

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS)

1.1 Erasmus activities included in your EPS

In this section, you need to tick the Erasmus activities covered by your Erasmus Policy Statement. Please select those activities that your HEI intends to implement during the entire duration of the Programme.

Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility:

The mobility of higher education students and staff ☒

Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organisations and institutions:

Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices ☒

Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities ☒

Partnerships for Excellence - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees ☒

Partnerships for Innovation ☒

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3):

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support to policy development and cooperation: ☒

1.2 Erasmus Policy statement (EPS): your strategy

Your Erasmus Policy Statement should reflect how you intended to implement Erasmus after the award of the ECHE. Should you wish to add additional activities in the future, you will need to amend your Erasmus Policy Statement and inform your Erasmus National Agency.

What would you like to achieve by participating in the Erasmus Programme? How does your participation in the Erasmus Programme fit into your institutional internationalisation and modernisation strategy?

(Please reflect on the objectives of your participation. Please explain how you expect the participation in Erasmus to contribute towards modernising your institution, as well as on the goal of building a European Education Area¹ and explain the policy objectives you intend to pursue).

Original language (and translation into EN, FR or DE if the EPS is not in one of these languages)

VGTU Erasmus Policy statement (EPS):

Since 2014 VGTU has had the internationalisation strategy integrated into the overall university Strategic Development Plan 2014-2020 (the same approach applied by the 53% of European universities who has internationalisation as a part of the general strategy, according to the EUA International strategic institutional partnerships and the European universities initiative survey, 2020).

Internationalisation represents one of the 7 key priorities of the VGTU Strategic Development Plan 2014-2020 that directly contributes to the implementation of the key objective of developing qualified specialists, nurturing creative and socially engaged professionals, preparing them for successful integration into the national and global research and labour markets. The plan was aligned with the National Development Strategy 2014-2020 priority of internationalisation of higher education and linked to the EU Education and Training 2020 programme objective that encouraged international experience of graduates. The plan refers to internationalisation as an essential condition and mode of action that contributes to the university competitiveness in the national and international higher education arena, implementation of European Higher Education Area policy as well as knowledge and sustainable society development strategies.

¹ For more information on the priorities of the European Education Area, such as recognition, digital skills, common values and inclusive education, please consult the following website:
https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en

The Strategic Development Plan envisaged the following interUniversities Initiativenationalisation objectives:

- Development of open, tolerant and multicultural community, valuing the international experience gained by mobility and internationalisation at home activities.
- Creating a solid basis for internationalisation, openness and further study quality development by broadening the access to the programmes taught in English.
- Encouraging studies in English for the local students and outgoing mobility of students as a prerequisite of skills required in global labour market.
- Attracting the greater number of international, especially degree-seeking, students for studies at VGTU.
- Broadening the scope of international mobility of students and staff for training in order to share and apply business knowledge.
- Increasing the opportunities for students' mobility outside the EU.
- Improving the marketing of international activities aligned with the university public relations strategy.

In pursuit of the abovementioned objectives and in order to meet the needs of studies and research modernisation, VGTU aims to increase the effectiveness of strategic international partnerships by intensified cooperation with universities around the world, participation in university networks and consortia.

VGTU Strategic Development Plan is followed by a series of two-year strategic action plans linked to the following key performance indicators for internationalisation:

- Programmes taught in English (%).
- International students (exchange and degree) in the overall students' body (%).
- Degree-seeking international students (%).
- Outgoing mobility of staff for teaching (%).
- Incoming mobility of staff for teaching (%).
- Joint degree programmes.

The new Strategic Development Plan for 2021-2027 is expected after the Rector's election in autumn 2021.

Erasmus+ programme is seen as the major platform for the implementation of university internationalisation strategy by providing support for:

- sharing EU values, best practices and experience mobility of students and staff.
- mobility of students and staff.
- development of partnerships with universities and businesses in and outside the EU.

- creating, testing and implementing the new innovative study and research practices. .

Erasmus+ programme period of 2014-2020 allowed VGTU to receive support and attract necessary resources to fulfilling internationalisation objectives, and broadening the scope of international mobility (especially outside the EU) by expanding partnerships, modernisation of studies and research.

