

## ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

University of Novi Sad

The University of Novi Sad (UNS) adopted its institutional Strategy of Internationalisation in July 2016 and updated it in 2020.

<http://www.uns.ac.rs/index.php/en/international-cooperation/internationalization-of-uns/strategy-of-internationalization>

In May 2020, the leadership of UNS submitted the amendments to the existing Strategy of Internationalisation to the Senate of UNS, in order to further modernise university activities, be ready to face the challenges of the new era of EU international projects and programmes, raise awareness among its students and staff on the important novel aspects of the process of internationalisation, and prepare the grounds for the development of systemic policies regarding digitalisation, environmentally-friendly practices, inclusiveness in all educational opportunities, and civic engagement and active citizenship of the academic community. These new items are listed and explained as new important priorities of international cooperation of UNS. They aim at creating a general framework and impetus for the development of UNS Digital Strategy during 2020, as well as the creation of joint policy papers, applied systemically at the level of all university members, and jointly tackling the new challenges of internationalisation and modernisation.

UNS Digital Strategy, a comprehensive document planned to be adopted by the end of 2020, will integrate the objectives of Erasmus Without Paper Network and the use of EWP/Erasmus Dashboard, and together with different EWP tools will help digitalise the management of new Erasmus+ projects. UNS foresees the integration of available tools offered by Erasmus+ as part of its daily work in order to enable online management of the entire mobility process – from nominations, student selection, inter-institutional agreements, learning agreements, transcripts of records to the recognition of ECTS credits and other requirements of new EU projects. UNS policies and regulations will be devised so as to be in line with the vision to keep creating the European Education Area and will demonstrate an even greater impact of the Erasmus+ Programme on the modernisation of UNS. The European Student Card Initiative will be supported by UNS, serving as an online one-stop-shop through the Erasmus+ Mobile App for students to manage all administrative steps related to their mobility period - before, during and after their stay.

New strategic documents of UNS, dealing with the process of digitalisation, will make full use of the European Commission's *Digital Education Action* plan, as its actions support technology use and the development of digital competences in education. UNS will build upon all of the IT support and structures it already has in use (e.g. SOVA e-learning platform, telepresence equipment from the Erasmus+ PPMA project enabling an educational system in a collaborative environment with participants in multiple locations, Digital library of doctoral dissertations defended at UNS, Institutional repository for the intellectual output of researchers developed in the Erasmus+ BE-OPEN project).

The Strategy of Internationalisation states that UNS shapes its future alongside other educational and scientific institutions belonging to the European Higher Education Area and European Research Area, and is also open towards collaboration with institutions situated in other parts of the world.

In line with its Strategy of Internationalisation, the University of Novi Sad chooses its partners with regards to the following priorities: Cooperation with leading universities in the world; Cooperation and networking with leading universities in the region; Cooperation with foreign universities able to contribute to the fulfilment of strategic objectives of the Republic of Serbia, Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, four university cities, other local communities, as well as companies situated on the territory of the Republic of Serbia; Cooperation with foreign universities located in the geographical areas inhabited by a larger population of Serbian nationality; Cooperation with foreign universities which are of significance to the national minorities in the Republic of Serbia; Cooperation with the universities in the region which need support from the University of Novi Sad; Cooperation with universities in underdeveloped countries which need support of the University of Novi Sad in the domains of science, education and overall capacity building.

One of the key aspects of international cooperation supported by UNS is the extensive exchange of students, professors, assistants, researchers and administrative staff within the Erasmus+ Programme. Academic mobility is, and has been, one of the strategic priorities of the University of Novi Sad. An important objective of UNS is to achieve the appropriate balance between incoming and outgoing mobility, to encourage student mobility at all three cycles of study, and to make sure that extensive mobility of academic and administrative staff has a sustainable impact on the process of internationalisation at the institution as a whole. International credit mobility, apart from bringing great benefit to individual students and staff is seen by UNS as an exceptional capacity building and quality raising mechanism for university and faculty services in implementing the priorities set out in the Strategy.

When there are advanced mutual interests of UNS and other foreign institutions, bilateral and multilateral cooperation is raised to the level of a strategic partnership, which includes coordinated activities in a number of different areas, joint coordination of large research and development projects, functional joining of resources which are at the disposal of partner institutions, mutual capacity building activities, a common approach towards third parties, extensive exchange of staff and students, and the development of double and joint degrees.

