

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU STRATEGIC PLAN A2025

Mission

As a national university of Estonia, we bear responsibility for tackling challenges faced by the society, acting as a pioneer of the knowledge-based economy and promoting the attitude of lifelong learning and future skills. We ensure the continuity of Estonian intellectuals as well as the Estonian language and culture and as a strong research university, develop education, research, technology and other creative activities through interdisciplinary cooperation throughout the world.

Core values

- **Research-based activities** that make us think critically, search for connections, pursue the truth and solve problems. Research-based activities are the criterion for professionalism in everything we do.
- The **academic freedom** and **autonomy of the university** through which we creatively and devotedly implement our mission.
- **Openness** to new ideas and in relations with the society. We rely on our traditions but are always open to innovate and contribute to positive changes in the university and the world around us.
- **Cooperation** between people, institutions and research areas in the university, in Estonia and at the international level. We use new knowledge arising from cooperation for the benefit of the society in the most responsible manner.
- **A human-centred approach and individual development.** Smart and educated people constitute the most valuable assets to the university and Estonia. We value the people who work and study at the university and create the best conditions for their development and self-realisation as well as an inspiring work and study environment.
- **Responsibility.** We realise the impact of our acts and omissions in the society and within the university. Our words and actions are filled with responsibility for the past, present and future.

Vision

We are one of the leading research universities in Europe, the centre of academic spirit and national culture in Estonia and an accelerator for the knowledge-intensive economy. We stick together and are an inspiring and open academic community.

INTRODUCTION

The University of Tartu is **the leading research university in Estonia and the only Estonian-language *universitas* in the world** that has been declared the best university of New Europe¹ despite the small size of Estonia and the small number of people speaking Estonian. Our competitive advantages include internationalism, high-quality studies and research and diversity.

An Estonian-language university **is of great value to Estonia and the entire world**. The university has the obligation and mission to preserve and develop the Estonian language, education, culture and heritage, and this role is eternal and prevails any fixed-term strategic plans. Teacher education provided by the university and cooperation with schools enable the Estonian education system to endure and develop in its entirety.

At the same time, the University of Tartu is **the university of all Estonia, acting as a role model in Estonia in terms of its organisational culture and activities**. The university is a symbol that every person in Estonia takes pride in, making Estonia and Tartu known all over the world.

Universities are not only known by their name and location in the world. They are also known by **world-class researchers** whose work has contributed to the development and innovation as well as the preservation and study of the diversity of languages and the natural and cultural environment all over the world. Relying on academic freedom, research schools that jointly form the primary foundation of the knowledge of the entire world are emerging and developing at universities.

The stronger the research activities of the university, the more solid and attractive the instruction provided by the university. Innovative solutions are based on strong basic sciences and international cooperation. Top-level research and studies are supported by excellent infrastructure, nonburdensome administrative procedures and competent support services provided to academic staff.

Openness and internationalism are a breeding ground for innovation and new ideas. The participation of the university as a strong partner in international research cooperation renders it possible to solve global problems. Besides the knowledge transfer to the Estonian society, it helps to bring in additional competition-based resources from international cooperation programmes and keep up with the times.

To ensure the greatest competence in existing research specialisations and develop new perspective and interdisciplinary research areas, **the university fills academic positions through international competitions**. The university provides students with a developing **international learning environment** that opens world opportunities **and the possibility to acquire additional skills and knowledge by studying abroad everywhere in the world**.

The university is open to learners of different social, economic and cultural backgrounds, irrespective of their age. We welcome those who want to obtain a degree as well as those seeking further training. **We consider the principles of lifelong learning important and we are a constantly learning and developing organisation ourselves**.

The society and businesses expect solutions from the university that **keep up with the times and increase the international competitiveness of businesses**. In particular, the alumni of the university

¹ *New Europe* means the states that have joined the European Union from 2004. See <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/best-universities-new-europe-ranking-2018>

who use their knowledge, skills and attitudes to create new smart enterprises help to advance the society and economy.