VGTU EPS for 2021-2027 is developed in line with the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education Guidelines (2020) and with regard to the broader EU policy context such as the European Education Area, the EU Digital Strategy and goal number four of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. EPS is based on the current university profile, its strengths and weaknesses, the experience gained in the previous programme period and areas for further development identified with the help of ECHE Self-Assessment Tool. The evaluation process was followed by the internal discussions with top management, faculties, staff and students. EPS represents the continuation of the university internationalisation priorities defined in the current Strategic Development Plan related to:

- encouraging sustainable and reciprocal mobility of staff and students.
- building sustainable internationalisation at home experience.
- making sure the continuity and scope of international collaborative study and research activities and transfer of project results.
- providing support for the strategic partnership development in and outside the EU by seeking the academic excellence.

VGTU EPS outlines the new dimensions in internationalisation activities that are focused on:

- increasing mobility attractiveness through the introduction of new mobility schemes (i.e. blended and short-term mobility).
- support to mobility participants and inclusion of individuals from a disadvantaged background and with fewer opportunities.
- seeking better quality, publicity and long-term impact of Erasmus+ projects implementation

These activities will contribute to:

- further modernisation of the university (including digitalisation and implementation of Erasmus Without Paper initiative)
- expanding the scope of green university solutions.
- enhancing the civil engagement and contribution to the society in the project activities.

The ECHE Self-Assessment tool will be used as a benchmark and applied thoroughly at least twice in the course of the new Erasmus programme period (by the end of 2023 and 2027).

Background information on Vilnius Gediminas Technical University is provided on VGTU www.vgtu.lt / About university.

Please reflect on the Erasmus actions you would like to take part in and explain how they will be implemented in practice at your institution. Please explain how your institution's participation in these actions will contribute to achieving the objectives of your institutional strategy.

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VGTU is planning to participate in all three actions of Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme.

The mobility of higher education students and staff projects within Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility - has always constituted the substantial part of VGTU international activities as it directly contributes to the internationalisation priorities. University's strategical key performance indicators reflect the strong priority given to outgoing and incoming mobility of staff and students with a special focus on the reciprocity of mobility flows. Academic mobility is seen as a key factor contributing to the development of relevant skills and experience, support to the internationalisation at home activities and modernisation of studies. Furthermore, it encourages sustaining of active partnerships and establishing new ones with universities in and outside the EU, as well as meaningfully contributes to the digitalisation, encourages environmentally friendly practices and civic engagement.

In the past decade, VGTU has gained solid experience in implementation of KA1 projects with programme and partner countries. It is reflected in the high rates of the completion of the planned mobilities (i.e. over 94% average in KA107 projects and 100% in KA103). The implementation of these projects in the new Erasmus+ programme period will be based on well-established management practice based on the following key principles:

- Centralised management of KA1 projects by VGTU International Relations Office (IRO) with consultations and support of all ten Faculties (i.e. the Deans and Faculty international relations coordinators). Projects are managed by IRO Erasmus+ group – a team with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, who are responsible for mobility (incoming and outgoing), mobility participants (students and staff) and types

of mobility (studies/traineeship, teaching/training). The group is headed by the Erasmus+ Institutional Coordinator, responsible for the conclusion of Inter-Institutional Agreements, planning the mobility flows, managing project budgets, communication and dissemination of project results, preparing reports, etc.

- Applying of transparent rules and formalised procedures for organising of Erasmus+ learning mobilities. VGTU operates according to the principles of the current Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education, programme guidelines as well as: 1) the set of internal rules and regulations for Erasmus+ projects implementation (i.e. VGTU Erasmus+ programme implementation rules, Erasmus+ staff mobility and Mobility for studies and traineeship procedures; 2) special sections in University regulations and strategic documents pertaining the education process (e.g. Studies regulation, Study results recognition procedure), staff performance evaluation (e.g. recognition of international activities), Green policy and implementation of Digitalisation strategy.
- Careful selection of partner universities in programme and partner countries taking into account the criteria of reliability, mutual trust, institutional capacities, geographical scope and subject area balance.
- Providing quality support for mobility participants before, during and after mobility in the format of individual and group consultation, mentorships, sharing of good practices, etc.
- Regular monitoring of mobility activities and its results, evaluation of factors that contribute to and/or hinder the success of mobility.
- Applying digital solutions for mobility management (i.e. online application systems) as well as the overall university administrative processes (i.e. paperless documents management system).
- Targeted marketing and publicity of project results, making aware the potential mobility participants of the benefits of Erasmus+ programme, promoting activities of Erasmus ambassadors as well as sharing testimonials.

In order to prepare for the new Erasmus+ programme period, VGTU has reviewed the existing practices, documents and processes related to the implementation of the VGTU ECHE 2021-2027 priorities. The areas of improvement were envisaged with the help of the ECHE Self-Assessment tool. VGTU is planning to update the respective internal rules and regulations in response to the new Erasmus+ programme period policy priorities. The envisaged steps are described hereinafter.

