

Rzeszów University of Technology

Erasmus Policy Statement (EPS)

One of the strategic goals in the Rzeszów University of Technology's Development Plan addressing among others internationalization and modernization schemes assume openness to broadly understood international exchanges and most importantly to cite: "to acknowledge it as a standard that personal and professional growth of a student and teacher calls for international mobility". Participation in the Erasmus programme is an ideal way to reach that view of every student and teacher who at least once in their academic career will partake in an educational exchange abroad. Hence to reach the strategic goals, the below objectives were defined:

- to increase the number of mobility participants,
- to increase the number of partner universities and companies- with a greater focus on new partners in SMP mobility,
- to digitalize the management of mobilities by 2025,
- to improve the system of the implementation of experience and knowledge gained during the mobility for the purpose of the development of the University,
- to monitor the professional outcomes developed during the exchange through reporting,
- to improve/simplify the system of publication and the use of the results of projects/research done during the mobility,
- to further focus on the possibilities of greater personal and professional development of participants,
- to create the possibilities for the knowledge exchange among staff,
- to further e-learning solutions,
- to modernize didactic offer on the basis of the best practices shared while exchanges,
- to increase the number of English language instructed programmes and ensure that they meet the quality requirements,
- to strive for creating the opportunities for academic community to learn second language through available tools and means,
- to support all initiatives and activities towards the creation of consortia with the universities, research units and partners from industry,
- to support initiatives leading to the development of double/joint degree,
- to offer language/culture overview to incoming participants as well as to organize International Day with cultural input of incoming students to promote cultural variety.

Participation in the Erasmus programme will to a great extent facilitate reaching the strategic goals through gradual fulfilment of the objectives set above for the Erasmus activities and perfectly fits into searched for tools to attain the goals. It is foreseen that the continuation of being counted among Erasmus beneficiaries will further the modernization processes especially of the educational offer, structures of English-taught degrees, management of mobilities and adopting digitalization also to other spheres of University's activities.

The authorities of the University will be addressed to elevate the academic importance of educational mobility in order to still increase the number of mobile students and staff. Further promotion of the programme in the academic society will result in better understanding of the value of mobility and encourage greater amount of students and staff year by year to participate until whole academic community starts to perceive mobility as an inherent feature of the learning process. Additionally, we will focus on the promotion of second language learning with the support from respective university units. By obtaining on-line tools and sources for students and staff we will make them widely accessible and usable through modern technologies and solutions. Furthermore, the Development Plan refers to providing education in accordance with the European standards allowing for recognizing received qualifications in educational institutions in other EU countries. All the above mentioned activities strived for by the Rzeszów University of Technology will unquestionably contribute to support the European Commission's initiative of building up the European Education Area.

Actions and contribution to achieving the objectives of the institutional strategy

The University aims at continuing its participation in Key Action 1. The Department of International Cooperation (further on DIC) is centrally managing all the steps necessary to successfully implement mobilities starting with the planning and administrating the calls, selection and application process, throughout monitoring participants before, during and after the exchange.

The mobility activities will be guided by fair and transparent rules approved by the respective Vice-Rector, published on the web page. They will be made available to all students and staff notwithstanding their socio-economic background, through existing communication channels: social media, University's media and systems, information sessions, face-to-face counselling. We will keep taking into account and verify the linguistic level of participants. When it comes to the SMPs – the additional condition that they will have to complete at least the second year of Bachelor Degree will remain valid. We will encourage the faculties which have not been active in mobility activities as well as staff members who haven't taken part in any mobility activities yet. We will increase the number of SMP and the number of business partners, as we think that the future of the participants on the job market will greatly depend on the work experience and professional skills they will graduate with. The selection committee will choose grantees and the recruitment process will be thoroughly documented. Former Erasmus beneficiaries as having on-site experience will be actively involved in guiding future grantees through 'before departure' stage. All necessary support to the grantees while and after mobility will be managed by DIC with the assistance of the faculty representatives, Vice-Rector or other people responsible both at sending and receiving institutions. The selection process of incoming participants is completely managed by the partner university. The University will accept nominated candidates without any final selection. We will keep our course offer as attractive as possible. The course catalogue is updated twice a year before each semester and made available under the link:<https://dwm.prz.edu.pl/en/erasmus/student> together with the applied grading system. The support will be provided when necessary. Incoming beneficiaries have the same rights and responsibilities as home students and staff.

