

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT 2021-2027

Educons University has been awarded the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education for the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027. The following Erasmus Policy Statement sets out our institutional strategy in relation to the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education.

The participation of Educons in the Erasmus+ Programme affects the modernization and approaching to the key issues for member states and higher education institutions, defined in the renewed Agenda for HE. Priorities are:

1. Improving the quality and relevance of higher education

Taking part in both National and European projects, University Educons is permanently working on improvement quality both on teaching and scientific field as well as investing in infrastructure for its users- as being the first private university in Serbia with campus. This all gives University great potential for further development in achieving European HEIs level of standards.

2. Strengthening quality through mobility and cross-border co-operation

Till now, Educons University has taken part in four IPA projects: HUSRB/1002/214/068 Development of an infield, ecologically safe, continuously detoxifying technology for producing bio vegetables-PHANETRI, with University of Szeged, Department of Microbiology; HUSRB/1602/41/0031 Development of soil type adapted microbiological products promoting ecological pest management- PLANTSVITA with University of Novi Sad, HR-RS182 Implementation of cross border joint actions toward environment protection in agriculture IMPACT-ENVI with Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek, and „Authentic Gourmet Taste for Sustainable Socio-economic Development in Cross-border region – EatPannonia ” with City of Vinkovic, Torusim Organisation of Irig Municipality and Vinkovic City Investement and Development Agency VIA Ltd.. These projects contributed to the strengthening of the cooperation and investment in the cross-border area with Croatia and Hungary.

3. Making the knowledge triangle work: Linking higher education, research and business for excellence and regional development

Since 2010, 180 agreements on business linking between the University and public and private companies throughout Serbia have been signed. Through developing project studies, which implies a very new level of association with companies and the formulation of long-term relationships and mutual relations - the university and business entities, by their joint action, essential support will be given to career development and raise of student interest to find a good and secure job. With the necessary student practice, study

programs are now synchronized with the real business needs of companies, which in turn have the opportunity to hire students immediately after graduation. As a result of linking higher education, research and business for excellence and regional development, three types of partnership have been identified in relation to the level and content of cooperation with the business sector. The importance of the most common partnerships, educational partnerships, is mainly in support of the learning process among students. The other type of partnership, development partnership, is based on the needs of partners to redefine and continually improve forms and instruments of mutual cooperation. The third type of partnerships, strategic partnerships, is based on the mission of the university and is not only included in the development perspective of the university itself, but also in the perspectives of regional development and the process of internationalization. As mentioned earlier, in order to strengthen regional development Educons University is co-founder of association ACEU.

4. Improving governance and funding

Close cooperation with companies helps universities to develop curricula that are practically oriented and meet the needs of students and society. At the same time, students acquire relevant and practical skills, and adopt new ways of thinking for the labor market. The Board of Directors was established with the intention to assume part of the responsibility as well as the advisory role of the Dean of the Faculty and its vice-chancellors, in their responsibilities(<https://educons.edu.rs/o-educonsu/saveti-direktora/>). Board presents the new foundations in the management of the Faculty, in order to innovate the teaching-scientific process and the improvement of academic staff and study programs. It also provides them with the possibility of direct scholarship for their students and their training within the professional practice that students perform within these companies. The Board is designed as an organizing committee that provides support to the Deans in the academic management of faculties in order to create responsible policies for the education of the next generation of students and to create new knowledge and skills, and in that sense, they also have the responsibilities for support of the Educons University mission statement. The Board consists of the most successful examples of business firms and successful individuals. Board provides direct support to university institutional management through selected interested companies offering opportunities for employment and student practice, networking and academic consulting, as well as the formation of university funds for: 1) financing and scholarships for students, 2) development and improvement teaching staff and 3) research and development of science. In this way, Educons University established a platform to support and facilitate the development of higher education in Serbia and create conditions for modernizing the teaching, learning activities and research process.

In order to reach the goals towards a European Education Area, the University defines the tasks in the function of their realization.

