

**EUROPEAN HUMANITIES UNIVERSITY
ERASMUS+ POLICY STATEMENT 2021-2027**

European Humanities University is one of the few private universities in Lithuania, bearing an exclusive history of an exiled university. EHU has been operated in Minsk, Belarus, since 1992 until political restrictions and forced closure in 2004. EHU was founded in Minsk in 1992 with the intention of creating an educational institution designed after western-style colleges and universities, rooted in the foundational study of Humanities and Social Sciences. Its primary purpose was to prepare young men and women to assume responsible roles in the future societal development of a free and open Belarus as thoughtful professionals and civic leaders in their respective fields. Because of these aims and respective way of teaching, in 2004 EHU was closed in Belarus. Having secured the support of international donors and the Lithuanian government the university has been moved to neighboring Lithuania and established here as a higher education institution corresponding to the Lithuanian legislation in 2006. Since then EHU is an organic part of the Lithuanian system of higher education, though, at the same time, it remains a Belarusian University, and not only for the reason that 95% of students and nearly 60% of the faculty at EHU are Belarusians. In correspondence with its mission, EHU uses its potential for the development of a European intellectual space without borders, return of knowledge to Belarus, the establishment of innovative social partnerships, development of civic education, and broadening of human rights and potential through the freedom of speech, thought, and research. All these goals, being fundamentally European, are especially valuable to promote Belarus' transition to openness and democracy and are very important for the other states in the Eastern European region.

The purpose of the European Humanities University (hereinafter – EHU) Erasmus Policy Statement (hereinafter – EPS) is to maintain forward-looking dissemination of the European Higher Education Area mission, goals, and objectives, and to support the genuine implementation of the EHU Strategy 2019-2024 (hereinafter – University Strategy) by means of establishing of purposeful communication planning and acting in the field of internationalization.

One of the main points of this strategic document is the EHU Internationalization Strategy. It stresses, first and foremost – the main aim of internationalization – to make the EHU a real hub for transforming the post-Soviet experience of democratic development into a system with tools to help the post-Soviet states in their further changes.

Playing a central role in transmitting European values and democratic principles via rigorous higher education is the main strategic target of EHU is internationalization. This target is the first starting point in EHU's international cooperation program, particularly, in the selection of partners and identification of specific ways and areas for cooperation. Given EHU's operations in the framework of the European Higher Education Area, a predominant role for fostering international mobility is dedicated to the Erasmus+ program. EHU intends to pursue: development cooperation with partners in other countries within the framework of a clear strategy for internationalization through capacity building, the share of best practice, opening opportunities for students, faculty, and staff, including those from a disadvantaged background, especially for individuals with fewer opportunities. EHU modernization strategy first of all consists of involving blended formats of Erasmus interaction, academic development, internationalization of studies, and alignment of students with the job market. According to the initiative of establishing a pan-EU European Education Area by 2025, EHU will promote the vision contained within the policy. In particular, spending time abroad to study should become the new norm for students and higher education

qualifications should be recognized across the EU, thus contributing to the overall promotion of the European identity.

The main focus of EHU is to carry out projects of different kinds that support the institution's development strategy, and are in line with the EU Modernisation Agenda for Higher Education. International programs and projects are among priorities in the research, artistic and educational activity of EHU. The part of the EHU faculty is involved in actions targeted at internationalization via these European Programs, and the idea has been expressed in the documents pertaining to the University's mission and strategy. Via Erasmus+ Program EHU aims to develop additional course offerings (for example, double degree/joint study programs with Bard College and Herzen State Pedagogical University) and to undertake research projects addressing specific needs of its stakeholders. EHU has experience of being a coordinator of an Erasmus+ Jean Monnet project "Teaching the European Transnational Constitutionalism inside and outside the EU" (project number 575172-EPP-1-2016-1-LT-EPPJMOCHAIR), and an experience of being a partner in Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project, as a "Learning Agreement Online System", (project number 2015-1-LU01-KA203-001348). The objective of the project was to enable students to prepare their Learning Agreements within an online system that will then allow them to liaise with the coordinators of sending and receiving higher education institutions to finalize the document, approve and sign it online.

