

1. 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)

Hasselt University (UHasselt) is a young, independent and innovative university, located in the centre of Europe in Belgium. As a civic university, UHasselt wants to deploy people and knowledge to tackle society's major challenges by being a knowledge hub where regional, national and international stakeholders collaborate fully. Hence, helping to solve today's and tomorrow's challenges, fully in line with the SDG's, guide teaching, research and social engagement of the university. This vision asks for a strong emphasis on internationalisation and networking. To enhance knowledge on local, regional and global challenges, Hasselt University collaborates with other universities, research centres, governments, businesses and civil society organisations worldwide. The university employs these networks to send students, staff and academics abroad. In this regard, Hasselt University attaches great significance to professional preparation ahead of time, support during and follow-up after a stay abroad. On the other hand, the university puts hospitality first when international students, visiting professors and researchers join the university fold. To this end, an effective and unambiguous welcome policy forms the basis for welcoming and supporting national and international guests who temporarily or permanently join the university. About 20% of all PhDs are joint PhDs, about 45% of the PhD students at Hasselt University are from outside Belgium and 17% of the academic staff is international. Last academic year, UHasselt counted more than 900 international students. Hasselt University is thus a place where the region meets the world and the world meets the region.

Internationalisation is an integral part of Hasselt University's mission, vision and strategy. The current Internationalisation and Development Cooperation Policy Plan outlines Hasselt University's internationalisation vision for the period 2018-2021. The policy priorities (<https://www.uhasselt.be/Internationalisation>) have been incorporated into a single general objective: 'To reinforce the international dimension of UHasselt's operations', plus four strategic objectives:

1. To continue to boost Hasselt University's international image
2. To facilitate and promote high quality international mobility
3. To ensure that Hasselt University's international mindset is shared by its students, researchers and staff
4. To ensure further development of education and science sharing with developing countries

As a current holder of the Erasmus Charter, the objectives and priorities of the current Erasmus+ Programme are embedded in the activities, the daily practices and the different strategic objectives of the internationalisation policy of UHasselt. The new Internationalisation and Development Cooperation Policy Plan (2022-2025) will integrate and focus on the new initiatives under the new Erasmus+ programme, e.g. implement and realise the European Student Card Initiative, following the timeline of the digitisation, actively commit to the European Universities Initiative, implement virtual mobility, etc.

Network

A strong international network is a lever for more structural international education and research cooperation. The creation of a European consortium is often a prerequisite for submitting European project proposals. Hasselt University aims to join strategic European and/or international networks at the institutional level. To extend our European network and to stay up to date about the European policy of higher education, Hasselt University recently became a member of the European University Foundation (EUF). Under the new Erasmus Programme, UHasselt aims to further enhance participation in European and international cooperation projects in order to strengthen its collaboration with other higher education institutions (HEIs). Therefore, one of the main focus points will be the European University Initiative in which UHasselt will actively invest.

The university follows the same line at faculty level and encourages all its seven faculties and two schools to develop broad partnerships and international networks within their own field of expertise. The focus is on partnerships with HEIs and companies in European and non-European countries. Since UHasselt is an active player in university development cooperation, partners in the South are also considered. Best practices can be learned from the UHasselt Erasmus+ Capacity Building Project with partners in the North and the South in which UHasselt is participating, e.g. CORETEV, RADIUM, ... (<https://www.uhasselt.be/erasmusplus-projects>). The strengthening of existing and new relationships is based on the compatibility and quality of study and training programmes and potential opportunities for research collaboration. Within the framework of our strategic partnerships, UHasselt intends to develop joint educational or research projects, student and staff mobility, joint master and PhD programmes, ... possibly with the support of national, European or international funding.

Mobility

In its overall policy, Hasselt University emphasises the importance of employability skills. What better way to develop these so-called 'soft skills' than by a stay abroad. One of the main priorities of the internationalisation policy of the university is to give all its students, staff and researchers the opportunity to go abroad. Therefore, the university will

focus on inclusive mobility under the new Erasmus+ programme. Virtual mobility will be implemented, seen as it will create more opportunities for an international experience, especially for those who, due to financial or other reasons, aren't able to travel. Furthermore, the university keeps promoting various funding possibilities, including the European programmes Erasmus+ and H2020, and internal, national and international funding. UHasselt remains committed to realising the 20% student mobility target.