Further internationalization of study programmes:

Further accreditation of study programmes in English include:

- creation of common study programmes with partner universities
- involvement of additional number of international lecturers in the modification of study programmes and their inclusion in the regular teaching processes,
- fostering student, staff and non-staff mobility with international partners (the objective for the enrolment of international students in the period 2020-2025 will be minimum 5%, and 10% maximum, out of the total number of enrolled students)
- boosting the activities in present Sport hall as the part of the international university campus
- facilitation of the enrollment procedure for international students in cooperation with the respective authorities – study visas, insurance, etc.,
- cooperation with the relevant Serbian institutions that promote student mobility scheme setting quotas for student exchange, as well as for the mobility of academic and non-academic staff with members of ACEU.
- creation and implementation of international marketing strategies
- strengthening the cooperation with the existing and prospective partners within the ERASMUS+ programme.
- connecting with international companies (inclusion of academic staff in commercial projects with international companies, providing international internships for the highest achieving students.

Further development of international scientific activities:

- facilitated access to information about international projects for the academic staff at Educons.
- inclusion of the University in a larger number of academic networks and organizations.
- further promotion of the international publishing activity and organizing conferences, symposiums, round tables, congresses, etc.
- founding the international agency for accreditation and quality audit with ACEU members.
- connecting with new partner institutions with an additional focus on North America, the Middle East and the Asian-Pacific region.

For the purpose of realizing these key objectives, there are several strategic programmes:

Increasing the number of foreign exchange students on both bachelor and master programmes:

Starting from 2015/16 Educons has enrolled first international students. With this in view, Educons has accredited English language programmes in three areas – humanities, natural sciences and technological sciences.

Currently, our study programmes in business economics, environmental protection and ecological agriculture are accredited in English at all three levels of study. To broaden its academic offer and attract more international students, Educons will strive to widen the scope of its English-language courses. On the other hand, there is a need to include elements of international participation in the existing curriculums, and to work on the professional development of lecturers and students.

Internationalization strategy (Strategy) of Educons University with all the priorities and key development directions have been defined. International cooperation and development is one of the four pillars of the University strategy of development, next to the development of teaching, science and research as well as collaboration with industry. Since University Educons have recognized the necessity for the full implementation of the Bologna process, it has initiated the organization of higher education institution under the name "The Alliance of Central-Eastern European Universities" (ACEU). Partnership and cooperation within the Alliance is one of the first and also the key segment in internationalization process development.

ACEU was founded in October 2009. in Sremska Kamenica, as an effective and superior alliance of universities, service providers and other key stakeholders in CE region, with the basic aim to create new values through partnership in higher education and research in order to contribute to the development of innovative, knowledge- based economy.

The general objective of the ACEU is to foster collaboration, provide opportunity for global experience and to facilitate the advancement of knowledge on the basis of reciprocity, best efforts and practice, mutual benefit and frequent interactions.

The participating universities agreed that the detailed terms and conditions that guide each activity identified above (technical description of the proposed activities, financial arrangements, bodies responsible for their implementation, etc.) will be separately determined and agreed upon by the Statute of the Alliance. Members of ACEU are: Medical University Reaviz, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, University of Agribusiness and Rural Development Plovdiv from Bulgaria, Educons University, Kaposvár University from Hungary, FON University Skopje from FYROM, Spiru Haret University from Romania, University of Presov in Presov Slovakia, Univerzitet Donja Gorica from Montenegro, Apeiron University from Banja Luka in Bosnia and Herzegovina, University "Luigj Gurakuqi" of Shkodra from Albania, Hellenic American University from Athens Greece. Within the ACEU, Educons University has founded a joint master programme Green Economy. The Green MBA, positions one to become a leader in this exciting transformation of the way business is being conducted around the world. It can help those who are driven to achieve make this world a better place while they help their enterprises turn a long term sustainable profit.

