

## ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS)

2021-2027

### 1. Erasmus activities included in the EPS

<b>Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility:</b>	
The mobility of higher education students and staff	×
<b>Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organisations and institutions:</b>	
Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices	×
Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities	×
Partnerships for Excellence - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees	×
Partnerships for Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3):</b>	
Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support to policy development and cooperation:	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 2. Erasmus Policy Statement (EPS): LSU Strategy

This Erasmus Policy Statement complies with the Progress Strategy of the Lithuanian Sports University (LSU) 2030 and the LSU Strategy 2018-2022, and defines the institutional strategic goals, priorities and objectives in relation to its internationalisation, mobility of staff and students and building of partnerships through the European and international cooperation projects.

The LSU is the only specialised University in Lithuania that carries out studies and research in all major fields of sport and health sciences, as well as trains high-level professionals in the areas of sport, physical education, sports and leisure management and physiotherapy. This extensive profile of a specialised state University enables the LSU to meet local and international needs and rationally organize research activities and studies. Since its foundation in 1934, the LSU has been playing a significant role in sport development and promotion of physical activity in the country becoming one of the leading academic and research centres in sport science in the Baltic Sea region where education, research and professional practice are closely interconnected. Currently, the LSU offers 19 degree programmes at all three cycles of study with a total enrolment of nearly 1.600 students.

## LSU internationalisation and modernisation strategy

The LSU vision is to develop into a University that promotes and ensures a wholesome and happy life through sport and physical activity, bringing cultural, scientific and educational benefits and values of sport, physical activity, recreation and health promotion to each individual with a primary focus on the student. With its mission to promote sustainable development of physical, mental, emotional and social well-being of people from different age groups, to help train high level athletes, and provide up-to-date and relevant recommendations to different stakeholders on the development of policies aimed at social and economic well-being through sport, physical activity, recreation and rehabilitation, the LSU considers internationalisation as one of the key factors that contributes to the modernisation of the University, involvement into the global world of research, enhancement of quality and relevance of its education programmes and incorporation of modern technologies into education and research. The LSU internationalisation policy is grounded on the two institutional core values, namely: inclusive accessibility and quality of academic services to national and foreign applicants and students, and support of an active dialogue with national and foreign partners and stakeholders.

In the LSU Progress Strategy 2030, internationalisation has been distinguished among the main factors that will help the University to implement its vision to become one of the leading institutions in sports science, education and innovations in Europe, characterized by the quality of studies and research of international level, the application of innovations and new technologies, the competitiveness of its graduates in the global labour market, and the continuous development of competencies and fostering of creativity in its academic staff.

The participation in the Erasmus activities will contribute to the following strategic objectives:

- To carry out internationally recognised high-level research and experimental development in sport science
- To conduct high-quality accessible, modern and research-based studies
- To increase the international dimension and visibility of the University
- To increase participation of the local community in sport and active leisure
- To maintain leadership positions in providing high-quality training for sports specialists and recommendations for different stakeholders
- To ensure effective management of the University

*Raising the overall quality of mobility experiences.* Being an internationally oriented University, the LSU seeks to develop and maintain sustainable and long-term strategic partnerships with different foreign higher education institutions and organisations that are distinguished by the highest quality standards in studies and research and whose achievements in sport and health sciences are internationally recognised. In the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme, the LSU carries out mobility activities with over 90 partner higher education institutions involving students, graduates, and the academic and administrative staff. In the past decades the LSU has been increasing the network of international partners to ensure wider opportunities for its students and staff to increase their professional knowledge, skills and competencies, to gain international and intercultural experiences, and, overall, to raise the visibility of the University on a global scale. In the new phase of the Erasmus Programme (2021-2027), the LSU will seek to optimise the network of partners bringing a stronger focus on the quality of mobility experiences and, in particular, on the compatibility and quality of educational offers and the quality of student support services for inbound students.

*Geographically balanced network of partners.* The geographical diversity of partner universities which meet the interests of local students is another important factor to ensure wider possibilities for academic experiences abroad. As a University representing the Baltic Sea Region, the LSU will continue to focus on mobility and cooperation activities with partner institutions from the Nordic and Baltic countries. Over the past years, the LSU has built intense cooperation in this region through

mobility activities under the Erasmus+ Programme and cooperation projects under the regional Norplus Programme. With the emergence of the Erasmus+ mobility scheme between the Programme and with partner countries, the LSU has expanded its network of partners from the USA, Israel, China, Japan, Kazakhstan and other countries. In the new phase of the Erasmus Programme, the LSU will continue to maintain and expand this collaboration out of bounds of the European Education Area which enables to mutually benefit from the strengths of each institution in terms of quality and diversity of educational practices, innovation in research, inter-cultural values and good governance of the universities.