By implementing unique European standards and acting in accordance with good and commonly adopted practices of the European countries, UNS aims at removing obstacles that prevent or hinder the exchange of information, ideas, knowledge, people and resources in the European Higher Education and Research Area and thus confirms its inclination towards being an open European university. UNS is dedicated to the advancement of procedures for the mutual recognition of qualifications in line with the EU standards as well as for the full recognition of successfully completed student mobility stays.

The University's strategic orientation towards growing international project participation is reflected in the Strategy of Internationalisation with the priorities in the domain of science, such as creating favorable conditions to involve a growing number of researchers from UNS in international scientific and developmental projects, which would increase the visibility and reputation of UNS and its member faculties. When deciding on initiating a project or accepting an invitation for participation, UNS applies several criteria in compliance with its Strategy: project objectives and sustainability, quality of partnerships, appointed team members and their expertise, as well as the level of innovation that a project can bring to the University and advance it in the domains of education, research and services.

An example of this established practice is the invitation UNS received and accepted in the application submitted within the ERASMUS+ KA2 Knowledge Alliance call 2019 – European Universities. This ERASMUS+ subprogramme fosters the creation of tighter bonds among universities in Europe, with similar strategic objectives, through joining their resources (both human and material), so as to form a powerful mechanism for developing new levels of excellence. Apart from entering a network comprised of well-known research-oriented European universities through which expertise and best practices will be exchanged, UNS has also recognised the opportunity to merge, synchronize and strengthen the functional links between teaching, research and third mission actions whose importance has been highlighted in all European policy documents. This would also include the creation of double and joint degrees, support for mobility of all kinds (physical, virtual, blended; of students, academic and administrative staff) within such networks, and the feasibility of practical implementation of Erasmus Without Paper.

Since UNS is a non-integrated university, with its faculties as separate legal entities, certain international projects have been managed and implemented both at central and faculty level. In case the project topics are related to specific scientific fields, they have been implemented at corresponding faculties. However, when there are mutual interests of UNS and other foreign institutions, cooperation needs to be raised to the level of a strategic partnership, which includes joint coordination of large research and developmental projects, functional joining of resources, mutual capacity building activities, and the like (e.g. CBHE Project BE-OPEN resulting in scientific papers repository significant for all teaching staff, researchers, PhD students).

UNS has all the necessary structures and the operational capacity supported by prescribed procedures to submit and implement international projects such as Capacity Building, Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances, Jean Monnet, Joint and Double Degrees, and Mobility Projects, and it intends to continue with the practice of smart and strategic selection of partnerships that would position it on the international map of excellence.

Participation of UNS in the programmes funded by the EU in the field of education, research, innovation, mobility, services, governance, etc. is, and has been, one of the main driving forces behind its process of modernisation. UNS firmly supports and endorses the (renewed) modernisation agenda of the EU in the field of HE and is determined to keep implementing its strategic goals and priorities.

- Tackling future skills mismatches and promoting excellence in skills development

UNS will keep fostering diverse forms of cooperation with the employers in order to increase the relevance, delivery and quality of its study programmes. UNS examines the data on its graduates in the labour market so as to determine both the advantages and shortcomings of its educational offer, and make informed decisions on its continual improvement.

UNS will keep encouraging students' access to work-based learning. There is already a growing trend of work placements as part of UNS's study programmes, particularly in the IT sector. The enrolment policy is responding to the needs and demands of the labour market from the institutional perspective, but is also guided by the national decision-makers in higher education.

UNS recognises the need to modernise its STE(A)M curricula. It will keep supporting applications in the context of the Erasmus+ Programme for the coordination of projects in innovative teaching methods in STE(A)M. Also, the newly opened Science and Technology park will enhance the opportunities for students and staff to gain high-level STE(A)M skills and develop the transversal skills and competences important for excellence in innovation and entrepreneurship.

Through its *iDEAlab - Laboratory of ideas*, developed within the EU project "Fostering students' entrepreneurship and open innovation in university–industry collaboration" UNS aims at advancing employment and self-employment potential of graduates and enhancing innovativeness of companies by fostering students' entrepreneurship, creation of business start-ups and open innovation approach in collaboration between universities and enterprises.

