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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 Vilentum University of Applied Sciences (VUAS) is an internationally oriented HEI, in the general sphere of Agriculture, Food Production, Sustainable Entrepreneurship and pertaining Communication and Teaching. The three pillars on which the institutional mission statement rests are in accordance with this, they are-

Provide and develop responsible and environmentally sound entrepreneurship

Achieve professional excellence through experiential learning, teaching and applied research

Provide and disseminate green knowledge for global citizens

Hence, VUAS strives to offer undergraduate and graduate studies and undertake applied research for the development and dissemination of green knowledge to the global community of those interested in responsible use of our planet's natural resources. This community is of necessity international. Reversely, students and staff from The Netherlands are stimulated to study and work in an international environment in which cultural diversity and interest are a given rather than an incident. VUAS sees the EU as its natural constituency, and has a 30-year track record to illustrate the shift in policies that this vision has brought about. Vilentum promotes and stimulates debate on European issues and achievements, and offers study elements on the EU as an integral part of all programmes, a rarity. Vuas participates active in 3 international educational networks for teacher training and learning as can be expected from one of the founding fathers: Firstly Enter, Network for learning and teaching in landbased and naturebased education; secondly Europea, Network for landbased and nature based TVET education; Thridly EAPRIL international network for learning (research level).

The developmental shift in the university over this period has largely been from regionally oriented to European to truly international. Currently (2013), the university population is 25% international, from many countries inside and outside the EU. This percentage is seen as ideal for a. the development of an international environment for the Dutch at the university, including specialized staff and b. providing an international community within which international students can flourish culturally and academically. Vilentum strives to maintain this level of international ambiance in the university.

The university is proactive in fostering respect and tolerance between individuals or groups of different ethnical, cultural or religious backgrounds or persuasions. Discrimination on the basis of religious beliefs, sexual orientation, nationality or political conviction is expressly forbidden to both staff and students. The university teaches and informs its community on this policy.

In selecting partnerships both inside and outside the EU the university will seek parties that are:

-dedicated to similar and recognizable principles of learning and research,

-interested in developmental goals since they perceive a phase difference between themselves and VUAS, either academically or institutionally or both

-involved in and recognized by Dutch government policies on international HE and development

-party to good relations with international trade and internationally operating companies, and active in responsibly developing these relationships

These four criteria are applied as a decision matrix to all new contacts that are proposed or sought –

If four out of four apply, there is possibly a strategic partnership to be developed (joint courses, projects, degree programmes in common).

If three out of four apply, there is a basis for a good working relationship, not a strategic alliance (projects, exchange, trainings).

If two out of four apply, there is a limited possibility of cooperation (exchange operated without heavy promotion or institutional support).

With institutions where one of these four common interests applies, no partnership will be sought.

A further guiding principle in selecting areas in the world or indeed Europe is mutual perceived quality of the co-operation after some time of trial. This implies that partnerships can change from active and productive to dormant over time, and some may not start at all. This is not seen as a loss of prestige or efficacy in maintaining international relations, but as a natural phenomenon in institutional development.

Vilentum will not seek partnerships for the sake of financial support or subsidies only. Reversely, joint research or teaching programmes, dual degrees or multiple degrees are only entered into with strategic partners. Their number is limited, obviously.

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]

VUAS is less interested in the organization of international cooperation projects in the framework of Erasmus, since the administrative burden does not contribute very much to institutional development and links that are the university's aim. VUAS will generally applaud other institutions that take a lead position in the type of project, and it will be content to make a professional contribution rather than an administrative one. The strategy for dissemination is simple – include all project activities in the ordinary university programmes and be explicit and generous in acknowledging the valuable contribution of the projects to institutional development. Thus, projects activities and mobility get strong valorization since they are seen as essential, yet remain recognizably part of the LLL infrastructure.

VUAS (Stoas Vilentum faculty) is active in identification and participation in Life Long Learning projects related to learning, coaching and teaching. Sometimes as project coordinator, sometimes as participant. Stoas Vilentum aims to be coordinator of one or two intensive programmes, or to participate in it.

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]

Participating in the Programme will aid the university's chosen strategic aims in the following way:
Responsible and environmentally sound entrepreneurship –

This type of activity is of necessity international and students need as much exposure to this in as many differing environments as possible. This results in better study progress and a higher quality of knowledge underlying a student's degree, hence stimulates students to have an interesting and goal oriented study attitude.

Participation will further strengthen the links with internationally operating businesses, already a VUAS forte. Students coming into the programmes taught in English normally do so with the expectancy of learning about what really goes on in business life. Any step taken in this direction also strengthens their chances in the job market, obviously.

Experiential learning and participative applied research –

The university maintains a strategic programme in the fostering of experiential learning and participates in the Programme to underline its importance also to incoming students. This is done for academic integrity, but it is strengthened exactly for incoming students and staff. The university wishes to further this practice and will make this intention known to its natural partners regionally – other knowledge institutions, companies and authorities.

Green knowledge for global citizens –

The university acclaims the Programme for contributing to the global in global citizens, and any contribution to mobility and mutual international work on the development of programmes has an impact not only on the participants, but also on the modernisation of the institution organising or managing it. Being responsible and transparent moreover helps the university to be administratively accountable and financially diligent.

* COM (2011) 567 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0567:FIN:EN:PDF>)