The University aims at continuing its participation in Key Action 2 as well. The exchange of staff under KA1 will definitely boost the number of projects in KA2. Outgoing grantees will be encouraged to initiate cooperation, join in partnerships and alliances whenever possible.

Participation in the Erasmus programme is one of the key points of focus that will grant fulfilment of strategic goals included in the institutional strategy. Increasing the number of mobile students and staff, the number of English-taught courses, upgrading didactic offer and adjusting it to the changing demands of economy, developing the existing partnerships and setting new ones under Erasmus will contribute to reaching set objectives.

Envisaged impact of participation in the Erasmus+ Programme

The Rzeszów University of Technology has been participating in the Erasmus programme since 1998. In the academic year 2018/19 the overall number of mobilities in Key Action 1 exceeded 290 and that was done under 88 Inter-Institutional Agreements in 32 countries. The University took part in Action 2 as well: as a partner in 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, as a coordinator in 2016, with currently 2 ongoing projects. The target in student and staff mobility is before mentioned and compliant with the strategic goals namely the increase in the numbers of grantees. Taking into consideration the capacity of the University, on the basis of the statistics for the past 6 years analysis and recent significant growth in the past 2 years over 51 beneficiaries sent more than in preceding years - it is expected that the number of mobile participants will continue to grow. It is expected that by the academic year 2025/2026 the University will be sending 16% and receiving 21% more beneficiaries than in the present year, and number of projects in KA2 over 7%. It can be achieved through: further intensification of the programme promotion especially among first year students, encouraging the University's authorities to still increase the appreciation of educational mobility by internal academic solutions, promotion of our University at partner universities through available channels as well as with the support of outgoing teachers, constant improvement of the procedures and services implemented. In order to keep track of the progress DIC will monitor:

1. correctness of the programme execution,
2. the quality of support offered to candidates, grantees, partner institutions,
3. comparing received number outcomes.

with the use of questionnaires (Mobility Tool, internal ones), consultations, analyses. Result data will allow for evaluating the impact and fulfilment of the strategic goals. In the case of inadequate upward level that has been strived for, reconstruction plan will be set.

Monitoring will also give an answer if other pursued target directly connected with the pointers taken into consideration thereinbefore related to and significant for the programme implementation has been reached:

-betterment in organization of mobilities on each stage before, while and after. Digitalization as one of the key features here is planned to be completed until 2025. It will not only expedite the whole process both for participants and the institution but it will be environmentally friendlier than now. What is more, focusing on support provided to mobile participants and endeavour for an adequate level of it will result in further the increase in the Erasmus applications.

The influence on individuals brought by participation in the programme is also an important aspect while discussion about the impact, in particular:

- students: broadening academic knowledge, learning other teaching methods, developing hard and soft competences, personal and interpersonal development, experience of new cultures and openness. Participation in mobility as such is expected to increase their chances of future employment, stand out among job applicants, and students will be able to live and work in a culturally and socially different environment.
- Staff: experience in teaching international student groups, improving the quality of own teaching methods, organization of laboratory work, confrontation of teaching methods, better understanding of the relationship between teaching and learning, establishing new personal contacts enabling continuation of scientific and research cooperation, or participation in joint European projects, good practices while knowledge transfer from educational sector to industry and vice versa.

Getting to know the work / study environment in a foreign institution, improving language competences, intercultural understanding, independent and critical thinking will apply to all types of the exchanges.

The results of the University's participation in the Erasmus programme will be observable and reflect various aspects of the University activity in the long run as well. Prospective students will find the offer of the University even richer and more attractive with a lot of opportunities for additional personal and professional development. This will lead to the increase of the number of students and consequently to the number of graduates. Active participation in the program will result in the great amount of gained experience and knowledge which will influence and further develop study programmes, teaching methods and researcher training. Moreover, other long-term impact endeavored for:

- strengthening and deepening the cooperation network by engaging in knowledge sharing and capacity developing processes,
- promoting internationalization of higher education and know-how by sharing the best practices in teaching, learning and research,
- strengthening multicultural awareness and a multicultural environment,
- improving the image and visibility of the University on the global market and in new regions,
- building capacity to participate in large-scale projects as a key partner,
- strengthening position in the developing areas.