

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT 2021-2027

STRATEGY

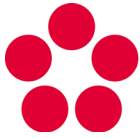
The University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice (hereinafter referred to as the "USB") aims to strengthen its international cooperation in the field of education, research and the internal environment so that it can provide an excellent study environment for Czech and international students, teachers and researchers. Internationalization is one of the USB five priorities as expressed in the USB Long-Term Plan. The aim is to increase the percentage of international students, to support international student mobility, to offer more degree programmes implemented in a foreign language and to support internationalization through targeted marketing campaigns. Mobility is seen as an invaluable tool in improving teachers' teaching qualifications and professional knowledge and in providing students with an opportunity to gain new knowledge and intercultural skills.

Due to its geographical location, cross-border cooperation is one of the well-developing key activities for USB. However, the University also successfully cooperates with partner institutions in most European countries, as well as with universities and specialized workplaces in the USA, Canada, South America, Asia and Africa. USB students and academic and non-academic staff can implement their international mobility through this wide network of partner institutions.

An important tool for international cooperation, modernization of teaching and development of USB is the Erasmus+ programme. Through the participation in the Erasmus+ programme, the USB would like to achieve the following basic objectives, which reflect the USB internationalisation and modernisation strategy.

1st objective: professional services & increase of student and staff mobilities

The USB has been successful in increasing the number of both outgoing and incoming student and staff mobilities financed mainly from the Erasmus+ programme and following this increasing trend is one of the planned strategies within The Long-Term Strategic Plan on internationalisation. There have been various reasons for this positive growth – restructuring of the International Relations Offices at both central and faculty levels that has resulted in professionalization of outgoing/incoming student services and advisory; significant institutional support of student organisations and their sustainability, e.g. the foundation of ESN Section on the campus and support of the „buddy system“. The quality of student/staff services has also increased across other university departments - e.g. the Support Centre for Students with Special Needs and its professional services deserve special attention. International exchange, cultural diversity of the campus, intercultural awareness, and successful integration are the foundation blocks of the Internationalisation at Home strategy and the USB aims to focus on this issue in the upcoming period. The mobility of students and staff has a crucial impact on the sense of European identity and strongly support the democratic principles of the civic society, social responsibility and environmental sustainability. Erasmus+ programme is a key component in all the



activities the USB is planning to apply for (mobility of higher education students and staff, cooperation among organisations and institutions: Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices, Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities, Partnerships for Excellence – Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, Partnerships for Innovation).

2nd objective: digitalisation (implementation of EWP, digitalisation of IRO and general university-wide administrative agenda, development of digital skills of staff and students)

Simple, transparent, modern and easy to manage and operate tools for the administration of the Erasmus+ programme (as well as for other administrative agendas across university operational departments) are welcomed and institutionally supported objectives. The digitalisation of HEIs across EU and easy access for students with the European Student Card is an important element of modernisation of the institution and the Erasmus+ ESC initiative helps us to make a significant step ahead. The USB will strengthen its activities and staffing in this area to ensure the implementation of EWP and ESC Initiatives.

The development and support of digital skills of staff, students and e-learning methods in the education process will be significantly supported in order to enhance, modernise and facilitate learning and teaching activities on institutional and international partnership scale. The importance of digitalisation has become a priority goal also due to the COVID-19 pandemic, when the university-wide necessity of immediate use of online tools in administration as well as in teaching has resulted in fast implementation of new practices and its development in the near future.

3rd objective: study programmes in foreign languages, double/joint degree programmes, wide offer of courses in foreign languages, Summer Schools

This objective requires strong support of international capacity building and strategic partnerships programmes, such as those supported by the Erasmus+ programme. The USB has already gained experience in the preparation, opening and processing of double/joint degree programmes and is ready to strengthen and develop these successful initiatives towards the concept of a European University. Faculty language departments offer language courses for students and staff, there are university-wide courses opened for students and staff across the University on Teaching in an international classroom or Intercultural Understanding, Awareness and Communication. In order to attract more international student/staff and, on the other hand, offer opportunities to study in a foreign language to local students who for any reason do not participate in any international mobility programme, individual faculties work hard to apply for accreditation of new study programmes in foreign languages. The University and its faculties develop strategies to strengthen, maintain and open double/joint degree programmes with long-term and stable partner universities. New courses taught in foreign languages are offered and specialised Summer Schools are organized (e.g. Sommerkoleg CZ-AT, SS of Slavonic Languages, SS in Social Work, SS in Molecular Biophysics and Systems Biology, SS of the Faculty of Fisheries and



Protection of Waters, etc.). The Erasmus+ institutional cooperation programmes, EU Operational programmes and Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, financially supports these activities.

