

Erasmus Policy Statement

ULB Erasmus Strategy 2022-27

Your Erasmus Policy Statement should reflect how you intend to implement Erasmus after the award of the ECHE. Should you wish to add additional activities in the future, you will need to amend your Erasmus Policy Statement and inform your Erasmus National Agency.

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?

(1) Please reflect on the objectives of your participation. (2) Please explain how you expect the participation in Erasmus to contribute towards modernising your institution, as well as on the goal of building a European Education Area and explain (3) the policy objectives you intend to pursue.

1. The Erasmus programme, an important tool for the implementation of ULB's internationalisation Strategy

Our objectives for the next programming period are in line with ULB's Strategic Plan "Cap 2030", which was adopted in 2019 (see: <https://www.ulb.be/fr/gouvernance/cap-2030-le-plan-strategique-de-l-ulb>).

OBJ. 1 – Promoting the quality of our education and research: through the different actions of the Erasmus programme, we give the opportunity to our researchers and teaching staff to share their knowledge with institutions from other programme countries or partner countries.

OBJ. 2 – Further improving our knowledge and expertise, widening our horizons: the Erasmus programme enables ULB students, researchers as well as academic and administrative staff to exchange best practices, to undergo training, to learn from our partners, but also to develop joint initiatives and projects. Over the next programme, we want to continue participating in thematic projects and developing our expertise on subjects that match ULB values and priorities (environment, social inclusion...).

OBJ. 3 – Helping our students become "Citizens of the World" – Commitment and service to society are embodied in ULB's DNA. Supporting multilingualism is also part of our objectives.

The mobility actions of the Erasmus programme enable our students to experience a different environment, to develop their language competences, and cross-cutting skills such as resilience, confidence, or critical thinking. Moreover, while ULB already counts more than a third of international students (long-term residents in Belgium without holding Belgian nationality) among its regular students, the students we are receiving in the framework of our exchange programmes (including the Erasmus programme) play an active part in our “Internationalisation at Home” Strategy.

OBJ. 4 – Strengthening our partnerships: ULB is a resolutely European and international University. ULB International & Mobility Offices work strenuously to build strategic partnerships in different geographical zones. We are convinced that trust and regular contacts make for quality partnerships. Over the next programming period, we aim at strengthening partnerships with a narrower range of institutions, with whom we would like to increase the mobility flows and experiment innovative type of exchanges. In particular, and building on our experience in this area, we wish to enhance our participation to Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees.

OBJ. 5 – Promoting our societal commitments within our partnerships: ULB is a civic University which is keen to contribute to the defence and promotion of principles of democracy, individual liberties, and free inquiry. The University Community intends to convey these values in all the initiatives we are a part of.

2. The Erasmus programme, an essential element in the modernisation of our institution

Beyond the positive impact of Erasmus activities on the individuals (academic staff, researchers, students) involved in partnership projects or in mobility activities, the Erasmus programme prompts us to reflect on possible improvements to our institution, in terms of process organisation, pedagogical innovation, culture or management.

ULB is committed to contribute actively to building the European Education Area. In this framework, our priorities for the next programme are :

OBJ. 6 – Digitalising mobility procedures and improving the Student Journey: over the past few years, ULB has adopted early on most of the available online tools. The next crucial steps include notably making the use of the online Learning Agreement the norm for all students and faculties, and announcing selected students to partner universities through online platforms (e-nominations), in line with the recommendations and standards set in the Erasmus Without Papers and European Student Card initiatives.

We also wish to improve the *Student Journey*, by integrating in one single platform all tools linked to mobility, by improving the visibility of mobility opportunities, by simplifying the processes to be carried out by outgoing and incoming students, and by streamlining the services offered to the wider University community through improved cooperation with the relevant ULB Departments (International Office, Enrolment Office, Housing Office, Student Welfare Office, IT Department...).

OBJ. 7 – Building the University of the Future: since 2019, ULB is engaged in one of the European University Alliances, CIVIS. As one of the first “European Universities” pilots, ULB shows its firm willingness to experiment and build the European Education Area. The instruments of the next Erasmus programme, in synergy with the EU research and other third-part grants, will enable the 8 partners to implement their common vision.

