



Erasmus Policy statement (EPS) 2021-2027 - Strategy

Your Erasmus Policy Statement should reflect how you intended to implement Erasmus after the award of the ECHE. 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?

Since its foundation in 1995, Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences has been embedded in a unique political-historical restructuring process taking place in the Cologne-Bonn metropolitan region, which has evolved from a centre of federal political power into a centre for international cooperation and academic knowledge. In accordance with its founding mission, the university aims to make a lasting and competent contribution towards strengthening academic knowledge, business and internationality in the region. The university's first development plan, which encompassed the period from 2010 to 2015 (HEP I), defined internationality as one of its three strategic principles alongside innovation and networking; the current university development plan for 2016-2020 (HEP II) picks up on this area of focus and amplifies it in keeping with the motto "Shaping and living internationality".

H-BRS understands internationality as the ability to think and act beyond national borders and to acquire new knowledge and experience in cooperation with other cultures. Society and the economy are facing a series of global challenges which universities are required to consider and anticipate when fulfilling their educational mission. As a university of applied sciences, we encourage and expect an ability and willingness to think and act internationally and to take a cross-border approach to challenges. At the same time, the university's regional ties are reflected in the principle of regional internationality, expressed for example in partnerships with regional stakeholders, many of which are "global players", even global market leaders in their niche, who act internationally and require internationally oriented graduates with intercultural skills.

As a cosmopolitan, international university, H-BRS practises and communicates liberal, public-spirited values that emphasise individual responsibility, looking upon these as essential conditions for the emergence of true innovation. The benchmarks of these values are human rights and democratic principles. In this belief, H-BRS is implementing specific measures in fulfilment of its responsibility for contributing to the achievement of goals that will facilitate the creation of a European education area. These include:

- The promotion of an internationally oriented culture of mobility. Students are encouraged to spend periods studying and gaining work experience abroad and are given support throughout the realisation process. The development of new study programmes invariably includes the creation of a mobility window designed to further optimise the structural conditions for spending time abroad and to move towards the goal of making international student mobility the norm.
- Continuing to reinforce internationality and intercultural competence by implementing appropriate measures in the areas of study and teaching. Curricula are being internationalised still further, new staff are being recruited internationally, and international study programmes and partnerships are being expanded. The university development plan for 2021 to 2025 (HEP III), which is currently still in the draft phase, will assign a still more central role to Europe and strategically intensify carefully selected partnerships with European institutions of proven

quality by expanding activities in each area of expertise and consolidating each level of cooperation.

- The appreciation and encouragement of heterogeneity, diversity and inclusion in all areas of the university. People from diverse backgrounds and orientations should feel welcome and at ease; they should be able to interact, learn, teach and work in an inspiring environment. Experiencing internationality and diversity on the home campus is an easily accessible method of developing intercultural competence and also motivates staff and students to become mobile themselves.

- The promotion of multilingualism and digital competence as key skills. Students are already obliged to learn at least one foreign language; general and subject-specific language courses are currently offered in fourteen foreign languages. The strategy for digitalising the university aims to make studying more flexible by integrating digital formats and content into all courses, to improve learning outcomes by dovetailing in-person and virtual learning phases for students with a wide range of educational backgrounds, and to lay a foundation for lifelong learning. The university's digitalisation activities are designed to prepare students for a working and living environment in which "digital literacy" and a knowledge of state-of-the art technology are indispensable and which also uses virtual mobility to facilitate international dialogue. The Office of the President has appointed an officer who will take charge of the digital internationalisation of teaching and provide support for these processes.

Participation in the Erasmus+ programme is giving H-BRS valuable ideas for specific measures aimed at manifesting these goals. Erasmus has become a key element of European educational exchange in recent years, not only for students but also for teachers and university staff. The partnerships formed through Erasmus are vital elements of the university's cooperative network, which is oriented on qualitative factors. The expansion of the programme to include partner countries has opened up more exchange opportunities for the university over the last few years. Students, teachers and university staff all benefit from the structures, support services and financial subsidies offered by the Erasmus+ programme, which encourages them to spend time abroad and in some cases is the decisive factor that actually enables them to do so. At the same time, the exchange students, teachers and staff who come to Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg through the programme are a major asset to our campus.

