

## ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

Since its foundation in 2006, a key element of Usak University's approach to Internationalisation, both in Europe and worldwide, is its everlasting commitment to partnership development. Usak University has developed an array of international collaborations through bilateral and multilateral partnerships at all levels. The international cooperation strategy is developed and implemented continuously by pursuing the principles of quality culture, lifelong learning, openness, transparency, and equal opportunities. Usak University is fully engaged with the Bologna process and is committed to the development of integrated programmes of study, training, and research with partner institutions across Europe and beyond. The primary strategy is to take full advantage of current and upcoming collaborative arrangements which will be funded by the Programme. These objectives and strategies directly reflect those to be articulated in Usak University's Strategic Plan for the period of 2020-2024. Continuing further engagement in mobility programmes is the main priority in accord with the Strategic Plan outlined for the Bologna Process. The student experience is central to the future development of learning and teaching at Usak University. Internationalisation is well regarded for enriching the educational experience of Usak University. Participation in international platforms organised internationally in other countries serves and will continue to serve as networking tools. Examining our institution's existing quality culture and meeting the requirements of quality assurance policy within the framework of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance will be very crucial for our institution in supporting itself in the continuing development of its strategic management and internal quality culture.

a) In choosing our partners, a swot analysis was carried out to see our stronghold academic units and corresponding respective institutions in the EU Member States were approached. Alongside the swot analysis, staff in academic units were asked to realize their networking capability and use their existing institutional/personal links for initiating partnerships. Over the years of mobility with our partners, our agreements were monitored on the basis of several criteria such as the performance for previous years, quality of the partnership, the number of participants benefited from the partnership, balance of the partnership, post-mobility reports from the participants, student & staff views, and other academic/project cooperation opportunities initiated. Monitoring and reviewing of partners to ensure relevance to courses and employability of graduates is an ongoing process.

b) The geographical spread of partner institutions has already been developed, with the intention to develop further networks related to the degree, exchange courses were offered. The number of our current bilateral agreements is about one hundred in a variety of academic fields with different universities from the EU Member States. The countries in the EU where a partnership agreement not being previously initiated will be our main target areas for the next European Mobility period. Usak University aims to have diverse partnerships to encourage new opportunities and to diversify mobility experience. Usak University participates in the Erasmus+ programme KA107 projects for Partner countries as of 2018 with Non-EU partner institutions from Russian Federation. The international cooperation also covers Mevlana Exchange Programme, Memorandums, and Bilateral Agreements with Non- EU partners spreading throughout the countries from Asia, Far East Asia, Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, Central Asia, West Balkans, South Caucasia, Latin America, and South Mediterranean. Erasmus Programme, as part of the current internationalisation strategy, followed in most of the Turkish HEIs, we have managed to attract international students from a wide range of countries. To enhance mobility opportunities for students and staff, the University aims to develop its partnerships with institutions worldwide. On a global scale, several attempts for academic cooperation have also been initiated and established.

c) The most important objectives and target groups for our mobility activities will be to develop cooperation with partners in EU or non-EU countries, promote and support student and staff mobility included from underrepresented groups at short cycle, recognize the importance of, and provide visibility to, the results achieved by our staff members in individual mobility or in cooperation projects with strategic partners, to develop our international performance, and to enrich the educational experience of our students and staff.

Usak University sets out to improve both the quality and quantity of its international focus. We firmly believe in the value of international relations and the policy of internationalisation for the improvement of the curricular quality of our degree programmes, for the attainment of accreditation and the international recognition of degrees, for the encouragement of student and faculty exchanges between institutes of higher education and finally for the benchmarking of our research and education. In this sense, Erasmus student mobilities for studies and placement in the undergraduate and graduate levels encourage the exchange of information and experiences. Likewise, Erasmus staff mobility for teaching and staff mobility for training play a pivotal role to support competences and professional profiles, to foster good practices, policies and systems in education, training or research beyond countries, and to contribute to the modernisation and the internationalisation of the institutions with their active participation. Therefore, the core strategy is to strengthen the existing cooperation and seek further scientific involvement at all levels in the EHEA. While doing this, reviewing our current portfolio of partnerships to concentrate on the most productive networks and seek to identify new ones that fit with current priorities set out by the Programme will be a crucial task. Usak University will target two crucial elements:

1. The creation of knowledge alliances between the University and businesses to promote creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship by offering new learning opportunities and alternative qualifications
2. Sector skills alliances between education, training providers, and businesses to promote employability by forming new sector-specific curricula and innovative forms of vocational teaching and training.

Usak University is very aware of what the future upholds for the new generations and alternative forms of learning are widely tested even for the disadvantaged groups of people. Usak University endeavors to create and ensure the required learning environment for the inclusion of the disadvantaged. Inclusive Mobility, the principle embraced by Usak University, is to secure fair and equal access to the Erasmus mobility, to provide accessible information for people with fewer opportunities. In order to attain inclusiveness, Usak University dwells on a sustainable inclusive institutional mobility strategy. The University will also use its know-how in extending new forms of learning and offering people with alternative learning routes.

The new programme which will be implemented across HE institutions in Europe is based on the premise that investing in education and training is the key to unlocking (unlock) people's potential regardless of their age gender and background. By participating in the programme, Usak University will be able to help its student & staff participants to be mobile for further development opportunities and will help them to increase their personal development, gain new competencies/skills and improve their job prospects. Involvement in the Programme will be an integral component of Usak University's internationalisation strategy. By participating in the Programme, Usak University aims to increase its involvement in research. Teaching and staff/student mobility programs to strengthen its economic and social engagement links and seek future funding opportunities offered within the Programme for the purposes of enhancing the quality and relevance of human capital development in higher education. Usak University will give priorities to:

- 1) Increasing the number of its graduates at all levels for the growing qualification pools of job markets.
- 2) Adopting institutionally the principles of European Education Area such as key competences for lifelong learning, digital skills, common values, and inclusive education.
- 3) Fostering inclusion and access of the people with fewer opportunities. Pursuing the Usak University's mission within the society, giving wide access to knowledge & acquisition of e-skills for disabled people and students with disadvantaged backgrounds
- 4) Encouraging students and staff about civic engagement and active citizenship in all steps of mobility.

- 5) Engaging in environmentally sustainable practices by diminishing the use of papers and integrating into the digital management of the programme.
- 6) Developing innovative distance-based educational products incl. blended approaches to learning to meet the growing demands of the market-particularly at short and 1 & 2 cycles in order to enhance the quality and relevance of human capital development
- 7) Promoting EHEA through active participation in multilateral projects
- 8) Expanding links with European and non-European universities particularly at postgraduate level (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle degrees) will also be sought for strengthening the knowledge networks between education and research
- 9) Staff mobility is a priority in the strategic plan and therefore highly stimulated. The creation of an international classroom is targeted and curriculum development will focus even more on an international working and learning environment and tuition formats will be developed in which students are able to work together remotely at an international level.