3. Inclusion as our “Erasmus compass”: opening opportunities for all

OBJ. 8 – Increasing and diversifying mobility opportunities: over the past few years, we witnessed a stagnation of the number of our outgoing students. This generalised trend throughout Europe does not mark a lack of interest from our students for a mobility experience, but shows that the current opportunities may not reflect their needs. Over the next programming period, we intend to explore and diversify our study abroad offer to fit the needs of the next generation of students: blended mobility, non-European destinations, shorter mobilities... This will require an agile management of the programmes, and cooperation with our faculties and our academic staff.

OBJ. 9 - Pursuing inclusive education – ULB is committed to enable all students to study without any discrimination. This includes making sure that our students from a less advantaged socioeconomic background or with specific needs have access to mobility opportunities. While we already make sure all of our students benefit from such opportunities, in the next programme, we want to proactively promote social inclusion and equal opportunities across our projects and activities, including by making stronger use of role models that have successfully undertaken a mobility abroad.

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.

Over the next programming period, ULB intends to participate in the following opportunities:

- Projects Erasmus Key Action 1 – Learning mobility
- Projects KA2 – Cooperation among organisations and institutions :
 - Partnerships for cooperation and exchange of practices
 - Partnerships for excellence – European Universities
 - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees
 - Partnerships for Innovation
- Projects Erasmus Key Action 3 – Support to policy development and cooperation

Implementation of Erasmus actions at ULB

The implementation of Erasmus actions at ULB is based on a set of guiding principles:

- **Guiding principle 1: Alignment of Erasmus projects with ULB's core priorities** (as identified in our Strategic Plan Cap 2030). This allows us to focus our efforts and resources and to draw synergies between projects and initiatives.
- **Guiding principle 2:** Notwithstanding principle 1, ULB adopts a bottom-up approach, respecting its **Faculties' independence** and its grounding **principle of free inquiry**. Academic staff, researchers and Faculties are therefore the driving forces of the activities ULB engage in.
- **Guiding principle 3:** ULB engages only in projects that add value to our University, its research, its community, and its societal mission.
- **Guiding principle 4:** ULB focuses on projects that aim at reinforcing its existing network of partners. New partnerships are encouraged whenever they enable us to share or draw new expertise.
- **Guiding principle 5:** in order to promote multilingualism, ULB seeks mobility partners that allow all students and staff to practice their preferred foreign languages (mainly English and Romance languages other than French, but also other for student of Area studies, as well as language and literature).

Entities responsible for the implementation of Erasmus projects:

- Erasmus+ Institutional Coordinator: monitors compliance with the Erasmus Charter and acts as the main contact point for the national Executive Agency;
- Erasmus+ Project Coordinator: manages ULB portfolio of KA2 and KA3 projects and supports project leaders in their implementation;
- ULB Student Mobility Office: managing learning mobility actions and budgets;
- European University (CIVIS) Coordinator: manages the European University project on behalf of ULB;
- International relations Office and Coordinators in our 13 faculties: ensure the alignment of Erasmus projects with the University's and Faculties' priorities;
- Network of mobility Coordinators in our 13 faculties: support the academic implementation of mobility actions.

Application, budget management and reporting: these processes are centralised by the Erasmus+ Project Coordinators.

Communication of opportunities: the Erasmus Project Coordinators communicate on relevant Erasmus calls to the wider community through the website, e-mail lists and information sessions. Check lists are produced to help potential project leaders to check the viability of their project proposals.

Technical expertise and support: learning mobility projects are directly implemented by the Student Mobility Office. With regards to other projects, guidance to project leaders is provided by the Student Mobility Office and the Erasmus+ Project Coordinator.

Student Support: Faculties are the main contact for mobile (outgoing and incoming) students. ULB has dedicated officers for Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees. The University Community Services each contribute where needed (development of a "Welcome Strategy" for international students and staff, collaboration with the Housing Office, Student Welfare Office, etc).

International dissemination and expertise: ULB is active in several international networks, such as UNICA (Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe) and the EUA (European University Association). We draw on these networks to bring in new expertise and share our knowledge or the results of our projects.

Contribution of projects to the objectives of ULB's institutional Strategy

In this section we refer to the objectives listed in the first part.

KA1 Projects – Learning mobility

One of our institutional objectives (Objective 8) focuses on increasing and diversifying mobility opportunities.

Besides this, we expect our participation to this action to contribute to Objective 1 (Promoting the quality of our education and research), notably through outgoing staff mobilities for teaching.