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.

Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences also intends to participate in the new Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme with the aim of facilitating student and staff mobility measures involving both programme countries and selected partner countries as set out in Key Action 1 – Learning Mobility for Individuals. Further proposals are also being considered for the capacity building programme, which constitutes part of Key Action 2 (cooperation for fostering innovation and the exchange of good practices); however, the submission of such proposals will be decentralised and take place on the initiative of the respective department.

Students, teachers and staff will receive support as part of the Learning Mobility for Individuals programme. Students will spend one or two semesters at European partner universities familiarising themselves with new cultures of teaching and learning and experiencing other

subject-specific perspectives which will foster their personal development and which they will be able to apply as they continue their studies. The opportunity to undertake an alternative or supplementary period of practical training sponsored by Erasmus+ reflects the particular importance attached to practical experience by H-BRS as a university of applied sciences. Experience gained in other work cultures is particularly important for students who plan to start their careers working for global companies and organisations. The International Office, with its Outgoing Team and Welcome Centre for international students and guest academics, and the coordinators of international affairs in each department are working in close cooperation to realise these mobility projects efficiently and ensure compliance with the rules. The outgoing student mobility projects will be realised on the basis of the following key points:

1. Raising awareness and inspiring enthusiasm about the possibility of spending time abroad right from the start by providing information stands/presentations and facilitating informal events; attempts to address groups that are under-represented in the programme will be intensified
2. Submission of applications via a central procedure which has been digitised and implemented internally since 2019; the coordinators responsible for international affairs in each department will make the selection on the basis of transparent criteria. Where possible, application deadlines for work placement funding will be handled as flexibly as possible so that support can also be provided for projects set up at short notice.
3. Guidance when applying to partner universities and assistance with preparations for the stay abroad: academic support will be provided by the departments and assistance with organisational matters and language/cultural preparation will be provided by the International Office
4. Ongoing support during the period spent abroad and fast access to contacts in the event of questions or difficulties
5. Transparent and reliable recognition of achievements; additional follow-up for outgoing participants, and the recruitment of these as high-profile university ambassadors for intercultural exchanges of experience and European values. Reports on experiences and personal feedback will be used as the basis for continuous quality management.

For incoming students, the centralisation of the application procedure and the Welcome Centre's liaison with the respective departments for purposes of academic coordination will ensure that the process is efficient and can easily be understood by international participants. Students will receive support and individual counselling right from the start in order to help them prepare for the time they will be spending at H-BRS; a study buddy system with trained student volunteers from the host university will also facilitate close support and dialogue at student level. In future, the Welcome Centre will be increasingly testing and using innovative digital methods to help students prepare for their arrival. Important information will be presented during an orientation week at the beginning of their stay; this will also serve the purpose of cultural preparation and be an opportunity for incoming students to familiarise themselves with the university and its location and to make initial contact with other students. Other cultural events and excursions will be offered as part of a semester-long cultural programme. The International Office will also assist the exchange students with organisational matters such as visa applications, insurance, accommodation in student residences etc. The provision of scope and incentives for personal dialogue between students of different origins will continue to be an important goal in the future, as will the exploitation of the possibilities offered by the programme to continue promoting diversity and heterogeneity on campus and to enable all members of the university to experience internationality on an everyday basis.