EHU is currently involved in the Strategic Partnership project "AIMED – Aiming to educate by promoting the academic dimension of Erasmus+" (project number 2018-1-PL01-KA203-051106). This project is focused on creating an online platform providing an interactive course catalog for international students presented in an attractive and user-friendly way. Students will be able to check the online courses offered by various Higher Education Institutions before completing their learning agreement. Access to the course methodology, multimedia presentations, or profile of the lecturer will provide a more accurate insight into the topic explored.

At the moment the University plans to advance the level of participation and the number of Erasmus+ projects. First, EHU plans - on the base of the Jean Monnet Chair - to develop applications for several Jean Monnet Modules and Jean Monnet Projects - to exploit the Jean Monnet Chair project results and to spread complete and necessary info about the EU law, policies and politics among Belarusian students, who are detached to a great extent from the actual info about the EU. EHU is going to continue participation in ongoing and to participate in new Strategic Partnership projects to share the experience in new educational programs' and modules' development, in exchange programs' creation and advancement and education management facilities and tools development, for EHU is a good hub for exploitation of the EU HEIs experience for Belarusian and other Eastern European students and a bridge for further transfer of this experience to Belarusian Universities. Also, the University is interested in participating as a partner and coordinator of Capacity Building projects for the development of new MA double diploma programs, new minors, and short-cycle / educational certified modules transferring the best educational practices from the European leaders in the field to Eastern European states and creating consortia involving Belarusian and other Eastern European Universities, NGOs, think tanks and public authorities. And, of course, Erasmus+ mobility under KA103 and KA107 projects will be in a focus of EHU attention, for it is of great importance not only for educational reasons but for spreading the EU values and integrity to the Eastern European borders. The other region of EHU interest is the states of Central Asia, where priority is given to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Key Action 1 -- would have an overarching impact on the successful implementation of Strategic Objective 3, 4 and 5 of the EHU Strategy 2019-2024. Particularly, EHU's successful track record of participation in KA107 is essential to the dissemination of good practice with the EU's neighborhood. It should be noted that in 2019 the number of applications for student exchange programs has almost doubled as compared with that of 2018 (74 vs 38 applications). This indicates the good motivation and interest of EHU students to participate in the Erasmus program. Requirements for the selection of partner Universities will be based on the EHU Strategy 2019-2024 and its goals. First of all, partners must match our fields of studies and programs, as well as research interests of our faculty.

Key Action 2 -- increase of quality in research and arts, as well as increasing the outreach of EHU to counterparts across Europe, increasing the share of faculty's engagement in Erasmus+ program. EHU is implementing a number of Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership projects; it is a partner in several project applications. In recent years EHU is also an applicant within the framework of Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education projects. Participation in these actions will contribute to achieving the goals and objectives of the EHU Strategy 2019-2024. This includes increasing a number of courses taught in English as well as increasing part of academic and administrative staff fluent in English; developing and strengthening existing institutional partnerships; sharing of best practices.

Establishing structured, intensive, and long-term cooperation with carefully selected partner institutions is closely connected and practically impossible without mobility activities for staff and students. Moreover, this European dimension added to the traditional curriculum of students and academic and administrative staff, not only reinforces their professional and scientific skills but also enhances their personal development.

The application process for participation of students, faculty and staff in the Erasmus program is open, transparent, and inclusive, which is determined by University's regulations in the field of mobility (Regulation on the International Mobility of Students and Staff of the EHU).

The process of selection of application is conducted on a collegiate basis, including representatives of different interest groups. The results of the revision of applications are presented publicly however respecting individual's right for privacy, meaning no disclosure of personal details of participants are revealed, however, any member of the University community, interested in learning about the results of selection, can get access to thorough statistics.

