



## Erasmus Policy Statement 2021-2027

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, according to its mission "operates in an European dimension both in scientific research and in teaching by participating, in the maximum achievable extent, in academic international cooperation". The above-mentioned assumption is further strengthened in the project of the new strategic plan of the Nicolaus Copernicus University development, currently under preparation, which is expected to apply until 2025: "We aim to be a renowned research university, that participates in the development of science, and thus actively changing the world", professing CREDO: Culture – Research – Education – Diversity - Openness.

The NCU Strategy, currently in force (2011-2020), assumes: "strengthening the leading position of the NCU in Poland and gaining a significant place among European universities." Both overarching objectives have been achieved particularly by:

- obtaining the status of one of the 10 research universities in Poland as part of the first competition of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education - "Excellence Initiative - Research University";
- involvement in the initiative of the European Universities and association with YUFE – Young Universities for the Future of Europe consortium, the highest rated in the first competition.

As a research university, the NCU bases its development strategy on the concept of "4xI@NCU: internationalisation, interdisciplinarity, innovation and integrity".

Widely understood internationalisation is considered to be the most fundamental change factor, influencing all the NCU employees and students and setting new standards in research and didactics. The basic objectives defined by the NCU in this regard include:

- increasing mobility of students, doctoral students, PHDs and professors;
- establishing an institutional support system for the management of international partnerships with leading research institutions;
- creating interdisciplinary study programmes in English and significantly expanding the offer of dual and joint master's and doctoral studies created in the framework of academic partnerships with renowned universities.

Further active participation of the NCU in the Erasmus Programme will be a catalyst for the aforementioned changes and will allow even greater synergies with the EEA assumptions (borderless learning and research; mobility as a standard practice; a strong sense of European Identity).

Particularly, the NCU's involvement in the implementation of YUFE's assumptions directly supports the principles of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education and EEA: „YUFE alliance aims to bring a radical change by becoming the leading model of a young, student-centred, non-elitist, open and inclusive European University based on the cooperation between higher education institutions, public and private sector, and citizens (University + ecosystem).” In turn, "European identity and responsibilities in a global world" is one of the 4 Focus Areas which the partnership focuses on. YUFE's ambition is to redefine the concept of studying and working in Europe, which will allow to equip students with true social competences and a refreshed European identity.

Multilingualism, automatic recognition, quality assurance, digital skills and digitisation of educational as well as international mobility processes are a focal point both in the YUFE strategy and in the individual activities of all individual academic members of the alliance, including the Nicolaus Copernicus University.

The NCU's Strategy for the years 2011-2020 refers to quality aspirations in education, research and management. Our aim is to issue diplomas highly acknowledged by employers in Poland and beyond. It is crucial to provide students with the competences necessary to compete in the European and global labour market. This is partly achievable by creating optimal structures for international exchange and engaging in joint educational programmes. Participation in the Erasmus Programme, including the Universities of Europe initiative, stimulates a continuous and valuable qualitative change in this regard.

The NCU is constantly increasing the number of international partnerships that are the foundation for the exchange of students and staff. The first and foremost criterion, when choosing our partners, is the quality of institution. In most cases, signing the agreements is preceded by a fact-finding visit of our representatives. Partnerships are developed by and for each of 16 faculties of our university. The NCU has signed 137 agreements of mutual cooperation, out of which 38 with EU and 99 with non-EU countries. Partner institutions cover 5 continents - Europe, Asia, North America, Africa and Australia.

To achieve Erasmus goals, the NCU has signed also over 800 LLA agreements (100% increase in relation to LLP programme), initiated and set up by the faculties, but also arranged at a central level. Within Erasmus+, we cooperate with almost all eligible Programme Countries (except for Liechtenstein and Luxemburg). The NCU also participates in the Education Programme (EEA grants – cooperation with Norway).

Under the new Programme, the priority of the NCU will be primarily to invest in the maintenance and development of partnerships, which are strategic for achieving the objectives of the Research University and YUFE. Moreover, the implementation of Erasmus mobility under these partnerships will be additionally supported by the NCU's own resources. Cooperation with Partner Countries under the KA107 action, where the NCU is one of the biggest beneficiaries among Polish universities, should be considered as one of the greatest successes of the current edition of the Programme. Cooperation with Partner Countries is highly valued by the NCU, primarily regarding high potential of development, very good mobility quality, cultural research and didactic diversity. It is especially crucial in the context of saturated market of cooperation with Programme Countries and decreasing student mobility dynamics. The KA107 partnership, currently implemented by the NCU, covers 81 institutions in 35 countries on almost all continents (Europe, Asia, North America, South America, Africa, Australia).

