



ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

Implementation of Erasmus+ Programme at University of Tartu after the award of ECHE 2021-2027

According to the University of Tartu's (UT's) Strategic Plan for the years 2020–2025 (A 2025), openness and international dimension are a breeding ground for innovation and new ideas. UT's participation as a strong partner in international cooperation for education and research renders it possible to guarantee high quality in all our activities and contributes to solving global challenges.

UT provides students with a developing international learning environment that opens up a world of opportunities, including the possibility to acquire additional skills and knowledge by studying abroad everywhere in the world. The aims defined by the Strategic Plan and listed below directly support the principles of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (2021–2027).

To provide competitive education to our students, UT develops study programmes focusing on the acquisition of universal skills required for future work. The study programmes will include courses on advancing students' enterprising spirit, career planning, self-management and digital skills. To find the best options for teaching university-level digital skills (such as content creation, problem solving and security), UT actively cooperates with partner universities and has initiated relevant cooperation projects within the Strategic Partnership call (KA2).

Developing an innovative digital university is one of the core objectives of UT's Strategic Plan. UT increases the use of digital solutions in education, thus also focusing, in addition to the students' digital skills, on enhancing the digital competence of its staff. Contributing to information technology capabilities is well aligned with the objectives of the Erasmus+ programme to digitalize the mobility processes and to guarantee secure data transfer.

At the master's level, UT has been cooperating with European partners for developing and delivering joint programmes. UT will continue using the excellent options of Erasmus+ programme's for offering joint master's programmes, such as Erasmus Mundus (KA1), European Universities Initiative, Strategic Partnership and Knowledge Alliances (KA2).

For enhancing and supporting student mobility, UT is having a mobility window (study abroad module) embedded in the curricula of the first and second study level. Included in curricula starting from the 2020/2021 year, the study abroad module helps students to consider which part of the study programme they could complete abroad and better plan their studies both

before and after studies abroad. The mobility windows are largely built on existing cooperation agreements, and the study abroad options encouraged and suggested within the mobility windows are mostly carried out in cooperation with Erasmus+ programme partners. The importance of the Erasmus+ programme is also featured in our regular student exchange. In the 2018/19 academic year, 59% of the UT students used Erasmus+ programme for their study or traineeship abroad.

The COVID-19 crisis and the exceptional circumstances in the spring semester of 2019/20 identified our strengths and underlined the need for further developments in online learning. The offer of UT's e-courses rocketed. UT continues strengthening e-learning and increasing its offer for courses delivered fully or partially online. We are participating in several international cooperation projects aiming to advance the development of e-learning opportunities within the Strategic Partnership call (KA2). The strengthening of e-learning at UT and abroad widens the options of the students with fewer opportunities to benefit from international cooperation.

UT highly values its staff and provides them with excellent opportunities for professional development and self-realization, and with an inspiring working and learning environment. Striving for international competitiveness, UT offers attractive working and learning conditions, incl. in cooperation with partner institutions, thereby increasing the international experience of the university members.

UT systematically supports the self-development through diverse training programmes with particular focus on the further development of teaching and digital skills. Partnership with leading universities across the world supports the exchange of best international practices.

Staff mobility and professional development is strongly supported by many Erasmus+ programme measures: sharing of best practices, diversifying international cooperation (widened networks), increasing the visibility of universities and negotiating new cooperation agreements.

UT ensures the training of the next generation of leaders to build a leadership culture encouraging the fast development of its academic community. As of 2020, UT participates in the leadership training of the U4Society University network, where five academic and non-academic leaders can advance their knowledge and skills each year. Exercising and advancing UT's good practice of leadership with the help and support of international collaboration is also facilitated by the Erasmus+ programme (KA1).

UT follows the European principle of creating the synergy of goals and supportive measures of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. To enhance international cooperation and improve the quality of our education and research, UT increases the use of external funding possibilities in both education and research by actively participating in the calls of Erasmus+ and HorizonEurope. UT uses a holistic approach to initiating cooperation projects in both education and research.

All activities listed above need strategic and efficiently coordinated international cooperation. UT is committed to consistently move closer to the best universities of Europe and the world,

connecting its activities more closely to those of the top universities of the Nordic countries and Western Europe. This objective is supported by UT's participation in the European University initiative ENLIGHT and by active membership in the U4Society University network. To have a say in shaping the international research and higher education policy, UT is actively participating in networks such as the Coimbra Group of Universities, the European University Association, The Guild, LERU – CE7 and the Utrecht Network. We apply our knowledge and experience to improve higher education and the organization of research in the Central and Eastern European region, promoting also the achievement of the sustainable development goals by our activities (KA2 – Capacity Building in Higher Education). The courses of action of the UT's Strategic Plan A2025 are in line with the objectives of the European Higher Education Area 2025 and enable smooth international cooperation. All courses of actions involve more students and staff compared to the previous period.

UT continues active involvement in student and staff mobility programmes (KA1) and in cooperation and knowledge sharing programmes (KA2; KA3).