The university gives high priority to a mobility window in all degree programmes in all faculties. But this internationalisation of the curriculum can take many forms. The existing physical mobility activities are only one example (studying abroad, research stay abroad, international internship, summer schools abroad, ...). Internationalisation at home can also be organised. Examples are: inviting a guest professor or developing joint classes with foreign colleagues (e.g. by video conferences), promoting contact between UHasselt national and international students (e.g. group work, language courses). The options are extensive and the degree programmes at UHasselt already invested in these examples of internationalisation at home and pursue the integration of at least two aspects of internationalisation at home in the curriculum. The university provides internal funding for these kind of activities through a competitive call and supports researchers, staff and professors to make use of external funding channels (including Erasmus+, e.g. for guest professors, educational innovation projects, projects involving cooperation with companies, etc.). The International Office and the faculties keep promoting the different funding options for mobility and organise info sessions for students, professors and staff. The university and the International Office continue to improve the support to staff and students in the administration and preparation of their stay abroad.

At Hasselt University, hospitality is key. The university welcomes students, researchers and staff from all over the world. This requires an efficient and comprehensive 'welcome policy'

(https://www.uhasselt.be/UH/Onthaalbeleid_EN/Incoming-international-researchers-and-personnel/Upon-Arrival/Welcome). The university strives to set up a single point of contact (SPOC) for international mobility. The SPOC is responsible for managing the central administrative procedures for both the incoming and outgoing international mobility of students, researchers and staff. In the past year, the university already invested in the centralisation of all expertise required to professionally support international visitors and to provide them with all kinds of information (about visa, insurance, accommodation ...). This is the result of a strong collaboration between different departments of the university (HR Office, Education Office, Research Coordination Office, Faculties, ...) and aims to increase the quality of incoming and outgoing mobility.

At the start of each semester, Hasselt University welcomes its international students during an 'orientation programme' where students receive all kinds of information related to their time in Belgium, to make their stay as pleasant as possible. This session combines practical information (such as access to the library, computer facilities, student services, public transport, bicycle rent) with workshops (intercultural communication) and fun (guided tour through Hasselt, welcome at the city hall, gathering of all international students, ...). Before arrival students can choose to enter a buddy programme. This connects local and international students and ensures better integration. Throughout the year, the university also organises activities for its international students (trips to neighbouring countries) and events to mingle the international community with the Belgian staff and students (World evening). International students can also choose to participate in the International Council. This council works closely with the student board. This gives international students a voice and they can actively go in dialogue with the policy.

The final aim of this welcome policy is to integrate internationalisation in all aspects of the university. This also includes the use of the English language. The latter is twofold and focusses on the use of English (as a second language) in administration and the organisation of English-language courses. Hasselt University already offers its incoming students and staff a range of language courses (English and Dutch at different levels, conversation classes, ...). Before the start of the academic year, an Intensive two weeks Dutch course is offered. The university is interested in exploring more options, to elaborate the offer of language courses (e.g. e-modules for (semi)autonomous (combined) learning, contact education, external language centres).

Development Cooperation

With regard to its role in society, Hasselt University endeavours to share its expertise in education and research with institutions from developing and emerging countries. University Development Cooperation (UOS) is also part of the Internationalisation policy of the university. Hasselt University aims to build capacity at the university, in order to make professors, researchers, students and staff aware of the importance of sharing science and to make them able to contribute to development-relevant initiatives and networks. The university supports actions in the South by facilitating the participation of students, professors, staff and researchers in UOS projects. Each faculty needs to have access to UOS relevant initiatives and funding channels where a win-win situation is identified. In the next Erasmus+ Programme, Hasselt University wants to make more use of the interplay of funding programmes on different levels (Flemish, European, ...) and create a leverage effect. Furthermore, the aim is to further stimulate the participation of women and young academics in UOS projects and increase the visibility of actions in the South.

For students, new internships in the South are organised, which on the one hand, increases the impact of ongoing projects, while on the other making it possible to offer reliable and structural internships to Flemish students. The university ensures that these projects and internships are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) of the United Nations. A Sustainability Steering Group has already been put in place to monitor the ecological and

sustainable aspects.

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.

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

Hasselt University is convinced the Erasmus+ programme offers many opportunities to reach the objectives of its internationalisation policy and is therefore committed to take part in the three different Key Actions of the new Erasmus+ Programme. To ensure the support for and implementation of the internationalisation policy by the university management and all faculties and departments, the International Office established the 'UHasselt Commission Internationalisation and Development Cooperation' (CIOS). CIOS advises internal policy and advisory bodies, as well as the university board on matters relating to internationalisation and development cooperation. CIOS consists of administrative and academic representatives of all faculties and schools and meets every four months.

Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility

UHasselt considers **student and staff mobility as a main tool to implement its internationalisation strategy**. The International Office (IO) works closely on internationalisation matters with the faculty coordinators of each faculty. The implementation and organisation of European and international credit mobility is the responsibility of both the International Office and the designated faculty coordinators. In order to coordinate these processes and to ensure the implementation of the commitments in the charter, the IO and the faculty coordinators cooperate very closely and have monthly meetings. The IO regularly delivers information and updates on mobility opportunities, deadlines, required documents, etc. Both the IO and the faculty coordinators cooperatively organise events such as info sessions, orientation days for international students, awareness and dissemination events, etc. The IO also informs the faculty coordinators on any information sessions or workshops that may expand their knowledge on mobility programmes, e.g. organised by the IO, the National Erasmus+ Agency, the Flemish government or EACEA. Besides the IO and the faculty coordinators, who are both partly responsible for the administrative process of the exchange of students, the student administration office is also involved in monitoring and processing these administration matters.

The duties of the IO include informing students and staff about the study and training possibilities abroad and about possible scholarships, and assisting them before, during and after their exchange activities. Furthermore, the IO is responsible for the preregistration and registration of incoming exchange students and provides them with the necessary support regarding accommodation, visa formalities, insurance, etc. The IO is also responsible for the coordination of all activities related to establishing and maintaining cooperation agreements with international partners. To ensure the quality, each inter-institutional agreement is reviewed regularly. Furthermore, the IO regularly monitors the number of existing agreements to ensure a sound balance and to optimise the offer of mobility places. A new or prolonged inter-institutional agreement will always be signed by the vice-rector of education, after approval by the IO, the responsible department and the partner university. In case of traineeships, all quality requirements specific to the planned mobility activity are identified in a Training Agreement that is approved by the faculty coordinator.

Within the faculties, there is at least one faculty coordinator responsible for internationalisation. They are nominated by the authorities at the faculty level. Their range of duties includes dissemination of information on available mobility opportunities of a given programme/department among students and staff from the faculty; informing students and staff about selection procedures; the selection of students and staff interested in taking part in the Erasmus+ programme and other mobility programmes; overseeing recognition of mobility results at the faculty level; approval of incoming short-term students and staff; providing support to them at the faculty level (e.g. finding an academic supervisor, ensuring welcome services at the faculty level, registration for classes, etc.); monitoring the implementation of faculty agreements with partner universities; supporting cooperation with partner universities; proposing new agreements and evaluation of existing cooperation with partner universities; communication with the International Office and other relevant faculties and departments at UHasselt.

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

Following UHasselt Internationalisation policy, UHasselt aims to **further enhance participation in EU and international cooperation projects**. The International Office created an internal 'incentive fund' to finance projects contributing to the goals of the internationalisation policy plan. This funding is seed money to enable UHasselt staff to explore and initiate new collaboration opportunities and develop potential project applications that can be submitted to external funding agencies. Under the Erasmus+ Programme, special priority will be given to the **European Universities Initiative** and to virtual mobility and virtual cooperation.

UHasselt has not yet actively focused on the European Universities initiative, but the university is a strong believer in university networks. The university management is convinced of its strategic importance and is making it a priority under the new Programme. This initiative will enable cooperation with other universities on a strategic level in order to jointly develop our learning, teaching, research and innovation activities. Hasselt University is exploring the possibilities for participation and a plan of action.

Besides this initiative, UHasselt also wants to focus on **virtual mobility and virtual cooperation** to create more internationalisation at home activities and to make Erasmus experiences a possibility for more students. For a large number of students, it is not possible to travel abroad due to social, financial or other reasons. As an alternative or complement to physical mobility, virtual mobility can provide solutions for these students and create more possibilities for a study or an internship abroad. Virtual mobility and virtual cooperation can also be used to complement physical mobility in terms of preparation and pre-integration (blended mobility). In this way students can prepare their study or internship more in-depth and already connect with the local community.

For the initiative of **Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees**, Hasselt university will learn from its previous applications and will continue to improve the quality of future applications.

Moreover, UHasselt will continue to **develop partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of good practices** as well as **partnerships for innovation**.

UHasselt fully supports staff and students wishing to participate in a given project by giving them adequate time to carry out their project work by providing administrative back-up and opportunities for dissemination and exploitation of project results. Participation in these projects will be recognised as an important aspect of the development of staff and students and will be considered a key component in their evaluation.

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

Hasselt university will explore the possibilities within key action 3 (**support to policy development and cooperation**).

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.

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

The Erasmus+ Programme will have a very important impact in the realisation of UHasselt's overall mission in general and in the realisation of its internationalisation policy plan. As a **civic university**, UHasselt wants to deploy people and knowledge to tackle society's major challenges, including global challenges. This can only be realised in full collaboration with others, both logically and globally, and therefore the Erasmus+ Programme plays a vital part in the realisation of these collaborations.

Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility

To begin with and supported by the Erasmus+ Programme, Hasselt University will educate its students, researchers and staff to be **global citizens**, for whom an **international mindset** has become inherent. As defined in her Internationalisation Policy Plan, UHasselt believes staff mobility and participation of staff in international cooperation projects contributes to the professional development. As such, UHasselt will see enhanced language skills, innovative teaching methods and cultural awareness of its staff. They are therefore actively encouraged to participate in the Programme. Furthermore, by structural embedding mobility through mobility windows, internationalisation of the curriculum and internationalisation at home, UHasselt provides more students, researchers and staff the possibility to go abroad. Hasselt University wants to maximise the possibilities for mobility for students, researchers and staff. Therefore, UHasselt also puts an effort in promoting mobility under the Erasmus+ Programme for PhD students. Mobility of PhD students is also very valuable in improving the international research potential.

UHasselt remains committed to realising the **20% student mobility target**. In order to keep track of the evolution of this target, UHasselt analyses the numbers every year and discusses the state of affairs with the faculty coordinators and the CIOS Council. If the numbers are lower than the year before for specific programmes, the causes will be examined in order to tackle the main issues and ensure an increase in the numbers. The numbers of staff mobility are

analysed annually to check whether numbers improve and that new staff members find their way to the Erasmus+ Programme. This is also an indicator in the internationalisation policies of the faculties.

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

In order to send students and academics into the world and attract others to our region even more, national and international education and research **networks form a key aspect**. Cooperation projects under the Erasmus+ Programme enable the establishment of these key networks. Close collaboration between the colleagues of the International Office and the Research Coordination Office opens new perspectives for synergies between the European Programmes for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, and for Research & Innovation (Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe). These synergies offer many opportunities for mobility, international projects and internationalisation at a PhD-level. Furthermore, under the new Programme, staff mobility (teaching and administrative staff) will be further promoted in brochures and UHasselt magazines, and calls will be initiated to raise more awareness.

As described in UHasselt's Education Policy Plan, **Community Service Learning** plays a central role in education. Grounded in this civic vision, UHasselt offers educational programmes that interact with the university's research domains, respond to labour market needs and aim at innovation and social development. By participating in certain activities of the Erasmus+ Programme, especially under Key Action 2, and by including partners from the industry, companies or social partners, UHasselt will have the possibility to continue contributing to the improvement of the quality and relevance of our study programmes and internships especially in active citizenship.

Furthermore, UHasselt has a **diversity and equality plan** with specific goals and actions to encourage talented young people from underrepresented groups to participate in higher education. Through participation in the Erasmus+ Programme, UHasselt will be able to further develop **more effective learning and teaching experiences**. UHasselt also believes that the **digitisation of the Programme** and the upcoming possibilities for **blended mobility and virtual cooperation** will increase social inclusion and non-discrimination. More students from underrepresented groups will be able to participate in the Programme.

UHasselt also believes in the continuation of contributing to the sustainable development of higher education in third countries by developing **strategic partnerships** and **joint educational projects with partner country HEIs**. The university has a strong tradition of participating in **capacity building projects** (with both Flemish and European funding) and thus has close relationships with HEIs in the South. The university will build on these contacts to explore further collaboration opportunities under the new Erasmus+ Programme, thereby seeking a high degree of synergy and complementarity with other actors and donors.

Timeline

As for the timeline, UHasselt's first focus point is to implement the **European Student Card initiative** following the foreseen **timeline of the digitisation**. Another main focus point will be the **European Universities initiative**. UHasselt gives priority to these initiatives in the first cycle (2021-2023) of the new Erasmus+ programme. To enhance participation in student and staff mobility, UHasselt will implement **virtual mobility and virtual cooperation** as soon as possible. Due to teleworking during the corona crisis, students and staff have seen the benefits of virtual cooperation. The implementation of initiatives such as **EGRACONS** will be discussed in first cycle, but will be implemented in second cycle (2024-2026). The third cycle (2027) is rather seen as a period to finetune initiatives that have been implemented or to strengthen cooperations and to further commit to the Erasmus+ Programme. Throughout the new Programme, UHasselt will continue its active participation in key action 1 (Mobility of higher education students and staff) and key action 2 (Partnerships for Cooperation and for Innovation) as it has been doing under the current Erasmus+ Programme. Hasselt university will also explore the possibilities within key action 3 (Support to Policy Development and Cooperation).

Conclusion

To conclude, UHasselt aspires to be a place where the region meets the world and the world meets the region. Students, researchers and staff are a vital part of this 'international innovation network' and actively participate in it. Participation in cooperation projects under the Erasmus+ programme enables UHasselt to establish networks that enhance close, effective links between education, research and business and helps to develop vital innovation and business skills. The impact of the international policy plan of Hasselt University will be leveraged by participating in this programme, leading to advantages for all involved stakeholders. UHasselt will also continue to use its own resources for internationalisation, e.g. by providing extra grants for students and staff to go abroad.

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