youth Aggregation Centers have been created, spaces available to students for ideas and initiatives.

Very useful and advantageous to highlight is the activity of a health emergency operating station, which represents an important example of conurbation of the University with the surrounding area. Alongside these is the University Chapel which has always been entrusted to the Dehonian Fathers, then joined in 2006 by the Dorotee Sisters. The University Chapel welcomes various university groups and organizes thematic reflection meetings. Students, and not only, can freely access the Library System made up of three large libraries: the Technical-Scientific Area Library; the Humanities Library and the Economic and Social Sciences Library. Finally, within the university perimeter there are: a Banking Agency; a post office; two theaters; two cinemas; two amphitheatres for outdoor events; a nursery that hosts over 50 children from the age of three months. Overall, over 5,000 parking spaces are available, and the various structures are accessible by a public transport system which guarantees daily mobility for over 25,000 users.

The strategic areas of training and research are the two principles of the university system, spontaneously supported, but only in recent times as mentioned above, by the third mission and social commitment as an area in which to systematically decline one's initiatives aimed at strengthening ties with the territory and its social and cultural valorization. The University of Calabria wants to contribute to the planning of a cultural project aimed at change and the social and economic growth of the regional territory, both nationally and internationally, strengthening the international vocation and the area of student services.

The University has the responsibility of having to act as a driving force for development, contributing to addressing the problems of the Calabrian territory, in particular those connected to the delay in growth compared to other areas of the country, global competition, and employment issues especially for young people have a high level of education. The vision of quality of the third mission therefore sees a natural propensity to strongly support not only technological transfer initiatives and activities, but also knowledge transfer and public engagement initiatives, to be developed by



adopting the principles of quality assurance as own methodological reference.

## **6. The Department of Business and Law**

The Department of Business and Legal Sciences "is the structure responsible for carrying out scientific research, teaching and training activities, as well as activities related or ancillary to the previous ones which are externally directed and attributable to the scientific-disciplinary sectors of Legal and Business Sciences within the Department itself".

The Department of Business and Legal Sciences was established in 2013 following the entry into force of the new Unical Statute, pursuant to Law 240/2010, which provided for the reorganization of research and training activities, previously delegated respectively to Departments and Faculties, relocating them within the new Departments. DiScAG, in particular, was born from the merger of the pre-existing Departments of Business Sciences and Legal Sciences and operates in continuity with the former Faculty of Economics of the University of Calabria. The initial project envisaged the development of scientific and cultural activities essentially in two areas (Business – SSC 13B and Legal – SSC 12). Over time the department has been further enriched and the initial SSCs have also been joined by 13A (Economic area), SSC 13D (Statistical area) and SSC 14D1 (Sociological area).

The objectives of Discag arose from the awareness that the context in which universities operate is complex and variable, both from a cultural and socio-economic point of view, therefore the objectives are influenced by continuous changes in the labor market which impact on the employability of graduates, to the growing competition in attracting students, to the needs of the territory in terms of accompanying companies towards innovation, to the evolution of the traditional reference professional figures (accountants, managers, lawyers), to the ever new scenarios in the of research, third mission and competitive projects. To face these challenges, adaptation and resilience skills are needed, as well as the ability to influence and stimulate change, without undergoing it.

Its mission, therefore, is to train excellent intelligence and professionalism capable of adapting to environmental changes and in some way guiding them.

All DiScAG operational activities developed by the Technical and Administrative Staff are organized into 4 sectors:

1. Administration and accounting
2. Teaching
3. Research and Third Mission
4. Higher education and Masters.

It should be specified that compared to the initial division (administration, teaching and research) dating back to 2012 - when the faculties were transformed into departments following the Gelmini law - at the beginning of 2019 the Research Sector of the Department was divided into Research Sector and Third Mission and Higher Education and Masters Sector. This subdivision has allowed us to develop even more specific skills, necessary in these areas, to achieve the expected objectives and above all to start generating best practices that allow the Department to consolidate the set objectives.

The staff is 14 structured units, as well as 13 units with collaboration contracts.

Starting from 2019, the Research and Third Mission Office has started monitoring both the departmental research and the third mission activities carried out within the department itself, but an attempt has also been made to start a process of spreading the culture of the Third Mission . In the first instance, the head of the research and third mission sector initiated a mapping of the research lines and interests of all the teachers belonging to Discag.

