



## **ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS)**

ALYTAUS KOLEGIJA/University of Applied Sciences

Erasmus+ ID code: LT ALYTUS01

Internationalization of AYTAUS KOLEGIJA/University of Applied Sciences (hereinafter AK) is clearly determined by its vision: successful performance in the international area. The strategy of internationalization is integrated into the plan of strategic activities of AK. One of the changes of the strategic plan estimates development of internationalization, i.e. development of partnership in international networks of international higher education institutions and implementation of mutually beneficial cooperation projects with foreign HEIs; assurance of participation of the community in international internships and/or exchange programmes; increasing prominence of AK, strengthening reputation of the institution in the international area.

The chosen activities (The Mobility of Higher Education Students and Staff, Partnerships for Cooperation and Exchanges of Practice, Partnerships for Innovation, Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support to Policy Development and Cooperation) in Erasmus+ programme will enable us to reach the raised goal – successful participation in the international area.

AK is ready to participate in mobility activities with the purpose of learning, as well as cooperation in the activities of innovations of and sharing good experience, development and improvement of the ideas in partnership between teachers, students, youth institutions and organizations, and companies in the Programme and Partner countries.

Preparation of study programmes in English and attracting students from foreign countries: AK is participating in KAPRIS-2 project in order to acquire the right to recognize foreign qualifications. After the assessment AK will obtain an opportunity to recognize the foreigners' qualifications of high school of foreigners, or education acquired by some other way.

Participation in the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education project *Innovative ICT education for social – economic development (IESED)* No 2017-0005/001-001(AK317) in the role of coordinating institution demonstrates an example of sharing good experience of implementation of the prerequisites of Bologna Process into the system of higher education with universities of Belarus. The project included partner institutions from Poland, France, United Kingdom, Belarus, and Lithuania (AK).

Continuity of the above activities will enable our further successful participation in international area, development of internationalization and intercultural abilities of AK community, development of internationalization of studies and increase expansion of international relationships into strategic partnerships and projects.

In order to achieve this purpose, the following quantitative and qualitative measuring indicators are established: number of incoming students according to exchange programs; part of out-going students for studies according to exchange programs; part of out-going students for internships according to exchange programs; proportion of the incoming teachers (according to exchange programs), who arrive from foreign HEIs to teach, with all the teachers; proportion of the out-going teachers who go (according to exchange programs) to teach or for training, with all the teachers; number of the current international projects; number of the signed cooperation agreements; increased satisfaction of students and graduates with their studies; increased employability of graduates after acquirement of international experience; obtaining and sharing good experience; updated content of the study programmes, improvement of teachers' cultural competences, and increased reputation of the institution.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

AK undertakes to select mobile staff and students and award grants in a fair, transparent, coherent and documented way, in line with the provisions of its contract with the National Agency. It will ensure such fair and transparent procedures throughout all stages of mobility and in the process of responding to queries/complaints from mobile students/staff.

AK is committed and ensures the academic community (the Statute items 15.9, 15.11, 21.2, 21.3) that any individual or group will be treated equally and equitably, in accordance with Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. There is no discrimination "based on sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation".

AK creates equal opportunities and promotes mobility opportunities abroad to people with fewer opportunities, for either economic, social, cultural, geographical, health reasons or for reasons such as disability or educational difficulties and ensure that their support needs can be met and their privacy respected. The option is given to all individuals applying for a mobility to disclose that they have fewer opportunities for participation, including eligibility for additional financial support.

A framework, taking into account relevant guidelines at national and European level, for additional support for the mobility of higher education students and staff with special needs under Erasmus+ programme is available for AK students and staff, information is publicised on AK website. It states that Erasmus+ pays particular attention to guidance, reception, physical accessibility, pedagogical and technical support services, and, especially, financing the extra costs for students and staff whose physical, mental or health-related conditions are such that their participation in Erasmus+ would not be possible without extra financial support (from here on referred to as "students and staff with physical, mental or health-related conditions"). This is to ensure that students and staff can take full advantage of an Erasmus+ mobility experience. AK commits to ensuring equal access and opportunities to participants from all backgrounds. Therefore, students and staff with physical, mental or health-related conditions can benefit from the support services

that the receiving institution offers to its local students and staff in addition to the regular Erasmus+ study or traineeship or staff mobility grant.

AK has developed infrastructure adapted for students and staff with special needs as well as it has trained staff for work with them.