It not only demonstrates gaining international position and reputation by the NCU, but also supports the organizational change and the processes of modernisation in Partner Countries' Institutions. Within the new Erasmus Programme, the NCU will enlarge partnership basing on individual contacts of our scientists as well as on the existing research and teaching centres. One of the most important destinations will be Eastern Partnership countries (RU, UA, BLR), where even Polish-speaking students can be recruited from, but also North Africa, and especially Morocco.

Our key objective is to provide international dimension and level of the activities at the NCU. This can be best achieved by a professional development of staff and the international mobility. The opportunities provided by the Programme will profoundly assist in providing mobility and further possibilities for international cooperation. Within outgoing students, Erasmus exchange students are an absolute majority group at the Nicolaus Copernicus University.

NCU is challenged with a demographic decline, that is why the admission of international students is in focus. New curricula are set up according to the needs of international labour market.

Participation in the Erasmus Programme helps the NCU in providing increasingly high quality education and teaching programmes. According to the Mission, our University has to provide teaching in an international context and prepare our graduates for the present and future challenges of modern society. Increasing the level of internationalisation in the learning process is one of the main operational objectives for the coming years. In 2014, the new Education Quality Assurance and Labour Organisation System "System of Academic Excellence" was introduced in the Nicolaus Copernicus University. This system applies to all areas of the University's functioning, covering all forms and types of studies, at all levels of education, and its design makes it an authentic tool for continuous improvement.

The most important goal is to achieve academic excellence for all types and levels of studies. The NCU is implementing National Qualification Framework Scheme; therefore, more emphasis is put on the effects of training. Our graduates will demonstrate professional knowledge, practical and language skills. Study mobility allows to enlarge the spectrum of courses by a specific offer of host universities. As for practical skills, Erasmus placement mobility is one of the key factors apart from national internship programmes. Generic competencies developed as a result of participation in an international mobility are priceless: language capacity, survival in an international environment, teamwork, overcoming stress and culture shock, building self-confidence, better organization, planning and financial management skills.

By participating in the Erasmus Programme, the NCU will improve its competence in developing and offering modules and short-cycle courses, vocational training to facilitate access to higher education for non-traditional and life-long learners. A wide application of blended formats of mobility and learning will also be of a great importance for an increased inclusivity in mobility.

The rating of HEIs is likewise of great importance. International mobility is also a crucial factor of promotion.

Further participation of the NCU in international cooperation projects within Erasmus Programme will contribute to strengthening the university's international profile. Participation and, even more, coordination of the international projects is highly appreciated and it contributes to the personal development of staff which, in consequence, enables to deploy teaching and research in new areas with partners who can provide examples of good practice. The knowledge triangle between innovation, research and education, supported by the Programme, is essential in order to strengthen the position of the NCU as a modern centre of knowledge with a strong influence on the proper economic development of the region. Participation in partner projects under the Programme will enable the NCU to address European challenges and, indirectly, to provide more support for the development of the European Research Area.

The vision of our university focuses on an operative and creative participation in global research and education area, and an active cooperation with leading HEIs.

The priority of the NCU will be to engage in the following actions:

- The mobility of higher education students and staff - Programme Countries and Partner Countries
- Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices
- Partnerships for Innovation
- Partnerships for Excellence - European Universities

Due to the very broad profile of the NCU and the expertise, the cooperation proposals concerned essentially all actions and operations eligible for higher education in the current Programme; thus, it is appropriate to adopt the widest possible horizon of options in the new edition. However, the basic objective for the NCU in the new Programme will be continuation

of qualitative (vs. quantitative) policy on participation in individual actions. Nevertheless, we assume a simultaneous increase in the number of cooperation projects carried out by the NCU due to the announced introduction of simplification in the application and reporting processes as well as simplifying the budgetary structure and enabling small scale projects in the HE sector, based on the exchange of good practices.

These changes will increase the involvement of employees in the implementation of cooperation in the Programme (more "newcomers").

International mobility activities in the Nicolaus Copernicus University are aimed at students and staff. The ratio of incoming to outgoing students and staff has been revised and extended. International mobility also affects the internal changes at the NCU campuses in accordance with the "internationalisation at home" principles. The reception procedures of international students and researchers are in the process of a continuous improvement, especially at the moment in terms of the implementation of the Research University strategy and YUFE.

Mobility under the Programme is complementary to the objectives of the above-mentioned strategies (eg: supporting high-quality partnerships; increasing the staff mobility of professors; attracting talented candidates; development of professional training system for the administrative staff; creating opportunities available to all, independently of socioeconomic or cultural background; development of soft and professional skills via internships; engagement in the local communities). Student mobility is particularly important for the NCU. The programme and its capabilities have a stimulating effect on the entire university and play an important role in strengthening the international dimension of the NCU. The experience gained in the Programme in terms of an organization of an arrival, a welcome, orientation activities, on-going tutoring throughout the stay at the NCU, services for international guests, recognition procedures, enable a greater implementation of other projects and activities in a range of internationalization at the NCU.

