

Erasmus Policy Statement (Overall Strategy)

PL GLIWICE01

Silesian University of Technology SUT – Politechnika Śląska

Institution's international (EU and non-EU) strategy, including explanations on a) how SUT chooses partners; b) in which geographical area(s) cooperation is / will be held; c) the most important objectives and target groups mobility activities (with regard to staff and students in first, second and third cycles, including study and training); d) participation in the development of double/multiple/joint degrees

a)

Each time an agreement is signed, the perspective sustainability of the new collaboration link is examined. The experience shows that long-lasting links evolve from common research interests of two individuals. Most of contact emerged in such a way. The roots of several agreement dates back to previous political system times. Here enforced institutional collaboration evolved with time to sustainable personal links. SUT recognizes the importance of keeping contacts with its alumni. A relevant database is under development. Former students and researcher often very eagerly collaborate with their Alma Mater. Their insider position allows for initiating contacts and joint projects with SUT. For new projects the priority is given to institutions where some record of collaboration with SUT exists. New partners search looks for recognized HEI with strong teaching and/or research programmes. To produce a win-win configuration SUT should offer some unique experience of interest to the partner. Conversely, less experienced partners are invited to a project network. This is the way of repaying the obligation from the time when Poland was an EU candidate country and was supported by Western Europe HEIs.

b)

Participating States are the first choice of geographical areas. Available funding schemes active in these countries, minimum bureaucratic burden associated with the mobility within EU states, and common cultural heritage makes this contacts easy to start and maintain. Historical contacts with the Former Soviet Union (FSU) states is the reason SUT frequently serves as a link between the EU and FSU. Countries with significant population of Polish minority are natural partners for SUT. Erasmus Mundus (EM) is the main vehicle to support the collaboration with Latin/South America, Middle Asia and Western Balkans. SUT is a member of Erasmus Mundus consortia and has also signed several bilateral agreements with universities in Mexico, Brazil and Kazakhstan. Involvement of Gliwice, the home city of the SUT, in the World Technopolis Association resulted in close contacts of the University with several HEIs in South Korea.

c)

The importance of academic mobility in contemporary higher education system cannot be overestimated. Every effort is made to enhance these activities of both students and staff. Except for command of language and GPA level, no limitations are set in any group of students. Most of mobility concern graduates. The mobility of undergraduates has a greater impact on the internationalization of the student life at SUT. There is a very active Erasmus Students Network group, organised mainly the alumni of former mobility students. PhD students are encouraged to participate in mobility, but the number of man flows is not satisfactory and base on Erasmus and Marie Curie schemes. Only recently Polish government and the region of Silesia launched programmes to support the best PhD students with an option of financing the mobility. SUT recognizes international practical placement as an extremely efficient teaching tool. Exposure to international environment and high-tech gives a synergy effect. The strategy is to enhance this type of mobility by extending the pool of companies that accept trainees from SUT. Assistance of the partner Universities and alumni of SUT working in international corporations will be used to achieve this goal. International mobility is a separate point within the biannual assessment of every member of the SUT teaching and research staff. Some units of the SUT define the minimum mobility period

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as a necessary condition for promotion to Associate Professor. For the period of long staff international employment SUT gives a leave of absence. Tenured SUT's employee may additionally apply for a 1-year paid sabbatical every seven years. Shorter visits abroad of staff are financed mostly within Erasmus and other international schemes. Nowadays the number of short visit have significantly increased, as they can be financed from national projects.

d)

The procedure of granting dual and double diplomas requires significant organization effort in order to define a procedure conforming with the legal system of both partner institutions. Several agreements defining such procedures have been put into power. The initiative is always on the side of the Faculty or Department. So far agreements with Bergakademie TU Freiberg (D), TU Clausthal (D), VIAUC-Horsens (DK), University of Cassino (I) are signed. Furthermore, SUT is a member of the KIC scheme. PhD diploma conferred jointly by two Universities are also a point of interest. The necessary conditions for applying for such a degree define the minimum time spent at both HEIs and presence of two supervisors coming from the involved Universities. The details of the procedure are defined on case to case basis to be in line with the requirement of both Universities conferring the degree. In many cases the European PhD label is attached to the PhD.

