



Erasmus Policy Statement

Participation in the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education is one of the most important aspects of Riga Stradins University's (RSU) internationalisation strategy. Mobility of individuals (both students and staff), participation in co-operation projects, student experience is embodied in the University's international vision.

Fostering internationalisation at each institution that participates in the activities within the frame of the Erasmus+ programme is one of the main goals of the programme. For the past 40 years internationalisation has become a significant factor for institutions of higher education worldwide, and today due to dynamic geopolitical situation it has become even more essential. To foster internationalisation, universities need to integrate the spheres of education, research and innovations – It can be achieved by implementing KA103 and KA107 mobilities, developing strategic partnership projects and Knowledge Alliances, etc. Various groups of society in Europe and in the world, rather than local groups within a country or region, are seen as target groups for an increasing number of universities.

The number of universities that have included an international dimension into their strategy and put targeted efforts to develop the aforementioned dimension has grown rapidly. RSU is such a university whose Senate in 2016 approved the RSU Development Strategy 2017 – 2021. The strategy includes the following aims with regard to the establishment of international cooperation:

- 1) to foster the development of multicultural environment at the university;
- 2) to create successful cooperation models with foreign universities by introducing new international study programmes and research projects;
- 3) to promote international recognisability of the university.

The implementation of all the afore mentioned tasks is directly related to the participation in activities within the frame of the Erasmus+ programme. Mobilities (both student and staff) are still among the most significant internationalisation indicators at RSU. Gradually, the significance of other activities with regard to internationalisation has been highlighted. It should be noted that these mobilities help diversify international collaboration within the university. The RSU Erasmus Policy Statement shows the importance of high involvement in international projects and programmes, acquisition of new opportunities and financial instruments, as well as the expansion of cooperation networks. RSU has been participating in Erasmus+ programme supported by the European Commission since 2004 (previously – Lifelong Learning Programme). Within the frame of Erasmus+ programme, currently, RSU has approx. 200 cooperation agreements with partner universities of the EU and non –EU countries that allows diversifying incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities and other cooperation projects.

In line with the developments in higher education and increasing of competition, the university has to meet the current trends by fostering the internationalisation of the

institution and providing students and teaching staff with possibilities to gain new skills (i.e., digital skills) that enable them to integrate in the higher education area and help them meet the requirements of the labour market. RSU is convinced that taking part in the Programme and its activities is a self-evident step towards development and modernization of the services offered to students and staff of RSU, as well as it will benefit the development of higher education of the country in general. The programme is an integral part of the internationalisation policy of RSU. Students and staff are actively encouraged and motivated to take part in the Programme activities to raise their awareness about the educational and scientific processes at the institutions all over participating countries. Also, participation in the Programme contributes to the implementation of the Bologna process within European Higher Education Area. To meet the key priorities of Modernisation Agenda for Higher Education (2017 sets out a renewed strategy) aimed at supporting the higher education sector across the European Union (EU) :

- Ensuring graduates leave higher education with the skill sets they and the modern economy need;

The changes in labour markets and the need for more high-skilled labour is a challenge that universities must meet. In this case RSU encourages recent graduates to participate in Erasmus+ mobility activities – traineeships which have rapidly become one of the most popular activities among RSU students. Additionally, a growing number of young professionals in health studies programmes are gaining practical skills through the internships in different health care institutions in EU and non-EU countries. This also improves not only the experiences of individual participants but also leads to overall improvements in the Latvian healthcare ecosystem.

- Building inclusive higher education systems;

The ability to support the study experience and careers of diverse students is clearly an important criteria that measures the quality of learning and teaching. RSU ensures that there are no barriers for any student to participate in any activities within the Erasmus+ programme. Students' participation is encouraged by supporting them also financially during mobility exchange.

- Making sure higher education institutions contribute to innovation in the rest of the economy;

RSU aims at strengthening the links between education and research to promote excellence and innovation, and training. In 2018, RSU joined the Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) in the area of health, managed by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology's Health Knowledge and Innovation Community (EIT Health). Currently the University serves as the EIT Health Hub in Latvia. EIT Health upgrades the skills of healthcare professionals throughout Europe by investing in Europe's best talents and facilitates the commercialisation of innovative health products/solutions within the EU. Through RIS, RSU has adopted the knowledge triangle that allows the interaction between the university and business community. This programme stimulates close cooperation between university and other stakeholders.

- Supporting higher education institutions and governments in making the best use of the human and financial resources available.

RSU ensures that funding is efficiently used to raise the level of quality- enhancing the governance of higher education and investing in education to match labour market needs.

The main principles of the European Education Area have been followed:

- spending time abroad to study and learn should become one of the pillars of RSU study programmes for any level;
- higher education qualifications should be recognised across the EU – RSU diploma is recognized across the EU as well as there are several study programmes which are fully taught in English that allows to provide high level study programmes for incoming foreign students;
- knowing two languages in addition to one's mother tongue should be standard, everyone should be able to access high-quality education, irrespective of their socio-economic background – RSU students are able to improve language knowledge throughout the whole study period – there are offered several foreign language courses. Therefore, RSU students do not have any problems to integrate into partner university study process;
- people should have a strong sense of their identity as a European, of Europe's cultural heritage and its diversity – RSU has the Faculty of European Studies that offers several study programmes on different aspects of the European Union – diplomacy, international relations, European law etc. This allows students of RSU to develop a strong European identity.
- Digital skills – RSU is providing online study environment which is accessible through MyRSU platform. This allows students to reach the university study system with specially design materials (course materials, library services, etc.) and also to interact with teachers in a very effective way. The largest part of different study papers is submitted through this system that allows the evaluation of students' work in an effective manner. Also, RSU follows the European Commission guidelines towards minimizing paper flow by the Erasmus programme.