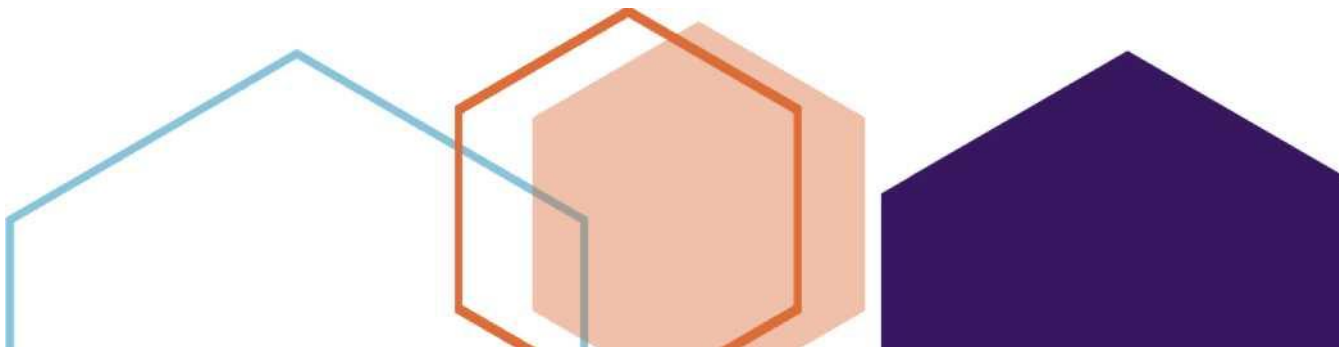


STRATEGY

FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION 2021-2027

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY - VARNA

Adopted by the Academic Board on 27 April 2020



1. INTRODUCTION

International orientation has stimulated the diversity of scientific and educational approaches and it has drawn in students and scientists all over the world that defines internationalization as the main strategic goal of the Technical University of Varna. The University international atmosphere, the way it organizes the training and purposefully popularizes international projects ensure that our students are able to undertake responsibilities both at home and abroad.

The strategic goal of the University for the development of the educational services export, aimed at increasing the level of competitive education at Technical University-Varna (TU-Varna) in an international aspect is in accordance with the national and European priorities. On the national level, the internationalization strategy follows the principles and goals set in the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in the Republic of Bulgaria for the period after 2020. On the institutional level, the current strategy is part of the goals and initiatives set for implementation in the Strategy for overall development of TU-Varna, adopted in 2019, and directed to achieve intelligent, sustainable and inclusive change at the University. The strategy for internationalisation of the Technical University of Varna has been developed on the basis of the relevant documents, approved and integrated on the European level. According to the European Commission documents, internationalization is a key base in the higher education development and modernization. The present process is not only national borders complete crossing but it involves connecting the local with the global, reconciling the known with the unknown, incorporating the principles of interdisciplinarity, multilingualism, cultural diversity, innovation, social justice and social inclusion.

There are different definitions for the higher education internationalization, and according to one of the most widespread, the internationalization of a higher education institution implies an integration of an international, intercultural and global dimension into the goals, functioning and processes of teaching and learning, research and knowledge transfer.

Internationalization means activities between nations, i.e. the basic unit remains the nation, even when relations between nations become increasingly important. Internationalization is diverse and it has related to equality. Upon globalization, a single world form integrates all others, consisting of an increasingly integrated world economy, new information and communication technologies, the emergence of an international knowledge network, the role of the English language and other forces beyond the control of academic institutions.

Internationalization is a management approach in the field of education, in which the activities related to international cooperation cease to be isolated within one department and become a priority and part of all activities performed within the higher school, namely teaching, learning, scientific research, academic projects, curricula, students mobility, lecturers and administration, internships in industry, academic services and the creation of a development-friendly multicultural environment for work, study and communication. The main areas on which European universities should focus their efforts and capacity in relation to the internationalization of higher education are: (1) students, academic and non-academic staff international mobility, (2) internationalization at home and digital learning (3) building strategic partnerships and (4) institutional capacity.

