

1. ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS)

1.1 Erasmus activities included in your EPS

In this section, you need to tick the Erasmus activities covered by your Erasmus Policy Statement. Please select those activities that your HEI intends to implement during the entire duration of the Programme.

Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility:

The mobility of higher education students and staff

Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organisations and institutions:

Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices

Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities

Partnerships for Excellence - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees

Partnerships for Innovation

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3):

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support to policy development and cooperation:

1.2 Erasmus Policy statement (EPS): your strategy

Your Erasmus Policy Statement should reflect how you intended to implement Erasmus after the award of the ECHE. Should you wish to add additional activities in the future, you will need to amend your Erasmus Policy Statement and inform your Erasmus National Agency.

What would you like to achieve by participating in the Erasmus Programme? How does your participation in the Erasmus Programme fit into your institutional internationalisation and modernisation strategy?

(Please reflect on the objectives of your participation. Please explain how you expect the participation in Erasmus to contribute towards modernising your institution, as well as on the goal of building a European Education Area¹ and explain the policy objectives you intend to pursue).

Original language (and translation into EN, FR or DE if the EPS is not in one of these languages)

¹ For more information on the priorities of the European Education Area, such as recognition, digital skills, common values and inclusive education, please consult the following website:

https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en

Latvijas Lauksaimniecības universitāte/Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LLU) has been implementing Erasmus programme activities since 1999. The Erasmus+ University Charter No. 66005-LA44-1-2014-1-LV-E4AKA1-ECHE was awarded to LLU in 2014 for the period 2012-2020 thus confirming LLU eligibility for international cooperation. LLU Development Strategy 2015–2020 formulates its vision on future development: “Latvia University of Life sciences and Technologies is one of the leading universities of science and technologies in the Baltic Sea region, specializing in the sustainable use of natural resources aimed at the enhancement of quality of life for society”. Internationalization is considered to be one of the priorities of LLU Development Strategy, and LLU internationalization plan (approved on October 26, 2016) specifies the goals and the scope of internationalization activities. Internationalization is declared not only as a singled out aspect of LLU operation, but it is one of the cornerstones of modernization of education and the main tool for the further development. This plan is especially focused on Erasmus+ programme because it has a leading role in the development of internationalization. The specific goal of LLU for Erasmus+ programme is to enhance the international competence of all involved participants by improving the quality of studies and encouraging the creativity and productivity of scientific research. It envisages the following actions: 1) making LLU more visible in international education area; 2) increasing the number of outgoing and incoming mobility students for studies and for traineeship; 3) increasing the number of international full-time students; 4) widening mobility opportunities for students and teaching staff, strengthening already existing contacts and looking for new partnerships in study fields typical for LLU profile; 5) participating in Erasmus+ cooperation projects that make important contribution in the quality of study programmes and development of science, both at LLU and partner HEIs; 6) increasing cooperation with international academic and research partners within the framework of bilateral agreements as well as international networks; 7) increasing the number of guest lecturers (including those, coming on Erasmus+ programme basis). Thanks to the exchange mobility and cooperation projects, LLU will accumulate the best practices in the basic fields from HEI of foreign countries and share LLU innovative experience with the partners. These basic fields for LLU are mainly related to life sciences and technologies, and their development will lead to the practical achievement of the above mentioned vision. Regarding this, LLU will seek partner institutions for inter-institutional agreements with leading European universities of a similar profile. Besides, LLU will contribute in the development of cooperation with HEI’s of programme partner countries, where mobility and other projects were successful implemented until now: Albania, Belarus, Colombia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Other would be added countries to this list if their HEI will express serious interest in mutually advantageous cooperation projects.

Please reflect on the Erasmus actions you would like to take part in and explain how they will be implemented in practice at your institution. Please explain how your institution’s participation in these actions will contribute to achieving the objectives of your institutional strategy.

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In case of the award of the ECHE for the period 2021-2027, LLU intends to continue all kinds of mobility activities and to participate in Erasmus+ and other international cooperation projects: KA1 mobility projects both with programme countries and partner countries, to be involved in joint Master’s degree programme, participate in KA2 projects and KA3 projects. LLU aims to advance internationalization process by participating in the Erasmus Programme through student and staff mobility and other projects to get new specific professional experience not provided by the home university, to exchange innovative theoretical and technological knowledge, to rise intercultural understanding and the global outlook, to improve language skills and, in general, to increase international competitiveness in related areas. The increased capacity developed by KA1, KA2 and KA3 projects will contribute in introduction of new double degree programmes, in adjusting existing study programmes for international full-time students, as well as in finding new partnerships for research projects. KA2 projects would also improve study content and methodology, traineeship effectiveness and administrative practices.