Subsequently, on the basis of the information received, 8 research groups were outlined, which include 61 teachers (data updated in March 2024). The research groups were as follows:

1. Business Economics Area - 16 teachers
2. Business and Management - 10 teachers
3. Civil Law in Constitutional Legality - 5 teachers
4. Commercial and Tax Law - 6 teachers
5. Criminal Law - 2 teachers
6. Public Law Disciplines - 10 teachers
7. Financial Intermediaries And Corporate Finance - 5 teachers
8. Territory, Environment, City and Tourism - 7 teachers

In this way, there was an understanding of who did what. Furthermore, the organizational chart of the existing organizational structure was reported in official documents, based among other things on a consistent and well-defined number of delegations granted to teachers. The auspicious wish of the governance was to confer as many delegations as possible, in order to also make teachers responsible for enhancing the common good which is that of the education of children and to contribute significantly to local, regional and sometimes national development.

## 7. Analysis and Results

In order to optimally conduct a planning, monitoring and evaluation action in order to guarantee development with a view to continuous improvement, it is necessary to focus on three key macro dimensions:

- ❖ **Strategy** - vertical dimension of planning, monitoring and evaluation from which the indications that define the path to follow for the next few years derive; it goes from the strategic plan to management performance, from the academic to the technical-administrative sphere;
- ❖ **Transparency** - external dimension (or depth), which opens the organization to stakeholders with a view to real accountability ;
- ❖ **Quality** - horizontal dimension, which permeates all University processes, roles, resources, structures.

Universities must therefore adopt internal methodologies for monitoring the achievement of the planned strategic objectives, also with the development of autonomous indicators adequately harmonized with the indicators defined by ANVUR which measure the degree of achievement of the objectives in teaching, research and organisation. and also in individual performances.

Furthermore, the identification of indicators is an extremely complex aspect since these may not always be sufficiently representative and exhaustive of the complexity of an organizational structure. Upstream and downstream of this moment, it is necessary to pay a lot of attention to equally important aspects, such as the definition of the information needs that the indicators must satisfy, the possible ways to allow their real use within the decision-making process, the dangers of behavioral distortions that the use of indicators can lead to the identification of adequate standards and terms of comparison within organizations. Therefore, the path through which the indicator is defined (and its labelling) is certainly more important than the indicator itself as the methodological analysis activated will allow us to identify the factors that will help the healthcare company to improve and grow.

As regards the Department of Business and Legal Sciences, the actions envisaged for the implementation of the activities included in the third departmental mission included in the strategic plan were essentially the following:

<b>Actions on i strategic strategies</b>	<b>TM.1 - A.1</b>	Incentivation to the valorization of the results of the company research
	<b>TM.1 - A.2</b>	Promotion of the corporate culture
	<b>TM.1 - A.3</b>	Reinforcement of incubation and support programs for businesses

**Table no. 1-** Strategic actions planned to achieve the objectives set and included in the strategic plan- source Strategic Plan 23-25 of the Department of Business and Legal Sciences

While the indicators used to achieve these strategic actions are :

- **TM.1-I.2** Number of people involved in training courses for the promotion of corporate culture
- **TM.1-I.4** Income from commissioned research, technology transfer and competitive financing
- **TM.2-I.1** Number of initiatives for the promotion and support of the civil and educational mission

From what is reported in the Discag strategic plan, we have:

### **TM.1- indicator I.2 Number of people involved in training courses for the promotion of corporate culture**

<b>Weight 25%</b>	<b>Baselines</b>	<b>Detection</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Target</b>	
	<b>31/12/2019</b>	<b>31/12/2020</b>	<b>06/30/2021</b>	<b>31/12/2021</b>	<b>12/31/2022</b>
<b>Department</b>	3.3	7.7	12.3	4.0	4.3
<b>University</b>	24.3	61.7	100.7	29.2	31.6

**Table no. 2.** Indicator TM.1- I.2, Number of people involved in training courses for the promotion of business culture - source Strategic Plan 23-25 of the Department of Business and Legal Sciences

The data refers to the last useful survey carried out before the adoption of the strategic plan.

The Department takes the social, cultural and economic development of the territory into great consideration, through continuous collaboration with other University departments, with the educational, productive and innovative ecosystem and with civil society.

For the **Strategic Action TM.1-A.1** - Incentive for the valorisation of research results, it can be seen that the Indicator **TM.1-I.4** Proceeds from commissioned research, technological transfer and competitive financing is made up as follows:

Weight 25%	Baselines	Detection	Current	Target	
	31/12/2019	31/12/2020	06/30/2021	31/12/2021	12/31/2022
Department	€52,538	€40,000	€170,566	€54,114	€55,165
University	€12,269,488	€12,487,690	€3,490,143	€12,637,573	€12,882,962

**Table no. 3.** Indicator TM.1-I.4, source Strategic Plan 23-25 of the Department of Business and Legal Sciences

Discag has already achieved excellent results in terms of the third mission, in fact compared to the other departments it is the one with the most existing activities, both due to the vocation and specificity of the research groups, for example in the legal field there are several lawyers and it is normal to involve, for example, the forensic associations, or in the economic accounting field, the associations of accountants and accounting experts and others are naturally involved. But the Department has set itself the objective of strengthening all these and other activities, in particular:

- that of developing multidisciplinary collaboration involving transversal research areas and promoting applied research projects;
- cooperate more with the local entrepreneurial fabric and with non-profit associations;
- spread the culture of technology transfer and active citizenship among teachers, researchers, PhD students, research fellows and the PTA;
- organize professional courses for researchers, businesses and, above all, public administrations such as local authorities, given that the PNRR has literally made the planning, organisation, management and reporting of simple and complex projects fall on them. Very often, especially in small local authorities, there is a lack of suitable professionalism and for this reason one look to the future is precisely that of training public administration employees. Indeed, for over 6 years, Discag has participated, winning an average of two/three activated courses every year, in the INPS Valore PA project <sup>1</sup>.

Other activities to be strengthened can certainly be identified in supporting teachers, researchers, PhD students, and research fellows in scouting regional, national and European opportunities and in carrying out

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<sup>1</sup>The INPS PA Value Project is dedicated to the training of public employees by issuing an annual call consisting of 3 steps : one aimed at public administrations which must report their training needs; one dedicated to universities which, based on the training needs expressed by public administrations, must offer training courses constructed at each and according to INPS indications; finally, the last step is addressed to public administration employees who have been accredited for their selection. It should be underlined that the institution itself bears the per capita cost of those admitted to the courses.

the administrative and partnership creation aspects; but also to intensify participation in competitive funding calls, including with multidisciplinary research activities that allow access to types of calls traditionally not central to the DiScAG .

However, with regard to indicator TM.2-I.1 - Number of initiatives for the promotion and support of the civil and educational mission, the strategic plan shows that the Department has focused more on the following activities, consolidating and intensifying the relations with educational institutions and institutional subjects in the area; increasing Public Engagement initiatives also aimed at student placement thanks to the involvement of local economic operators and companies, as well as orientation and interaction initiatives with schools of all levels; proposing a large number of hackathons , bootcamps , co-design with companies and institutions, for the development of innovations.

These reported below are the values of the indicators for the year just ended and the target for 2024.

Valori indicatori						
Indicatori	Peso	VALORE 31/12/2023	TARGE T 31/12/2023	T.R.I. Tasso Raggiungimento Indicatore	Raggiungimento normalizzato ponderato	TARGET 31/12/202 4
TM.1-I.2	25%	14	4	100%	25%	4,3
TM.1-I.4	25%	260.816,00 €	54.114,00 €	100%	25%	55.165,00 €
TM.2-I.1	50%	155	52	100%	50%	141

**Table no. 4.** Indicator values for 2023 and proposed objectives for 2024 - Data source Monitoring, quality and evaluation service - Statistics and reporting sector of the University of Calabria.

## 8. Discussion of results

By review we mean an activity carried out to verify the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of something to achieve the established objectives (UNI ISO 9000 standard).

According to the review report for the revision of the strategic plan, it was found that Discag in the strategic area TM\_DiScAG : the third mission had a score of 100%.

Two of the three indicators (Number of people involved in training courses for the promotion of business culture - TM.1-I.2 \_Elaborated by the university (TM-20) - Proceeds from commissioned research, technological transfer and competitive financing - TM.1-I.4\_PSD (TM-21) very significantly exceed the previous year's target.

The indicator Number of initiatives for the promotion and support of the civil and educational mission - TM.1-I.2 \_PSD (TM-20) reaches a value

slightly below the target (91.26%), in fact starting from 2019 which saw the organization of 48 activities, for 2020 41 initiatives were registered, for 2021 42 initiatives were registered, for 2022 120 activities were registered and lastly, in 2023 we had a sprint with 155 valid activities as activities attributable to the third mission, which includes public engagement initiatives, social engagement, conferences, seminars, workshops, etc. This demonstrates the growing trend of activities, despite the health emergency in those years, with the involvement of all teachers and of all the technical-administrative staff who denote a great sense of belonging to the University. A particular piece of data was detected immediately after the end of the health emergency which, as can be seen in the table below, denotes the exponential increase in activities that were carried out mainly in person.

Year	n. of third mission activity recorded on 12/31 of each year
2019	48
2020	41
2021	42
2022	120
2023	155

**Table no. 5.** Our processing. Data source Monitoring, quality and evaluation service - Statistics and reporting sector of the University of Calabria

The trend of the first indicator has grown over time but it is underlined that in the two-year period 20-21 it is slightly decreasing, compared to the first year of monitoring 2019<sup>2</sup>, for obvious reasons linked to the health emergency caused by Covid -19.