Outgoing academic mobility of students and staff has been always limited to a certain percentage of students and faculty. Therefore, the internationalization of type “at home” has become increasingly important for the universities development, which refers to attracting foreign students for the entire course of study or exchange lecturers with an international experience, as well as the curricula and content internationalization and the introduction of innovative methods for teaching and learning.

In contrast to traditional universities in the past that only focused on teaching and scientific research, modern universities are not some elite clubs of privileged intellectuals who have lost connection with society, but seek to show the processes happen inside and mostly to serve it by training good personnel to themselves and to society. Following the vision of TU-Varna, the current strategy has been developed in order to achieve its goals and it is based on the principles and values followed by the entire university academic community.

2. INTERNATIONALIZATION - STRATEGIC GOALS AND PLANNED INITIATIVES IN TU-VARNA

The strategic area of internationalization should be considered in the context of a modern technical university concept. It has been disseminated far beyond teaching within the curriculum and stimulating students initiative. The world, business and science are interconnected and interdependent more than ever before. Therefore, graduating higher education students can be truly useful to themselves and society only if they have so called global competencies, which include:

- knowledge of global political, economic and social trends, as well as the changes they lead to;
- understanding of the global dimension, which has the field in which they have been realized professionally;
- knowledge and developed ability to adapt in communication with different cultures, perceptions and approaches;
- ability to communicate effectively without cultural and language barriers;
- ability to work and create in a multicultural and multilingual environment.

The lecturers, students and staff should take into consideration existing international and cultural aspects in teaching, curriculum development creation, as well as working methods and practices. This approach will popularize Technical University-Varna idea as a world recognized technical university, which is a reliable international partner for the transfer of knowledge and technology to industry, science and society. The strategy for internationalisation of TU-Varna aims to contribute to the transformation of the university into a most modern university, following the main strategic goals, and the following planned initiatives lead to the achievement of:

Strategic goal #1.

International mobility encouragement

Planned initiatives:

1. Transformation of outgoing student mobility with a duration of at least 3 months into a desirable element upon graduating in bachelor's degree programmes.
2. Diversification of student mobility possibilities with the purpose of training by increasing the number of countries, partner universities and training programmes in which students of TU-Varna can perform mobility.
3. Expansion of the network of employers and business partners of TU-Varna in Europe and the world, in order to increase the possibilities for student internships and internships abroad.
4. Increasing the amount of attracted funding under Erasmus+ Key Activity 1, as well as attracting funding for outgoing student mobility outside the European mobility programme.
5. Improving the organizing, facilitating and reporting methods on outgoing student mobility by optimizing the activities of the International Cooperation Department, the Educational Department and the Career Center.
6. Stimulation of short-term mobility for the purpose of teaching by applying a flexible approach in organizing the study schedule and a period of mobility recognition abroad as full-time work at TU-Varna.
7. Guarantee participation in at least three mobilities by 2027 of each representative of the academic staff at TU-Varna.
8. Optimization of the mechanisms for recognition of the results of the staff mobility and their connection with the annual attestation

Strategic goal #2.

Internationalization of the academic community and curricula

The education internationalization offered by TU-Varna must guarantee diversity and ensure high quality, international experience and modern approaches.

Planned initiatives:

1. Increasing the number of foreign students at TU-Varna up to 10% of the total number of students

by optimizing the marketing strategy and online presence of TU-Varna.

2. Achieving sustainable annual growth in the number of incoming students for the purpose of credit mobility through active participation of TU-Varna in the Erasmus+ programme, Key Activity 1 for mobility with universities in the EU.

3. Increasing the number of countries from which foreign students come at TU-Varna to a minimum of 10 by improving the quality of teaching, developing new educational markets and creating new academic partnerships.

4. Creating curricula leading to achievement of double degrees with partner universities.

5. Integration in all curricula of TU-Varna of disciplines aimed at improving the skills of students to communicate and work in a multicultural environment.

6. Digitalization of the educational process.

7. Creating conditions for improving the students of TU-Varna foreign language competencies by organizing and conducting additional classes in the languages offered for training at the university.

8. Increasing the number and duration of incoming lecturer mobility at TU-Varna by attracting Erasmus+ funding, as well as by activating the mechanisms for reciprocity of lecturers mobility, set in partnership agreements of TU-Varna.

Strategic goal #3.