While organizing student mobility, we carry on our current practice, which requires academic units to take initiative in signing cooperation agreements, well-thought-out cooperation for designing the content of mobility windows and maintaining the cooperation contacts under the guidance of academic staff. The running of mobility windows requires active cooperation and a reasonable number of efficiently collaborating partners. When designing the content of mobility windows, UT academic units have assessed the need to either increase or reduce their partnerships. Successful delivery of mobility windows is closely linked with the counselling service, which is provided not only by coordinators, but also by the respective programme directors. Having study abroad options better integrated into study programmes makes mobility a more transparent part of education and offers international experience to the students, who for various reasons have not set a goal of studying abroad.

All UT PhD programmes include international study and work experience as one of their objectives and therefore, students are expected to study and/or do research at a foreign university or research institution for at least one semester.

Upsurge in mobility requires a good overview of statistics. To ensure evidence-based mobility management and partners' access to substantial statistical data, UT has created a publicly accessible digital dashboard.

When establishing partnership, incl. not only for the purpose of mobility, UT considers the partners' academic reputation and strategic goals. UT academic units choose partners with whom they have mutual interest in substantive cooperation, staff mobility and research cooperation. In Europe, UT is encouraging partnerships within research university networks with our strategic partners. For Erasmus+ Credit Mobility Programme, UT is facilitating cooperation with its historical partners of good academic reputation. UT is cooperating with partners in Russia and other former Soviet republics, in Asia and the US.

In arranging staff mobility, UT continues with the same procedures as before and focuses on its strategic internationalization priorities. The main emphasis is on the development of

teaching, digital and management skills, maintaining collaboration with its current partners and expanding partnership.

UT aims to increase its involvement in the Erasmus+ programme cooperation projects, in fact to double its involvement compared to the current period. Via Cooperation and Knowledge Alliance (KA2) and other calls for proposals (KA3), UT creates a strong network of universities and enterprises for preparing a stimulating environment for future innovative research and education projects. UT contributes to the enhancement of the potential of Europe's border countries and other developing countries, and modernising their education.

UT encourages its staff to use the grant eligibility software and inspires academic staff to actively apply for external funding by using centrally available project-writing support services. Cooperation and project ideas are generated by academic staff and the central smooth coordinators of the Grant Office provide support from writing to final reporting. UT is developing its internal digital systems to ensure smooth communication with Finance Office and Human Resources Office, and secure fast, convenient and paperless data and project management. All listed activities are well aligned with UT Strategic Plan and its courses of action described in section 1.2.

In the 2018/19 academic year, 4.3% of students and 11% of graduates had studied abroad. In the academic year 2017/18, the corresponding figures were 4.2% and 10.3%, thus the increase in mobility has been moderate rather than sharp in the recent years.

The European goal for 2020 is that at least 20% of European graduates should have completed a part of their study abroad, including degree studies, but UT's statistics is about short-term mobility within one study cycle. UT has set a goal that with the help of mobility windows, the proportion of graduates with study abroad experience will grow (at all three levels), and by including both blended and virtual mobility, student mobility strives towards the European objectives.

Mobility growth is also facilitated by UT's participation in the ENLIGHT network that has a stepping-stone path as a frame for supporting mobility. The stepping-stone path will offer a low-hurdle entry point into the mobility, mostly via virtual mobility, and end up with an option to pursue a joint degree programme delivered by the ENLIGHT universities. The stepping-stone principle enables flexible mobility options fitting for a larger group of students based on their actual needs and opportunities.

In the 2018/19 academic year, 613 exchange students studied at UT, which is 2 % less than the year before. However, before 2017/18, UT had a significant increase in the numbers of incoming students, approximately 4 % per year. Considering the overall objective to increase mobility, the number of incoming students grows, incl. due to wider options in e-learning. Mobility windows that are embedded in curricula and facilitate the study abroad for UT students work both ways: they help to maintain contacts between institutions and ensure the availability of information on courses taught at UT.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and exceptional circumstances in the spring 2020, we cannot expect an increase in students' mobility figures next year regardless of the e-learning options.

UT has taken various steps to support and encourage students' mobility. In 2019–2022, UT with the University of Helsinki and the University of Stavanger participate in SkillMill, an Erasmus+ strategic partnership project led by Uppsala University. The project aims to develop a method that helps students to identify the general skills acquired during study abroad, for example, adaptability, and teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills. For promoting international traineeship, UT has designed a blog, which shares the experiences of students who have returned from traineeship abroad. In 2019, Tartu Welcome Centre was established with a mission of supporting international newcomers in Tartu and the South-Estonia area in the process of settling and making Estonia their new home.

UT support services designed for international students to ensure their better adaptation and introduction to UT's academic life have received excellent feedback in the 2019 International Student Barometer Survey. The highest marks were given to IT services, visa advising and the availability of information preparing students for their academic studies at UT. UT is committed to offering trainings for international student tutors and buddies to enhance student-to-student support services. Since 2019, tutor training is also provided in English.

In 2019, a total of 179 UT employees delivered lectures or participated in training courses at universities abroad, which is slightly less than in 2018. The reason for the decline lies in the slightly smaller volume of the International Credit Mobility compared to 2018.

There are more employees using professional development options and fewer are teaching abroad. UT is determined to support the professional development of the employees who have not had an opportunity yet and whose objective of mobility is in line with the principles of advancing international cooperation.