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**Abstract**

This article summarizes the process of conceptualizing the third mission of higher education institutions. First, the relevant changes in the socio-economical context of higher education are enumerated and institutional responses are described. Next, the main trends in defining the third mission are delineated, and the ways in which the various concepts differ are outlined. A conceptual framework for the third mission is presented, and consists of three dimensions: enterprising, innovative, and social/civic. Considering the three dimensions as the basis for efforts to evaluate higher education institutions, indicators based on contemporary research are then assigned to the framework. Finally, based on the example of Czech higher education, the national approach to the third mission and practical possibilities of data collection within the generated conceptual framework in the Czech higher education are estimated. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)