

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

Strategy

Tarptautinė teisės ir verslo aukštoji mokykla (TTVAM) is a modern and growing accredited institution of higher education providing professional Bachelor degrees (180 ECTS) that open up opportunities to pursue Master degrees in Lithuania and abroad. The mission of TTVAM is "To create a professional for a progressive society". The vision is to be a "creatively thinking international organization for the new era". Internationalization is one of the most important strategic directions embedded in the Institutional Strategy for the implementation of institutional mission and vision as well as contribution to building a European Education Area.

TTVAM aims to provide its students with a qualitative higher education that would correspond to the national state and international requirements, as well as to educate modern reasoning personalities able to create and implant innovations in the areas of business, science, culture and technologies, and start their own business in an international environment.

TTVAM is oriented towards the tendencies of the EU education process and endeavours to harmonize its own policy with them. One of the main goals of TTVAM is the internationalization and modernization of studies and strong international partnerships with other HEIs in the EU, thus TTVAM strives to keep up with the EU education development, in order for students to have the best conditions to reach for contemporary European education. The priorities of TTVAM and the activities taken in order to reach this goal are: integration into European educational processes; promoting international mobility of students and staff; integration of the international / intercultural dimension into study programmes making mobility period abroad a desired part of each student's / staff member's study/work process; development of new study programmes and modules; strengthening the partnerships as well as common project activity in cooperation with partner institutions.

Participation in Erasmus programme has been an integral part of TTVAM internationalization strategy for ~15 years already (including former Socrates, Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013 and Erasmus+ Programme 2014-2020). TTVAM has been successfully implementing the principles of the Bologna Process, strengthening international image of the institution, integrating successfully into the development processes of EU higher education, which provides students, lecturers and the administrative staff members with an opportunity to acquire international experience and to get acquainted with novelties in study process.

Participation in the new Erasmus Programme and promoting its activities and opportunities is one of the core means to achieve better results in the process of internationalization and modernisation of studies. It will also further increase the quality of student and staff mobility –the participants will have the opportunity to discover new teaching and learning methods, improve foreign language skills and fluently operate more than one language, deepen their academic and cultural knowledge and skills. The international experience gained and professional network started will greatly contribute to the further professional growth of the young individuals in professional and personal perspective. This will increase their attractiveness and competitiveness, helping to maintain employability in a quickly changing national and international labour market. Active implementation of the Erasmus mobility programme will also raise the attractiveness of the institution itself for the new student applicants.

Successful participation in previous mobility programmes proves TTVAM to being capable to further successfully implement the programme's principles and that its internationalization strategy contributes to the goals of a European Education Area laid down in the communication on "Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture" (2017).

Implementation of Erasmus+ programme

TTVAM is taking part in action KA1 (The mobility of higher education students and staff). Participation in this action will contribute to achieving the objectives of our internationalization strategy – promote international mobility of our students and staff, as well as strengthen the cooperation bonds with our existing partner institutions abroad, and establish new fruitful partnerships in order to more actively participate in international project activities, generate new ideas and exchange best practices in the field of higher education and its modernization.

TTVAM International Relations Office's main functions while implementing Erasmus+ within the institution are: expansion of the international cooperation; quality assurance of students', lecturers' and administrative staff mobility; counselling outgoing students and staff within the Erasmus+ programme; coordination of incoming students and staff; consulting on the matters of studies, teaching visits; dissemination of information about possibilities of studies abroad, conferences, seminars; representation of TTVAM in international environment.

We have taken part in action KA1 before and are willing to continue implementing the mobility of students and staff during the new period of Erasmus programme based on the same core principles, that every participant of the Erasmus Programme without any discrimination should have the opportunity to take full advantage of the possibilities for personal and professional development and learning; that all academic achievements in partner HEI should be fully recognized by means of ECTS and those results are all recorded in the Diploma Supplement; and that all mobility activities that a participant takes part in are completely free of charge. Moreover, we plan to take actions and implement the new priorities of the programme set out in the new ECHE – implement digital mobility management, promote environmentally friendly practices in all activities; encourage the participation of those with fewer opportunities and promote civic engagement among the programme participants.

When it comes to the implementation of student and staff mobility under KA1, TTVAM manages the programme activities strictly by following Erasmus programme regulations and taking actions that are indicated in institutions agreement with the National Agency.