Erasmus+ KA1 mobility projects will be managed by LLU International Cooperation Centre (IRO), which is subordinated to Rector of LLU. Erasmus+ coordinators in close cooperation with departmental coordinators of the faculties will operate using already approved procedures. LLU undertakes and IRO will be responsible for implementation of all actions related to Erasmus mobility digitalization and managing all Erasmus+ tools. KA2 projects will be managed by project managers, Science and Project Development Centre and Centre of Lifelong Learning together with LLU structural units/faculties according to the project profile and content. KA3 projects, if such an opportunity open up, will be implemented by a specially created project team at the top level of university management.

What is the envisaged impact of your participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on your institution?

Please reflect on targets, as well as qualitative and quantitative indicators in monitoring this impact (such as mobility targets for student/staff mobility, quality of the implementation, support for participants on mobility, increased involvement in cooperation projects (under the KA2 action), sustainability/long-term impact of projects etc.) You are encouraged to offer an indicative timeline for achieving the targets related to the Erasmus+ actions.

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It is expected to have a strong impact of the international mobility on students, researchers, teaching staff and administrative staff, thus achieving of internationalization of higher education and research. In this way LLU has been increasing the quality of graduates at all levels and strengthening a link between education and research. It is assumed that Erasmus+ programme will have an impact on higher involvement of students in science and research, and it will help to encourage talented students to get experience abroad, improving their understanding of their future professions. Besides, Erasmus+ mobility programme has become more international since the number of international full-time students has increased every year. They have a possibility to participate in the mobility and get more experience and learn in the European education space. The impact of the programme is expected in the following academic fields which are essential for achieving LLU strategic goals: 1) bioeconomy - to be one of the leading universities in Europe and a national leader in development of bioeconomy strategy and policy, 2) biotechnologies and IT - to provide innovations for agriculture, forestry, food science, veterinary, functional materials, bioengineering; 3) smart regional development - to provide friendly social environment for peoples' life; 4) sustainability of study programmes and development of new technologies. The main indicators for LLU performance per year in Erasmus+ program will be: 1) allocated Erasmus funding for mobility projects and for KA2 projects; 2) the number of outgoing and incoming mobility students; 3) the number of outgoing staff and incoming staff; 4) proportion (%) of LLU students and staff taking part in mobility; 5) the number of signed inter-institutional agreements; 6) the number of innovations/new introduced actions by KA2 projects; 7) the number of beneficiary (organizations, individuals) from KA2 projects; 8) satisfaction level of KA1 mobility participants; 8) implemented Erasmus+ digitalization. The achievement of indicated results and appropriate time scales will depend on the amount of allocated Erasmus grants.

2. Implementation of the Fundamental Principles

2.1 Implementation of the new principles

Please explain the measures taken in your institution to respect the principles of non-discrimination, transparency and inclusion of students and staff. Describe how your institution ensures full and equitable access to participants from all backgrounds, paying particular attention to the inclusion of those with fewer opportunities.

LLU undertakes fully respect the principles of non-discrimination. All mobility participants from all backgrounds have equal access and opportunities. No tuition fee and other fees are charged from all exchange incoming students (for studies and traineeship). Exchange students have the same opportunities to access laboratories, the library and other facilities as offered for local students. All incoming and outgoing students and staff are treated equally in all academic and service matters.

LLU carries out non-discrimination policy in all its activities. Basic normative documents, such as "Regulation of Studies", "Internal Regulations for Students", include principles of non-discrimination, transparency and inclusion, specified in descriptions of general provisions, obligations and rights of students and staff according to the EU "Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European parliament and of the council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data", LLU has issued "LLU privacy policy" https://www.llu.lv/sites/default/files/2019-12/LLU_privatuma_politika.pdf. LLU internal regulations regarding studies, research, social and everyday life do not contain sentences providing special advantages or privileges for some groups of students or staff. Student documentation templates for submission (application forms, explanations, etc.) do not contain requirements to reveal information related to discrimination backgrounds or personally sensitive information.

