

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

Union Nikola Tesla University

1. INTRODUCTION

As the Internationalisation Strategy of the Union Nikola Tesla University (adopted on 17 May 2019, <http://unionnikolatesla.edu.rs/en/international-areements-and-cooperation/related-documents>) clearly demonstrates internationalisation is one of our university`s main aims. As a young university we are aware of our needs and potentials to grow and establish ourselves in the borders of our country as well as internationally further. Based on the success of our previous regional and international collaborations we are eager to exchange knowledge with our existing and potential future parents in education and scientific research, as well as in industry.

As our uttermost aim we have set working towards making our university recognised, from local to regional and international level, as an active entrepreneurial university, known for its support of creative synergies between education, research and industry, so as to create innovation for and with society. With this aim in mind we are set to forge international partnerships in order to rise to the challenges in the higher education. Based on the framework of this strategy, our university`s working plans, and our main aims we have determined following core internationalisation aims:

- to establish ourselves as one of the leading universities in Serbia open for creative and visionary international collaborations;
- to become one of the leaders in initiation and facilitation of internationalisation efforts in the region;
- to position ourselves as highly reputable and reliable partners in international projects and efforts in higher education in Europe as well as worldwide.

The aforementioned internationalisation core aims will be met through the following objectives:

1. Improvement of curriculum based on international norms and requirements,
2. Development and deployment of joint degree/double degree programmes,
3. Development of student mobility programs,
4. Development of staff mobility programs,
5. Participation and initiation of multi-institutional educational and research projects.

2. SELECTION OF PARTNERS

When establishing local, regional or international partnerships we look for partners who are willing and able invest significant efforts in improving quality, performance and competitiveness for the benefit of all participating institutions as well as the people and local communities potentially influenced by these collaborations. The criteria that guide our selection are as follows: similarity between our study programmes, potential for development joint or double degree programmes, possibility to foster knowledge exchange and forge scientific research partnerships, social, ethical and work norms. We are always open to suggestions of our staff and students regarding types of exchange programmes as well as countries of destinations. Thus, while we rely on our network of already established partners, we are always on a lookout for the new ones.

We prioritise strategic partnerships with leading universities in the world, in the region and the universities able to fulfil strategic objectives of our country, our university, local communities and companies. We choose institutions on all levels that can not only work with us synergistically, but which can through expertise and experience we still do not have, enrich our practice. Vice-versa we put our knowledge and expertise on a disposal to the universities in the region that might need our help and to the universities in underdeveloped countries that need our support in the field of education, science and research and capacity building.

Union Nikola Tesla University has strategic interest to collaborate with educational and scientific institutions, organisations and associations in Europe and beyond. Therefore, we target following geographical areas:

- European Union
- United States of America
- Serbia`s neighbouring country (including non-EU)
- Russian federation
- The rest of the world

When there are interests for synergetic and mutual advancement of the Union Nikola Tesla University and other foreign institutions, bilateral and multilateral cooperation will be transformed into strategic partnerships. They will include mutual use of available resources and coordination of research and development projects, joint teaching programmes development, intensive exchange of staff and students, and mutual capacity building ventures. Union Nikola Tesla University will meticulously and selectively forge strategic partnership with institution in and outside of the borders of Europe, known for their excellence in science, education, originality and expertise transfer.

In the past our focus was on staff mobility. The staff exchange impacted the work of their host universities (e.g. where their courses were elected by independent committees as the best semestral courses) as well as the quality of their teaching and their research and scientific capacity upon their return. Promotion of international experiences and development of international competencies of our staff and our students a prerequisite for enhancing international competitiveness. Therefore, from now on we aim to strongly devote ourselves to building students mobility programmes – out top internationalisation priority.

Increased staff and student exchange (with the focus on academic and research projects), will significantly improve professional competences of our employees. While the outgoing staff and students upon their return will enhance the quality of our teaching programmes, methods and approaches; the outgoing staff and students will have a supporting environment at our university to share their own best practice.

Union University Nikola Tesla is strongly determined to amplify its efforts in supporting incoming and outgoing members of staff, taking part in both short and mid-term exchange programmes. We will enable members of staff to take sabbatical and other forms of short leaves together with all other necessary conditions carefully planned to support exchange. Whenever need arises we are ready to introduce a flexible teaching scheme with modular and block teaching in order to enable staff to take part in mobility programmes or give guest lectures (lasting longer than a week), as well as to host incoming teaching staff.

Respecting and acting accordingly to the EU standards and regulations in higher education, Union Nikola Tesla University aims to remove all impediments to the exchange of available resources, staff and knowledge in European Higher Education and Research Area, and position itself as truly open European university.

3. INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL (EU AND NON-EU) COOPERATION PROJECTS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ERASMUS + PROGRAMME

Union Nikola Tesla will continue to maintain current and establish new partnerships in order to participate in international partnerships in the domain of educational improvement and scientific research.