TTVAM possesses a substantial amount of inter-institutional agreements with foreign partners in EU member countries. These countries and partners were chosen based on the relevance and comparability of the offered academic programmes, geographical location as well as cultural diversity. TTVAM strives to establish partnerships with as many HEIs in EU as well as as many EU Member states as possible in order to provide the students with a broader choice of mobility destinations in terms of academic choices and exposure to diverse cultures.

The functioning of Erasmus+ programme within TTVAM and all practical information on student, academic and administrative staff mobility (process on selection procedures, distribution and transferring of finances, and recognition of study period abroad) is clearly defined in the internal Institutional Erasmus regulations which are accessible to all students.

Students, academic and administrative staff members of TTVAM are encouraged to actively participate in Erasmus+ programme by announcing a call for applications and organizing selection interviews twice a year – In late October – early November for the Spring Semester, and in March for the Autumn Semester. Also, the information seminars are held to the students throughout the year with the participation of previous Erasmus+ programme participants who share the experience and knowledge on the benefits of the programme and participation in it. During the next Erasmus phase we are planning to put more effort into motivating students to go for a study exchange semester combined and followed by an internship semester. While being on academic exchange semester it may be easier to start searching for the internship place for Erasmus+ internship programme. A combination of one semester of academic exchange and one semester of internship may greatly motivate students to gain international experience in professional area and may result in a fast and efficient employment.

Full-time and part-time 2nd and 3rd year students have an opportunity to study abroad for the period of 3-12 months, or complete their internships in a foreign business enterprise for the period of 2-12 months. The period of study and/or traineeship mobility must be relevant to student's degree-related learning and personal development needs and be a part of the study programme that the student is following. Mobility for Traineeships is also relevant to the student's field of study and is integrated into the study programme whenever possible. Academic and administrative staff members have the opportunity to take part in Staff Mobility for Teaching and Staff Mobility for Training for the period of 2 days up to 2 months.

In the new phase of Erasmus programme we will be putting effort to ensure that a mobile semester abroad would be an experience taken by the majority of our full-time Lithuanian and international students. All students receive a mobility grant based on their destination country and duration of mobility period. The participants are also encouraged to go with a Zero grant if they have such possibility, and still possess all the rights of an Erasmus student. Students with special needs are also welcome to participate in the programme, and additional grants are available to make their mobility experience as qualitative as possible.

The whole turbulent situation connected to the current outbreak of the COVID-19 virus has put all the mobility participants to an online means of learning. TTVAM has a very strong distance learning experience via Moodle platform, and the local and incoming Erasmus students successfully completed their courses and took exams online. As we had to adapt to such circumstances, the idea of further developing and fostering virtual mobility which may be blended together with physical mobility arose. In the new phase of Erasmus programme the students will be given the possibility to come to study to TTVAM and take also desired courses online thus saving their time and making the mobility more digitalized. The same idea applies to outgoing students when they are missing certain subjects to fulfill their curricula, they will be able to follow the courses online even during their exchange semester thus avoiding any possible academic debts and moreover will extend their academic knowledge and professional experience in various other subject areas. Virtual internships are also planned as we have already received several offers from foreign companies that are looking for virtual interns. Especially after the COVID-19 we believe the need for virtual assistants and interns will be rising.

Before the study period abroad all participants must choose the subjects at partner HEI corresponding to their home study programme curriculum and sign Learning Agreement for Studies to

ensure a transparent and efficient preparation of the exchange abroad, as well as to agree on how courses successfully completed abroad will be recognised. In case of traineeships, the students come up with a training plan together with their tutors and sign a Learning Agreement for Traineeships to ensure a transparent and efficient preparation of the exchange abroad. This document sets out rights and responsibilities of the various parties, a detailed programme of the traineeship, information on insurance, and how one's traineeship will be recognised upon successful completion.

Before the mobility period every student receives Erasmus Student Charter explaining student's rights and obligations with respect to their period of study/traineeship abroad. Prior to the mobility period all participants whose mother tongue is not English, have to take an OLS test in order to assess their knowledge of a foreign language and make sure that those skills fulfil the linguistic requirements of a host institution. All students have the opportunity to take an online language course of the language of the host country.

There are three categories of staff members at the Institution responsible for outgoing students:

- Erasmus Institutional Coordinator is responsible for dissemination of information; organization of selection; informing candidates about selection and its results; assistance in preparing documents for host institutions (applications, Learning Agreements, insurance, accommodation, etc.) and the embassy if relevant; allocation of the licenses for linguistic assessment and language courses; preparation of grant agreements; mediation in problem solving between mobile participants and host institutions and other staff in the sending institution;
- Study Programme Managers are responsible for students' assessment during selection, approval of course list which is included in Learning Agreements (and its changes as well) and academic recognition;
- Tutors at the sending institution are responsible for all traineeship questions (approval of traineeship programmes, consultations to students and mentors at the host institutions; final evaluation of the traineeships).