At the same time, the university staff members act as **advisers of the development of the society**. In a research-based manner, the university helps to achieve the sustainable development goals and **resolve the challenges² of the society: to tackle global climate change, adapt to demographic changes, ensure security and safety, improve and promote human health, preserve biodiversity, govern the state smartly and reduce social gaps.**

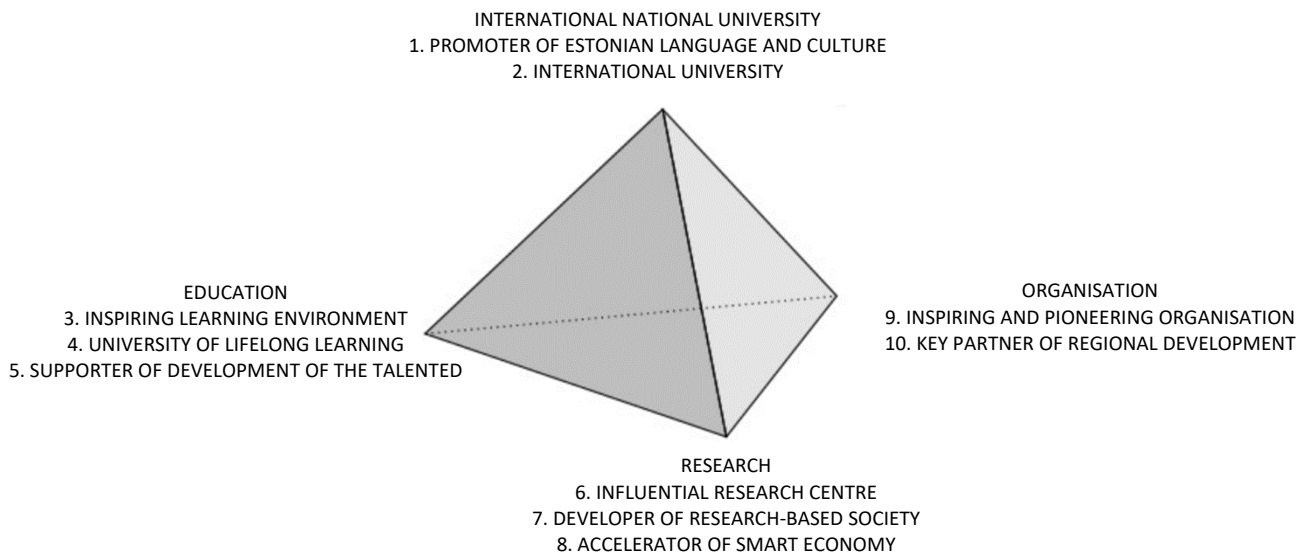
The Estonian economy needs stronger cooperation between researchers, businesses and policy-makers to make a **breakthrough to research-intensive entrepreneurship of high added value** and allow the top research fields of the university achieve a leading position in moving towards the EU climate neutrality goal.

In cooperation between the researchers of the university and businesses, research results are rapidly applied in business. Productive cooperation presumes understanding and recognition of mutual interests and flexible opportunities to share working time, technological possibilities and intellectual property between the university and businesses.

The university encourages businesses to build up productive development teams. **As a recognised entrepreneurial university, the University of Tartu continues to develop the enterprising spirit of its members and the society.**

The different roles of the university in achieving its mission must not be contrasted. The university will be the *universitas* only if it covers a broad spectrum of specialisations and acts as a national university, an international university as well as a developer of the economy and society. The university enables everyone to discover and realise their potential.

The university is consistently moving closer to the best universities of Europe and the world and has set itself a direct aim to reach the level of strong Nordic universities that, based on international rankings, belong to the top 100 universities in the world in 15 to 20 years.



² [The development needs set out in the analysis carried out by the Government Office for the preparation of the long-term strategy of the state "Estonia 2035" have been referred to here and later in this text.](#)

1. PROMOTER OF ESTONIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Function of the university: we preserve and develop the Estonian language and culture in the conditions of continuing globalisation and ensure the possibility to obtain research-based Estonian-language education in Estonia.

The Estonian language is and will be the primary language of instruction of a major part of the curricula in the national university. At the same time, to increase the competitiveness of students on the labour market, proficiency of other languages is also required and this is fostered by the international learning environment. This is made possible by strong research and research-based studies that support learning already in the earlier stages of the education system.

