



## Erasmus Charter for Higher Education 2021-2027

### Policy Statement Utrecht University

September 2021

#### Strategy, objectives and priorities in the context of the Erasmus+ Programme

Utrecht University (UU) is setting the outline of the 2025 university strategy, with one eye on the 2030 horizon, considering what this means for the period 2020-2025. As a public organisation, public values such as accessibility, equality, pluralism, inclusiveness and transparency form the starting point of our strategy and activities.

Utrecht University's mission is to work for a better world. Our graduates have the knowledge and skills to make a substantial contribution to society. Our research is ground-breaking and focuses on solving major international issues. Our collaborative culture makes innovation, new insights and social impact possible. The core values of ambition, inspiration, commitment and independence are the basis of our university community.

Measures to establish a European Education Area and the key principles for the new Erasmus programme such as common values and inclusive education, digitalisation, civic engagement, sustainability and flexible education for lifelong learning are not approached as separate outside targets, but are in the heart of our institution's policies and organisation. In view of the social challenges and international developments in higher education, we are continuing a number of key points from the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan:

- Strategic themes

The strategic themes - Institutions for Open Societies, Dynamics of Youth, Pathways to Sustainability and Life Sciences- are now indispensable to our profile. As a result, the themes will be embedded even more strongly in education and research in the next planning period.

- Open Science and public engagement

In the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, Utrecht University formulated its ambition to be a pioneer in the field of Open Science. The Open Science programme was launched in 2018 and focuses on Recognition and appreciation, public engagement, open access and research data management.

- Internationalisation

Students gain international skills with a globalising labour market in mind; top research is by definition international and the issues on which the university is working in education and research are global. In order to strengthen our international profile, an internationalisation programme was launched in the previous planning period. This programme will be continued and its objectives are still up to date.

- Digitalisation and innovation in education and research

Educate-it and Research IT are two programmes that have contributed to a modern and innovative education and research environment in recent years.

- Diversity and inclusion

In the previous planning period, the university set itself the goal of becoming more diverse as an organisation in the broad sense of the word. Diversity contributes to the quality of academic debate and, as a public organisation, the university has a responsibility to reflect society as a whole and to ensure a culture of inclusiveness. This ambition remains intact.

In addition, three main ambitions have been formulated for the coming years:

1. Students and staff will contribute to a better world. The Sustainable Development Goals will form an integral part of our education, research, impact and operational management.



2. Our students and staff will be given the scope to develop; staff and students will take care of each other. We will constantly work to build a strong community.
3. We will ensure an agile and innovative organisation and finances which facilitate the ambitions.

To achieve the above ambitions and respond appropriately to social developments, we aim to accelerate in a number of areas:

- greater embedding of strategic themes and multidisciplinary in education, research and impact;
- recognition, rewarding and well-being of staff and students;
- embedding the Sustainable Development Goals in education, research and operational management in order to contribute to urgent social issues;
- make education more flexible and preparing students for lifelong learning;
- strengthen strategic alliances both nationally and internationally;
- offer a secure, state-of-the-art digital infrastructure.

Cooperation will be strengthened with and through:

- local and regional civil society organisations and authorities (*example: community service learning*);
- national alliance with Eindhoven University of Technology, Wageningen University & Research and University Medical Center Utrecht (*example: education innovation and challenged-based learning*);
- international European University CHARM-EU (*example: linking education to SDG's, inclusivity, blended mobility*).

### Erasmus+ actions

Since the start and without interruption, Utrecht University (UU) has participated in the Erasmus programme. Over the years the mobility numbers -in what is now KA131- have risen and Erasmus exchange is considered to be a core activity, completely integrated in the elective curriculum, supported by student services, the institution's student information system and internationalisation strategy. New Erasmus mobility activities have been adopted and KA2 project opportunities were taken (strategic partnerships for innovative education and Erasmus Mundus Joint Master). In recent years UU started participating in KA107 and successfully applied in the pilot phase of the European University initiative (CHARM-EU). This means implementation is well on its way and already contributing to our ambitions and values as innovative, international and sustainable research-based university community.

