

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

OF KAUNAS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY FOR 2021 – 2027

In the new strategy of Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) till the year 2025, the University's vision is to become a highly competitive international, interdisciplinary technological university that creates and transfers advanced knowledge and innovations. Internationalization becomes the strategic goal and top priority, cross – cutting all areas of University's activity, covering the roof of the house hosting three main areas of activity to be focused on: quality of studies; a breakthrough in science; organizational coherence.

The international dimension is becoming particularly important in order to compete successfully in the international market with other higher education institutions and to ensure that we are qualitatively involved in the process of exchanging specialists, knowledge and value created. KTU top priorities for internationalization are as follows:

- **ECIU - development of the idea of a European University**
- **attracting foreign academic staff and students**
- **creating an international image, promoting visibility in the international environment**
- **cooperation with international study and research institutions**

KTU joined Erasmus Programme in 1999. Since then implementation of the Programme activities has made and continues to make the huge impact on achieving strategic goals of institution's overall modernization and internationalization strategy, acts as catalyst developing processes related to internationalization at home.

The priorities of European Education Area set out for the new Programme shall be implemented:

1. By undertaking the necessary steps to implement digital mobility management in line with the technical standards of the European Student Card Initiative.
2. By promoting environmentally friendly practices in all activities related to the Programme.
3. By encouraging the participation of individuals with fewer opportunities in the Programme.
4. By promoting civic engagement and encouraging students and staff to get involved as active citizens before, during and after their participation in a mobility or project.

These priorities go in close correlation with strategic goals of the University.

ECIU - development of the idea of a European University:

One of the most important steps in achieving the goal to become an international university was taken by the KTU community back in 2019, agreeing to become a part of the European University. The right solutions, the courage of the University leaders to accept the challenges have made KTU a part of a very significant project that will offer a new international concept of higher education. Until recently, together with partners from Europe, we started to develop a new, innovative model of higher education in Europe. Following the European Commission's approval of the project's funding, Europe's most innovative universities, together with Mexican partners in an international *Consortium of European Innovative Universities*, have begun to develop a new concept for a higher education model based on real challenges.

The main idea of the project is to promote challenging teaching at the University, when students will solve real-life business, scientific, industrial or social problems. Teachers and scientific experts will cooperate in developing innovative teaching methods, new initiatives for the promotion and development of science, and promoting international mobility. The new university model of the future will provide study flexibility, allowing students to choose small credits for study modules ("micro credits"), which will be "accumulated" by students in their certificate of competency, regardless of which ECIU partner university they are listening to. Such innovative study and research practices will promote both physical and virtual mobility. It will be developed towards the vision of achieving a very significant increase of mobility of students and staff by 2025 (50% of students and 20% of staff). Erasmus mobility schemes and funds will make a substantial contribution to achieving these ambitious goals. In order to recruit an Erasmus programme for project purposes, ECIU partners already signed Erasmus+ ECIU University Inter-institutional Agreement 2020-2022.

The activities of this international project, which will provide highest value and experience, will help to establish a solid foundation of internationality for the University and will become the biggest challenge for the development and internationalization of the University in the coming years.

Attracting foreign academic staff and students:

The major focus during the new Programme duration goes to student mobility. Due to the strong institutional support the number of incoming and outgoing students was permanently increasing and finally reached negative balance in 2016-2017 (more incoming than outgoing students). Since 2017-2018 academic year mobility numbers stopped to grow and stabilized. Due to rapidly changing international environment and permanent decrease of total student body of the University, it is necessary to adapt quickly to presently changing situation and shift the focus from quantity to quality. It will be implemented by executing qualitative analyses of existing partnerships and only those Bilateral Erasmus Agreements, which identify shared quality requirements, including concrete proposals as to how these activities will contribute to the development of learning and teaching in participating institutions, will be renewed. The involvement of academic staff is key to ensuring that the selection of partners is based on sufficient knowledge of the study area. By this, we expect to balance mobility flows and to achieve the ratio of incoming and outgoing students 1:1 in the near future.

All individuals or groups will be treated equally, irrespective of their characteristics. No discrimination policy based on sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation will be applied in respect of mobile participants. KTU will provide specific support for incoming and outgoing mobility participants from under-represented groups (students or staff with disabilities, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, with family responsibilities or with part-time jobs, etc.).

The strong emphasis goes to student and recent graduate mobility for traineeship, as it effects the skills and has an impact for future employability. We will make every effort to keep the numbers of outgoing students for traineeship permanently growing.