The university's strategy for the organisation and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) programmes proposes collaborative regional and international projects significant for higher education. Our next steps entail qualitative and quantitative increase of students and staff mobility. We are particularly interested in applying for programmes under the Key Action 1 in order to improve our curriculum based on international norms and requirements. We want to develop and deploy joint degree/double degree programmes, thus improve learning performance, enhance career prospects, further improve foreign language competencies and intercultural awareness. Our staff and students have been developing expertise on

participation and inclusion of various public members and organisations through live projects. Therefore, Key action 2 could provide us with par excellence opportunities to further forge multi institutional partnerships (in and outside higher education), to more closely engage public, especially young people, enable knowledge transfer and support innovation. Key action 2 activities are something we strive for, especially Partnerships for Innovation, and hopefully later Partnerships for Cooperation and exchange of practices, as our staff improves. Since we were not active in Erasmus + programme before, we will seek experience and knowledge in the beginning.

4. THE EXPECTED IMPACT OF THE PARTICIPATION IN THE ERASMUS + PROGRAMME ON THE MODERNISATION OF THE UNIVERSITY, WITH REFERENCE TO EACH OF THE PRIORITIES OF THE RENEWED EU AGENDA FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AS WELL AS THE GOALS TOWARDS A EUROPEAN EDUCATION AREA.

Union Nikola Tesla University aims to engage all of its intellectual capacities and resources in order to take part in EU (and non-EU) funded programs so as to continually modernise itself in the domains of scientific research, education, knowledge transfer and innovation, mobility, administration, management and governance. The university is strongly committed to the European Area of Education goals and will meticulously implement them.

4.1. Tackling future skills mismatches and promoting excellence in skills development.

The university is determined to keep increasing the number of cooperation contracts as well as forms of cooperation with various companies and employers. In this way university can monitor current market needs and increase relevance and quality of its curriculum, and improve applicability of students' knowledge and skills. Additionally, feedback obtained after students in industry placement is used to advance the curriculum and course design and delivery methods. The university is in the process of establishing database of its graduates in the labour market (closely monitoring their employability in Serbia and abroad)

Our study programs include an obligatory student internship – which assist students to test their knowledge and skills, and develop their competencies further in real life labour market. In addition, many students organise independently voluntarily internships during summer break. Students and employers after the internships carry out evaluations and fill out feedback forms., which is recognised by the Diploma supplement. Funding lines under the Key Action 2 could enable the university to further work on this area.

4.2. Building inclusive and connected higher education systems

Union Nikola Tesla University is building its reputation as non-discriminatory university, offering inclusive learning environment for students and staff from various backgrounds. We are always willing to make a tailor-made approach for teaching/learning for students coping with social, economic, and health challenges. Respecting their needs, we flexibly approach timeline, course schedule, study dynamics, and learning tempo, while providing them full support and encouragement.

Moreover, we collaborate not only with educational and scientific institutions in country and abroad, but also with local companies, arts and cultural institutions (e.g. Museum of Pedagogy in Belgrade for the purpose of the Design of Public building course), city fair, etc. Through this network of connected partners, stakeholder can significantly impact the quality of the teaching, learning and research at the university, while the university can provide relevant expertise and support, putting its skill and knowledge at the disposal of the society and industry.

4.3. Ensuring higher education institutions contribute to innovation

In accordance to our Strategy of Internationalization, Union Nikola Tesla University will actively seek programmes which contribute to innovation overall. Erasmus programme is a gateway to such opportunities and it will promote and engage in all scientific and educational activities and join the global flow of knowledge. This is meant to contribute and strengthen our innovation potentials.

Our academic staff is well experienced in their current forms of cooperation and they will have institutional support to engage in all above mentioned activities, with the aim of raising our institutions innovation potential and recognisability at regional, European and global level. Academic staff will also be encouraged to take part in improvement, exchange and research programmes, as well as participate in international conferences in order to strengthen universities exchange of knowledge and skills, and share and publish the results of educational and scientific work.

University is already spread through several cities in the region, and is committed to internal transfer of staff and knowledge. Also, with experience in several international projects of cooperation, the university is striving to share knowledge to areas in the region, Europe and the world. Participation in Erasmus programme will ensure universities aims for providing better opportunities for our students and academic staff to create long-lasting connections at global pools of knowledge and deepen the links between education, research and business, which will strengthen their capacities for innovation at local, regional, and hopefully, global levels.

4.4. Supporting effective and efficient higher education systems.

In light of globalisation and competitiveness in contemporary surroundings, Union Nikola Tesla University is dedicated to promotion and development of effective and efficient higher education systems. and high-skilled needs of the modern age. The Programme, being the very vital means of modernization through internationalization for the University, is expected to provide this enhancement. By regularly taking part in the Programme, through sharing and expanding knowledge, University aims to bring itself to always be more effective and efficient Higher Education Institution.