Description of SUT'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.

As a rule, the elements of Erasmus scheme that can be directly transferred to cooperation projects in teaching, are implemented. Specifically this concerns the credit transfer idea, learning agreements and reporting methods. While within the Programme signing the bilateral agreement is straightforward, other projects require significant paperwork. It is the International Cooperation Office, who maintains this process supported by Legal and Financial Departments. The myriad of legal regulations of the HEI collaborating with the SUT requires individual treatment of each case, making this part of the preparation quite time-consuming. The usual mode of operation when starting a new partnership is to sign a general agreement (MOU) moving the details of the staff exchange, financing modes etc to annexes. The agreements are signed by Rector or Vice Rector for International Cooperation, who holds the power of attorney for such activities. He also supervises the entire process from signing the agreement to finalizing the mobility or education offer. Once the mobility comes to fruition, the International Mobility Office takes care of the organization of the travel of outgoing and lodging of incoming students and staff. The academic aspects of the education rest on the Faculties where a given student is enrolled. Similarly, the duties of the outgoing and visiting teaching staff are defined at the level of the Faculties or Departments. In most cases, projects are initiated at the level of Departments by a single member of staff based on his/her contacts abroad. The number of projects initiated at the Rector's level is smaller and concerns countries considered as strategic for the SUT. Once appropriate general agreement is signed, a SUT staff member is made responsible to elaborate on the details of the collaboration. The completion of a course and semester for an international students does not differ from Polish ones.

Expected impact of SUT's participation in the Programme on the modernisation of the institution (for each of the 5 priorities of the Modernisation Agenda) in terms of the policy objectives intended to be achieved.*

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

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The global economy enforces internationalization of higher education. The SUT Authorities are determined to enhance the role of international collaboration in both teaching and research. The details of relevant activities are described in the Strategy of the Development of the University. The international mobility of the employees enhances their chances of finding satisfactory jobs. Exposure to international environment during studies lifts the constraints of employment within one country and provides an experience of acting in a multilingual and multicultural surrounding. Participation in the Programme offers a simple and effective mean of introduction of the internationalization into learning. Wide experience gained within the years of participation in the Programme, the existing human resources and infrastructure make LLP/Erasmus by far the most efficient mean of internationalization.

In the recruitment strategy of the SUT and participation in the Programme is emphasized, as this aspects of education attracts many candidates (Priority 1) aware of the expectation of the labour market. The current trend of high unemployment among young alumni makes this feature even more pronounced. By nature, good rather than weak students are interested in international mobility. Thus, the stress on the international exchange in recruitment strategy, would improve the average quality of the enrolled students. This results in reduced failure rate at first years of education, thereby increasing the attainment level (Priority 1).

The role of the practical placement component of the Programme in SUT strategy will increase. It has been recognized that the gains to the student are twofold: exposure to international environment and cooperation with the real world industrial problems. Both features improve the quality and relevance of education offered by the University (Priority 2).

To increase the number of students undergoing practical training at companies abroad, the University needs to seek actively industrial partners. Such a search will be performed by many HEI. To be competitive in this rivalry, the achievements of SUT in both research and teaching should be substantial (Priority 3).

Additionally, the research and teaching should be pertinent to industrial partner interest, thereby improving the relevance of both teaching and research. Participation in the Programme will thus, through a positive feedback, open good perspectives for collaboration between business and academia. As a result, participation in the Programme will pave the way to build knowledge alliances (Priority 4).

An important part of the Programme constitute the staff mobility. Along with the usual teaching activities associated with these visits, the researchers are asked to become acquainted with the governance and funding scheme of the host HEI. The idea is to examine the administrative solutions at partner institutions in the context of their applicability at SUT (Priority 5).