During the mobility, KTU fosters the integration of the incoming mobile participants aiming to achieve full integration into the student community. This is best done by their fellow students / peers and KTU Erasmus Student Network (ESN), which plays a significant role in supporting incoming students and helping them feel welcomed and included in the daily student life.

The students and teachers increasingly choose Partner countries (KA107) for their mobility period abroad. KTU developed partnerships with Universities in 16 Partner countries such as Japan, South Korea, India, Peru, Mexico, etc. Focusing on quality, we plan to develop our existing partnerships including extra activities such as student mobility for traineeship and aiming to achieve higher exchange numbers until 2027. DCI Asia and Latin America countries are strategical regions for development partnerships for the upcoming period of seven years.

Bearing in mind the challenges that come altogether with the new Erasmus program in general and ECIU project in particular, digitalization of mobility processes is becoming a key strategic activity. Due to support higher volumes of mobilities, simplify and develop more user friendly administrative procedures, KTU will join the European Student Card (ESC) initiative and connect to the Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) network, which enables secure data transfer between higher education institutions. The digitalization of mobility processes is closely related to one of the main University's areas of activity and priorities, namely the accessibility and quality of studies. KTU prepares to use the EWP network to exchange student mobility data according to the timeline set in the ESC initiative:

- 2021 - to manage inter-institutional agreements and online learning agreements,
- 2022 - to send and receive student nominations and acceptances,
- 2023 - to exchange transcripts of records related to student mobility.

We are proud to state, that KTU institutional Erasmus+ Dashboard account has been created and Online Learning Agreements (OLA) started to be prepared, approved and revised in the platform already in 2019. Firstly, the platform has been tested with the group of exchange students representing one KTU faculty. During the subsequent academic year, OLAs became mandatory for all incoming and outgoing exchange students at

KTU. In parallel, the University started to promote the use of the Erasmus+ mobile app to ensure that mobile students can benefit from increased efficiency of administrative procedures. More than 500 OLAs for Erasmus+ studies and traineeships have already been generated at KTU in two academic years of 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. Since KTU started to implement digital management of OLAs well before the timeline, we can now focus on further milestones and procedures to get ready for the electronic exchange of data among universities.

Exchange of teaching staff under Erasmus is also considered one of the main pre-requisites for the successful development and implementation of the European dimension in KTU curricula as well as an important quality assurance factor. The number of outgoing teachers and staff is limited by funds allocated for mobility grants. Due to provide the larger number of employees with the possibility to gain experience abroad with Erasmus programme, KTU encourages to choose reasonable periods of stay, calls departments to finance mobility from internal University's funds. Mobility experience is recognized as the valuable input into academic employee performance and further career development. For this reason, formal procedures for recognising staff mobility for both teaching and training activities abroad has been established.

Increase of incoming teachers, as one of the study programmes quality indicators, is among the uppermost goals for the University for the upcoming years.

Creating an international image, promoting visibility in the international environment:

By participating in European and International cooperation projects KTU seeks to ensure that cooperation activities contribute towards the fulfilment of the institutional strategy. The following types of cooperation projects for innovation and good practices KTU intends to implement:

- Erasmus+ Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility: the mobility of higher education students and staff.
- Erasmus+ Key Action 2 (KA2) - 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.
- Erasmus+ Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support to policy development and cooperation.

Of particular importance is European Universities initiative as development of **The ECIU University** project is the top priority of the University's overall internationalization strategy.

Cooperation with international study and research institutions:

Today, we can be proud to be full members of international organizations and associations such as the European University Association (EUA), the Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research (CESAER), the European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU) and others. The University also collaborates with representatives of more than 350 educational institutions in 50 different countries of the world and international and national businesses.

Recognizing the importance and benefits of co-operation, we are committed to fostering existing and building new co-operation links at the international level, entering but not limited to European countries. We will focus on the development of international cooperation networks, strengthen partnerships with international higher education institutions and business representatives, involve them in study processes and research, experimental development and innovation activities, ensure the dissemination of achieved results at the international level.

Expected outcomes:

- 80% increase in the number of foreign students.
- 5% increase in the ratio of foreign to all academic staff.
- 10% increase in the number of articles in scientific publications of foreign publishers.
- Income from international projects increased 2.5 times.
- The number of international patent applications increased 3 times.

- 75% increase in the number of international teaching and training visits of employees.