During the mobility the contact with students and their coordinators is being kept via email or online conference calls. Any problems arising during the mobility period are solved as fast as possible by coordinators in charge.

After mobility period abroad the students receive final approval and full recognition of successfully completed courses upon the receipt of a Transcript of Records or Evaluation Certificate in case of a traineeship. In case students fail to pass certain courses at the host institution, they are given the opportunity to retake the examination at home. The same applies if there have been any changes in the Learning Agreement and the student is missing a certain volume of subjects. In such case conditions are created to take the subjects and pass exams free of charge.

Regarding the inbound mobility participants, the documentation is handled by the Erasmus Coordinators in both institutions, and students Learning Agreements are confirmed by the Manager of a relevant study programme. The Course list and full ECTS Course Catalogue is being revised twice a year, constantly updated and uploaded on the institution's website so that all incoming students have access to the relevant and up-to-date information.

TTVAM has a dormitory and provides accommodation facilities to all incoming students. However, if such a need occurs, TTVAM administrative staff also assist in finding accommodation elsewhere. An Orientation Week is organized for inbound students during the first week of each semester. Erasmus Institutional Coordinator and Coordinator of International Study Centre provides the following information: - study process in receiving institution (mandatory lectures attendance, continuous assessment, requirements for examination, e-learning environment, etc.); - deadline for Learning Agreement changes; - organizational aspects of their stay in Vilnius (public transport, ISIC, accommodation, contacts, etc.). We organize intensive cultural/social activities for Incoming students during Orientation week and the semester together with international and Lithuanian students who are members of Students' Council or have interest in inter-cultural communication.

As TTVAM has two full-time study programmes delivered entirely in English, incoming Erasmus students are integrated into the classes together with full-time international and local students thus fostering their equal inclusion into the study process and creating multicultural environment.

After the mobility of incoming students, Certificates of Attendance and Transcripts of Records are prepared and sent to all the participants and their coordinators after all the examination results are presented by the teachers. In case there are any failures, the students are given the opportunity to retake their exams at TTVAM or via Moodle online platform.

Due to demographic reasons as well as lack of motivation, the number of participants in the mobility for studies is decreasing. However, as big emphasis is put on practical training during study process in our institution (almost one fifth of the total number of ECTS in the study programmes are devoted to traineeships), the numbers of students interested in traineeships abroad is rising year by year.

We see the tendency that once a student takes the opportunity and goes on Erasmus abroad, it is very likely that he/she will express his/her willingness to go again and again until they use all 12 mobility months that they get in each academic cycle. The above mentioned combined path may greatly support TTVAM internationalisation and modernisation strategy.

Envisaged impact

By participating in Erasmus programme we expect certain goals and impact to be achieved. We expect the share of faculty teaching in English to increase year by year; the number of students taking part in international mobility projects to increase year by year; all degree programmes to host at least 3-5 visiting foreign professors each during one year of delivery.

Moreover, a positive impact is expected in widening the international academic community and academic mobility:

1. At least 5-10 percent of students on the majority of degree programmes to take an exchange semester abroad which will help them to become globally competent and competitive graduates;
2. Every English taught degree programme to receive at least 10 international exchange students every semester;
3. The number of students on international internships to increase year by year;
4. At least 2 faculty members from every degree programme to go on exchange teaching or training visits every year which will help in incorporating new teaching and learning methods into TTVAM curricula as well as improve its quality and relevance;
5. The incoming-outgoing exchange student ratio to be balanced.

As our institution aims at developing and fostering an international environment and the culture of internationalization and promoting academic, social and cultural integration of international students, we expect at least 85 percent of incoming international exchange students to express satisfaction with their academic, social and cultural integration, also the institutional indicator of intercultural competences of staff to improve year by year throughout the duration of the programme.

In the new phase of Erasmus programme we also expect to increase our participation in common project activities together with our academic partner institutions abroad which will provide the opportunity to get familiar and adopt novel methods of teaching and learning, extend the use of digital component, add value to the improved competencies of academic and administrative staff and foster the overall importance of internationalization in every individual's lifelong learning path.