The Equal Opportunity Policy was developed and adopted at the University in 2019. This Policy is aimed at protecting against discrimination "based on sex, race, color, ethnic and social origin, genetic features, languages, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation". EHU is currently undergoing a process to further expansion of this Policy, which is expected to come into force in the next academic year.

Participants with fewer opportunities are encouraged to apply for additional funding for their mobility activities in order to secure their participation and participation of accompanying persons (if needed). Participants having family responsibilities or working participants will have the range of mobility opportunities to apply to: "physical" (full-time) mobility, blended mobility, as well as a virtual one. EHU will provide support for inbound and outbound mobility participants from these groups by using the EHU's extension of the learning platform Moodle (the most popular course management system). Virtual mobility participants within blended mobility at EHU will be treated equally and have access to the same services (for example, library) as home students and staff, as well as long-term physical mobility participants.

In 2015-2017, EHU has already demonstrated its eagerness to switch to the online-learning agreement by participating in LAOS (Learning Agreement Online System). From 2019, every outgoing student of EHU is encouraged to install Erasmus+ mobile App prior to departure to Erasmus exchange. EHU has already access to the Erasmus+ online dashboard platform. In order to foster the implementation of the European Student Card Initiative, a task force featuring IT staff will be set up in order to develop the necessary tweaks for the integration of the Oracle PeopleSoft studies information system with the ESC initiative. In order to meet the requirements and implement the European Student Card Initiative, workshops for administrative staff will be developed, especially for EHU academic program curators, who are responsible for negotiating the learning agreement and the process of recognition. In accordance with the announced timeline of the European Student Card Initiative, EHU plans to set the following actions in order to implement the initiative.

- In 2021 - to manage inter-institutional agreements and online learning agreements
- In 2022 - to send and receive student nominations and acceptances
- In 2023 - to exchange transcripts of records related to student mobility.

EHU has been continuously putting efforts at reducing its environmental footprint both within University operations, so during the University-hosted events and activities. Since 2017, EHU has introduced Oracle PeopleSoft Studies Management System that allows for streamlining management of studies, as well as to significantly reduce paperwork, which previously has been conducted in hard copies. By virtue of EHU's involvement in AIMED Strategic Partnership project (2018-1-PL01-KA203-051106), the University will further invest in the digitalization of channels for communication of its Erasmus-related offerings to various target groups. Implementation of the European Student Card Initiative will also allow EHU to reduce print paperwork.

Since EHU has become a full participant of the Erasmus program, the University is unanimously committed to full automatic recognition of all credits. At the moment, this policy is implemented through the EHU's Regulation on Student and Faculty Mobility (the latest version adopted in 2016 by University Senate and approved by Rector). EHU works according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Periods of studies carried out by the students under the Erasmus+ framework are fully recognized and do not increase the lengths of the studies. Incoming students receive the Transcript of their records in order to be able to accomplish the recognition of their credits at the sending institution. Transcripts of records issued by EHU include detailed information about the Lithuanian grading system. In the future, as one of the objectives of the University Strategy, this document will also include statistical information on the distribution of grades across academic programs.

According to Lithuanian legislation, an academic year is composed of 60 ECTS workload. In order to ensure full automatic recognition of gained credits, a Transcript of Records and learning agreement must be submitted. Recognition of credits for traineeship is conducted on the basis of a learning agreement and a traineeship certificate and is listed in the diploma supplement. It is notable that in 2013-2016, the European Commission has awarded the Diploma Supplement Label to EHU, underlining University's commitment to the rigorous application of the Diploma Supplement and excellence in its implementation.

If a student takes part in credit mobility outside of EHEA, then EHU utilizes a compatible system for ensuring transparency in recognition of credits. Normally, a consultation with the Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC member organization takes place in order to take into account all specificities of the respective higher education system. Explicit information on the procedures of automatic credit recognition is described in full on the EHU website, as well as in the EHU Erasmus+ student guide.

