

## **Erasmus Policy Statement (Overall Strategy)**

*1. 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.*

University of Social Sciences (UoSS) – Społeczna Akademia Nauk aims to carry out its Erasmus+ Program in line with the undertaken responsibilities and principles included in the accepted Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, such as respecting the principles of nondiscrimination and ensuring equal access and opportunities to mobile participants from all backgrounds, providing sufficient support to incoming and outgoing staff and students participating in the mobile activities, ensuring the recognition for satisfactorily completed activities of mobile participants, exploiting the results of the projects in a way that it is maximizing its impact on individuals and institutions by encouraging peer learning with wider academic community.

We believe that all successful partnerships are the result of shared commitments and mutual benefit from cooperation. Our international partner institutions are diverse, reflecting the different needs and priorities of our partners and our own students and staff. Many of our current partnerships result from individual links between academic staff, while others have been introduced through existing partners or other networks. In order to encourage the development of new links and the internationalization of our study programs, we intend to support the extension of our Erasmus exchanges to new subject areas. Additionally, we also continue to promote the benefits of participation within our institutes and we support academic staff setting up exchange programs in Europe and elsewhere with the aim to seek to offer more diverse mobility opportunities to our staff and students, and to include mobility as an integral or optional element of an increasing number of study programs.

For mobility activity, partners will be chosen by ascertaining which institutions offer similar educational offerings to our own and where there is a good curriculum match which will allow our students to progress to the next stage of their course when they return to the university.

In the EU, we will not target specific geographical areas for exchange activities as the curriculum and language of teaching will be most important so that students will receive maximum academic benefit from a period abroad. Outside, the EU our main targets for mobility activities will include both the US, Canada and other countries on both American continents, as our teaching staff have a number of professional relations with their colleagues representing this part of the world, as well countries of the former USSR, such as Kazakhstan or Georgia, where there still a number of citizens with Polish origins, who are interested in studying in the country of their grandparents. Also, Ukraine and Belarus, as our neighbouring states belong to the area of interest. Irrespective of the continent, it will be essential that partners are located in destinations which are attractive to students.

*2. 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.*

The University guarantees the highest quality in the organization of student mobility, whilst ensuring equal academic treatment and services to home and incoming students. Students receive extensive support from the International Relations Office throughout their mobility activity. Periods of study undertaken by the students within the Erasmus+ framework receive full academic recognition and do not lead to an increase in the overall length of course of study.

During the semester the International Relations Office organizes extracurricular programs for the incoming students, whereas Erasmus+ students can use all facilities and services also attend freely all events organized by the institution, such as our annual celebrations, career fairs, training opportunities, conferences, and workshops. Erasmus+ students are treated equally in the educational system. They need to meet the same expectations we have for the institutional students as well as they receive the same rights and are provided equally with services as the institutional students. For inbound students we provide general information regarding visa, accommodation and insurance on our website and upon arrival we also give them handouts with a short summary of all relevant information. However, if students still feel the need for assistance, they can visit the as the International Office, where we provide personal assistance when required.

As part of the Erasmus+ Traineeship exchange program UoSS aims to provide students with the opportunity of working as an intern in another country, to broaden the horizons of our students by discovering new cultures, to promote cooperation between institutions, to help enrich the educational environment, and to contribute to building a pool of well-qualified, open minded and internationally experienced young people. For any work placement that may be introduced, each student is provided with a Training Agreement concerning the program placement period, which needs to be endorsed by all three party involved in the placement.

A clear agreement between the parties is recognized as being an important means of demonstrating that there is a shared understanding both of what is to be provided and what the student can legitimately expect, and also that the University – which is ultimately responsible for the provision – is in a position to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the student placement. The International Relations Office is in regular contact with the students to be able to monitor the progress made by students during the placement and to provide assistance in case it is required. Upon returning students will have to certify that they have completed the agreed program of work and need to submit a written report. This system is designed to help ensure the highest quality in the organization of student placements.

At UoSS we believe, that the opportunity to take part in Erasmus+ exchanges is important for the personal development of our teaching and administrative staff. The University also welcomes visiting academic staff and the contribution they make to its administrative processes, teaching programs and curriculum development. Additionally, outcomes of staff exchange are positively evaluated and recognized upon arrival. Teacher and staff exchanges are also valued and encouraged as part of our policy to continue to develop bilateral and multilateral partnerships.

UoSS demonstrates strong institutional commitment to equality of opportunity. Consequently, all students selected to take part in the exchange programs are chosen on the basis of merit and their potential to benefit from the experience. The University selects students without regard to sex, race, ethnic origin, religion or social background. Applications from students with disabilities are viewed on exactly the same academic grounds as those of other

candidates, therefore the transparency of our selection process is also highly ensured. Finally, we are committed to enable students with disabilities to participate as fully as possible in the Program as well as in student life.

We display all available scholarship opportunities on our website throughout the semester and organize student forums and fairs regularly in order to promote the Erasmus+ Program. Students receive extensive support from the International Relations Office with their application and throughout the mobility period including possibility of personal consultancy about the available places at our partner institutions, study related questions or personal difficulties in order to facilitate the increase the number of program participants. Up-to-date information is available on our website regarding partner institutions, written student and staff reports or survey results, also we organize student forums involving returning Erasmus+ students on a regular basis and attend all professional events organized by other departments in order to promote the Erasmus+ Program. In addition, staff taking part in Erasmus+ mobility are required to share their experiences on regular departmental meetings to promote Erasmus+ opportunities among colleagues.

UoSS encourages and supports the sharing of good experiences among staff as well as peers, which facilitates the maximization of the impact of its Erasmus+ Program.

*3. 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.*

UoSS's participation in the Programme will be mainly in the area of student and staff mobility. Turning to Priority 1 of the Modernisation Agenda, mobility experiences will enhance both the skills and employability of our graduates and to encourage our staff to benefit from different teaching and learning practices. A greater awareness of academic colleagues of the benefits of mobility for both students and staff should result both in higher levels of student and staff mobility.

To address Priority 2, we will continue our well-established relationships with professional bodies, industrial organisations, government departments and research institutes to develop our curriculum and to ensure that our courses will be relevant and meet industry needs. As the University has a culture of continuous enhancement, participation in the Programme will allow us to carry on this culture and will allow us to learn from engagement with other institutions and individuals. As a result, the whole University will be institutionally engaged in the Programme for the benefit of all its students and staff, thereby addressing Priority 3. With regard to Priority 4, it will be key for us to work with industry, both regional and international, to provide as many opportunities for our students as possible. Not only will this be of benefit to the employability of our graduates, it will allow us to set up networks of contacts which could lead to stronger network development between the University and business in and outside the local region and increase the range of placements we can offer to our students. In terms of improving governance and funding, active engagement with partner institutions/organisations in other countries will allow us to compare and contrast our current practices, and where possible, implement enhancements to improve governance. Relationships with these institutions could result in collaborative networks which in turn could result in joint ventures for funding applications under this, and other programmes.