The new University Strategic Development Plan 2021-2027 and its integral part dedicated to internationalisation priorities will reflect the priorities of the new Erasmus+ programme period.

University modernisation is linked with fostering of digitally enhanced education, the introduction of more flexible curricula, interdisciplinary, challenge-based and international approach to studies. A gradual introduction of the blended mobility form

will be built on the existing university experience in organising of summers schools and short-term incoming and outgoing mobility of students as well as the implementation of virtual courses. In order to make progress towards this objective, VGTU is planning to learn from the best examples of the partner universities (i.e. VGTU partners in the ATHENA project application under the European University programme). We expect blended mobility option to contribute to the attractiveness of the mobility opportunities both due to the shortened duration of physical mobility and virtual components facilitating learning exchange.

Implementation of solutions related to Erasmus Without Paper initiative will be included in the VGTU IT Strategy (2021-2023). VGTU will take necessary steps towards the implementation of the European Student Card initiative and promotion of Erasmus+ mobility app following the EC and national regulations, which are expected to be introduced in the nearest future.

Green university concept (2015) is currently being renewed and will become an integral part of the University sustainable action strategy. It will incorporate environmentally friendly practices.

VGTU Erasmus+ programme implementation rules will be updated. The focus will be given to the enhancement of the quality of the process with regular monitoring and adjusting of practices in response to the identified weaknesses and emerging trends. The recent outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic evoked not only the greater awareness of the health and safety issues but also the importance of risk-management strategy application. Organising of mobility will be underpinned by the risk-management plans, which will be adjusted and activated in case of emergency.

VGTU is revising the existing Studies regulation in order to further integrate virtually taught courses into curricula and secure a smooth implementation of alternative mobility options (short-term mobility, virtual mobility and blended mobility). Automatic credit recognition, as well as a micro-credentials recognition must become the university reality throughout the course of the new Erasmus+ programme period.

Before the beginning of the new Erasmus+ programme period, we are planning to revise the existing Inter-Institutional Agreements in order to strengthen the partnership portfolio.

Involvement in the wide range of collaborative activities is an essential factor contributing to the internationalisation and modernisation of the university. Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) "Cooperation among organisations and institutions" and Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3) "Support to policy development and cooperation" create great opportunities for VGTU to implement its strategic internationalisation priorities related to the developing of cross-border partnerships with universities and businesses worldwide, creating, testing and implementing the new innovative study

and research practices. Moreover, it contributes to the building of the strong partnership network in Europe and around the globe, raising the international profile and serves as a strong channel for sharing the EU values, best practices and experience. Quality partnerships will help the university increase the number of joint and double degree programmes and attract a greater number of international degree-seeking students. Ultimately, KA2 partnership projects activities are enhanced with the collaboration within KA1 learning mobility projects.

Contrary to the KA1 projects, VGTU KA2 partnership projects management is decentralised with key roles being played by the Faculties supported by the IRO and Projects Division. The overall strategic planning of KA1 and KA2 projects is supervised by the Vice-Rector for Strategic Partnership, thus making sure the relevance of the implemented projects, their correspondence to the institutional needs and capacities, sustainability and balance in terms of the benefits of outcomes to all partners.

VGTU has built a strong experience in KA2 Strategic partnerships and Capacity building in higher education as well as some experience in Knowledge and Sectors skills alliances projects. University has recently applied for the Partnerships for Excellence in building the European university alliance together with six EU partner institutions. In the new Erasmus+ programme period we are aiming to sustain the current scope of collaborative action, make sure greater impact of the projects, but would also like to develop the partnership for excellence and innovation, develop Erasmus Mundus joint master degrees and contribute to the Support to policy development and cooperation.

Analysis of the results of completed projects and the progress of ongoing projects under KA2 in which VGTU has the role of partner or coordinator allowed to define the areas for improvement. There is a need for better consolidation of projects results, better dissemination and visibility of project outcomes, monitoring projects impact and transfer into practice. Setting annual thematic priorities would help to focus on project applications that potentially contribute to further development of digital skills, environmentally friendly practices, engagement with society and implementation of the new Erasmus+ programme period priorities. Aligning of the Erasmus+ projects with university activities is expected to bring added value for the university as a whole.

What is the envisaged impact of your participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on your institution?