Courses of action

Strengthening the role of the Estonian language as a primary language of instruction in the international learning environment. We preserve and develop the Estonian language and culture, provide Estonian-language education and are the leaders of Estonian-language terminology work. We consider instruction in the Estonian language of excellent quality important and, in addition to high-level research publications, we value the preparation of Estonian-language textbooks for higher education institutions, taking this into account upon selecting employees for academic positions and in their professional review.

Strengthening studies on national sciences, culture, history and heritage. We develop studies on the Estonian history, language and culture to preserve and advance the Estonian language and culture as well as other sciences that affect the self-determination of Estonians and shape their identity. We preserve history and heritage and carry out high-level research, work to achieve and maintain the good order of collections owned by the university and set ourselves the goal of opening said collections for international research.

Increasing the attractiveness of teacher education. We ensure that the organisation of teacher education is supported across faculties. We take care that future teachers know the newest teaching methods and get experience in practical school-life. We provide teaching staff with the opportunity to improve their teaching and supervising skills, among other things, early on in their academic career.

2. INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Function of the university: to be successful in international competition, we offer attractive working and learning opportunities, also by cooperating with partner institutions, and thereby increase the effectiveness of teaching and research at the university.

We reinforce our position among the best universities in Europe, connecting our activities more closely to those of the top universities of the Nordic countries and Western Europe and provide students with self-development and learning opportunities in partner universities throughout the world. The strong and well-known University of Tartu is an attractive employer and ensures the competitiveness of its alumni on the international labour market.

Courses of action

International and high-level academic staff. Relying on academic freedom and international cooperation, we create opportunities and motivation for our academic staff to reach the top and stay there. We organise open and international competitions when filling academic positions. We provide our international staff with high-quality support services to ensure that they quickly adapt to the working and living environment.

Motivated students with a diverse learning experience. We create an international learning environment for our students. We develop curricula so that they increase the competitiveness of graduates to pursue studies in the best universities of the world and ensure the ability to cope successfully on the labour market and the acquisition of universal skills³ required for future work. We support learning mobility and also create a mobility window for all curricula and provide short-term learning mobility, for instance, in summer universities.

Cooperation with strategic partners. We participate in the cooperation initiatives of the best universities in Europe. We promote joint activities with the universities of the U4Society network to achieve long-term strategic goals. We take joint effort with other universities and research institutions to apply the roadmap of the European Green Deal. We implement our knowledge and experience to improve higher education and the organisation of research in the Central and Eastern European region, promoting also the achievement of the sustainable development goals by our activities.

³ See OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030.

3. INSPIRING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Function of the university: to ensure our students cope successfully in an increasingly developing technology-rich living and work environment, we provide opportunities for self-development and obtaining the required future skills.

We prioritise the excellent quality of instruction and the development of teaching and learning skills at the university and ensure the high motivation of teaching staff. We value an integrated university experience for students, part of which also includes studies outside classic courses. We promote the attitude of lifelong learning among the members of the university.

Courses of action

Excellent quality of instruction. We value the profession of teaching staff as teaching researchers. We appreciate teaching skills, maintain them and create new opportunities for developing them, learning also from international experience and applying new learning methods accompanied by technological development. We create an integrated feedback system supporting the good quality of studies. In course feedback questionnaires, we evaluate the activeness and engagement of students and the learning environment supporting development based on achievement. We create the opportunity for collegial feedback.

Personal development of students, development of new skills and creation of networks. We provide students with an integrated university experience and the development of skills, giving them possibilities to participate in student organisations, cultural activities, sports organisations, professional societies and representative bodies. We expand the ways to gain learning experience, for instance by establishing a business, studying abroad or contributing significantly to community or university life. We recognise active students. We notice students who are talented in research and involve them in the work of research groups.

Teaching future skills. We promote the attitude supporting the global sustainable development goals⁴ among students and provide the knowledge and skills required for that. We make sure that we develop the creativity, enterprising spirit, critical thinking as well as the cooperation and learning, self-management, digital and other future skills of our students through instruction. We encourage students to make use of the diverse range of specialisations of the university studies and favour interdisciplinarity in studies and research.

