



**BURGAS FREE UNIVERSITY**

*the new idea in education*

## **ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT 2014-2020**

### **The International (EU and non-EU) Strategy of BFU**

The international strategy of Burgas Free University is integral to achieving its mission and strategic directions. It acknowledges the provision of high quality degree programmes, active participation in international cooperation projects and the key contribution of student and staff mobilities. The concept of an internationalised university involves the provision of multicultural educational experience for students and staff and the development of strong international partnerships to support our capacity in education and research.

International cooperation has been part of the University long-term strategy to secure and improve quality within the university. Cooperation between universities in different countries helps to strengthen the international community.

Burgas Free University chooses its partners for mobility activities among the partner universities with which framework agreements for cooperation have been signed. BFU promotes professional collaboration and maintains good contacts with more than one hundred universities and organisations all over Europe and the world, thus providing both staff and students with a stimulating and demanding academic environment. Among these, during the 25 years of its existence BFU has signed 35 framework agreements, memoranda and protocols of cooperation with universities and institutions in Europe, Asia, Africa and America, aiming at developing academic relations and long-term cooperation in the field of higher education, exchange of academic staff, student exchange and support of research.

During the years 1994-2002 the University has been working on 15 TEMPUS - PHARE European projects and the university management has done its best to preserve and further develop the cooperation established as a result of the joint work on these projects. The activities on the projects proved to be beneficial for the introduction of new courses, the restructuring of the existing ones, the improvement of the infrastructure, the institutional building and university management, the development of expertise of the academic staff, the exchange

of experience and ideas. On the grounds of all these contacts partners on the ERASMUS programme have been involved.

As part of the professional development of the lecturers, their individual participation in various international events, such as conferences, seminars, project activities, is also acknowledged as a tool for finding new partners in mobility actions.

A geographical balance has always been sought. It has been the strategy of the University to have partners in various regions in Europe and only 1 or 2 partners in a country with the aim of keeping the geographical balance and having more diverse partnerships.

The target groups in the mobility activities are students in the first cycle, whereas we seek partners in double degrees for second cycle students with non-EU countries. In the last several years contacts have been established and further improved with Kazakhstan, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia and Turkey and negotiations are already in place as regards the development of double degrees.

In further developing the international profile and reputation, the University places particular emphasis upon the following strategic objectives:

- Promoting deeper engagement with non-EU countries and regions;
- Improving partnerships with the neighbouring countries;
- Developing joint Master's degrees;
- Providing international educational experiences for all by supporting student and staff mobility, including underrepresented groups;
- Improving the intercultural and international dimension of the teaching and learning process by including more international seminars and classes in the programmes and integrating the foreign students;
- Increasing the number of incoming students and staff by providing programmes and courses in English;
- Educating students to become prepared, informed and responsible citizens and supporting them as alumni to make leading contributions internationally;
- Producing research of international impact and significance;
- Supporting the social, cultural and economic interests of the city and region through the University's international expertise and engagement;
- Further developing measures for quality control and internal monitoring and evaluation of the University's and Faculties' participation in international mobilities and cooperation programmes, by actively implementing the ISO 9001:2008 standard, for which BFU is certified;
- Providing more opportunities for visibility and dissemination of the results achieved by students and staff and thus promoting the programme and allowing for its assessment and improvement.

## **The Strategy for the Organisation and Implementation of International (EU and non-EU) Cooperation Projects in Teaching and Training**

A central element in the institutional policy of Burgas Free University is the participation in international cooperation projects. They contribute to the educational quality, excellence and transfer of knowledge and foster the international collaboration. The aim is to share experience with institutions in different regions in Europe and other parts of the world. Such interaction promotes new ideas and insights that add knowledge and inspiration. This, in turn, helps the University to strengthen and further develop its mission as an international educational institution.

Strategic aims of BFU with regard to international projects:

- strengthening the cooperation with old partners;
- fostering increased collaboration with non-EU countries;
- facilitating the interaction and networking between education, research and business;
- supporting the mobility of students, teachers, researchers and other staff;
- further developing higher education teaching and learning capacity;
- development of high quality joint, double and multiple degrees;

In the organisation and implementation of international projects BFU places emphasis on:

- strong partnership composition;
- balanced distribution of tasks among the partners;
- meeting the particular needs of the targeted groups and regions;
- tangible impact on the participating institutions and the target groups;
- cross cutting issues such as equal opportunities, gender balance, social equity;
- visibility, awareness raising, project promotion;
- multiplier-effect and capitalisation of the project results and dissemination activities;
- quality assurance and evaluation measures to ensure efficient monitoring of the projects.

## **The Impact of BFU's Participation in the Programme on the Modernisation of the Institution in terms of the Policy Objectives to be achieved**

In the next few years Burgas Free University will be facing the main challenges and obstacles regarding the modernisation of higher education as many other universities in Europe. Our participation in the Programme will greatly contribute to the university governance, curricula improvement, interdisciplinarity in training and research, higher quality of education provided,

mobility activities enhancement, stronger partnerships with the business community.

As part of the modernisation of our university we will increase our efforts to improve the quality, relevance and attractiveness of the programmes offered by providing relevant support, guidance and counselling and courses that are more responsive to the social and business needs. We will be more flexible in designing the study programmes, include interdisciplinary learning modules, provide a greater variety of study modes to meet the needs of a larger and diverse group of students, including disadvantaged and under-represented groups. Thus more young people will receive a better-quality degree and will have improved job prospects. By increasing the attainment levels and offering more quality degrees, better-educated and qualified workforce will be provided to the business sector in the city, the region and the country. Strengthening the links between higher education institutions, employers and labour market institutions, improving the match between skills and jobs, taking into account the needs of the labour market and society will increase the graduate employment. The contribution we will make to economic growth and prosperity in Europe will help increase our international attractiveness.

The international mobility of students, staff and researchers has a positive impact on the quality of education and plays a crucial role in the modernisation agenda of Burgas Free University. Efforts will be made to facilitate the increase of learning mobility by strengthening the ECTS and improving efficient recognition processes, developing joint degrees and double Master's degrees, encouraging internships and work placements. Providing courses in English will increase the number of incoming students and also make us attractive for academics and researchers from Europe and outside the EU and facilitate new forms of cross-border cooperation. Investing in the continuous professional development of our teaching staff, lifelong learning, innovation, cooperation with the business sector will help us in strengthening the links between education, research and innovation.

Being a private university gives us more flexibility and academic freedom with regard to diversification of programmes, recruiting staff, raising private revenues. However, improving governance and funding in the EU will give us greater autonomy in overcoming the administrative restrictions and concentrating on our core tasks in education, research and international cooperation.