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DEMOCRITUS UNIVERSITY OF THRACE

Erasmus Policy Statement (Overall Strategy)

D. Erasmus Policy Statement (Overall Strategy)

The Institution agrees to publish this overall strategy (all three parts) on its website within one month after the signature of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education by the European Commission.

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.

Internationalisation is one of the strategic priorities of the University as it is a key factor for responding to challenges, changing needs and the rapidly evolving Education and Science frontiers, as well as strengthening quality assurance. As the most essential part of the wider International Strategy, the European Strategy will contribute to all key objectives of the strategic plan: European and cross-border cooperation not only with HEIs but also with other strategic partners such as enterprises, local authorities, organizations and research institutes, aiming to improve teaching and learning, research, regional affairs and sustainability.

In more detail, the University's Internationalisation Strategy aims to promote longer-term and sustainable networks and partnerships with HEIs and other organisations in research, teaching and enterprise for mutual benefit.

Key objectives are:

- To raise the University's international profile through recruitment and partnerships.
- To internationalise the curriculum to reflect an increasingly diverse student and staff body.
- To expand the number of programmes offering an international experience enhancing individual and societal advancement.

Within the European Strategy, Erasmus has a central role in facilitating collaborative links and partnerships with other European HEIs and in fostering high quality learning opportunities for students and staff through mobility. Offering the possibility of cooperation with strategic partners in EU and non-EU neighbouring countries, in South-Eastern Europe (essential because of the geographical position of the University) for the modernisation of the HEIs and for student and staff mobility through development of joint/double degrees together with our European partners, Erasmus is considered as an essential key for these objectives.

Criteria for choosing partners are: a) to ensure that all scientific fields and all cycles are represented, b) to ensure quality in cooperation by evaluating and re-examining existing and active partnerships (compatibility of academic profiles, trust in partner's academic decisions and administrative support for mobile participants in terms of provision of basic time-lines, updated course catalogues, early response for acceptance and signing Learning/Teaching /Training Agreements or for issuing Transcripts of Records/ Confirmation letters, help in finding accommodation and in social integration to local academic life), c) to ensure partnerships will lead to participation in common research projects, and d) to ensure that partnerships will help meeting the emerging needs of the University and the society and to strengthen its international outreach.

Under the Erasmus scheme, the University currently has over 200 Erasmus partners in 23 different countries, offering mobility opportunities to students and staff in 49 different academic subject areas. These partnerships are reviewed annually, with a view to consolidating and strengthening each relationship. Academic Units are encouraged to establish new partnerships which will bring long-term benefits to each institution.

Partners are chosen from all participating countries, but there is a trend especially to collaborations with neighbouring countries for cross-border cooperation, due to the geographical position of the University on a crucial cross-roads between West and East and the specific needs and visions of some subject areas and scientific fields. Opening of partnerships in Asia through Erasmus will be essential for the strategic plan of the University.

The key objective is to increase the mobility of outgoing students, while continuing to maintain the number of incoming students both in study and placement actions. In more detail the objectives for the mobility activities are:

- promotion and further support (financial, administrative and academic) of high quality student and staff mobility,
- selection of mobile persons in a completely transparent way,
- ensuring immediate and automatic recognition of studies or skills gained by mobile students, institutional and academic recognition for mobility activities of staff
- recognition of mobility and cooperation activities as a basic tool for assessment of individuals and Faculties
- non-discrimination and provision of equal access and equitable opportunities to mobile participants from all backgrounds, especially from under-represented groups.

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 has always included the Erasmus office to be an integral part of its Central International Relations Office resulting in increased visibility and co-ordination to the University's Erasmus activity and ensure a consistent and student-centred approach for incoming and outgoing Erasmus students. The IRO holds management and internal accountability of Erasmus activity by delivering a university-wide forum of academic and appropriate administrative staff to guide and oversee activities assisted by the Academic Liaison members of staff who operate in each faculty/department of our University.

Annual evaluative reports of academic mobility activity (reports on exchange activity) are compiled by the Academic Liaison members of staff and reported to the International Relations Office.

Additionally, the IRO in collaboration with the Erasmus office produce leaflets and booklets on opportunities to promote Erasmus study /placement abroad, inviting returning and visiting students to give presentations and encourage them to publish articles in the University's/ Faculty's internal publications, as well as posting them on our web page that contains practical information and administration procedures for students: forms, documents and handbooks can be downloaded by students and staff. This area will continue to be a priority for developing, and for promoting Erasmus.

Additionally, two main University central services support the administration and the dissemination of the Erasmus programme: the Research Committee of Democritus University of Thrace and the Career Office, by respectively providing financial support, accounting services and dissemination of all activities through their websites and in site offices.

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.

International mobility of students, researchers and staff within the framework of the Erasmus Strategy is directly linked to one of the strategic goals of our University which refers to the growing of its internationalization. The policy objectives mentioned in section D1 will have an impact on the priorities included in the strategic plan of our University which are contributing to the key points of the Modernization Agenda.

In further detail, enhancing mobility opportunities for students and staff ,the University aims to develop and sustain long term partnerships with HEIs and research intensive institutions that support and enable more effective and personalised learning and teaching/research experiences equipping graduates and members of staff with core transferable competences through the use of innovative learning approaches and delivery methods (e-skills and ICTs) embedded in their curriculums and research activities.

By reviewing biannually the bilateral agreements with our partners, aiming to support and promote those that encourage a greater variety of study modes will provide to our mobile students and members of staff the opportunity to have a strong impact on quality of learning and teaching experiences as described in the paragraph above. Additionally, when having incoming students and staff members in our faculties, events are held to promote the dissemination of experiences and activities within the department/faculty and thus encourage mobility among colleagues and students based on shared academic/research interests.

To provide more opportunities for students to gain additional skills through study or training abroad the University /faculties hold events and develop materials to promote opportunities to first year undergraduates/graduates. The International Office has established a 'Drop-In' information sessions for members of staff interested in mobility activities along with the launch of a new website "erasmus.duth.gr" that today contains all relevant information and materials.