Erasmus+ mobility procedures are transparent and fair: selection criteria for mobility are clearly described, their application by the rector appointed commissions are justified and documented, the results of selection for both students and staff mobility are openly announced. In case of dissatisfaction of an applicant, an official complaint procedure to appeal may be launched. LLU provides a special support for mobility participants with fewer opportunities/ special needs appointing an individual tutor, an accompanying person during visits to doctors, health centres, hospitals, social care institutions. LLU has the experience of good contacts with municipal Social Care Service in case of necessary support for international students. All this support will be also available for participants of blended mobility.

Please explain what measures your institution will put in place to implement the European Student Card Initiative, and promote the use of the programme's Erasmus+ mobile App to students. Please refer to the timeline indicated on the European Student Card Initiative website².

LLU undertakes all necessary technical and informative measures to introduce Erasmus Without Paper and European Student Card (ESC) Initiative and promoting Erasmus+ mobile app to students. LLU internal information system LLU IS, E-learning system, the library access system and others will be adjusted for ESC use. Year 2021 will be a preparatory year to introduce Erasmus+ digitalisation procedures that will allow to manage Inter-institutional agreements and online Learning Agreements using the Dashboard platform. By 2022 it will be possible to implement on-line nominations and acceptances, but since 2023 it will be possible to exchange Transcripts of Records.

A responsible body for technical decisions of implementation of the Erasmus+ digitalisation action will be LLU IT and Research Facilities Centre, but LLU Erasmus+ coordinators will inform students about ESC benefits in general and its use for Erasmus+ mobility procedures particularly. The information about ESC will be placed in LLU website www.llu.lv both in Latvian (for local students) and in English (for international students).

Please explain how your institutions will implement and promote environmentally friendly practices in the context of the Erasmus+ programme.

² https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-student-card-initiative_en

As the university of life sciences, LLU pays a great attention to sustainability and environmentally friendly practices. All LLU bachelor's degree study programmes include the mandatory study course "Ecology" that is accessible also for Erasmus+ incoming students. Many other study courses teach environmentally friendly use of technologies both in research and industrial practices thus benefiting for ecological education.

From a practical point of view Jelgava is a green and clean city. In spite of the fact that LLU has no separate campus, LLU buildings are rather close to each other, they are in a walking distance, so it is advised for international students not to use cars or buses, but go on foot or use bicycles, as local students and staff do. The participation in green activities is offered to Erasmus+ students, which are usually initiated by Student Self-government and ESN, the Department of Landscape Architecture and others. For example, the Forest Faculty organizes the Forest Planting Day annually involving all enthusiasts.

Since the Erasmus+ has included "Environmental and climate changes" as one of the possible topics that could be addressed by project proposals, LLU has been running several Erasmus+ KA2 projects related to ecology and climate changes: "Share Your Soils" 2019-2022; "Skills for Baltic Wood Industry-European Quality in Vocational Education and Training" 2018-2021; "Climate Changes in Agriculture" (CLICHA) 2017-2020.

Please explain how you will promote civic engagement and active citizenship amongst your outgoing and incoming students before, after and during mobility.

All Erasmus+ mobility participants have good attitudes towards of the EU, they have a sense of European citizenship and have a positive effect on engagement at the EU level. The exchange students, both incoming and outgoing, have got new knowledge, improved language skills and have got understanding about culture and traditions of other countries from the mobility period abroad. Besides, they promote co-operation between partner institutions and after the mobility they feel more qualified, open-minded and internationally experienced than students, who have never participated in the mobility.

LLU promotes all mobility participants to become like ambassadors, where incoming and outgoing students, who have been on mobility, share their experience with potential applicants. Incoming students and staff are fully integrated into academic and social life of the university and local society. During the mobility all incoming students are asked to participate in different LLU celebrations and events. It is traditional that Erasmus Student Network (ESN) together with the student self-government organize National Meals' events and the Flag days for exchange and international students where they tell others and demonstrate their countries' traditions. Every year LLU organises international scientific conference "Students on Their Way to Science" where all international and exchange students are welcome to participate. After the mobility incoming students at their home HEI's inform about their experience at LLU and encourage other students to participate in the mobility.

Outgoing students before the mobility are asked to prepare a presentation about LLU and the country, so that they could present it in their host universities. After the mobility they share experience with local students. Members of Erasmus student network and coordinators are the main persons who help students integrate in local society.