⁴ The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) adopted at the United Nations Summit on 25 September 2015

4. UNIVERSITY OF LIFELONG LEARNING

Function of the university: the changing nature of work and ways of performing work require the repeated acquisition of new skills and, thus, we create opportunities to study at the university, regardless of the time, place and living arrangements of people.

We are the university of lifelong learning, providing diverse opportunities for research-based studies to people of different ages in cooperation with our partners. We care for our alumni, use their feedback and involve them as practitioners in the development of studies. We promote the attitude of lifelong learning among the members of the university.

Courses of action

Learning opportunities supporting personal development. We are a flexible and innovative partner for lifelong learners, both organisations and people. We provide various continuing education programmes to a range of target groups, including modules from degree study curricula as open studies. We are a learning organisation and offer our members opportunities for self-development.

Development of curricula and training programmes. We constantly assess and develop curricula to make them meet the needs of students and the society. We involve alumni in studies in a variety of roles: members of programme councils, teaching staff, mentors, practical training supervisors and terminologists.

Strengthening e-learning. We use and increase our strength in e-learning, creating opportunities for innovative international virtual mobility in cooperation between universities. We support using e-learning opportunities both abroad and in different regions in Estonia. We create and use open web courses that support the choice of specialisation of future students, provide constant self-development opportunities and increase the international reputation of our strong research areas.

5. SUPPORTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE TALENTED

Function of the university: in a situation where talented people can easily find self-realisation opportunities all over the world, we provide them with the best opportunities for self-development in Estonia, connecting them with the university as early as during general education or when making a decision to pursue an academic career.

We create opportunities that enable talented youth to prepare for university studies, devote themselves to self-development during their studies, be competitive as alumni and actively participate in the activities of the university. We connect talented youth from all over the world with Estonia and the university. We support the endeavours of students to become leading specialists through doctoral studies.

Courses of action

Supporting the development of the talented in cooperation with schools. We find talented youth in general education schools across Estonia and support their interest in research and the development of their skills from an early school age until the end of secondary school. We provide schools with lectures complementing their curriculum and practical training in the university laboratories. We make the involvement of the talented more systematic and create new learning opportunities for them at the university.

Connection of talented youth from all over the world with the university and Estonia. We admit students of high potential to study in our international curricula, provide international students with learning opportunities and counselling supporting their integration into the Estonian society. We strengthen the alumni network, make staff members and alumni who have left Estonia to work abroad ambassadors of the university and Estonia; we keep in touch with them by involving them in cooperation projects and create inspiring conditions to encourage them to return to Estonia.

Motivation of doctoral students. We continue our efforts to ensure a motivating income, social guarantees and the best quality instruction for our doctoral students. We inspire doctoral students to be entrepreneurial as well as to create a solid international specialised contact network during their studies.

6. INFLUENTIAL RESEARCH

Function of the university: to ensure the sustainability of top-level research and meet the research and development needs of Estonia, we create conditions that support the sectoral diversity of scientific research and cooperation and we actively apply for funds required for that.

We stand for a research- and evidence-based world view, value top-level researchers, favour the development of future academic staff and actively use international support to finance research. Our researchers contribute to achieving the goals of sustainable development and the roadmap of the European Green Deal.

Courses of action

Making research policy. We allocate additional resources of baseline funding of research and development of the university to support the academic career model. We cooperate with the sectoral ministries and other stakeholders in developing national research and development programmes and search for possibilities to increase the amount and number of state research funding sources. We actively participate in the research policy of the European Union to contribute to the resolution of global problems, reduce the gap between the research funding of new and old Europe, increase the participation and visibility of the university in international networks and introduce Tartu and Estonia as the developer and implementer of new technological solutions.

External funding of research projects. We create and actively use the external funding possibilities of research, including by participation in the research and development partnership programmes of the EU in strategic research areas and inviting researchers to participate in calls for proposals for research grants that have not been available to them so far. We support research cooperation between faculties, including the involvement of researchers from social sciences, arts and humanities in technological development projects. We develop research and development support services, incl. grant eligibility software and project-writing support services, and inspire academic staff to actively apply for external funding.