Learning mobility of teachers, academic staff, students but also administrative staff will definitely contribute to Objective 2 (Further improving our knowledge and expertise, widening our horizons).

By enabling our students to live abroad and discover other cultures and languages, KA1 projects are key in helping us to reach Objective 3 (Helping our students become “Citizens of the World”).

Fostering inter-institutional cooperation through the development of mobility agreements is both a condition and a result of learning mobility. Therefore learning mobility also contributes to Objective 4 (Strengthening our partnerships).

Academic mobility and the exchange of ideas it enables are a very efficient way to promote our societal commitments across various countries. Therefore, we expect KA1 to contribute to Objective 5 (Promoting our societal commitments within our partnerships).

Furthermore, developing learning mobility opportunities is one of the main components of our European Alliance (Objective 7 - Building the University of the Future).

As mentioned above, ULB is careful to promote equal opportunities and diversity in all its policies, including in individual mobilities: hence contributing to Objective 9 (Pursuing inclusive education).

In turn, we expect learning mobility (KA1) to be facilitated by Objective 6 (Digitalising mobility procedures and improving the Student Journey).

KA2 Projects – Cooperation among organisations and institutions:

Given the great collaborative nature of the activities under KA2, we expect our participation in these projects to help us reach Objective 1 (Promoting the quality of our education and research); Objective 2 (Further improving our knowledge and expertise, widening our horizons); Objective 4 (Strengthening our partnerships); Objective 5 (Promoting our societal commitments within our partnerships).

Our participation to a “European University” project that shall continue over the next programming period will contribute to Objective 7 (Building the University of the Future).

Depending on the KA2 thematic collaboration opportunities that open for ULB, our involvement may contribute to reaching Objective 6 (Digitalising mobility procedures and improving the mobile student journey); Objective 8 (Increasing and diversifying mobility opportunities) and/or Objective 9 (Pursuing inclusive education).

ULB will closely follow the announced increase of opportunities for third country partners in future KA2 actions, and make maximum use of these. In particular, we highly welcome that international consortia are likely to become fully the norm in the new “Cooperation partnerships”, while they required specific justification in current “Strategic partnerships”.

KA3 Projects – Support to policy development and cooperation

Playing an active role in society, being a “civic” University is essential to ULB and is outlined as such in the Vision Statement of our Cap 2030 Institutional Strategy (see attachment).

We expect our participation in KA3 projects will enable us to contribute to the defence and promotion of the values of free enquiry and democracy (Objective 5); to be involved in resolving major societal problems; and to be an active participant in the public debate against disinformation, ideological regression and identitarian closure. In a time of disinformation and fake news, we also strive to give academic expertise a new credibility, focusing on new and innovative outreach methods.

What is the envisaged impact of your participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on your institution. Please reflect on targets, as well as qualitative and quantitative indicators in monitoring this impact (such as mobility targets for student/staff mobility, quality of the implementation, support for participants on mobility, increased involvement in cooperation projects (under the KA2 action), sustainability/long-term impact of projects etc.) You are encouraged to offer an indicative timeline for achieving the targets related to the Erasmus+ actions.

Targets and indicators

Student mobility:

In terms of student mobility, our focus is not only on a quantitative increase, but also on broadening the number of opportunities:

- Our overall target is to increase mobility by 30% by the end of the programme, that is the end of 2027 projects (all mobility types, including short mobilities).

- With regards to “classical” physical mobility (for one semester or a full year), we would like to see an increase of 20% by the end of the programme.
- With regards to specific mobility opportunities, we would like to foster internship (SMP) mobilities, where we believe there is growth potential. We aim to increase the number of internships by 50% by the end of the programme.
- We would also like to foster mobility at PhD level, with an objective that they constitute 10% of our mobilities by the end of the programme.
- Our focus will also be on reaching some balance in the number of outgoing students per Faculty, encouraging some of the faculties that send no or less students to promote mobility.
- Based on our first - incidental but successful - experience of blended mobility in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, we will also try to develop and promote this type of mobility and shorter mobilities, especially for students who would not have experienced mobility at all otherwise (students with family responsibilities for example).

Staff mobility:

- Our target for overall staff mobility is a 10-fold increase by the end of the next programming period.
- In particular, we would like to increase the numbers of mobilities for the administrative staff dealing with student mobility, as we believe this would in turn contribute to increase student mobilities.
- With regards to the destinations, we would like to encourage mobility of academic staff towards the universities that make up the CIVIS Alliance, with a view of developing trust and the basis for building joint programmes and degrees.

