

Erasmus Policy Statement (Overall Strategy)

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The Institution agrees to publish this overall strategy (all three parts) on its website within one month after the signature of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education by the European Commission.

Please describe your institution's international (EU and non-EU) strategy. In your description please explain a) how you choose your partners, b) in which geographical area(s) and c) the most important objectives and target groups of your mobility activities (with regard to staff and students in first, second and third cycles, including study and training, and short cycles). If applicable, also explain how your institution participates in the development of double/multiple/joint degrees. (max. 5000 characters)

Original language [EN]

The Catholic University of Croatia is a young university which strives to bring added value to Croatian society, in terms of its scientific, social, and economic progress, as well as in terms of protection and promotion of its culture and identity. Working in Croatia, HKS is embedded in the current Croatian change of perspective from local to European. On the other hand, in the projected period for which the ECHE (Erasmus Charter for Higher Education) is applied for (2014-2020), the Catholic University of Croatia is expected to undergo a transformation from a small, recently established, university with a limited number of study programmes in social and humanistic fields into a fully integrated university offering programmes at all levels (1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle), in all major fields of higher education and scientific research. In this challenging situation, with a changing environment, the international orientation of HKS is indispensable in achieving its strategic goals, above all its completion as a higher-education and research institution.

The common denominator of all segments of HKS's international strategy is using international collaboration as an engine for the development and growth of the university. The strategic goal of international cooperation at an EU level is the integration of HKS into the EHEA (European Higher Education Area) and ERA (European Research Area) by engaging with programmes with European added value. Outside the EU a strategic priority is the establishment of a worldwide network of collaboration and exchange with primarily Catholic, but also other, universities. A further, but equally important, goal is cooperating with HEIs and other institutions in neighbouring non-EU countries.

HKS applies several criteria for selecting its partners in mobility and international cooperative programmes. First, it is important to establish collaboration with HEIs and enterprises with overall high-quality in higher-education and instruction programmes. Collaboration with these institutions should serve as means for a systematic increase of quality levels at HKS. Second, the complementarity of programmes between HKS and foreign HEIs should play a pronounced role in the selection of the partner HEI. In this way both students from HKS and from the partner institution have the opportunity to attend courses which are underrepresented or still not adequately addressed at their home institutions. Third, for HKS it is of importance to find partner enterprises, in Croatia and especially abroad, which could provide practical professional training and thus complement the academic education of its students.

HKS is interested in establishing partnership and collaboration with HEIs and enterprises in all areas of the EU to increase the cultural diversity at the university through the experience of outgoing students and staff and through the presence of incoming students and staff. Furthermore, the orientation of HKS to the entire EU space will allow it to build a network of partnering institutions with a truly European value. The exposure to the entire EU area is also expected to facilitate the integration of HKS into EHEA and ERA. HKS is also open to collaboration with HEIs and other academic institutions from all parts of the world. In particular, HKS's cultural and geographical proximity simplifies collaboration with HEIs and enterprises in neighbouring countries, both EU and non-EU. The process of capacity building at HEIs in neighbouring non-EU countries is in this respect of especial interest.

The most important objective of mobility activities at HKS comprise: increasing the cultural diversity and integration of HKS into EHEA and ERA (related to students in all cycles and staff); complementing the academic education at HKS in academic (other HEIs) and practical (enterprises) ways (for students in all cycles); better preparation for the labour market (for students in all cycles); attracting students to PhD programmes at HKS (incoming students in the 1st and the 2nd cycles); better preparation for research careers through exposure to modern trends and methodologies in research and studying at foreign HEIs (3rd cycle students); and the professional development of staff.

Establishing double/multiple/joint degrees is one of several future goals at HKS. Effort in this respect will proceed in three directions. It is of interest for HKS to establish joint degrees with targeted departments at HEIs in both the EU and worldwide where there is staff and expertise compatibility at both institutions to form programmes competitive at a European and international level. Introduction of joint degrees with other Catholic universities will be attempted based on similarities in curricula and institutional organization. Finally, joint degrees with HEIs in neighbouring countries will be considered where geographical proximity and cultural similarity promise synergy and added value in the higher-education process.