Participation of TU-Varna in the global knowledge society through participation in international projects and consortia aimed to capacity building and development of science and innovation in higher education.

Planned initiatives:

1. TU-Varna teams development of successful Erasmus+ Key Activity 2 projects in order to build capacity within higher education in cooperation with universities from different regions of the world.

2. Participation of TU-Varna as a partner in international projects for strategic partnerships, exchange of good practices and transfer of innovations in various fields and activities of the university.

3. Development of innovative Master's programs in cooperation with universities that offer such programmes.

4. Research teams of TU-Varna participation in projects that support the internationalization of science and sustainable international scientific consortia creation.

The implementation of this Strategy for Internationalization of TU-Varna is a commitment to which the whole community of the university is committed:

academic staff, management, students, administrative staff of the International Cooperation and Foreign Students Directorate, Academic Department, Research Institute, Student Council and Career Center.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE CONDITION

The internationalization processes in TU-Varna have existed since 1962 - the university establishment, and with the establishment of the International Cooperation Department. The University has been participating in the Erasmus Student and Lecturers Mobility Programme since 2004. TU-Varna has an extended Erasmus Charter since 2007, which allows students to participate in a mobility program for internships.

Another positive trend in the internationalization processes of TU-Varna is the good organization and coordination of these processes between the various involved countries. As a result, during the period 2014-2020 there is a steady trend of increasing number of outgoing and incoming students, lecturers and non-academic staff mobility. More and more international students have been choosing the university as a destination for their academic mobility. Every year the number of foreign students studying at the university for more than one semester increases.

For the academic year 2018/2019, Technical University - Varna has signed 24 new inter-institutional agreements with universities from Europe and Asia and has received about 20 letters of intent from companies for student internships. As of April 2020 we have 120 Erasmus+ interinstitutional agreements with universities and companies from 27 partner countries. These interinstitutional agreements are based on areas of mutual interest, shared quality requirements, selection of students and staff for mobility and clear deadlines at all stages of mobility. They are based on the compatibility of curricula. Interinstitutional agreements have been regularly monitored and, if necessary, adapted.

SWOT analysis

The planning and implementation of the goals and measures for internationalization, specified in this proper Strategy for Internationalization of TU-Varna, requires a preliminary assessment of the external and internal environment conditions (SWOT analysis).

Strengths:

- Established network of sustainable and working academic partnerships with universities from the EU and other countries;
- Membership of TU-Varna in the European Universities Association (EUA);
- Well-trained lecturers;
- Opportunity for mobility of students and lecturers under the Erasmus+ programme in a large number of European universities;
- Well-equipped laboratory base and attractive campus;
- Separate teams of the International and Foreign Students Directorate;
- Availability of a base for student accommodation;
- A committed student council that assists foreign students in the adaptation process;
- Active social student's life;
- Good location of the university in a seaside resort city.

Weaknesses:

- Low recognizability and visibility of the TU-Varna name;
- Limited region of origin of available foreign students;
- High cost of educational services and lack of scholarships;
- Concentration of students' interest in certain specialties;
- Insufficient number of lecturers who have professional experience gained outside Bulgaria;
- Non-established communication culture in a multilingual and multicultural environment;
- Lack of a "partner" market for students due to the absence of permanent summer schools.
- Modest investment / lack of investment compared to competing universities;
- Limited use of new technologies in foreign students attracting;
- Deficiencies in student experience / training (academic, administrative and social);

Opportunities:

- Bulgarian membership in the European Union;
- Low living costs in Bulgaria;
- Making the attraction of foreign students as an institutional priority;
- Growth potential in underdeveloped and slow developed markets;
- Using the opportunities presented by the new Internet technologies;
- Availability of an airport in Varna with relatively good international connections;
- Improving international positions and participating in strategic partnerships;

Threats:

- Global and regional economic or political changes;
- Investment increase in attracting students of national and international competitors;
- Lack of budget and understanding;
- Appearance of new competitors on the foreign students market;
- Other competitors to improve their positions on the national and international market;
- Problems with visas issuance. Complex procedure and high costs for visa type D issuance for training in Bulgaria;
- The lack of a unified national advertising strategy for the higher education in Bulgaria promotion abroad;
- Unrecognizability of Bulgaria as an educational destination abroad, lack of international traditions of Bulgarian higher education;
- Relatively difficult procedure for admission of international students in Bulgaria, approved by the

legislator.