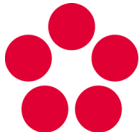
4th objective: International attractiveness

In order to increase the visibility and attractiveness of the USB in the international context, the University management supports this goal by hiring professional staff members and investing into digital marketing tools, data and deep analysis based international marketing strategy and ongoing participation at international Education and Recruitment fairs. In order to become a globally recognised university, the Erasmus+ programme, especially the International Credit Mobility represents a significant tool for building a strategic partnership for mobility, education and research with partner organisations from outside the EU area. The USB has applied for ICM projects since their first launch and every year becomes more and more successful. ICM projects have helped us to spread the European Educational Strategies and Principles around the world and have significantly boosted cooperation with geographically remote and culturally diverse education and research institutions. ICM projects significantly help to support developing countries in fields of education and research (e.g. Ukraine, Papua New Guinea - PNG). The financial support of the Erasmus+ programme helps to sustain and strengthen unique science projects conducted by the staff and students of the USB, projects with a global reputation and significant environmental impact (e.g. studies based in Papua New Guinea - PNG). USB is committed to follow and strengthen this trend.

ERASMUS ACTIONS – implementation of the actions and achieving the objectives of the institutional strategy through these actions

1) Mobility of Higher Education Students and Staff

The Rectorate International Office (IRO) centrally manages the Erasmus+ programme (KA103, KA107) at the university (budget management, student/staff mobility evidence etc.). It is the main contact unit for all interactions with the Erasmus+ National Agency and the main contact for the partner institutions and organizations. It provides incoming students and staff with support in visa, insurance or accommodation issues. This central IRO organizes all promotion and marketing events and performs the Emergency management across the University. It also organizes all events to support and promote the Erasmus+ programme, e.g. Orientation week for incoming students, Welcome back event for outgoing students after mobility, International mobility fair, International days, Erasmus talks, Intercultural Understanding course, Communication skills in a foreign language courses, International Staff Training Week for IRO professionals focused on current international topics etc. It runs also an Advice IRO Contact Centre for students and staff. The IRO provides assistance and guidance to all non-academic staff outside faculties, i.e. staff of the Academic library, the Rectorate, the Dormitories, the Children's group. Mobilities of non-academic staff will be more closely supported in



the next programming period as they are considered an important element for strengthening the international environment at the University and for improving services in the agendas provided by them.

The IRO methodologically leads and regularly communicates with Erasmus+ coordinators at the faculties. Faculty coordinators are responsible for the concrete steps related to a mobility and for guiding the students and staff on a mobility. They organize and monitor the selection process of outgoing students/staff, nominate selected outgoing students, confirm the Learning Agreements for Studies/Traineeship and Teaching/Training agreements for staff mobilities. They also manage the ECTS recognition in cooperation with the faculty study department. Furthermore, they manage the mobilities of incoming students from the admission phase to the issuance of final documents. In addition, they actively search for potential partners for cooperation in the field of practical traineeships and support outgoing students with necessary institutional provisions, the content and recognition related to particular traineeships.

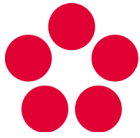
The University and its faculties implement international cooperation mainly with similarly focused universities and academic workplaces in order to ensure maximum compatibility of the degree programmes and curricula. This provides greater flexibility in the students' selection of individual courses and consequently full recognition of all successfully completed courses and ECTS credits. All this clearly strengthens the motivation of our students to go abroad and increases the number of international students coming to USB. Our academic and non-academic staff benefit from valuable examples of good practice acquired through such international mobilities, which they incorporate in their future research and teaching activities at USB.

IRO closely cooperates with the ESN local section ESN USB Budweis. It provides assistance with the necessary administrative tasks, cultural and social programme and implements mentoring through a system of so-called buddies (i.e. USB students who are assigned to individual incoming international students). International students are successfully integrated into the Czech study environment as they take part in courses taught in a foreign language and commonly offered and accessible to Czech students. A preparatory week, so-called Orientation Week, takes place before the semester starts and a semester-long course called Czech for foreign students is provided to help students to overcome the language and cultural barriers.

Updated information on mobilities of the USB students and staff and updated information for incoming students is provided on the webpage of the University, its social media and in guidebooks for incoming and outgoing students and staff.

2) Partnerships for Cooperation and Exchanges of Practices, Partnerships for Innovation

Applications for this action are submitted by individual faculties. All applications are subject to approval by the University management on the recommendations of the Dean of the applicant faculty and the Central IRO. The IRO also keeps evidence about current ongoing projects and regularly informs faculty IROs about new calls, deadlines



and is ready to provide advice. IRO staff regularly attends workshops, seminars, webinars organized by the Erasmus+ National Agency and is responsible for spreading the information across the University. Approved projects are realised at respective departments/faculties and Central IRO helps to support in organisation and promotion of events and outcomes together with the Marketing Department.

International cooperation and strategic partnership are some of the key strategies in the Internationalisation Long-Term Plan (see part 1.2).

3) Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities

USB is striving to strengthen its presence in the international academic, research and higher education community as part of its further implementation of cooperation between universities in the European region. The University would like to focus more on the opportunity to be involved in the European university cooperation through establishing a European university. The starting point for contributing to this pan-European vision of a long-term joint strategy for education can be the already established cooperation with European partner universities with which USB implements double/joint degree programmes. The university leadership supports this programme action and is ready to secure additional funding and policy.