Success stories of EHU student mobility are highlighted via the University web and newsletter. The staff of the EHU Communication and Development Unit provides all necessary administrative support in paperwork and provides recommendations regarding the logistics of student mobility. Erasmus+ Institutional Coordinator is actively involved in regular monitoring of the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform, including analysis of the feedback of mobility program, which is provided by students upon completion of credit/traineeship mobility.

At EHU both the incoming and outgoing students carry out their mobility under the supervision of the Institutional Erasmus+ Coordinator, the International Mobility and Alumni Manager and academic coordinators, who are in charge of giving all the necessary academic support and provide information and help if needed.

The selection of students, as well as the procedure for awarding them a grant, is fair, transparent, coherent, documented, and is available to all parties involved in the selection process. The necessary measures to prevent any conflict of interest with regard to persons who may be invited to take part in the selection bodies or process of students' selection are taken.

The main selection criteria for students of the first and second circles are: academic performance of a candidate, previous mobility experiences, motivation, etc., and are made public, because the rules are available at the Universities web site. Lower priority is given to those who have already participated in mobility actions.

Civic engagement stands at the core of EHU's mission and is an integral part of the University curriculum. We realize the civic engagement mission of EHU as a private institution serving the public

interest. Through EHU's membership in the Open Society University Network, every University student is actively encouraged to implement individual and group projects, both serving the University's community (e.g. Erasmus Student Network, Buddy program, Debate Society etc.) and the outer community locally, regionally and internationally.

Erasmus incoming students are enrolled and become a part of the University community, having equal academic treatment, the same rights, as well as the chance to participate in the Campus activities, as all the students at our University. Incoming students are supported by Buddies, helping them in the educational process and adopting them with the new conditions of living. At the department level, the students are supported by departmental mobility coordinators. Students are supplied with the possibility to use all the Universities facilities, including libraries, computer classes, housing service, student canteen, sports facilities etc.

Staff applying for mobility have to justify in the application how their mobility will be beneficial to their research, also how the visit can contribute to reforms in their country, as well as at EHU, making a contribution to teaching methods, quality assurance, joint research, and international cooperation development. An activity plan has to be uploaded: the applicant – in consultation with his / her home and host authorities - has to draw up a plan of the courses and/or planned teaching/training/ research activities at the host institution.

The impact of this mobility project is always regarded and assessed from different points of view: from the point of view of students, staff that participated in the mobility, EHU, partner institutions, as well as from the point of view of the impact on the states and regions where the Universities are situated.

The institutional impact of the Erasmus+ mobility concerns the possibility to sign bilateral agreements with Universities after having some work experience and understanding better the possible profit from deeper cooperation, its possible level, and forms (certified modules / double degrees / joint programs / collaborative research etc.). Moreover, mobility helps to understand the legislative restrictions of all the states on the possible cooperation.

Mobility between Universities, having different dimensions and spheres of good experience, promotes lifelong learning development, distance learning studies improvement and dissemination of contemporary and innovative approaches, student-centred and problem-based learning. Effective governance and funding will be ensured by bringing together an active and professional academic community, developing modern infrastructure, and improving the efficiency of college management. Studies will be delivered by professional academics and assisting staff able to work in a multicultural environment.

At the same time, EPS will correspond to the EHU Strategy 2019-2024, whereas internationalization stands one of the essential goals of the Strategy. In the EPS drafting process EHU will also rely on the tenants of the European Commission's vision for European Education Area, as laid out during the 2017 Gothenburg Social Summit.

As for the impact of mobility at the local and national levels, it is possible to say that it will give the new point of view on the possibility to develop cooperation of different cultures, including the culture of education, where each culture retains its identity, but bravely and friendly enters into a dialogue with other cultures.