Therefore, Educons University had initiative to start the international cooperation from the very beginning of its foundation. Realizing the importance and perspective, internationalization is one of the basic priorities of Educons development, within the timeline of period 2016-2025. In order to facilitate internationalization process, major

investments have been realized by building and opening first private student dormitory in Serbia, in October 2015, and Sports Hall Center in October 2017. Thanks to that, University Educons has become an international University campus in Western Balkan region. The main objectives of the internationalization strategy are going to be adopted in near future: larger number of study programs in English will be accredited, foreign students' enrollment will be initiated, mobility of students and staff will be increased, efforts for the development of joint study programs and participation in international scientific research projects will be motivated. As up to now, the University Educons remains focused on building partnerships in education, innovation and research.

Erasmus+ staff and student mobility are priority in internationalization strategy also. Both types of mobility are equally important for University Educons and they are marked as important objectives for future development. Core study, scientific and research fields at University Educons are Economics, Business Administration, Environmental protection and Ecological Agriculture. Reason for development in these areas is because capacities and resources of Educons University are the strongest in those research field. At this moment, these fields are priority for students (first and second cycles) and staff mobility. When a system in these areas is established, we can easily include other study and research fields.

The exchange of students and staff will provide the exchange of information on teaching, learning materials, publications and other literature relevant to the educational and research programs. Therefore, it will strongly contribute to the quality of current teaching programs in the area of environmental sciences and agriculture which is also a strategic goal of high education in Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and The Republic of Serbia.

All Key actions, except KA3, within the framework of the Erasmus + projects are strategic orientation of Educons University. Educons team was involved in the preparation of the project proposal in the frame of Erasmus mundus last call. The proposal was not approved but contacts between Educons and 11 EU and 6 WB HEI were established. Some of partners were already known from the ACEU. These contacts were used as a resource for signing partnership agreement for Erasmus+ K1 exchange of student and staff. Realization of this type of projects is one of the primary ways of increasing internationalization of the University, which is also the part of the institutional, and national priority of higher education development, in order to improve the integration of Serbia into the European system of higher education. Main indicators of University Educons international orientation are four implemented partnership mobility agreements so far. So far, university Educons took part in projects: Education of Teachers in the field of Ecological Food Production and Management-EDUECO (16964-TEMPUS-1-2011-1-NLTEMPUS-JPHES); Serbia: Striving towards Excellence in Veterinary Education-EDUVET (TEMPUS 544-270-2013), Building capacity of Serbian Agricultural Education to link with Society-CASA (TEMPUS 544072-2013), Building Competences and Cooperation in the Field of Noise and Vibration Engineering-SENVIBE (598241-EPP-1-2018-1-RS-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP). At the moment following Erasmus+K2 projects are active: Improving Academic and Professional Education Capacity in Serbia in the area of

Safety & Security (by means of strategic partnership with the EU) / ImprESS(586410-EPP-1-2017-1-RS-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP), Introduction of agroheritage concepts into higher education agenda for raising awareness and capacity of future agriculturists for conservation of this heritage AGROHERITAGE (2019-1-TR01-KA203-075715).

It is expected that the participation in Erasmus programme will continue to contribute to:

- creation of common study programmes with partner universities
- involvement of additional number of international lecturers in the modification of study programmes and their inclusion in the regular teaching processes,
- boosting the activities in present Sport hall as the part of the international university campus
- cooperation with the relevant Serbian institutions that promote student mobility schemesetting quotas for student exchange, as well as for the mobility of academic and non-academic staff with members of ACEU.
- strengthening the cooperation with the existing and prospective partners within the ERASMUS+ programme.
- connecting with international companies (inclusion of academic staff in commercial projects with international companies, providing international internships for the highest achieving students

In general participation in Erasmus programme will contribute to improving the quality and relevance of study courses at Educons, strengthening quality through mobility and cross-border co-operation, linking higher education, research and business for excellence and regional development. Educons shows an unequivocal dedication to the objective of supporting student mobility with the building of an international university campus. The project of the student house, besides investing in the student standard of living, is one of the prime contributors to the internationalization of Educons University. A university campus with a variety of activities and facilities provides a realistic basis for attracting international students. Quality of the implementation will be maintained through:

- Providing international students with complete study support at Educons.
- Training administrative staff to work with international students
- Keeping record of international students
- Providing accommodation at the Educons student house
- Providing study visas for foreign nationals
- Helping students get health insurance coverage in Serbia
- Realization of student mobility and the mobility of academic and administrative staff.
- Establishing new contacts and creating the base for further international cooperation and projects.