*Internationalisation of the curricula.* The extent of courses offered in foreign languages has been steadily increasing and the involvement of international students in the LSU activities has been strengthened and enlarged. Since 2013, the number of international degree students at LSU has increased four times. The LSU offers a number of international degree study programmes and part of them are run together with the international partners involving Erasmus mobility of students and staff (European Bachelor in Physical Activity and Lifestyle, International Master in Performance Analysis of Sport, and International Master in Basketball Coaching and Management). In cooperation with the University of Tartu, the LSU implements joint doctoral studies that helped to increase the mobility of researchers and PhD students, joint research publications in journals with high impact factor, professional and linguistic competencies of teachers and researchers. In the upcoming years, the LSU is planning to continue the internationalisation of the curricula by reorganising certain degree programmes into consortium-based or joint degree study programmes and developing new ones.

*Capacity-building through international partnerships.* In the past years, the LSU has significantly increased its participation in European cooperation projects, especially in the field of sport. The LSU administrative units provide all the necessary support for the staff who coordinate or are involved as partners in these projects. The expertise and experience gained from participation in the projects enables the LSU to take a leading role in developing and implementing new projects. The LSU has taken the first planning steps in bringing together higher education institutions in the area of sport science across Europe for strategic partnership to build a strong network of European sport universities which will contribute to the international competitiveness of the universities involved and enable their students to obtain a degree combining studies in several partner universities.

The aim of such European University network would be to strengthen the quality of sport science studies and research by building a platform for sharing human, intellectual and technological resources and provision of more integrated and structured learning opportunities for students within the network of partner institutions.

The main foreseen activities of the network are (1) the creation of a long-term strategy for the network setting out the principles and guidelines for more intensive cooperation with the aim to increase the academic quality, and research-based contribution to the development of national and regional policies in sport and health sectors; (2) the creation and/or adaptation of joint master and doctoral study programmes and courses which would enable partner institutions to offer more flexible and innovative study programmes and teaching concepts for students; (3) sustainable development of the European sport culture promoting the historic heritage of national sports and games, and thus to increasing intercultural competences of different academic and social groups; (4) mobilization of intellectual and technological resources through joint working groups to strengthen the research and development potential and to increase the availability of resources (access to different databases, open use of research labs, inter-library network, search for external funding for joint projects, etc.).

### 3. Implementation of the Erasmus actions

The LSU has been successfully implementing the mobility of students and staff in the framework of the Erasmus Programme since 1999 and over the years has established internal regulations and procedures for the implementation of mobility activities which are constantly monitored and, whenever necessary, updated. The LSU International Relations Office (IRO), consisting of three employees, is responsible for the coordination and administration of the implementation process of the Erasmus + Programme mobility activities and reporting for the implemented activities to the National Agency. The Erasmus + inter-institutional agreements are concluded and renewed with foreign higher education institutions according to the needs of the University's academic units and study programmes.

#### **Before the mobility:**

*LSU as the sending institution* undertakes to: (1) disseminate information to all potential candidates on mobility opportunities, conditions and selection criteria in a transparent way through the set out channels of communication; (2) select students and staff for mobility according to the selection criteria established at the University; (3) ensure proper preparation of selected participants for the mobility period, including their linguistic preparation; (4) nominate the selected candidates to the receiving institution, set up their study, traineeship, teaching or training plan and validate it by signing a learning/traineeship agreement for students and mobility agreement for the staff members; (5) provide assistance to the mobile participant to prepare the documents required by the receiving institution in a timely manner and within the deadlines specified in the inter-institutional agreement.

*LSU as the receiving institution* undertakes to: (1) provide an up-to-date course catalogue containing the detailed information on the English-taught courses offered to mobile students and make it available online; (2) provide all relevant and necessary information related to the student's mobility period (application procedure, academic calendar, grading system, minimum English language proficiency, conditions for accommodation, health insurance, visa and temporary residence permit, support for persons with special needs, etc.); (3) upon receipt and evaluation of the application documents, issue a document confirming the acceptance of the mobile participant; (4) whenever needed, issue a mediation letter and provide other assistance to the mobile participant for obtaining visa through the responsible specialist at the Study Division; (5) provide the dormitory room or assist in finding suitable accommodation for the mobile participant; (6) in case of the staff mobility for teaching, integrate teaching topics agreed beforehand into the study programmes.

