

Erasmus Policy Statement (EPS)

2021-2027

EN|D

Participation in Erasmus+

Bertha von Suttner Private University (BSU) is planning to implement the following mobility projects for the current Erasmus+ programme period in accordance with its internationalisation strategy outlined in the section below:

Blended Intensive Programmes (BIP) – in the form of Summer or Winter Schools with different disciplinary, methodological as well as inter- and transdisciplinary focuses (e.g., Participatory Action Research; Mentoring in Social Work; Future Literacy Labs; Organisation Labs; Collaborative & Sustainable Housing; Application and Development of Qualitative Methods; Mentalisation Research); Since the BSU is also active in professional development, it has expertise in the organisation and implementation of open certificate courses. Those are shorter than a semester but can make a significant contribution to skill-development through their density and effective use of virtual communication channels. The BSU can and will continue to build on this successful model of compact teaching and learning packages in the international field. Here, BIPs offer a perfectly fitting format.

Student Mobility for Traineeships (SMT): Traineeships abroad for students of the first and second study cycle (Bachelor resp. Master) in the psychosocial, educational and/or economic field are promoted. Through the practical and work-related orientation of the BSU study programme, the development and expansion of practical partnerships with international organisations (e.g., Diakonie, Caritas) as well as the use of the global network of the academic staff, students should be able to connect to the work environments of European programme and partner countries in a high-quality way. Through existing curricula with integrated mandatory traineeships, this aspect is firmly established in the teaching profile of the BSU, with which the expansion of the international/European orientation is to be anchored accordingly.

Staff Mobility for Teaching (STA): The teaching staff of the BSU has excellent contacts at Higher Education Institutions throughout Europe due to their involvement in many international practice-, research- and publication-projects. The outgoing mobility of our teachers, in addition to learning and living intercultural connections, represents a low-threshold opportunity to further strengthen these networks and to stimulate even more comprehensive cooperation projects. In inviting incoming teachers, who can also stem from non-scientific organisations, the BSU sees an opportunity to stimulate and specifically promote the transfer of knowledge and experience from practitioners to students, even across national borders.

Staff Mobility for Training (STT): Networking and expanding the competencies of administrative staff is another central component of the BSU's internationalisation. Formats such as Staff Weeks or Job Shadowing are to be used here. Particularly in its role as a young (accreditation November 2018), fast-growing private university, the BSU in its organisational development can benefit greatly from the input of experienced international actors. Conversely, its young and agile organisational culture offers innovative perspectives and dynamic impulses for established Higher Education Institutions in Europe.



As an university in its formative years, BSU is participating in the Erasmus+ programme for the first time. Accordingly, it cannot yet draw on mobility projects that have already taken place. However, even at the current stage of development there is already an extensive list of European programme and partner countries with which successful contacts in research and teaching have already been established and can and should be further expanded. Considering the political developments in 2022, the BSU has also set itself the goal of focusing its internationalisation strategy even more strongly on (South) Eastern European programme and partner countries („widening countries“) in the future.

Starting point and state of development

The BSU has established openness, diversity, and internationality as key principles of its activities. It strives for the broadest possible international orientation of its activities while adhering to regional requirements specific to the degree programmes. An international and intercultural mindset is an essential principle in teaching, research and administration. It is lived and carried on by all members of the private university. The BSU sees itself as part of a connected and solidary global and European community.

With her active commitment to peace, dialogue and inclusion, the visionary activist and thinker Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914) is the eponym and programmatic inspirational figure for the university. Like no one else, Bertha von Suttner stands for the connection between science and social engagement, always in search of allies towards an open, fair, and growing society. International exchange, whether in form of incoming, outgoing or blended activities, represents an opportunity to integrate this perspective more fundamentally into the organisational culture and among students. BSU sees international and transcultural peer-to-peer networking, e.g., through buddy programmes, as part of its ‚informal curriculum‘ and will take supportive measures to make this experience feasible for as many students as possible – including those who cannot be mobile themselves („Internationalisation at Home“).