An equally important challenge during the implementation period of the new Erasmus Programme will be to ensure the sustainability for the YUFE partnership under the EUI after the pilot phase ends. Academic partners, including the NCU, are jointly taking a number of supplementary actions, including initiating further projects complementary to the YUFE strategy, for an effective synergy with all areas of the university's activities and in order to maximise the potential of the alliance. In this context, the YUFE alliance will also strive to continue to attract European funding from Erasmus.

The Nicolaus Copernicus University encourages the academic community to engage in international projects, strategic alliances, joint studies as well as provides administrative support to implement and carry out the project activities and to disseminate project results at every level.

The Department of International Cooperation plays leading role in promoting Erasmus opportunities by spreading information (via e-mail, newsletter, website news), organizing info-days and individual consultations for staff and students. Moreover, the Department of International Cooperation actively supports staff and students in the application process (particularly in the area of budget construction) and management of Erasmus projects accepted for funding (eg.: assists at monitoring and audit controls and provides support at the reporting stage). International projects are also supervised by the Financial Department. Rectors and deans are authorized to support participation in projects with the use of university resources. Students' participation in projects is recognized by ECTS credit points and information in a Diploma Supplement.

The Department of International Cooperation is, in general, responsible for maintaining international partnerships and providing a range of services for international students, PhD's and visiting scholars in close cooperation with other NCU units. An important objective is to further develop and encourage mobility programmes at all levels and to allow students to enhance their academic experience and future employability.

The Department of International Cooperation offers professional guidance, both to students and staff, in connection with the planning of an Erasmus stay abroad.

The fully implemented and efficient Erasmus participant service system includes in particular: ECTS system in all the University departments, support of student and staff exchange at a central level; monitoring of outgoing students; orientation, integration and mentoring support for incoming students; university accommodation; free language courses; academic mentoring (Faculty/Departmental Erasmus Coordinators).

Project and international mobility management will be subjects to qualitative changes currently being introduced at the NCU in view of new challenges. The main objective is to provide amplified support for students and researchers. These changes will unify the procedures, project-based proceedings and team-based management. Projects' activities will be substantially supported by the electronic document flow system, which will be introduced in 2020.

The main objective of the NCU will be to maintain high-quality mobility and projects implemented under the Programme. At the same time, the qualitative approach will support the ever-increasing and optimal use of Erasmus offer, in line with the development objectives of the NCU. In this context, it is necessary to distinguish:

- an increase in the number of student mobility at all levels and fields of study, including first halting the further decline in long-term mobilities, which is expected primarily due to an increase in the inclusivity of the new Programme by introducing more flexible mobility formats (blended mobility), short term mobility, increasing amount of scholarships;

- achieving a balance of exchanges with Programme Countries and maintaining the current favourable proportion of incoming to outgoing mobility in cooperation with Partner Countries (ca. 60% incoming vs ca. 40% outgoing);
- implementation of a special mobility quota (all types of mobility) dedicated to the cooperation with YUFE partners (under the European Universities Initiative);
- ensuring sustainability of the NCU's involvement in YUFE (under the European Universities Initiative);
- maintaining the current, very high level of satisfaction of the NCU Students taking part in Erasmus mobility (more than 90% of overall satisfaction) and from the organisational and administrative support provided by the NCU (above 5, in a 6-point scale on the basis of additional internal survey);
- progressive development of cooperation with Partner Countries (under KA107 action), achieving geographical balance, increasing student mobility and maintaining the highest level (one of the highest in the country) of absorption and use of KA107 funds;
- continuous verification of the quality of cooperation agreements and partnerships;
- increasing staff mobility, including an increase of "newcomers" participation (people who have not yet benefited from STA/STT mobility) above 30% in the total number of mobilities and the increase of administrative staff participation (all levels and in all parts of the university) in training opportunities abroad; the use of acquired experience and competences by employees to improve the quality and international dimension of the curricula and the functioning of the university administration;
- improving the implementation of ECTS;
- improving the course catalogue;
- promoting the development of student and staff intercultural competences;
- full implementation of the digitisation of mobility according to the Erasmus Without Paper objectives and in accordance with the timetable indicated by the European Commission;
- maintaining the evaluation of final reports on mobility projects and cooperation projects at a very good level, including by recognising the implementation of the project as an example of good practice;
- engaging in cooperation initiatives with the highest quality and implementation potential, as well as maintaining the highest standard of institutional support for the implementation of cooperation projects;
- increasing the number of projects based on the exchange of experience;
- using Erasmus cooperation as a catalyst for the development of joint programmes, as well as scientific cooperation and research projects.