Cooperation partnerships and other KA2 actions:

- Build a community of expertise around KA2 projects and streamline them into geographical working groups;
- Further professionalise project management skills (joint effort of different entities that offer advice concerning external fundraising, including from EU programmes) and retain qualified project managers in the long term;
- Define a small number of priority sectors and partner regions/countries, while respecting faculties independence in their choices and taking into account domestic (e.g. FNRS or ARES) funding opportunities;
- Develop strategies to support the sustainability of our existing Erasmus Mundus Masters.
- European universities:
- Identifying potential synergies with other Erasmus+ actions; in particular, making the link with other Erasmus+ actions on impact on the local community.

Indicators

Student and staff mobilities:

- Number of students having conducted a mobility during their studies at ULB;
- Number of mobile students (per destination, per cycle, per Faculty, per background);
- Number of outgoing staff (per destination, per staff category).

Actions to achieve our objectives:

Boosting Student mobility:

- Conducting advocacy actions to loosen the eligibility rules for a mobility in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (ongoing);
- Encouraging our faculties to include mobility windows in their programmes, or to extend the periods eligible for student mobility;
- Encouraging traditionally less mobile students through targeted actions (communication through the Student Welfare Office, the Office for Students with Disabilities...).
- Working hand in hand with student associations to create a virtuous loop: inviting returning students to join students associations; funding joint activities through the organisational support; envisioning joint participation in KA2 projects for larger-scale projects.
- Increasing the involvement of returning students: Creating a community, CIVIS ambassadors, internationalisation at home.
- Developing joint initiatives with ULB's Language Centre to better prepare mobile students and give students the skills and confidence they need to take the leap and apply for a mobility.
- Increasing our communication on Erasmus+ opportunities, and spreading communication efforts over all the academic year; creating a repository of video testimonials on our website;
- Organising Flagship events regularly: Erasmus Breakfasts, International Mobility Day, CIVIS local days;
- Developing more opportunities for students to discover partner universities (through Mobility Fairs or online);
- Creating "Erasmus+ programme Ambassadors" in the faculties: developing a Guide and Toolkit for Faculty Mobility Coordinators, writing down processes; rewarding their commitment at institutional level.

Exploring Staff mobility as a multiplier:

- Encouraging staff incoming mobility as a first step;
- Facilitating outgoing staff mobility through new processes (to be in place by 2021);
- Setting targets for staff mobility per Faculty;
- Prioritising staff mobility applications for CIVIS destinations.
- Improving the implementation of mobility activities:
- Issuing guidelines for faculties for the signing of Inter-Institutional Agreements: inviting them to pay peculiar attention to accommodation solutions, language levels required, and avoiding the multiplication of partnerships in a same region to focus on strengthening existing partnerships;
- Monitoring inter-institutional agreements more regularly, flagging up any upcoming issue, such as problems in grade conversion, insufficient language skills, timing to receive the transcript of records, imbalance in mobility flows. Taking into account the willingness of the partner to invest in digitalisation procedures (Online Learning Agreements) to meet our own goals.

- Meeting regularly with all Student services to inform them of the specific needs of mobile students make sure the information we offer to outgoing and incoming students is up-to-date (insurance, housing, support for students with disabilities, Language Centre, etc.).
- Improving crisis management: the COVID-19 crisis has shown the importance of increasing our institution's preparedness to crises. This is all the more relevant in the context of Erasmus projects, which involve student and staff mobility. Over the next programme, we will aim at reinforcing our internal emergency procedures to provide international students and staff with the appropriate support. Within this realm, we consider the digitalisation of Erasmus+ procedures as a strategic component to avert and manage the effects of potential future crises.

Cooperation partnerships and other KA2 actions: Improve the internal communication around KA2 opportunities;

- Offer workshop-type exchange opportunities for project managers in ongoing projects;
- Reinforce exchange on how to overcome challenges in the field of joint/multiple diplomas, at the domestic (FWB and/or Belgian) and European level. Depending on the future role of non-European University partners in EM consortia, they will also be included in this exchange.

Increasing synergies between Erasmus+ projects:

Invest in KA2 and KA3 projects that enable us to overcome some of the hurdles we are encountering in KA1 projects.