If applicable, please describe your institution's strategy for the organisation and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) cooperation projects in teaching and training in relation to projects implemented under the Programme. (max. 2000 characters)

Original language [EN]

The strategy of the HKS is to use cooperation projects in education and training for introducing good practices in higher-education and as means of guiding the growth of HKS in quality and scope of its study programmes.

The HKS aims at forging long term strategic partnership with at least one world class HEI in the EU area which may serve as a role model for the organizational, educational and scientific development of the HKS in its quest for higher-educational and scientific excellence. The main expected outcomes of these partnerships would be increased attainment levels, a broader and more profiled research base and an overall increase in quality of teaching at the HKS.

A further strategic goal of HKS is establishing intensive cooperation and common bilateral and multilateral projects in education and training with distinguished Catholic universities, both within and outside the EU, to transfer their know-how and expertise in how Catholic universities contribute to the humanistic, social, economic and scientific development in their respective countries.

It is a permanent ambition of the Catholic University of Croatia to gradually transform the processes of practical training in enterprises, especially SMEs, transfer of knowledge, skills and technologies and amalgamation of creative contributions in joint projects with companies and public institutions from isolated cases to systematic higher-education and scientific trends in the Croatian society and economy. To pursue this strategic activity, cooperation projects with enterprises are envisaged.

As an HEI in a country soon to become an EU member state at the forefront of its enlargement, HKS aims at using its natural cultural and geographical advantages in conducting cooperation projects in training and education with HEIs in nearby Partner countries. These cooperation projects in education and training are expected to serve to capacity building towards modernization of HEIs in Partner countries.

Please explain the expected impact of your participation in the Programme on the modernisation of your institution (for each of the 5 priorities of the Modernisation Agenda*) in terms of the policy objectives you intend to achieve. (max. 3000 characters)

Original language [EN]

Mobility opportunities under the 'Erasmus for All' programme are expected to broaden the base of prospective high-school students, both from Croatia and nearby countries, who are considering studying at HKS. The variety that such mobility programmes bring has the potential to attract students that would not otherwise consider studying in Croatia, to reduce dropout rates and avoid fatigue that students might feel during their studies.

Mobility programmes open perspectives that otherwise might not be available at HKS or in Croatia in general. The possibility of participation in mobility schemes increases the motivation of students which translates into higher attainment levels and allows HKS to attract better university teachers.

The experience of studying abroad and the exposure to learning at advanced EU HEIs may motivate the best students at HKS to pursue research careers and enroll in PhD programmes. Furthermore, the incoming students at 1st or 2nd cycles at HKS may in turn become motivated to attend PhD programmes at HKS, thus increasing the pool of PhD students and overcoming the present deficiency of insufficient concentration of PhD students in a great many PhD programmes in Croatia.

The experience of mobility students and staff serve as a conduit to introduce more contemporary and relevant topics and research results into the curriculum at HKS. Mobility schemes, especially those related to training in enterprises should also allow faster adoption of important market and social trends, their incorporation into curricula in general, and a much broader insight into the needs of the EU common labour market. The participation of HKS staff in mobility schemes constitutes an important part of their permanent professional development.

Mobility programmes and the related transfer of skills, knowledge and experience will be used at HKS as a way of strengthening criteria in higher education. This is expected to proceed in two ways: by top-down implementation of best practices, and the bottom-up diffusion of positive personal experiences.

Setting up systematic training of students and cooperative projects with enterprises, especially SMEs, is an important challenge at HKS as a contribution to strengthening of the "knowledge triangle" in Croatia. Students who pass training in SMEs are more likely to develop an entrepreneurial attitude whereas the students and staff participating in cooperative projects with enterprises foster a transfer of knowledge and technology, and are more likely to engage in start-up or spin-off companies.

Mobility contacts with advanced HEIs will enable HKS to adopt their governance systems. This process is expected to proceed by formal contacts of the HKS mobility officers with respective mobility officers at other HEIs (in the process of making inter-institutional agreements and Learning Agreements of individual mobility students) and by the experiences of HKS staff that participated in the mobility programme.