Teaching placements funded by Erasmus+ along with advanced training and continuing education measures abroad can also contribute in many ways towards the achievement of the goals set out in the university development plan under the motto "Shaping and living internationality". Along with the personal and professional added value for staff, enhanced cultural and language skills facilitate the optimisation of support services for international students and academics in the various divisions, while teachers receive valuable ideas for the international orientation of courses and can often serve as role models by transferring their experience to students and inspiring the students themselves to undertake mobility projects. Guest lecturers and guest staff who come to H-BRS as part of the Erasmus+ programme contribute an international perspective to the university's teaching and administration. Last but not least, the personal contact facilitated by staff mobility can keep university partnerships alive and provide inspiration for future cooperative projects. The university therefore supports the expansion of staff mobility, with the Information Office providing information on opportunities and modalities and offering organisational support for participants both before, during and after the mobility measure.

Capacity building projects set up as part of Key Action 2 will enable H-BRS to expand its cooperation with emerging and developing countries, an activity which also constitutes part of the university's internationalisation strategy. They will promote networking between H-BRS and the international universities in the fields of applied research, teaching and transfer and facilitate the integration of "digital mobility".

Fundamental importance must be attached to inclusion, digitalisation and environmental sustainability in all of the programme lines mentioned above, as set out in the goals of the Erasmus+ programme and the university's own strategy; they must also become benchmarks when the programmes are realised.

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

Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences aims to continue improving its figures in the areas of student mobility (study periods and work placements abroad) and staff mobility. A more detailed definition of appropriate indicators is being developed as part of the discussions relating to the university development plan for 2021-2025. The goal is to reach Bachelor's and Master's degree students from all disciplines and a variety of backgrounds and living situations by addressing each specific target group and persuading them of the opportunities and support provided by Erasmus+. One way to encourage more students to spend time abroad could be to offer mobility phases involving blended learning. These options will be reviewed in each case when the new Erasmus+ cooperation agreements are concluded; if they are found to be feasible and meaningful, they will be developed further with the goal of realisation. Efforts will also be made to expand the mobility window and to review and optimise recognition processes.

A vitality and quality review of each partnership has already been initiated at department level and will be directly linked with the conclusion of the new agreements. In the autumn of 2019, each department began presenting its existing Erasmus+ partner universities to the Commission for International Affairs, which advises the university administration on all matters relating to the planning and implementation of international cooperative projects and serves as a cross-divisional forum for dialogue on internationalisation. The purpose of this was to evaluate the cooperation that has taken place since 2014 and to identify possible strategic partners; in 2020/2021, the insights gained will be used to form a vital Erasmus+ partner

university network that will continue to be oriented on qualitative factors and remain in place for the next seven years.

The progress reports made available via the mobility tool are already being evaluated in order to ascertain important indicators of the quality with which the programmes have been realised. One goal is to follow up more intensively with participants after their stay abroad, with the aim of facilitating reflection on their experiences, obtaining further personal feedback and recruiting former participants as programme ambassadors. Department-specific and/or cross-departmental formats will be tested over the next two to three years; here the difficulties posed by the participants' physical absence from campus during this study phase (thesis preparation) can be overcome by digital means if necessary.

One step towards the goal of digitalising programme management was taken in 2019 with the introduction of digital mobility software that links with Erasmus Without Paper. The digitalisation process will continue step-by-step in accordance with the schedule set by the EU Commission; it will start with the drafting of digital inter-institutional agreements.

The International Office aims to raise awareness of sustainability issues among participating incoming and outgoing students and to identify ways in which international mobility can best be reconciled with environmental sustainability. In this respect, H-BRS can benefit from dialogue with and the expertise of initiatives already established at the university (Green Office university group, Respekt! Time for Diversity, Time for Sustainability) as well as the Sustainable University concept created by the H-BRS International Centre for Sustainable Development. The establishment of new approaches, examples of best practice and the visibility of the topic in the context of student and staff mobility will serve as indicators of success while the programmes are being generated.

The success of the capacity-building projects will be measured by indicators such as the establishment of new teaching and learning methods and the development of training opportunities for students. A further aim is to equip students for the respective international employment market and to expand cooperation between universities and companies in the respective country.