<sup>2</sup> Monitoring began in 2019 in conjunction with the official adoption of the University Strategic Plan for the three-year period 2019-2021. Just to give a quick overview, in terms of drafting strategic plans and performance evaluation, it is certainly necessary to mention the following rules:

1. L. 370/99: establishment of the CNVSU, or the National Committee for the evaluation of the university system,
2. L. 204/98: establishment of the CIVR, Steering Committee for Research Evaluation,
3. Legislative Decree 150/2009: performance and transparency, Brunetta decree entitled "Optimization of the productivity of public work and efficiency and transparency of public administrations". With the introduction of this decree, for the first time, the moment of measurement is distinguished from that of evaluation, establishing the CIVIT (Independent Commission for the Evaluation, Transparency and Integrity of Public Administration), which today no longer exists. The basic function of this authority was to guarantee, independently of the Italian government, the optimization of the productivity of public work and the efficiency and transparency of Italian public administrations.
4. L. 240/2010 ANVUR quality assessment in universities,
5. L. 98/13 ANVUR evaluation of the performance of administrative activities in universities,
6. Legislative Decree 25 May 2017, n. 74, hereinafter Legislative Decree 74/2017, made changes to Legislative Decree 150/2009 regarding the optimization of public

This, however, demonstrates that the objectives set and the actions implemented to achieve them have largely worked. The result was achieved thanks to the collaboration and involvement of the technical-administrative staff with the teaching staff. This has made it possible to achieve a significant competitive advantage given by the assembly of several people, who are nevertheless bearers of different knowledge, rationality and experiences.

The most important actions that gave an immediate and tangible result were:

- Encouragement of the valorisation of research results through dissemination workshops and seminars;
- Promotion of business culture, through scheduled invitations to local and, sometimes, national entrepreneurs to hold seminars and spread their story among university classrooms;
- Strengthening and enhancing business support programs through training courses aimed primarily at entrepreneurs. A significant innovative experience to report and reproduce is undoubtedly the establishment of a dedicated research and training center aimed at entrepreneurs. In fact, the Department of Business and Legal Sciences has inaugurated the Training and Research Center for Small and Medium SME Enterprises, a sort of incubator within the Department itself.

## 9. Concluding remarks

In the context of the economy and management of private companies, the perspective of "looking to the future" constitutes without any shadow of a doubt one of the indispensable strengths that allow the company itself to continue to live and grow over time. This concept must also and above all be the perspective for public administrations.

Generally speaking, what is required today is an efficient and effective organization, even if this involves a necessary change of vision primarily on the part of public administration operators, including those in the university sector, called to work with greater order and with the

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labor productivity and the efficiency and transparency of public administrations, implementing the provisions of article 17, paragraph 1, letter r), of Law 7 August 2015, n. 124 (so-called "Madia reform"). Legislative Decree 74/2017 provides, among other things, that "public administrations annually evaluate organizational and individual performance. To this end, they adopt and update annually, subject to the binding opinion of the independent evaluation body, the Performance Measurement and Evaluation System (SMVP).

Worth mentioning is the implementing decree of Law 43/2005, or Ministerial Decree 216/2007, which defines the methods for drawing up three-year strategic plans.



awareness that every organisational-management choice is related to the need to achieve pre-ordained objectives.

In truth, it was necessary to introduce Legislative Decree 150/2009 - but above all the subsequent modification implemented by means of Decree no. 74/2017, implementing the Madia law n. 124/2015-, since, after a long period characterized by waste and inefficiencies, it was necessary to introduce a rule that required public administrations to measure their work, to weigh it, also so that the user/student could grasp the transparency of the processes managed by PAs and universities, also in a more efficient reallocation of available resources.

From this perspective, in the opinion of the writer, the direction in which the " Discag model" and more generally of the University of Calabria is developing is to be considered positive, in terms of performance measurement, with the introduction of forms of participation of technical-administrative staff in the operational processes that take place within the Department, at all levels.

Given that the involvement of multiple people, bearers of different knowledge, rationality and experiences, and who do not normally work together, constitutes a source of competitive advantage, in my opinion what can be summarized as future prospects from a systemic perspective of results and of transparency, compared to what has already been started within the Discag, it is necessary to aim at achieving 5 objectives:

- plan better;
- measure better;
- evaluate better;
- reward better;
- report better.

It is clear that if a structure is based on good activity planning, it works better.

With the hope that this contribution can increase the awareness that without people and, above all, without everyone's cooperation and a valid reward system we will get nowhere, we hope to be able to contribute actively and materially to the construction of a third mission worthy of being called such and of being the point of reference for Discag in the present and for the coming years.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author reported no conflict of interest.

**Data Availability:** All data are included in the content of the paper.

**Funding Statement:** The author did not obtain any funding for this research.

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