

ERASMUS Policy Statement 2017-2021

Internationalization Strategy

The Catholic Private University (KU Linz) is a forward-thinking institution committed to the transformative power of education and, thus, to the development and support of its students and staff. Our objective is to be a globally recognized research and teaching facility that delivers high-class education and prepares its students for the challenges of a global world. Consequently, international partnerships play a pivotal role in positioning the KU's international impact. The International Office (KU International) supports the university leadership in realizing its strategic objectives through establishing international partnerships with institutions that share KU's founding principles and values. KU's overall internationalization strategy covers internationalization of curriculum, students, teaching and staff mobility and fits the University's larger development plan. Internationalization strategies have been advanced for both faculties encompassing three departments: theology, philosophy and art history.

The institutional internationalization strategy pursues the following objectives:

- to raise the profile and increase the international esteem of KU Linz through its innovative educational institute;
- to embrace, learn from and respond to cultural and religious diversity;
- to deepen the research and teaching profiles in the corresponding fields of research and teaching interests, e.g. the analysis and interpretation of artistic and cultural manifestations from aesthetical and societal in different cultural contexts
- to further develop and enhance partnerships and networks in the wider international world;
- to develop international student recruitment strategies;
- to foster culture of open-mindedness
- and to internationalize the curriculum

Catholic theological faculties and seminaries have a longstanding historical experience with internationalization. However, in hindsight this kind of internationalization was mostly Eurocentric and thus has had an ambiguous impact on various cultures. More recently, numerous factors including the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) have propelled a serious shift: catholic universities have become seriously interdisciplinary by using insights from several fields of studies such as sociology, cultural studies, post-colonial studies. The envisaged exchange of students and faculty aims at coming to critical terms with theology's own history of 'internationalization' while also opening doors for intercultural as well as interreligious learning against the background of post-secular societies.

Mission Statement

We believe that high-quality academic education requires a culture of open-mindedness. With regard to internationalization our efforts focus on skills acquisition based on cross-border, mutual learning and development of both, our students and employees. This objective implies a (gradual) international orientation of the entire university. In order to achieve that we not only try to foster students and staff mobility but also to develop an international campus through internationalization at home activities that are able to reach non-mobile students and researchers as well.

Partners and strategic partnerships

KU Linz pays attention to the quality of a partner institutions and study programs and to the needs and interests of the students and staff. In year 2017, all university partnerships were evaluated according to following principles:

- complementary internationalization strategies
- similar and complimentary study programs
- quality of teaching and research
- joined activities and mobility flows in the last 5 years
- joined research projects

The evaluation procedure helped us, on one side decide on if and how partnerships are to develop in the future and on the other define cooperation partners in Europe, which are of a strategic importance and provide impulses for the internationalization of teaching and research through joint activities. In addition, the KU Linz intends to increase its membership and work in international specialized university networks and to strengthen its R & D activities.

The results of a students' survey (2017) helped us further define goals of internationalization, regions and countries of interest for student's mobility. KU students showed tendency to Central, Northern and Western Europe and clearly stated that new partners outside of Europe with universities in North and South America (Theology) are of an interest. Research fields of the academic staff and lecturers has allowed the KU Linz to take on a pioneering role in establishing cooperation with institutions in South America (Brazil) and South Caucasus (Armenia and Georgia) and West Balkan countries, in the middle term Erasmus+ Projects and eventually double degree programs in the long term will followed.

Further in 2021 we plan the evaluation on departmental level for all departments using the "MINT-Tool for mapping Internationalization" in order to be able to even better define goals and regions and countries of interest for the three different departments.

KU LINZ International Semester - fostering mobility, internationalization at home, internationalization of the curriculum, staff exchange

KULIS (KU Linz International Semester) is an international semester designed for theology, Philosophy and Art History students and held since the autumn term 2019 completely in English. Its main purpose is internationalization at home, allowing employed KU Linz students who are not able to go abroad to be international and develop their intercultural competences. Students from partner universities join KU students for one semester in Linz, attending an orientation week, several field trips, and cultural events which together sum up 30-40 ECTS points in a then diverse intercultural and interreligious environment. Lecturers from partner universities co-teach with KU Linz faculty giving students deeper insights in the international dimension of theology, art history and philosophy. By 2021, the KU Linz International Semester should take place not only in autumn terms but in summer terms as well.

Organizational Structure

KU International defines the internationalization strategy as well as the goal agreements, measures and evaluation criteria in close coordination with the Vice-Rector's office and the Deans of the faculties. Further international coordinators at the faculties playing active role in promoting and supporting internationalization.