2.2 When participating in Mobility Activities - After mobility

Please demonstrate your commitment to implement full automatic recognition in your Higher Education Institution.

Please describe the concrete steps you will take to ensure the full automatic recognition of all credits gained for learning outcomes achieved during a mobility period abroad/ a blended mobility, according to the Council Recommendation on Automatic Mutual Recognition³.

³ The text of the Council Recommendation on Automatic Mutual Recognition may be found at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1568891859235&uri=CELEX:32018H1210\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1568891859235&uri=CELEX:32018H1210(01))

Students participating in the exchange programme receive full amount of credit points (ECTS) and mobility period recognition for academic work successfully carried out at any of host institutions. In order to ensure the full recognition of study period, LLU has carried out and approved the Recognition procedure how study courses completed at receiving institution shall be recognised at LLU. As soon as online Learning Agreement and online Transcript of Records are implemented at LLU, the academic recognition procedure will be updated and published in LLU website. All learning outcomes and the study period are recognised as agreed beforehand in the Learning Agreement and confirmed in the Transcript of Records (in ECTS), they are transferred to a student's account in LLU's information system LLU IS without additional work or assessment. The recognition procedure is clear and transparent – every student has an access to his/her account in the LLU information system and can see the recognised study outcomes. LLU uses ECTS only for exchange and international studies. The responsible person for recognition at LLU is Director of a study programme. The Diploma with Diploma Supplement (in both languages Latvian and English) are issued for all graduates, where a record of the period of mobility under the Erasmus+ Programme is included.

Erasmus+ coordinators together with departmental coordinators strictly follow, that outgoing and incoming students' Learning Agreements correctly reflect study courses and their amounts in ECTS that students learn in a host university and their eligibility with actual study programme plans. In addition, LLU will annually update the course catalogue for exchange students. The assessment system of LLU are clearly explained and the ECTS grade distribution tables are included in the Transcript of Records and published in LLU website.

LLU will strongly require HEI partners of Erasmus+ KA107 mobility projects to follow full recognition principle.

Please describe your institution's measures to support, promote and recognise staff mobility:

LLU promotes outgoing and incoming staff mobility that will contribute in the development of study programmes, improvement of specific study courses or administrative practices. It is one of the main criteria for the evaluation of candidates applying for the Erasmus+ mobility grant.

The mobility process is described step by step in appropriate internal regulations. The procedures of application, selection of candidates, preparation of mobility documents, communication with hosting universities, informational support, recognition and dissemination of mobility results are transparent and clear, and supported by LLU top management and Erasmus+ coordinators. The majority of LLU academic staff have already significant Erasmus+ mobility experience, so support activities are focussed on those who use this opportunity for the first time. International Cooperation Centre specifically promote administrative staff for the mobility of training in order to obtain new experience and improve their communication and English language skills. After mobility participants usually share their new experience with colleagues in departments and structural units, use new ideas to improve study courses and study environment. Besides, participation in Erasmus+ mobility is included as one of the main evaluation criteria in LLU motivation system for academic staff, and this participation gives additional bonus.

2.3 For the Purposes of Visibility

Please provide the web link where you will host the Erasmus Policy statement in the future. Please reflect on how you plan to regularly promote the activities supported by the Programme.

LLU Erasmus Policy Statement will be published in LLU home page <https://www.llu.lv/lv/llu-pamatdokumenti> (in Latvian) and <https://www.llu.lv/en/study-guide-documents> (in English). It will be in conformity with a new version of LLU Development Strategy 2021 – 2026, as well as LLU Internationalization Plan.

All news about Erasmus+ programme are published in LLU website. Besides, information about application deadlines, partnership proposals for KA2, etc., are disseminated via staff meetings in the Rectorate and Deans' Offices. LLU International Cooperation Centre regularly inform Erasmus+ coordinators in faculties about current events. Every year informative meetings are organised in all faculties of LLU, when recent Erasmus+ mobility participants with their stories about mobility experience try to encourage potential participants going abroad.

Please describe how you will ensure that the principles of this Charter will be well communicated and applied by staff at all levels of the institution.

- 1) Erasmus University Charter is/and will be published in LLU home page – www.llu.lv
- 2) Obligations and demands, what LLU undertakes by signing of Charter, will be explain in faculties and its departments.
- 3) Every evidence about non-conformity of actions to Charter will be investigate and appropriate measure will be taken by LLU leadership and responsible persons.