Development of services of research infrastructure. We strengthen the impact of investments made in research infrastructure by increasing its cross-usage and making the services based on that infrastructure available to businesses and other stakeholders outside the university. By active use and sustainable management of the infrastructure, we help to ensure its regular renewal. In terms of roadmap objects of the research infrastructure of national importance, we set ourselves the goal to join international infrastructures (incl. the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures) and increase the use of the infrastructure and external funding through international cooperation. We provide researchers with digital services to comply with the requirements of open research arising from the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon Europe. We offer developed digital solutions to cooperation partners.

7. DEVELOPER OF RESEARCH-BASED SOCIETY

Function of the university: the efficient resolution of the problems of the society presumes the development of the research-based world view of the members of the society and, thus, we participate in an open discussion and cooperate with the public sector in implementing studies on major challenges in the society and in providing evidence-based solutions to develop state policy areas.

We show the way for societal development, value democracy and the rule of law. In collaboration with state authorities, we create a motivating environment for researchers to find solutions to societal problems by involving experts from different fields. We extend the popularisation of research and the involvement of researchers in matters important to the society, considering this as part of the researchers' everyday work. We favour the temporary and long-term employment of experts who hold a scientific degree in the public sector.

Courses of action

Knowledge transfer to solve the problems of the society. We start negotiations and cooperation with ministries to organise the studies and counselling needed to achieve the goal of Estonian climate neutrality, conduct studies on long-term development needs of the state (adapting to demographic changes, ensuring security and safety, improving human health, preserving the diverse natural environment and cultural heritage, smart state governance and reduction in social gaps) and develop the corresponding action plans. We search for ways to use the unique strengths of Estonia to find solutions to global problems which benefit the Estonian society and could be applied in other parts of the world on a large-scale basis. We enter into agreements with the public sector and consider counselling the state (by participation in councils, commissions, workshops, etc.) part of the work of academic staff, recognising the best and most influential staff members.

Popularisation of research and involvement in matters important to the society. We make the popularisation of research an inseparable part of the career of a researcher, teaching and supporting the distribution of research results in a generally comprehensive manner and increasing the understanding of the content and objectives of research in the society. We favour the involvement of researchers in matters important and topical to the society, make the cooperation with media channels more efficient and develop the communication channels of the university.

Industry sabbatical in the public sector. In the university career model, we create the opportunity for academic staff to work in the public sector for a certain period and thereafter return to the university. We strengthen the connections of doctoral studies with the public sector. We support the concept of a smart state, where counsellors, developers and executives are experts with a scientific degree.

8. ACCELERATOR OF SMART ECONOMY

Function of the university: to achieve the sustainable development goals, increase the added value of businesses and contribute to the creation and development of new research-intensive businesses, we develop research areas that are important for Estonian businesses, favouring cooperation between top researchers and businesses and the development start-ups.

We are a development partner and consultant for businesses, proceed from the principles of open innovation and increase the impact of research results on economic development through business agreements, consultation and creation, protection and rapid commercialisation of intellectual property. As the main partner of ecosystem supporting innovation, we favour and develop the enterprising spirit of the members of the university and create an even better development environment for start-up activities and cooperation with businesses.

Courses of action

Strengthening cooperation with businesses. We actively search for opportunities to cooperate with businesses and use the funding measures supporting cooperation between universities and businesses and the possibilities provided by the research infrastructure of the university. We value cooperation projects between academic staff and businesses, for instance, inspire supervisors of student papers to consider the interests of businesses when choosing topics. We create the opportunity of industrial sabbatical in business for university staff members, retaining their academic position for the time the staff members are engaged in the development of the business or committed to the development of a new business. We consider knowledge transfer part of the work of academic staff, recognising the best.

Establishment of new businesses. Through entrepreneurship studies and preincubation programmes in cooperation with partners, we strengthen the training of students and researchers throughout Estonia to establish, develop and manage businesses. We value the development of ideas with business potential and the creation of prototypes and advise on the topic. We compile clear principles for the participation of the university and the use of the university's infrastructure in businesses to be established and follow these principles. We involve investors and venture capital and manage our holding in new businesses.