*Selection of outgoing mobile participants: students.* The candidates for the student mobility for studies and traineeships will be selected by centralised selection committees, consisting of International Relations Office (IRO) staff and study programme directors who select candidates based on the available places for mobility. The selection of candidates will be carried out according to the established procedure based on the following criteria: (1) academic performance; (2) motivation of the student identified through an interview; (3) linguistic proficiency; (4) compliance of the planned individual course units during the mobility to their study programme; (5) student's engagement in civic, research, and social activities.

*Selection of outgoing mobile participants: staff.* The candidates for the staff mobility for teaching or training will be selected by centralised selection commissions according to the established procedure based on the following criteria: (1) prior agreements with the host institution on the integration of teaching into a specific course (in case of teaching) / relevance of the training programme to the development of professional competencies of the staff member (in case of training); (2) proficiency in the language of teaching/training; and (3) content of the teaching/training programme. The priority will be given to (1) candidates whose teaching will be integrated into one of the consortium-based or joint study programmes (in case of teaching) / candidates applying for a staff training week event organized by the receiving institution (in case of training) (2) candidates who will participate in mobility activities for the first time or less (compared to other candidates) over the last two years; (3) candidates who have initiated or contributed to the signing of an inter-institutional agreement with the host institution; (4) candidates who undertake to implement additional activities during the mobility activity (development of new teaching material, extension of inter-departmental cooperation activities, development of new or implementation of existing cooperation projects, etc.).

#### **During the mobility:**

*LSU as the sending institution* undertakes to coordinate any changes that occur in the study / traineeship plan after the student arrives to the receiving institution by discussing them with the responsible study programme director and validating them in the Learning/Traineeship Agreement at the beginning of the study / traineeship period.

*LSU as the receiving institution* undertakes to: (1) provide full support and help incoming students to integrate into the academic and social life (Orientation weeks at the beginning of the semester, the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) events, etc.); (2) seek to minimise changes to the selected courses outlined in the learning agreement; (3) assign a student mentor for each incoming student and a tutor to each incoming staff member who will take care of the mobile participants during their mobility period; (4) ensure that all mobile participants have the same rights, opportunities and conditions as local students and staff; (5) provide the Lithuanian language learning opportunities to incoming mobile participants.

The ESN LSU section that was opened in 2015, with the support of the IRO, coordinates and implements the mentorship program based on one-to-one communication between a student-mentor and an international student in order to make the adaptation period for incoming students much easier.

#### **After the mobility:**

*LSU as the sending institution* undertakes to: (1) give automatic recognition to the student's learning outcomes upon their return from the mobility period; (2) help the student to integrate into the study process after the mobility period; (3) ensure that the staff mobility visit for teaching/training is properly evaluated and recognized.

*LSU as the receiving institution* undertakes to issue Transcript of Records and a document confirming the duration of mobility period (certificate of attendance) no later than five weeks after the mobility period.

Student mobility for traineeships is organized applying the same regulations as for student mobility for studies. The LSU undertakes to find a place for traineeship and communicate with the organisation that accepts the student for the traineeship regarding the conditions

to ensure the quality of traineeship experience. After the internship, the student gets a Traineeship Certificate signed by the supervisor of the internship.

### **Participation in European and international cooperation projects**

International development and integration into the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area, participation in the European and international cooperation projects within the Erasmus+ Programme and the Nordic-Baltic Nordplus Programme as a coordinator and/or partner make a significant contribution to the quality and international level in research and studies, development of innovations, enhancement of competitiveness for its graduates in the European labour market, and the development of academic community's creativity. Through participation in the cooperation projects, the LSU seeks sustainable development and long-term collaboration with different strategic academic institutions and different organisations who apply the highest standards to the academic and research quality and whose achievements in sports and health-related sectors have been internationally recognized. The LSU involvement in different European projects provides opportunities for students and staff to increase their general and professional knowledge, skills and competencies, to present the latest research findings, to gain international and intercultural experience, and bring greater international visibility for the university. The knowledge triangle of research, education and innovation stands at the centre of the University development. While participating in the cooperation projects, the LSU always seeks to achieve that all knowledge and experience obtained through the project activities, outcomes and results are transferred and integrated into the learning and research contexts, helping to develop an interdisciplinary approach, expand research into new scientific areas and bring innovative practices to teaching and learning. Furthermore, participation in the European, international and regional cooperation projects leads to the development of new joint programmes, teaching and training methods, and integrated modules. Besides, the University's staff develops a high expertise in the fields of inclusion, intercultural awareness and active citizenship and are better able to address the particular needs of students, including those with special needs or economically disadvantaged.