Since its accreditation in November 2018, BSU can reflect on a steady and sustained growth in terms of student numbers, curricula, organisational structures, and its network. As a young academic institution, not all development processes have yet been completed and some structures are currently in the process of formation. This offers the opportunity to integrate internationality early and from the outset of the institutional development, as has already been done in the strategic preparatory work so far. At the same time, various aspects of the internationalisation strategy cannot yet be fixed in detail. The BSU is working with highest priority on finalising its medium to longterm internationalisation strategy. The current generation of Erasmus+ programmes is essential for the BSU to achieve its internationalisation goals.



Teaching profile and students

As an university, the BSU is primarily oriented towards people who are working in the social and psychosocial field and who would like to improve their academic qualifications and further education. The focus on extraoccupational studies is therefore crucial to the university's profile. This means that the BSU is particularly aimed at people who wish to pursue an academic education after and in addition to their professional activity. All degree programmes at the BSU are designed so that they include work and attendance times which are compatible with each other and also enable career changers to study. The BSU organises its degree programmes in a manner that makes them accessible for so-called nontraditional students or those with unconventional educational careers. In contrast to the tenor of public universities, it is a central goal and essential cornerstone that beginning students contribute their own, preexisting professional and practical profiles.

Due to the correspondingly high degree of professional activity and parenthood among students, many potentially interested persons do not have the time resources and local flexibility for longer stays abroad. The opportunities offered by the current generation of the Erasmus+ programme in terms of blended and shortterm mobility are particularly attractive for this student group, which is strongly represented at the BSU. At the same time, these options are ideally linked to the basic principles of teaching at the BSU, which have been determined and pursued since its accreditation as a private university (see also: [institutional accreditation](#) and [research concept](#) [both documents in German]), and which are also anchored in the curricular structure: Career- and childfriendly conception of teaching, especially via blended learning and condensed face-to-face teaching. The BSU can thus draw on resources and experience developed even before the Covid-19 pandemic, which are also useful for the implementation of corresponding Erasmus+ mobility formats. This teaching profile specifically promotes fairness/inclusion, lifelong learning and digital education and thus actively contributes to the Focus Topics of the European Education Area (EEA).

The BSU and its degree courses are particularly linked to professional practice. The BSU strives for a high level of employability, which is achieved, among other means, through targeted traineeships and a dedicated psychotherapeutic outpatient clinic (pta), which is institutionally linked to the BSU, and through cooperation with the largest national training association for psychotherapy (ÖAGG). There is also an extensive network of practice partners in the field of social work, both regional and national. In addition, the BSU is currently establishing an interdisciplinary university outpatient clinic onsite in close cooperation with the regional capital of St. Pölten, which will combine studies, practice (including clearing and outreach activities), research and third mission in a unique way.



Objectives

Clear and measurable target markers result from the degree of implementation of the mobility projects mentioned above. In this context, the following principles are applied: A balanced ratio between incoming and outgoing participants is strived for. Furthermore, all projects should be scaled within a framework that is appropriate to the size of the BSU, in order to be able to guarantee the quality of mobilities above all. The particular advantage of a relatively small institution lies in the personal and individual contact with all participating persons. This characteristic should continue to be guaranteed and actively maintained through close support for students, personal counselling sessions, opportunities for conflict mediation and a constructive feedback culture. In the case of incoming lecturers, the BSU takes all necessary steps, such as individual coordination meetings in advance, in order to integrate the visit into the course programme in a way that is most meaningful for all involved.

Internationality and physical as well as virtual incoming and outgoing mobility should become part of everyday study life at BSU, i.e., all students should be informed about opportunities and available resources. This goes hand in hand with the goals of permeability of studies and support for non-traditional students (equal opportunities) and reflects the goals of the EEA. An essential prerequisite for the deeper establishment of the European Education Area is also the promotion of digital skills among students and staff (EEA Focus Topic). In connection with this topic, the BSU sees an important opportunity in the rapid implementation of the European Commission's Erasmus Without Paper initiative (including Erasmus Dashboard Tool, Erasmus+ App, European Student Card) to ensure that all parties involved can communicate efficiently and exchange the necessary documents digitally before, during, and after mobilities.

The linking and mutual development of Erasmus mobility and academic structures will subsequently also be realised for the promotion of early career academics. The doctoral programme developed within this framework (completed by 2026 at the latest) will be based on the above-mentioned profile and include internationality as an important cornerstone. The high level of professional networking and international visibility among the BSU's teaching and research staff, which is systematically promoted by the unit 'Research Coordination and Networking', forms therefore an essential basis.