Partnership in ecosystem supporting innovation. We create an environment promoting entrepreneurship in cooperation with Estonian entrepreneurship organisations and county centres for entrepreneurship. We act as the main partner of the ecosystem supporting innovation by helping to develop and organise international research, development, innovation and technology cooperation between businesses.

9. INSPIRING AND PIONEERING ORGANISATION

Function of the university: to successfully cope with constant changes in the external environment, as an international organisation with members of diverse cultural backgrounds, we proceed from the common values, involving our members in the achievement of common goals, offering our staff opportunities to use their best potential and smartly developing infrastructure.

We are an innovative organisation focused on sustainable development, providing equal opportunities and following best practices. We move towards a more open, environmentally aware and cooperation-minded organisational culture. We increase the opportunities of the members of the university to develop and use their potential in the best manner, carrying the values of the university and taking pride in the university and their participation in the everyday life and development of the university.

Courses of action

Making the university open and prone to dialogue. As an active opinion leader, we initiate discussions and are ready for dialogue. We encourage the expression of dissenting opinions. We favour open communication between parties and the involvement of stakeholders in all important processes. We admit to our shortcomings and learn from these.

Valuing our staff. We care for our staff; we notice every staff member and recognise the best. We develop and implement an academic career model that motivates the starting researchers and values experienced ones. We systematically support the self-development of our staff through diverse training programmes. We ensure the next generation of executives and support their development into leaders who set an example for other university members. In the academic career, we value both studies and research, the development of the university as an organisation and serving the society. We apply the principles of equal treatment and the best practices of the university.

Creating an attractive work environment. We ensure up-to-date working conditions, preserving and valuing historical buildings and their best-intended purpose. We create the social and cultural environment that considers the needs of our members. We develop and implement integrated environmental principles and promote a way of thinking that supports sustainable development in the university and in educating the public. We support the health improvement of our staff, promote active movement and a healthy diet. We consider good mental health important.

Developing an innovative digital university. We are gradually developing an integrated digital infrastructure where study and research activities are supported by smart and smooth support services. We increase the use of digital solutions in studies, which renders it possible to develop and provide virtual mobility opportunities in cooperation with international partners. We enhance the digital competence of our members and provide them with a secure possibility to communicate through digital channels, collect and retain data and develop cooperation with partners. We contribute to information technology capabilities and make sure that the data of the university become valuable and available assets.

10. KEY PARTNER OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Function of the university: we cooperate with the state and local authorities to prevent the increasing of regional inequality, making higher education and knowledge transfer available to different Estonian regions.

We combine higher education provided by colleges with the possibilities and needs of regions and act as a cooperation partner of sustainable development and innovation to businesses all over Estonia. We are one of the major cooperation partners of the city of Tartu, complementing each other and strengthening cooperation in the areas of the smart city, the development of entrepreneurship, tourism and transport connections, education and culture.

Courses of action

Assuring the best quality of higher education in Estonia. We consider it important to divide resources based on the quality of higher education and research and development, to take into account the needs of balanced regional development and the continuing globalisation and impact of human activities on climate and to support smart regional specialisation and development considering local conditions. We support the effort of the state in optimising the network of higher education and research institutions.

Continuation and strengthening of cooperation with the city of Tartu and partners in the Tartu region. We jointly design an attractive city environment and cooperate in planning and developing buildings and the transport network, using the diverse competence of the university. We preserve cultural values and open these to visitors. We develop an integrated education system across all levels and in continuing education. We support the efforts of the city in creating new transport connections and contribute to the development of conference tourism through the organisation of international events. We cooperate with the research, development and innovation partners of the region to achieve synergy and participate actively in the activities of Tartu as the European Capital of Culture.

Development of colleges in Narva, Viljandi and Pärnu and the presence of the university in Tallinn. In cooperation with the state and local authorities, we increase the extent of studies considering the distinctive character and possibilities of the regions and contribute to the development of innovation and entrepreneurship. We increase the visibility and impact of units and actions that support the principal activities of the university and are required for the state in Tallinn.