

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (OVERALL STRATEGY) (2014-2020)

PART I: LSU international (EU and non-EU) strategy

This Erasmus Policy Statement complies with the Integrated Development Strategy of Lithuanian Sports University (LSU) 2012-2017 and defines the institutional strategic goals, priorities and objectives in relation to internationalisation, mobility and participation in cooperation projects in education and training.

The LSU, founded in 1934, is a specialised higher education institution that has developed unique traditions in the areas of sport, physical education, rehabilitation, health promotion and recreation, and seeks to establish itself as open European University, characterized by respect for knowledge, support for innovations, accessible and high quality studies, cooperative approach and promotion of the sense of community, healthy lifestyle and citizenship.

Aiming to be an open university, providing higher and continuing education based on the latest research advances and technologies and, thus, contributing to the sustainable development of the country, the LSU acknowledges internationalisation and integration into the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area as the key factors that facilitate modernisation of the University and ensure the quality and relevance of its education and research. From the very beginning of its participation in the European mobility and cooperation programmes, the LSU seeks to establish sustainable long-term co-operation with the EU and non EU universities, aiming to mutually benefit from the diversity of educational approaches and practices as well as cultural values, and develop its identity recognisable by other universities and community at large.

The LSU identifies strategic goals for internationalisation and participation in European and international cooperation projects as follows:

1. To ensure a wide range of opportunities for students to complete a period of studies and/or training abroad and its staff to develop professional competences by initiating new and constantly revising existing partnerships for mobility and cooperation, developing the internal network for communication and dissemination of information, and extending the range and quality of support services for mobile students and staff members.
2. To implement measures that lead to the creation of a favourable environment and attractive studies for incoming students by supplying them with up-to-date information about studies, social activities and everyday life, organising their mentoring and integration into the academic community and social life, monitoring the quality of studies, and providing easily accessible support services.
3. To provide all the necessary (linguistic, administrative, financial and technical) support for staff mobility and international cooperation, and ensure recognition of these activities as part of their professional development that lead to the increased participation in international cooperation initiatives and projects and, as the result, the institutional capacity building.

4. To ensure the development of an international dimension in studies through the concept of the internationalization at home by developing joint modules, short-term courses (winter/summer schools and intensive programmes) and joint degree programmes with partner institutions, attracting internationally recognised and leading experts, teachers and trainers, and developing multi-national research projects.

6. To build strategic long-term partnerships with the EU and non-EU higher education institutions, enterprises and networks by initiating and participating in cooperation projects that will contribute to the implementation of strategic key trends set out in the Integrated Development Strategy.

7. To focus on the development and adaptation of degree study programmes for international students seeking to increase visibility and recognition in the international higher education market and to recruit increasing numbers of students outside Lithuania.

Considering these strategic goals, the LSU will seek to build international cooperation on existing strategic partnerships and to strengthen underdeveloped areas by establishing new partnerships with institutions that are recognised for their credibility and expertise in the areas concerned. Aiming to ensure the position of a leading sport science university in the Baltic Sea Region, the LSU intends to take advantage of its geographical location and to intensify cooperation with partner from the Nordic and Baltic countries. A wide well-developed network of the EU partner institutions has been identified as one of its main strengths, however, existing potentials and opportunities to expand cooperation with institutions outside from countries the EU, in particular USA, Russia, China, Ukraine and Kazakhstan are not fully exploited and need to be explored and systematically developed in order to ensure further internationalisation of studies and research.

PART II: LSU 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 Erasmus+ Programme.

Over the past years the LSU has been intensifying the participation in the EU educational and training cooperation projects providing incentives and the necessary support for its staff and coordinating these activities to better match the institutional strategic goals and objectives. The expertise and experience accumulated during the years of participation in the EU centralised and decentralised cooperation projects (thematic networks, curriculum development projects, intensive programmes, etc.) and Nordplus projects enables the LSU to take a leading role in developing new projects, e.g. the Erasmus intensive programme *EIVoS* (2010–2013), the Nordplus *NBN Coach Training Network* (2009–2012).

The international cooperation projects will continue to have a pivotal role in the implementation of the strategic objectives, especially in developing international and joint degree study programmes in the areas of sport science and rehabilitation, implementing academic quality assurance system, and introducing innovative educational approaches and diverse study modes. The LSU is aware that current cooperation with partners outside the EU is underdeveloped and its potential needs to be exploited through the joint cooperation projects. In this respect, the LSU will seek to establish inter-institutional partnerships with higher education institutions of a similar profile and lead cooperation projects in order to increase its visibility in the international higher education market, and to mutually benefit from the diversity of expertise, practices and innovations.

PART III: The expected impact of participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on the LSU modernisation (for each of the 5 priorities of the Modernisation Agenda) in terms of its policy objectives.

Participation in mobility activities and international cooperation with the EU and non-EU partner institutions will continue to substantially contribute to the modernisation of the University and is perceived as a facilitating factor for achieving the institutional strategic goals.

1. Increasing attainment levels to provide the graduates and researchers Europe needs

The shrinking number of prospective students to be recruited because of the unfavourable demographic situation and the increasing numbers of school-leavers choosing to pursue higher education abroad increase the competition of higher education institutions. By participating in international mobility and cooperation activities, the LSU expects to develop attractive and high-quality joint degree study programmes, to recruit higher numbers of talented students and to develop the institutional measures for lifelong learning, distance education using ICT, recognition of competences gained outside formal education.

2. Improving the quality and relevance of higher education

The LSU seeks to increase quality research and innovations by consolidating the available resources. Participation of advanced students and academics in mobility and cooperation activities will help to develop their professional competencies and research skills that will be applied in their current and future jobs.

3. Strengthening quality through mobility and cross-border cooperation

Evidence from previous participation in mobility shows that international mobility has contributed to the transfer of innovative educational approaches and teaching/learning methods and has a positive impact on the modernisation of the University governance. The increasing numbers of international mobility (study, placement, teaching and training periods) and the planned development of joint study programmes will contribute to the LSU strategic objective to provide high-quality, attractive and relevant study programmes. The integration of mobility for studies and internships abroad into existing study programmes help to ensure their correspondence to labour market needs and better employability opportunities for their graduates.

4. Linking higher education, research and business for excellence and regional development

The LSU sets out an objective to prepare the monitoring and evaluation system to assess the LSU impact on national and regional development and to set up an alliance of partners from research, public and business sectors. One of such initiatives is the establishment of the National Wellness Institute. The LSU is committed to continue its active participation and contribution to the national and European thematic networks and alliances (e.g. ENSSEE, ENPHE, EOSE, HEPA-Europe) that link higher education, research and business organisations.

5. Improving governance and funding

The current reform is primarily focused on the improvement of governance by ensuring staff motivation and competence development, increasing the quality of management, and developing ICT-based services for students and staff. Staff training visits to partner institutions are considered to have a substantial impact on the foreseen changes since previous training activities have significantly affected the work of International Relations Office, Library and Publishing Centre.