The BSU considers comprehensive organisational cooperation projects (KA3), such as Alliances for Innovation or European Universities Alliances, to be desirable in the longer term. However, implementation during the current programme period is rather impractical. Therefore, the programme period should be used to expand contacts and establish sustainable working alliances by means of individual mobility projects (KA1), so as to be able to implement potentially even more far-reaching cooperation in the subsequent period from 2028 onwards.



Strategic goals and sustainable impact

In the course of its further development process, the BSU attaches highest priority to further internationalisation. Creating a sustainable impact is also reflected in the BSU's mission statement: teaching and research should provide the basis for productive engagement with current societal challenges, from which noteworthy contributions to the promotion of health, wellbeing and public welfare, among other things, can emerge. The BSU addresses the topic of „people and society in the digital age“ in an interdisciplinary manner on the basis of national and international cooperation. As a platform for collaboration and knowledge transfer, the BSU strives for active exchange with the public, social actors and incoming and outgoing students.

The BSU also emphasises the integration of teaching, research and knowledge dialogue/ knowledge transfer as a necessary third mission of universities. For this reason, active exchange with business actors, civic-society actors and governmental actors as well as various stakeholder groups (including specific demand groups in the social and health sectors) is also an essential part of the study courses. Together with the development of degree programmes, the BSU initiates and establishes networks and cooperative relationships. This is based on a dedicated participatory approach, which provides for selected, tested and also new (creativity-promoting and target group-oriented) dialogue formats in research, teaching and connecting third mission activities. The participation of heterogeneous and plural actors in knowledge production itself (in the sense of a multi-actor approach) makes it possible to address current and fast-moving social transformations and respective challenges, to make them visible, to work on them in a targeted manner and to evaluate them in a sustained or accompanying manner. In addition to national commitments and international partner activities (e.g., in the course of Horizon Europe), the BSU emphasises and cultivates its local and regional ties (St. Pölten, Lower Austria) and actively promotes socio-spatial developments on site.

The overall objective is to implement the mobility projects listed above in high quality during the current programme period. For this purpose, a timetable and milestones have been developed, whose achievement is the most important indicator for the successful use of the Erasmus+ programme.

Timetable & milestones

The current timetable includes the following milestones:

UNTIL FEBRUARY 2023

Further gathering of know-how and expansion of staff structures in the International Office (50% full-time equivalent). Take advantage of webinars and individual counselling appointments offered by the national agency (OeAD). Informal exchange of experience with structurally similar institutions within the framework of the Austrian Private Universities Conference (ÖPUK). International outreach - addressing potential cooperation partners and existing BIP networks with thematic overlaps. Implementation of the online tool 'Erasmus Dashboard'. Internal training on open mobility opportunities for teaching and admin staff as well as organisation of an information event (International Day) for students.

BY FEBRUARY 2023

Submission of/participation in mobility applications to at least one BIP in committed alignment with at least two partner institutions (concluded Inter-Institutional Agreements). Depending on the coordination within the partnership, the BSU can take on both a sending or a hosting role. In addition, three STA and three STT mobilities will be applied for. The number of SMT mobilities is based on the demand and interest of the students, which will be surveyed beforehand. In the following years, the submission activity should grow reasonably, sustainably and under regular evaluation.

UNTIL SUMMER 2023

Established actions to broadly advertise the mobility offers to students. Multichannel communication should effectively make mobility opportunities visible to potential participants. Existing parameters of the marketing and communication department (website views, conversions, social media reach) will be used to evaluate the achievement of this milestone.

FROM SUMMER 2023

Once mobilities start, established quality-assuring measures come into effect. These include regular monitoring through management reports and key indicators. Based on the experience and knowledge gained, the BSU will assign priorities in the following mobility activities and partnerships until the end of the programme period.

UNTIL 2025

Implementation of the European Student Card for all BSU students.

UNTIL 2026

As part of its further development, the BSU will place a particular focus on the promotion of young academics and respectively on the development of a corresponding programme, which nowadays can only be designed internationally. The integration of BIPs into the BSU's emerging doctoral programme is a key component of this.

UNTIL 2028

Already at the end of the current programme period, more comprehensive Erasmus+ cooperation projects will be planned on the basis of successful collaborations and corresponding strategies will be fixed.