The task of Educons in realizing this goal is to ensure better possibilities for student and staff exchange. Mobility schemes provide conditions for completing a study period abroad, both for incoming and outgoing students and staff. An increase in the number of these international mobility programmes is imperative. This can be achieved by aligning the study programmes of partner universities based on the ECTS system of credit accumulation and transfer. By 2025, the goal is to significantly increase the student mobility rates, and provide the necessary conditions for the advancement of international mobility schemes. Educons aims to develop and improve the process of academic exchange for the teaching staff, by taking steps to find adequate partner institutions and establish an active cooperation. A rise in mobility will add to the professional skills and quality of the teaching process and study modules. Beginning with the strategic goal of Educons University to raise the level of internationalization, the EU programme ERASMUS + holds a significant place. The terms for student and staff mobility are approved and in-place parts of inter-institutional contracts among Educons University and international partners, which enable both incoming and outgoing students and staff to apply for financial aid within credit-bearing Erasmus+ mobility schemes. Educons plans to take maximum advantage of the possibilities offered by the Erasmus+ schemes.

Through participation in KA2 will enable institution to spread innovation, improve current capabilities and to transfer good practice. Targets and indicators (in brackets) for Educons participation in Erasmus+ programme are the following:

1. to apply with the highest possible number of the signed bilateral inter-institutional agreements for student and staff exchange (number of new agreements for each successful application)
2. to extend the offer of study programmes in the English language, thereby increasing the number of incoming students and new potential institutional partners (number of new courses for each successful application)
3. creation of new joint study programmes (number of new courses for each successful application where applicable).
4. to extend accredited doctoral programs in English (number of new accredited doctoral programs for each successful application where applicable).

In the following period, Educons intends to research all possibilities of establishing new joint study programmes within the EU and beyond. The joint programmes are important as they contribute to the quality of study programmes, teaching methods and standards. Currently, there is one English language programme, called Green Economy, in cooperation with ACEU members. Provided that conditions are met, Educons will participate in the creation of new joint study programmes in partnership with ACEU members and other potential partners. A role in Key Action 1 of the Erasmus+ programme is one of the crucial goals, as the EU provides a substantial support though financing the joint master degree programmes). In the frame of current Erasmus+ K2 projects, Impress and Agroheritage, new curricula and study courses will be developed and accredited.

Over several years, Educons participates in various international programmes (Tempus, COST, IPA ...) through which it strengthens cooperation with its European partners. The results achieved within Tempus have met all expectations and greatly contributed to the improvement of the professional practice and cooperation with academic partners. The established firm partnerships are continually growing. As until now, Educons will invest in partnerships on international projects in the area of education and scientific research. A particular attention will be targeted toward the latest EU projects Horizon2020 i Erasmus+ (Key action 2), primarily with European institutions.

Sustainability and long term impact of projects will be conducted through sharing all the information on University website as well as providing continuous visibility and dissemination of results of ongoing projects.

Indicative timeline

2021/2022

Existing agreements renewal, establishing new agreements, applying for KA103 projects to raise opportunity for receiving grants, finding partners for KA107, increasing number of incoming students. It is expected that there will be decrease in mobility of students and staff due to Covid-19, therefore target will be to catch up with the previous mobility numbers.

2023/2024/2025

Midterm evaluation of targets/establishing new agreements/increasing number of incoming students and staff/5% increase in outgoing mobility numbers is expected. KA107 projects will be encouraged by department visits, with objective to increase countries diversity for student/staff exchange.