5. ACTIVITIES FOR ACHIEVING THE INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY GOALS

International competencies are of extremely high importance for successful professional realization of higher education graduating students. The team of TU-Varna is aware of this challenge and it strives to become a leader among other technical universities in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe in terms of providing training close to the real industry that prepares students for successful implementation in the field of production and innovation. The transformation of TU-Varna into a prestigious technical university with an active and socially engaged community in which everyone studies, works and communicates freely, without language and cultural barriers, will contribute to the development of the city of Varna and the country.

During the period 2021-2027, within the implementation of this Strategy, the TU-Varna team will focus on the following key and interrelated activities:

- > Internationalization of the student community.
- > Strengthening the institutional commitment to internationalization.
- > Internationalisation of curricula and syllabus.

The tables below contain information about the activities that will be performed, as well as the responsible departments and employees.

> INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE STUDENT COMMUNITY

Activity	Department in charge
Increasing the number of foreign students for full course of education at TU-Varna	International Education Programmes Department
Increasing the number of incoming students mobility from partner universities at TU-Varna	International Cooperation Department
Increasing the number of outgoing mobility of students of TU-Varna to foreign universities for a period of one or two semesters within the Erasmus+ programmes	International Cooperation Department
Stimulating the mobility of students from TU-Varna to industrial companies outside Bulgaria in order to acquire international experience.	Career Center, Student Council, International Department
Creating a network of students and alumni with positive experience as ambassadors for recruiting international students.	International Education Programmes Department
Activating the representation of the university in social networks to attract the interest of international students and their parents.	International Education Programmes Department
Activities related to the adaptation and integration of foreign students at TU-Varna	International Activities and Foreign Students Directorate

> INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONALIZATION

Activity	Department in charge
Development and conclusion of contracts for academic partnerships in new countries and regions all over the world for TU-Varna, as well as approval of the already existing strategic partnerships.	International Cooperation Department
Development and participation in projects within the Erasmus+ programme Key Activity 1 "International Credit Mobility" and Key Activity 2 "Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices".	International Cooperation Department Academic Staff

Improving the qualification of the lecturers' staff by gaining international experience acquired during short-term mobility or during a long stay at a foreign university.	Academic staff, International Cooperation Department
Participation of the academic staff of TU-Varna in joint projects for knowledge transfer and innovation with representatives of companies in Bulgaria	Research Institute, Student Council and Career Center
Participation of the academic staff of TU-Varna in research projects with international participation	Academic staff Research institute
Improving the competencies of the academic staff of the University in English and acquiring communication skills in a multicultural environment.	Academic staff LCES Department
Assisting students in choosing courses and programmes before beginning of mobility. Special attention to people with special educational needs, socially disadvantaged students and others. less presented groups in mobility.	International Cooperation Department, Erasmus Coordinators.
Organizing and conducting international conferences and seminars that provide opportunities for cooperation and establishing new contacts between academia and business.	International Cooperation Department, Research Institute, Student Council and Career Center
Organizing public events and meetings of participants in outgoing mobility and incoming Erasmus+ students, in order to transfer knowledge and experience and create a university environment in establishing an international profile of the university.	International Cooperation Department, Erasmus Coordinators.
Creating a programme for relatively modest scholarships for international students.	Business Council

> INTERNATIONALIZATION OF CURRICULA AND SYLLABUS

Activity	To be performed by
Development of joint educational programmes and programmes with double diplomas issuance	International Cooperation Department Academic Department, Academic Staff
Focus on the international dimension of specialization different areas	Academic staff
Increasing the participation of students and PhD students in mobility, exchange and internships at foreign universities	Academic staff Foreign language lecturers
Updating the curriculum and integrating new disciplines for acquiring skills in the field of intercultural communication.	Academic staff,
Study of principles and practices of study recognition credits. Transparent procedures and criteria used in study credits recognizing.	Educational Department, ICFS Directorate

The effectiveness of the activities is annually measured and updated.