Please reflect on targets, as well as qualitative and quantitative indicators in monitoring this impact (such as mobility targets for student/staff mobility, quality of the implementation, support for participants on mobility, increased involvement in cooperation projects (under the KA2 action), sustainability/long-term impact of

projects etc.) You are encouraged to offer an indicative timeline for achieving the targets related to the Erasmus+ actions.

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In the pursuit of the VGTU ECHE 2021-2027 implementation university outlines 5 targets:

- Building a sustainable network of partnerships.
- Ensuring sustainable, reciprocal mobility of staff and students.
- Ensuring quality, inclusion, equal opportunities and impact of the participation in Erasmus+ projects.
- Implementation of the new EC policy priorities and initiatives.
- Enhancing international profile and reputation of the university.

Building a sustainable network of partnerships:

- Throughout the last 10 years, VGTU has built a broad network of partnership with over 450 higher education and research institutions worldwide. A substantial part of the partnership agreements were concluded in the course of implementation of the projects within the previous Erasmus+ programme period as well as prior EU programmes that supported international mobility and collaboration in the HE area. The new programme period gives us the right momentum to revise the current agreements in terms of the quality, added value, scope of joint activities, reciprocity of exchange, etc. We are aiming to reduce the existing number of Erasmus+ Inter-Institutional Agreements with universities in programme and partner countries down to 350 to make sure the best offer of active, geographically and subject-area-balanced agreements available to all 10 VGTU faculties. We expect that the renewed agreements will be equally beneficial to our partner universities and will allow more active collaboration in a range of complementary activities (such as academic exchange, implementation of blended mobility, joint research, summer schools, joint projects for cooperation, exchange of good practices, excellence and innovation, etc.).

- During the last period of Erasmus+ programme VGTU has been involved as a partner (83%) or coordinator (17%) in more than 30 international projects under Key Action 1 “Learning mobility of individuals with programme and partner countries” and Key Action 2 “Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices”. Strategic partnership in the field of HE projects constituted a relatively bigger share as compared to the Capacity Building in the field of HE supporting cooperation with Partner Countries projects (16:12). In order to make sure the continuity of project partnerships, transfer of its results as well as an exchange of good practices we are planning to make sure that no less than 15 KA2 and KA3 projects would be implemented each year by VGTU.

- Participation in the Sector Skills Alliances project ensured the cooperation between education and employment, and projects in Knowledge Alliances cooperation between higher education institutions and enterprises helped VGTU to intensify the links with industry and build the relevant skills for the labour market.
- In 2020 VGTU together with 6 EU universities submitted the application for the building of European University Alliance – “Advanced Technology Higher Education Network Alliance, ATHENA” in order to contribute to the excellence of the European HE.
- Despite the success in development and implementation of joint and double degree study programmes with the EU and non-EU universities (13% of the overall number of education programmes), VGTU has no relevant experience in Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees programme as several of previous applications were not selected for funding. Nevertheless, we would like to endeavour to apply for the development of joint master degree programme with partner universities in the new Erasmus+ period.
- VGTU is planning to explore the opportunities of partnerships for innovation as well as align the Erasmus+ programme projects with other EU funded initiatives such as Horizon Europe, European Structural and Investment Funds, Creative Europe, European Solidarity Corps.

Ensuring sustainable, reciprocal mobility of staff and students:

- Academic mobility of staff and students has always been one of the biggest priorities of VGTU internationalisation policy as it contributes to the development of relevant skills, modernising of studies and building new partnerships. Despite the decreasing numbers of the mobility of students in Europe similar number of outgoing mobility for studies for the first stage (2021-2023), and increased number in the second stage (2024-2027) is planned. We relate the latter increase with the introduction of short-term and blended mobility options (the latter to make up no less than 15% of all incoming and outgoing mobilities of students by 2027) followed by automatic ECTS recognition, that is expected to boost the motivation in mobility participants.
- The interest in traineeship mobility of students is decreasing as well, thus we are planning to make sure a slightly smaller number of traineeship mobilities by 2027. At the same time, we are aiming to sustain the number of incoming exchange students and seek the balance of outgoing mobility (for studies and traineeship) and incoming mobility (for studies) flows.
- For the new Erasmus+ programme period we are planning to ensure the balance and increase of outward and inward flows of academic staff for teaching and training. Ensuring quality, inclusion, equal opportunities and impact of the participation in Erasmus+ project:

- In order to guarantee equal opportunities and greater inclusion of mobility participants from a disadvantaged background and fewer opportunities will be to define the target groups that will receive additional support (i.e. information, consultations, financial incentives, an offer of the more flexible or customised mobility modes, etc.). Based on the experience and preliminary evaluation of the share of the persons that received support in previous Erasmus+ programme period we are planning to increase the participation of the disadvantaged groups by 5% until 2027.
- VGTU will review and update the current Erasmus+ administrative practices (in terms of support for mobility participants, documents management, the flexibility of mobility options, financial incentives, etc.) as well as integrate the new administrative tools and solutions (such as EWP, European Student Card, Erasmus+ mobility app) to gain the maximum satisfaction with academic mobility participants. Based on the evaluation of previously implemented Key Action 1 programme projects we are aiming to reach no less than 95% satisfaction rate of incoming mobility participants and no less than 90% satisfaction rate of outgoing mobility participants (both students and staff) for all types of mobilities.
- Based on the evaluation of existing VGTU partnerships in mobility and capacity building projects with universities in developing economy countries we are planning to seek the similar rate of partnerships (i.e. no less than 35%) by 2027. We expect these activities to contribute to better inclusion and exchange of practices.

Implementation of the new EC policy priorities and initiatives:

- The digitalisation of Erasmus+ administrative processes timeline at VGTU is directly linked to the deliverables and terms set in Erasmus Without Paper initiative. By the end of 2021, we expect to have 100% of Erasmus KA103 Inter-Institutional Agreements and 100% of Erasmus KA103 students learning agreements on EWP dashboard and also ensure 100% of Erasmus+ mobility app usage by VGTU outgoing students.
- By the end of 2022, we expect all mobility applications of students under Erasmus KA103 and subsequently next year – all their transcripts of records to be processed via EWP dashboard. In 2025 all students participating in mobility shall make use of European Student Card.
- The timescale of the implementation of the abovementioned digital initiatives will depend on EWP systems being fully developed, tested by VGTU and confirmed fit for the purpose.
- As a result of all the abovementioned activities, we expect to reduce the time spent on students' mobility management by no less than 60% in 2027.
- Gradual application of the EWP solutions for staff mobility is a subject to the further development of EWP dashboard and complementary EC regulations.

- VGTU environmentally friendly practices of encouraging the university community to recycle materials and use of the green city transport options, participation in green public procurement procedures will be complemented by the additional solutions related to the international mobility. Based on the estimation of the percentage of the mobility participants travelling to neighbouring countries to be reached by the alternative means of transport (i.e. bus, train or ferry) we expect to encourage up to 18% of staff and students to take this into account.

- The relevant part of the implementation of Erasmus+ incoming mobility of students is based on the support provided by the mentors of Erasmus Students Network (ESN VGTU). Activities organised by the ESN VGTU not only ensure social and cultural integration for incoming exchange students but also help to involve them in community projects and volunteer work to contribute to civic engagement. We are planning to encourage the involvement of the majority of incoming mobility students in at least 10 hours of community or volunteer work during their study period at VGTU.

Enhancing international profile and reputation:

- We believe that implementation of the mobility-related tasks of VGTU ECHE 2021-2027 will have a long-term effect on the international profile of our university, higher national and international rankings and will contribute to increasing the number of degree-seeking international students for studies at VGTU. The average rate of international (exchange and degree) students at VGTU during the last three years was exceeding 12% and expected to increase up to 14% by 2027.

Diversified portfolio of international activities ranging from academic mobility, joint/double degree programmes, joint research activities, creation and exchange of good practice and innovation allows VGTU to make sure the wide global reach, great diversity and multiculturalism of its international activities under Erasmus+ programme and beyond. Within the new Erasmus+ programme period we are aiming to sustain the breadth and scope of existing activities by collaborating with over 65 countries and hosting mobility participants from over 80 countries globally.

VGTU EPS for 2021-2027 priorities are linked to the set of targets, that will be measured by qualitative and quantitative key performance indicators (KPIs). The detailed description of VGTU ECHE 2021-2027 KPIs is provided in the table below.

Evaluation of average scores (where applicable) in the last three years (i.e. 2017, 2018 and 2019) provided the basis for the estimation of KPIs. Certain factors that might affect international activities (such as a pandemic, motivation for mobility, the attractiveness of alternative modes of studies, access to sustainable means of transport, etc.) are hard to predict. Following the set timeframe for the implementation of some EC initiatives (e.g. EWP and European Student Card), KPIs are

planned in two periods – 2021-2023 and 2024-2027. By the end of the first period (i.e. in 2023) the planned KPIs shall be reviewed.