In compliance with the newly adopted EU Digital Education Action plan, UNS intends to train its academic and administrative staff in developing digital competences and open science skills to be applied in education, research and services. As a prerequisite to this, UNS adopted Open Science policy documents ([Open Science Rulebook](#), [Decision on Amendments to the Bylaw on Doctoral Studies](#), [Agreement on Sharing Primary Research Data](#), [Instructions for publishing in Open Access](#), etc.) developed within the ERASMUS+ CBHE Project BE-OPEN and embedded a special section into the University's website dedicated to Open Science issues.

In the scope of the Erasmus+ BE-OPEN Project, an institutional repository has been developed where all relevant data referring to UNS researchers, their scientific and artistic production have been deposited. The repository is complementary and linked with some international repositories, which makes UNS's scientific and artistic results visible in the international contexts as well.

Along these actions, trainings and lectures for the University's staff are organised, so as to familiarise them with the agenda of the European Commission referring to the Open Science and implementation of OS principles, and train them in applying these principles in their everyday work when managing the institutional repository and providing assistance to academic staff over depositing their research results.

- Building inclusive and connected higher education systems

UNS offers an inclusive learning environment for students of different backgrounds and is engaged with the local, national, regional and international communities. Agreements on cooperation are concluded and implemented not only with educational counterparts in the country and abroad, but also with local companies, cultural institutions (e.g. Matica Srpska), art institutions, city fair, local and regional

authorities, companies, as well as other stakeholders that contribute to the processes of learning and teaching at UNS, and where UNS can provide relevant expertise and support.

In line with the program of affirmative measures, UNS implements the special enrolment quota for students with disabilities and students of Roma national minority. Students from vulnerable groups have at their disposal various support services, assistive technology and a customized working environment at UNS.

- Ensuring higher education institutions contribute to innovation

UNS is highly dedicated to innovation in education, research and engagement with the wider community. Throughout its units, UNS strives to achieve research excellence and provide high quality doctoral training. It also strives to contribute to the solving of local, regional and global challenges. One of the examples is UNS's BioSense institute. Recognising that ICT today plays a pivotal role in ensuring sustainable, smart and inclusive growth of agriculture, BioSense focuses on multidisciplinary, game-changing and needs-driven research and disseminate it to a global ecosystem of forward-looking stakeholders.

- Supporting effective and efficient higher education systems

Science, higher education and cooperation with the business sector are balanced and interconnected at UNS. More than 150 start-up companies in the IT sector were founded with the support from the University and its members, employing several thousand young engineers from the region who graduated from UNS.

Being a multicultural and multilingual university, in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina famous for its diversity of peoples, UNS upholds Europe's common values of heritage, diversity, mutual understanding and inclusiveness, at all levels of education and training and through the process of internationalisation strengthens the European dimension in all aspects of its work.

Lifelong learning is an integral part of the University's and its member faculties' activity. In terms of the pedagogical and transversal skills, UNS aims to continually offer training modules to its university junior staff and PhDs (e.g. TRAIN programme emphasising the development of soft skills). UNS faculties offer a wide range of modules in different subject areas. One of the examples is the Erasmus+ PPMA project, where one of the goals is to develop 20 courses which will be conducted within short cycles dedicated to lifelong learning in the field of public policy making and analysis.

Given that the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, with Novi Sad as its administrative centre, is a multinational, multicultural and multiconfessional European region, a considerable cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity is maintained in all spheres of its academic and social life. As a clear illustration of such a diversity, there are 26 ethnic groups and 6 official languages in Vojvodina. The importance of multilingualism is fully acknowledged at UNS and evidenced by the language support offered at different levels. English language is taught across the majority of study programmes at UNS faculties, either as a mandatory or elective course, which implies constant foreign language preparation. The Centre for Languages at the Faculty of Philosophy provides language support to outgoing mobile participants via courses in more than 20 foreign languages that candidates can take prior to applying for mobility. The Centre for Serbian as a Foreign Language offers lectures to incoming mobile participants. As a result of many successful years of participation in EU-funded mobility programmes and projects, UNS has identified the need to further internationalise its academic offer and, as a result, measures have been developed to encourage the teaching staff to increase their offer of courses in English and other foreign languages, rewarding this particular internationalisation activity in UNS's open calls for mobility.

The University of Novi Sad will continue to pay full attention to the Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages and emphasize the importance of developing multilingual competence of its staff and students by improving language learning and teaching, encouraging the usage of online tools and platforms for such a purpose, actively supporting and recognising the mobility of students and staff as a useful means of boosting their language skills, and promoting and encouraging mobility of language teachers through the Erasmus+ Programme.