

Erasmus+ Policy Statement for 2021-2027

The University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów (UITM) is the largest and highest-ranked private university in southern-east Poland.

The current structure of the University has four educational faculties – Management, Applied Computer Science, Media and Social Communication, and Medical Faculty.

In addition to educational activities, we run many scientific research projects and organize numerous international scientific and industry conferences. We are directly involved in injecting life into the region and we do this by marrying up education with business.

During 25 years of activity over 60 thousand people have studied here, both from Poland and abroad. We are proud that UITM is increasingly willing to accept young people from all around the world, and that they choose our University to kick start their path to a successful career.

Our university's greatest asset is the ability to adapt curricula to the needs of students and a changing socio-economic environment in the world. We educate practically and we prepare young people from all over the world for their future. Our staff is open to cooperation with students and lecturers from many countries. Every idea and initiative is very important to us. Cultural diversity isn't just an idea, it is our priority. We have been educating students in English for many years, and the number of foreign students is growing significantly every year. We are a leader in south-eastern Poland in terms of internationalization and diversity. Our strength is also demonstrated by the achievements of our graduates, who make valued staff in many Polish and International Companies.

Internationalisation is integral to the UITM. Our mission is to achieve international excellence in education and research. Implementation of the high-quality Erasmus+ programme has been part of our strategy since the day we joined the initiative in 2001. In the past years, our main focus was Key Action 1: mobility of individuals. This allowed for many mobilities, incoming and outgoing, which resulted in further cooperation. Not only do we promote the initiative of the Erasmus+ programme but we also promote the idea of European society. We do our best to advertise Poland and our region as an innovative and full of possibilities destination. We create opportunities for our students to enable their best possible future. It is important to underline that the majority of UITM students who participate in the programme come from outside the EU and they have a vast understanding of the significance of diversity and multiculturalism.

Our international strategy is to further participate in Erasmus+ and to include more and more activities. Thanks to the actions implemented so far, we have a strong network of partners, which can only be extended further in the next Erasmus initiative. We hope to establish more strategic partnerships, start joint degree programmes, develop new curricula, organise networking events, such as staff international weeks - to create as many opportunities for students and staff as possible.

The UITM is a multicultural university with students from more than 50 countries and we do our best to promote their cultures and educate all students about the importance of tolerance and non-discrimination. We aim to encourage more students to participate in the programme. We will put more focus on Polish students, who are not as eager to do so as international ones (who do not need encouragement) because we believe that this is a way to teach them about the world and to wake the sense of the European Identity in them. This will allow them to obtain many useful skills, such as speaking a foreign language, think autonomously and become accustomed to this rapid digital change that is happening right now. This knowledge, as well as the ability to feel at home everywhere in the world, will prepare them best for the international labour market.

Practical teaching is our motto, thus it is one of our top priorities to lead our students up to the challenges they might face once they start their first job hunt. Our Career Service is here to give support and guide them in this process. We have many partnerships with international companies offering internships and job positions but finding a placement abroad is nowadays much more beneficial.

Participation in Key Action 1 is our crucial objective. The implementation of Key Action 1 has been successful and we intend to continue this good practice with a few improvements. We will carry on promoting the programme among our students, the concept of the EU and the idea of the European Identity. We aim to increase the number of both outgoing and incoming mobilities and to sign more agreements with foreign universities and companies under the scope of the programme. The UITM students and staff get all the support they need while considering and then applying for mobility.

Students leaving for a semester abroad shall be carefully guided through the process by the Erasmus and ECTS Coordinators to ensure the best outcome. The mobility will be fully recognized and supplemented in the diploma. It is our practice to organise meetings with students coming back from mobilities for new applicants so that they can share their experience and answer questions that might occur. We also publish their Erasmus stories on social media and our website to promote the programme and its benefits. For even better results we put in contact students who have already participated in the programme with those who are considering it. This proved to be an effective solution, as students who have completed their mobility have the best knowledge of what to expect. Students doing SMP mobilities get the necessary guidance as well, however, we try to teach them the independence to improve their chances on the labour market. We suggest that they contact employers on their own, however, we support them in all the steps, as well as while preparing all application documents.

With regard to incoming students, we make sure that they feel part of our university community from the moment they arrive. A few years ago we implemented the "Mentor Programme" which, with a few adjustments, proved to be a vital part of the whole experience. Mentors are usually students who plan to study abroad in the following semester. It is their responsibility to contact incoming students at a very early stage, right after the nomination period and befriend them. They learn about travel arrangements and answer all questions and eventually meet them upon their arrival and assist them to their accommodation. The next step is to help them out with finding their way around the city and university. All mentors and incoming students

participate in the "Erasmus Welcome Days" when we handle all formalities and give tours of the campuses. Students also meet their coordinators, as well as representatives of faculties and learn the basics of Polish law and academic ethics. They also go through a short communication course and are offered a Polish language course. The two-day event allows incoming students to feel at home and get well acquainted with the UITM community, as well as dispel any doubts and fears.

Action 1 Mobility programmes and institutional partnerships under other Erasmus Actions have always been the cornerstone of UITM internationalization strategy. We would like to continue this approach to:

- expand our curricula with new teaching programmes and courses developed with European and international partners;
- develop innovative tools for our students and teachers (as we do now in several partnership projects);
- strengthen our links with local communities and decision-makers to help to build effective educational systems and approaches able to respond to the emerging needs of societies and labour markets;
- transfer our experience and projects ideas developed and implemented locally in cooperation with businesses and public administration into international (European) level;
- further increase the level of international recognition of UITM through cooperation with other European universities and institutions.

The Erasmus+ Programme has had a great impact on UITM, throughout the years. It allowed us to increase our international network of students and partnerships. In the future, we will continue our practice but we also intend to get involved in more projects in all three actions, having in mind that our region needs to be educated about internationalism and that it is our goal to create a safe and open environment for everybody.