As university with a global perspective, Utrecht University brings the outside world in and connects with it. Continuing participation under the new Erasmus programme, with shared values, ambitions and principles, will help to strengthen this connection in multiple ways.

We expect to continue our participation in all KA1 and KA2 activities, not as separate components but in conjunction with the overall internationalisation strategy, with shared values, focus and ambitions.

Being a member of the European University CHARM-EU gives ample opportunity to think out of the box and develop, test and implement innovative teaching and learning in an inclusive blended and hybrid educational environment.

Information and support services for (other) KA2 partnership applications for cooperation and innovation will be improved by the central Students & Academic Affairs Office. Good practices from all activities will contribute to the common goals and ambitions to form a truly global university.

Increased participation in KA171 projects will boost staff professionalism with an international perspective. Strong cooperation with institutions in partner countries will make a major contribution to achieving SDGs and strengthen social engagement.



To achieve our objectives related inclusion, sustainability and digitalisation, we expect to be supported by the new principles under the Erasmus programme. Participation in KA1 will accelerate the development of digital data exchange with our partner universities, contribute to diversity and inclusion activities and anchor our Travel Green Grant project.

### Envisaged impact

Participation in the Erasmus programme and commitment to the principles will contribute to reach the following targets, which we consider essential to become a global university:

- UU promotes physical exchange but at the same time stimulates other forms of exchange by focusing on digital cooperation. All faculties have good facilities for online meetings and teaching rooms where online collaboration is possible (Teaching and Learning Labs) - priorities digitalisation, environmentally friendly practices, inclusion
- UU has an active and effective policy to decrease international travelling and to fly less frequently on necessary journeys - priority environmentally friendly practices
- The UU community has many cultures and backgrounds. UU facilitates an effective internal intercultural community where understanding between both students and staff with different backgrounds come first. The international classroom is an intercultural classroom - priority inclusion
- UU ensures that international staff and students not only receive a warm welcome, but also feel seen and supported during their stay - priority inclusion
- UU is a bilingual university. Anyone who has been associated with UU for more than 2 years, is encouraged and supported in at least passively controlling both Dutch and English. Information for all employees and/or students will be always offered bilingual - priority inclusion
- UU effectively uses networks to contribute to SDGs through joint education, research and exchange of expertise - priorities civic engagement, inclusion, environmentally friendly practices, digitalisation

The above mentioned and other targets will be covered by our continuing Internationalisation programme and impact will be monitored consequently. As the new strategy for 2020-2024 has not yet been fully established, no quantitative targets can be given at this stage.

We focus on maintaining the numbers of classical outbound mobility for studies and traineeship and increasing participation in blended mobility and other -digital- forms of international educational activities. With these new activities and additional financial opportunities offered by the Erasmus programme, we intend to increase participation of underrepresented groups.

Staff mobility will grow with our increasing involvement in KA171 cooperation with institutions in partner countries. Under the new programme this will most likely be extended to more student mobility as well.

For many years mobility support for -mainly- students is organised in a central office and International Offices at all faculties (7) and University Colleges (2). Staff services are -additionally- provided by the International Service Desk.

Utrecht University has one central digital process for outgoing students (including Erasmus grants) and one process for incoming exchange students, completely integrated in the institution's student information system. Under the new Erasmus programme the system will be connected to the EWP platform to simplify and secure data exchange with partner universities and with the Erasmus app for easier access to information and processes for students.

Being a member of the newly established European University CHARM-EU ensures implementation of all Erasmus priorities, as they are at the core of this new academic entity. All developments in the field of educational innovation, civic engagement, inclusive education and sustainable mobility will also benefit and impact the individual institutions, through the mutual exchange of good practices between the alliance and its members.