Support of double/joint degree programmes aiming to transform into the European University concept is one of the key strategies in the Internationalisation Long-Term Plan (see part 1.2).

4) Partnerships for Excellence - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees

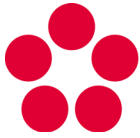
The Faculty of Education of the USB has been a partner university in the EMMIR (European Master in Migration and Intercultural Relations) Erasmus Mundus study programme since 2011 and plans to continue and extend the activity in the upcoming period. The faculty has gained vast experience in preparation, realisation and dissemination of the outcomes and is ready to build on the good practices, share them across the University as well as across the professional community and the public.

Support of double/joint degree programmes is one of the key strategies in the Internationalisation Long-Term Plan (see part 1.2).

ENVISAGED IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION IN THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

1) Digitalisation

The University would like to simplify the administration processes across the institution and modernise/innovate digital tools. The timeline for the implementation of other Student Card Initiative (SCI) solutions goes hand in hand with the Erasmus+ programme requirements. By 2020, the USB plans to implement the management of inter-institutional agreements and the issuance of the European Student Card under the EU's electronic identification rules (eIDAS regulation) standards. By 2021, the institution should be ready to use the university student registration system adjusted



for the management of Learning Agreements according to the SCI standards, by 2022, to send and receive student nominations and acceptances and by 2023, to exchange transcripts of records related to student mobility. These improvements in digitalisation may enhance the attractiveness of Erasmus+ mobilities among students and staff by making the process quicker, simpler, more visible and more transparent.

2) Internationalisation

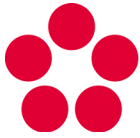
Mobility enhances cultural diversity of the campus; quality of education, graduation of students with professional and soft skills necessary for the global labour market and work in international team community; activity and success of academics and researchers on the worldwide scale; modernisation and innovation of the institution (implementation of good practices, budget security). Real impacts will be monitored annually by data-based analysis of a number of mobile students/staff (incoming, outgoing), number and activity of IIAs, number of submitted and realised strategic partnership projects for cooperation/innovation, assessment of academic staff in the field of internationalisation activity, evaluation of alumni, data-based analysis of recruitment strategies and marketing campaigns. The outcomes are published in the Annual Activity Report available for the public at the webpage of the USB.

3) The Brand

The excellent brand of the University representing Quality, Stability and Innovation is the key factor of global education market competitiveness and success. The University has a great potential to grow and gain an international reputation in research, quality of education, respect and recognition of the public in the region and nation-wide. The impact will be monitored annually by databased analysis of marketing campaigns, recruitment activities on-line and at international Education Expositions focused on strategic markets, public news/TV/on-line media release and graduate students' performance. The outcomes are published in the Annual Activity Report available for the public at the webpage of the USB.

4) The Public

Mobility, strategic cooperation and innovation of learning, teaching and facilities have an important role in the local community. The USB is one of the largest employers in the region. The USB student-life is an important actor at the city's and region's culture, education and civic society. The presence of excellent and worldwide renowned research teams is a great chance to involve the public in academic and campus life. The USB strives to become an open and socially responsible institution with an educational and innovative impact on the civic society, tolerance across cultures and the agent and the guard of the adherence to the democratic principles in our society. The impact will be monitored annually by a press release of academic and professional articles/interviews, number of Life-long learning courses/lectures/workshops for professionals and the general public, number of study programmes for University of the 3rd Age, the Children's University and Specialised Summer Schools, number of events dedicated to the popularisation of



Science, number of public events promoting the Erasmus+ mobility of students/staff, number and quality of institutional partnerships with local authorities, companies, entrepreneurs, schools, social & public health services providers etc. The outcomes are published in the Annual Activity Report available for the public at the webpage of the USB.

4) The Environment

The impact of mobility in terms of the environmental footprint of mobile individuals is obvious and the USB is committed to promoting green and environmentally friendly practices among all participants. Using the potential of renowned research teams at university faculties, the engagement of students and staff and sharing good and inspiring practices with partner institutions, the University is able to prioritise this topic in its institutional strategy, which is being prepared. The impact will be monitored by the issuance of the university commitment to become an environmentally friendly workplace and education institution, by the number of activities and events for the public designed to raise awareness of climate change and environmental sustainability and by the number of activities/events organised by the Student Union or ESN USB Budweis focused on the environment. The outcomes are published in the Annual Activity Report available for the public at the webpage of the USB.

5) Sustainability

Mobility and international partnership have a positive impact on the professionalization of university services for students and staff. Sustainability of services provided by high-skilled staff, equal to locals and internationals, can be ensured by the institutional policy, engagement in strategic projects and budget security for an adequate number of employees working in student/staff services. The key element in modernisation, openness and effectiveness of sustainable practices is close cooperation with student entities and the academia (teachers and researchers) and their active engagement in policymaking, quality assurance and accessibility. This will be monitored annually by the number of joint activities and events organized for mobile students/staff (incoming/outgoing). The outcomes are published in the Annual Activity Report available for the public at the webpage of the USB.