

Erasmus Policy Statement (Overall Strategy)

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The Institution agrees to publish this overall strategy (all three parts) on its website within one month after the signature of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education by the European Commission.

Please describe your institution's international (EU and non-EU) strategy. In your description please explain a) how you choose your partners, b) in which geographical area(s) and c) the most important objectives and target groups of your mobility activities (with regard to staff and students in first, second and third cycles, including study and training, and short cycles). If applicable, also explain how your institution participates in the development of double/multiple/joint degrees. (max. 5000 characters)

Original language [EN]

Hasselt University (UHasselt) is an independent innovative university, which is regionally anchored and has a pronounced international orientation. The university stands for excellence in education, top research in spearhead fields and active engagement in innovation and entrepreneurship. UHasselt's overall objective is to combine academic excellence with economic and social relevance. UHasselt aims to widen participation, addressing all talents, and inspires her students and staff to develop their full potential in a dynamic environment. UHasselt targets students with attractive undergraduate, graduate and PhD programmes which are research-led and characterised by a high academic level and the integration of lifelong employability skills. Through an international experience, students will improve and enhance their skills and therefore, UHasselt encourages all her students, researchers and staff to spend a part of their career abroad. UHasselt has an extensive international network and develops joint programmes with universities in Flanders and The Netherlands. Furthermore, UHasselt actively participates in EU and international research and educational programmes, including several actions of the former Lifelong Learning Programme. Under the new Programme, UHasselt aims to further enhance participation in European and international cooperation projects in order to strengthen her collaboration with other higher education institutions (HEIs).

UHasselt defined a number of strategic and operational objectives in her Internationalization Policy Plan (2013-2017), which includes the development of more strategic partnerships with HEIs and enterprises in European and non-European countries, taking into account the compatibility and quality of study and training programmes, as well as potential research collaboration opportunities. Within the framework of these strategic partnerships, UHasselt intends to develop joint programmes, including mobility organized on the basis of joint, double or multiple degrees of high quality. All partnerships will be reviewed regularly, with attention to consolidating and strengthening each relationship and the possibility of working with those partners in other European and international projects.

In line with this overall objective, each department will define a strategy in order to develop broad partnerships and participate in international networks within their research fields. These strategies will take into account the existing partnerships as well as the ambitions to target new geographical areas. Since UHasselt is an active player in university development cooperation, her partners in the South will continue to play an important role, along with European and other non-European countries. In addition to these departmental strategies UHasselt has defined a number of quality criteria for partnerships, e.g. synergy between different disciplines and between education and research, recognized accreditation and quality control framework, sufficient administrative support and guidance, etc. In the framework of mobility activities, partners will be assessed and selected on the basis that they use a transparent credit and local grading system, offer language courses for incoming students and can provide a study or training programme of sufficient quality to ensure that the required learning outcomes will be achieved by the student.

As a current holder of the Erasmus University Charter, one of the main priorities of the internationalization policy of UHasselt is to give all students and staff the opportunity to go abroad (in line with the defined departmental strategy) or to have an international experience at home (e.g. by welcoming international students and staff on her campus). Currently, all departments have already included a mobility window (for study and/or training) within their bachelor, master and PhD programmes for both outgoing and incoming students. One of the main objectives defined in UHasselt's Internationalization Policy Plan is to increase student mobility in first, second and third cycles in order to meet the 20% student mobility target by 2020.

Moreover, UHasselt aims to expand her activities in the area of staff mobility, as well as to foster teaching collaborations, both nationally and internationally. By recognizing an international experience as a component in staff assessments and evaluations, UHasselt seeks to maximise the number of staff exchanges. In that respect, UHasselt already obtained the HR Excellence in Research logo.

To achieve these goals, UHasselt will continue to organise information sessions, both at the central and departmental level, as well as promote exchange programmes and cooperation projects through her website and brochures. The International Office (IO) will continue to improve her support towards staff and students in matters of organization and administration in order to facilitate their mobility activity.

