



ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

Varna University of Management

The internationalization of Varna University of Management, Bulgaria (VUM) is one of the seven key objectives in the institution's Strategic development plan from 2012. Based on its Internationalization strategy (2011), at VUM internationalization is a horizontal policy implemented in all major activities (teaching and training, research and innovation and links with the business and community engagement) and engaging all stakeholders.

a) When choosing its international partners VUM strives to establish partnerships which will improve the institution's competitiveness and performance. A partnership is considered attractive and eligible if it brings mutual benefits and added value for both institutions. The procedure for establishing new partnerships is coordinated by the International Cooperation Department and includes:

- detailed research of the prospective partner's profile;
- screening of programmes and activities where bilateral cooperation could be established; constant exchange of information with the partner; consultations with the respective Programme Directors, Career Center and other relevant stakeholders at VUM;
- SWOT analysis, assessment of partnership's feasibility, cost effectiveness analysis;
- final approval is based on report summarizing the results of the analysis;
- signing of the agreement.

Rector's Council is regularly informed on the new partnerships established and information on VUM website is updated.

b) Over the years VUM has established partnerships with institutions in the EU, Turkey, the Eastern Neighboring Area and in the USA which will be further deepened and new ones will be developed.

- EU and Turkey: currently VUM has active mobility partnership agreements with 28 HEIs in 14 EEA countries, 4 HEIs in Turkey and with SMEs in Spain. Over the next years VUM will focus

on increasing the outgoing and incoming mobile students and staff members with existing partners in the EU and Turkey; further extending the network of academic partners with a profile similar to VUM's in the rest of the EU countries; establishing new partnerships with SMEs from the EU for students placements, staff training mobility and development of entrepreneurial skills of VUM students and staff.

- Eastern Neighboring Area: VUM is the lead organization of the Leading and Managing Change in Higher Education Tempus IV project approved in 2012. The project consortium includes 23 HEIs from Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Over the next years VUM will extend the cooperation with these partners beyond the project by developing sustainable mechanisms for student and staff mobility. In addition, VUM will continue to cooperate with its academic partners in Russia and Kazakhstan.

- USA: in the period of 2008 – 2010 VUM coordinated a project within the Atlantis programme and cooperated with the University of Toledo and Owens Community College. Through this VUM has established links with other HEIs in the USA as well. During the next years VUM will put efforts to restore and revitalize these links and to negotiate a series of mechanisms for student and staff mobility between VUM and its transatlantic partners.

c) VUM offers undergraduate programmes in business, management, tourism and hospitality. Over the next years it will continue to collaborate with HEIs teaching similar programmes in the 1st cycle and with SMEs with the aim of staff and student credit mobility.

The following objectives and target groups have been identified and agreed at VUM:

- to increase the percentage of outgoing mobile students to at least 10%.

This will be achieved through: extending the network of partners and providing opportunities for study and placements in a large number of countries and institutions with diverse profiles; improved access to mobility for study and placements for student groups under-presented in the mobility programmes, e.g. students with families, employed students, students coming from disadvantaged social groups; improved visibility of the mobility programme.

- to increase the number of incoming students to at least 100 by: providing high quality of education; creating friendly multicultural environment and promoting tolerance and intercultural awareness; provision of tailor-made support to incoming students in the process of integration;

- to increase the percentage of outgoing mobile academic and non-academic staff members to 25% per year to upgrade their skills and to help them acquire and introduce innovative practices in their work.

- to increase the number of visiting lecturers for teaching mobility to exchange good teaching practices and to stimulate joint research activities.

- to attract representatives of SMEs from abroad to provide staff training at VUM.

Currently VUM offers double degree programmes in collaboration with Cardiff Metropolitan University and University of Portsmouth on the undergraduate level. In the next years VUM will

seek to establish similar double degree programmes with HEIs from the Eastern Neighboring Area. Currently VUM does not offer programmes on the master level.

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

In the future VUM will continue to allocate resources and to provide support in order to stimulate and foster the institution's involvement in international cooperation projects for innovation. In addition to the current Tempus IV project VUM coordinates, the institution is a member of the ISLE Erasmus Academic Network for sustainable development. VUM has been a partner in 5 LdV/TOI projects in collaboration with SMEs and VET institutions from the EU. In the future VUM will put efforts to sustain the already established HEIs networks and partnerships with SMEs and to engage in new strategic partnerships with HEIs and enterprises in Europe.

Projects increasing the relevance of the curricula at VUM towards the labour market needs, stimulating business start-ups and transferring knowledge and innovative practices between the business and HE will be a priority. In addition, VUM will initiate strategic partnerships with local and regional authorities and the civil society to increase its community engagement by identifying the community needs and pro-actively responding to them.

Currently VUM is cofounder and member of a cluster in Culinary Arts and Hospitality. Given this experience, VUM will explore the options for engaging in similar sectoral projects between education providers and the business and to join sector skills alliances funded under the Programme. Simultaneously VUM will continue to cooperate with HEIs from third countries, more specifically from the Eastern Neighboring Area. VUM is committed to sustain its cooperation with the partners from the Tempus IV project beyond the project life. It has already initiated a dialogue and needs analysis at the partner institutions on the prospective follow-up of the current project. In the future VUM will seek options to maximize the potential of the already existing consortium and to engage in projects that will contribute to the modernization of the HEIs in these countries thanks to its knowledge of the region.

Expected impact of VUM 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

Prospective involvement of VUM in actions funded under the Programme will be in compliance with the priorities stipulated in the institutional Strategic development plan and the Internationalization strategy. It will contribute to the modernization of the institution as follows:

1. Increasing the attainment level and the number of graduates

Through involvement in actions supporting lifelong learning VUM is expected to attract students from under-presented groups such as employees and non-traditional students aged 30 and above. In addition, VUM will provide support to disadvantaged students and will attract students from

third countries. VUM will initiate projects aiming at validation of prior learning and creating flexible learning paths.

2. Improving the quality of education and its relevance to the needs of society and the economy

Actions aiming to create strategic partnerships with enterprises, local and regional authorities and the civil society will contribute to attuning the curricula at VUM to the labour market and society's needs. Knowledge transfer and exchange of innovative practices through the strategic partnerships between the business and VUM will help develop flexible and innovative learning and teaching methods at the institution.

3. International mobility and cross-border cooperation

VUM's involvement in actions funded by the Programme will foster the processes of internationalization of the institution. VUM will promote pro-actively European and international staff and student credit mobility with the aim of skills and knowledge upgrade, good practices exchange, improvement of the students' global awareness and increasing their employability. VUM will continue to actively participate in international cooperation projects aiming at the modernization and internationalization of the HEIs involved.

4. Strengthening the knowledge triangle

VUM will make cooperation with business one of its core activities. Through establishment of strategic partnerships with enterprises funded by the Programme and participation in clusters and other types of sectoral alliances VUM will further strengthen its business and community engagement. VUM will involve in actions funded by the Programme to become a center of knowledge and expertise in social sciences in the North-Eastern part of Bulgaria. VUM has experience in applied research and will engage in projects identifying research needs of the business in the field of social sciences and the provision of tailor made research.

5. Creating effective governance and funding mechanisms

Through participation in projects funded under the Programme VUM will be able to diversify its sources of funding. Within the Programme VUM will explore the options to engage in projects aiming at developing leadership and management skills at all management levels in the institution. Educating new generation of professional managers at the institution will improve the institutional governance and overall performance.