Hence, the LSU participation in the Erasmus actions and integration into the European Education Area make a significant contribution to achieving most of the objectives set out in the LSU institutional strategy, in particular in the areas of research and studies.

The past experience shows that the staff mobility for teaching and training have a strong impact on the professional networking among the researchers which later leads to new collaboration initiatives and projects in research. Over the past 10 years, the LSU has made a significant breakthrough in different areas of sport and health sciences. During the external assessment of the LSU research units, the international experts recognised the ongoing research in the area of biomedical sciences of an international level and the area of sport education to be of a strong national level. These achievements are strongly connected with traineeships abroad of PhD students and incoming teaching visits of distinguished scholars within the Erasmus Programme (University of Tartu, Manchester Metropolitan University, Medical School Hamburg, Karolinska institute). Hence, the LSU will continue to strengthen the quality of its PhD studies and research, taking advantage of the new opportunities that are coming with the increased flexibility for PhD students (Short-term mobility for PhD students, blended mobility, etc.).

The development of joint or consortium-based study programmes, incorporation of structured mobility activities, integration of incoming teachers into the curriculum have led to significant improvement in the academic quality and integration of the latest research findings into study programmes. The presence of incoming mobile students and organisation of the International Weeks provide an ever-increasing international dimension to studies since mobile students are integrated into study modules and carry out the group assignments with local students. The LSU will continue in this trend in the next phase of the Programme with the aim to expand the international dimension in studies and develop new consortium-based or joint study programmes and modules in future.

#### **4. The envisaged impact of the participation in the Erasmus+ Programme**

The participation in the Erasmus+ Programme has been making an extremely significant impact on the development of the LSU into the internationally oriented University in the past two decades. In 1999, when the LSU joined the Erasmus Programme the mobility activities included only a few outgoing students and teachers; however, in a very short course of time with the help of the Erasmus Programme the LSU has made a remarkable progress, increasing the number of the outgoing student mobility to 60 persons per academic year and the outgoing staff mobility to 40 persons per academic year. The development of the international studies at the LSU and the incoming flow of students and staff were even more remarkable leading to the expansion of the international study modules and degree programmes, and the rise of the incoming students to 50 persons per academic year and the incoming staff to over 35 persons per academic year.

Another significant impact that the Erasmus Programme has made on the LSU internationalisation is the growing number and geographical representation of partner institutions. The increasing participation in the Erasmus Programme and growth of the network of partner institutions prompted the University to become involved into different European and international cooperation projects, including the Erasmus intensive programmes, thematic networks, capacity building projects, Erasmus+ Sport projects, etc.

As stated in the LSU Strategy, one of the strategic objectives will be to increase the international dimension and visibility of the University and to become an even more internationally oriented and recognised University. In the new phase of the Erasmus Programme 2021-2027, the LSU participation in the activities supported by the Programme (Key Actions 1 & 2) will be more integrated structurally into the curricula making it easier for students and staff to take advantage of the mobility and cooperation opportunities. The models for the integration of mobility that have been applied in several current study programmes will be further elaborated and transferred into other study programmes. Within the next phase of the Programme, the LSU will continue to strive for the steady growth of the outbound students giving a special attention to ensuring the quality of their mobility experiences and increasing their traineeship opportunities.

The LSU will seek to optimise the network of partner institutions by reviewing currently valid inter-institutional agreements with higher education institutions and to build the partnership network with organisations which can offer high-quality traineeship placements in the areas of sport coaching, physical education, fitness, sports and leisure management and physiotherapy. Over the last four academic years, the LSU has reached the balance in the outbound and inbound mobility flows and in the next phase of the Programme the LSU will seek to keep the mobility flows well balanced giving a special attention to increasing the geographical balance and diversity.