If applicable, please describe your institution's strategy for the organisation and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) cooperation projects in teaching and training in relation to projects implemented under the Programme. (max. 2000 characters)

Original language [EN]

UHasselt believes that the actions of the Programme present an added value and contribute to the achievement of the overall objectives of her Internationalization Policy Plan. It is UHasselt's mission to prepare students thoroughly for an exciting career. UHasselt is convinced that an international experience gives her students indispensable skills to be highly successful on the international labour market. Therefore, UHasselt will encourage staff and students to participate in the different key actions of the Programme (e.g. Knowledge and Sector Skill Alliances, capacity building projects with European and third countries, strategic partnerships, etc.), taking into account the objectives defined in her Internationalization Policy Plan and ensuring a sustainable outcome for all partners involved.

When a staff member or student intends to participate in a cooperation project, he informs the IO, clearly indicating the objectives for his participation, the role he plays within the project, the expected results, the added value and financial implications for his department and UHasselt in general. The University's Central Administration (UCA) thoroughly checks whether the proposal meets the internal quality criteria and issues a positive or negative advice on the participation of UHasselt in the project. After endorsement of the UCA, the IO assists the promoter throughout the application process and acts as a liaison officer between the promoter and the UCA. After approval of the cooperation project, UHasselt fully supports any staff and student participating in it. The main responsibility of the organization and the implementation of a given project lies with the UHasselt promoter, but the IO will give him the necessary support. Each project is registered in a database in order to have a complete overview of the ongoing projects and to ensure the correct follow-up of each project. UHasselt will ensure the project receives maximum visibility.

Please explain the expected impact of your participation in the Programme on the modernisation of your institution (for each of the 5 priorities of the Modernisation Agenda*) in terms of the policy objectives you intend to achieve. (max. 3000 characters)

Original language [EN]

UHasselt believes her participation in the Programme will have a positive impact on her modernization and internationalization strategy.

As described in her Education Policy Plan, UHasselt has a strong commitment towards enlarging participation in higher education. Grounded in this vision, UHasselt offers educational programmes that interact with the university's research domains, respond to labour market needs and aim at innovation and social development. Furthermore, UHasselt has diversity and equality plans with specific goals and actions to encourage talented young people from underrepresented groups to participate in higher education. Through participation in the Programme, UHasselt will be able to further develop more effective learning and teaching experiences, such as blended learning, which is notably interesting for under-represented groups.

With regard to the second priority of the European modernization agenda, UHasselt's mission is to equip her students with the key competences and skills they need to succeed on the labour market. Therefore, UHasselt does not only focus on teaching knowledge, but also on lifelong employability skills. By participating in certain actions of the Programme, e.g. Sector Skills Alliances, UHasselt will have the possibility to continue contributing to the improvement of the quality and relevance of higher education.

Furthermore, as defined in her Internationalization Policy Plan, UHasselt believes staff mobility and participation of staff in international cooperation projects contributes to the professional development of her staff. Therefore UHasselt will actively encourage them to participate in the Programme.

In her Internationalization Policy Plan, UHasselt has committed herself to meet the 20% student mobility target by 2020, as well as to continue to contribute to the sustainable development of higher education in third countries by developing strategic partnerships and joint educational projects with third country HEIs. The participation in the Programme will facilitate the successful completion of these objectives.

UHasselt is not an island of knowledge, but rather a creative hub in a complex economic and social network consisting of large and small companies and organizations, research institutes and other HEIs. Students, researchers and staff are a vital part of this 'international innovation network' and actively participate in it. Participation in the Programme (e.g. actions Knowledge and Sector Skills Alliances) will enable UHasselt to further enhance close, effective links between education, research and business.

By participating in the Programme, UHasselt will be able to obtain the necessary funding for the implementation of her Internationalization Policy Plan. UHasselt will also continue to use own resources for internationalization, e.g. by providing extra grants for students and staff to go abroad.

* COM (2011) 567 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0567:FIN:EN:PDF>)