AK ensures that fair and equitable opportunities are provided to all potential participants, including those from groups with fewer opportunities for participation and usually under-represented immobility programmes. These include individuals with special needs, from lower socio-economic backgrounds, students with family responsibilities, part-time jobs or enrolled in programmes where being mobile is difficult etc. AK provides supplementary support for all mobility participants including the ones from these groups. Additional part of Erasmus+ grant is allocated in the framework of Erasmus+ grants for students with fewer opportunities (excluding those with special needs) as well.

AK will provide variety of mobility forms: any mobility activity can be carried out as blended mobility, including student mobility for studies and traineeships. The credits obtained will reflect the volume of learning based on the defined learning outcomes and the associated workload. During the period of virtual mobility within a blended mobility, participants will be offered the same treatment, services and opportunities as home students and staff, as well as participants who are on long-term physical mobility. The ECHE principles will apply equally to blended mobility participants as to any other type of mobility.

AK undertakes to join and contribute to implementation of the Initiative which is a step forward in the transition towards a digital European society and a true European Education Area, in which spending time abroad to study and learn is the norm, and educational excellence is a reality for all. AK undertakes to ensure that the relevant staff is informed about the digitalization roadmap as described on the Initiative's website and take active measures to implement minimum requirements for digital mobility management in a timely manner. The leadership, International Office and IT department of AK will work in concert to actively promote digital learning and training opportunities (conferences, workshops, webinars, support from the national agency, etc.) to administrative and other staff and relevant stakeholders within AK to build capacity for implementing digital mobility management by simplifying administrative procedures and reducing administrative burden, boosting mobility for all. Students, as powerful drivers of change, are also involved in the processes of promotion and design of the action plan of the institution.

AK has already connected to Erasmus Without Paper Dashboard and requested an account and its validation. The institution undertakes to join the implementation of the Initiative which is in the phase of testing and preparation before 2021 and use the Erasmus Without Paper network to exchange student mobility data according to the set-up milestones:

2021 - to manage inter-institutional agreements and online learning agreements

2022 - to send and receive student nominations and acceptances

2023 - to exchange transcripts of records related to student mobility

AK undertakes to promote the use of the Erasmus+ Mobile App to incoming and outgoing students and to the extent possible, ensure that useful information about AK and the host community are accessible via the Erasmus+ Mobile App for incoming students. Information about the Initiative

which will make it easier for students to access services before, during and after their mobility is placed and will regularly be updated on the website of the institution, to facilitate empowering of the student experience.

AK makes efforts to promote environmentally sustainable and responsible behaviour among its participants making use of the opportunities provided by the Programme to support sustainable means of travel and reduce the negative impact of mobility on the environment.

AK organises its activities by using virtual and on-line platforms, offering them for meetings and training activities, for mobility - combining trips and when planning trips choosing environmentally friendly means of transportation, if possible. The institution stimulates the academic community to contribute to a clean future by choosing whenever possible sustainable green premises, suppliers and products as well as encourage the community members to make conscious choices when it comes to transport, food, water and electricity consumption.

AK institutional strategy defines the concept of sustainability, implementation of which makes great impact on the mobility of the community and internationalisation of the institution as follows: Harmonious and Creative Environment which Ensures High Quality of Sparring Activities and Sustainability:

- Improving the Quality Management System of AK basing on the guidelines of quality assurance of European Higher Education and principles of strategic management.
- Optimizing the infrastructure that corresponds to the needs of AK and maintaining its quality.
- Developing information and communication technologies of the institution activities through introduction of modern information and communication technologies.
- Relating the social responsibility of AK to harmonious development of the region; joining to international networks of socially responsible business through use of the most progressive means of introduction the concept of company and NGO social responsibility.
- Fostering the company culture and traditions of AK through maintenance of responsibilities to the commonly recognized values and ethical standards.
- Supporting the student organizations of AK and their activities.

The vision of AK – a higher education institution which is acting successfully in the international area as a centre of applied research and culture, fostering national culture and traditions and being a socially responsible and open to the society institution.

The values of AK, as described in the Strategic Plan of the institution, are the following: Professionalism and competence, Quality of activities, Tolerance and respect to others, Social responsibility, Openness. The culture of the institution strives to continuously improve positive changes and foster its values as well as cooperation.

Implementation of mobility programs opens opportunities to integrate good foreign partner experience of application of the concept of social responsibility in the field of environmentally friendly and inclusive development (investment into the human capital, environmentally friendly activities, developing respect to international behaviour standards, human rights and law; implementation of volunteer initiatives of social responsibility, etc.) into the study programmes.

Participation in mobility programs provides an opportunity to gain experience in implementation and improvement of the Quality Management System in the institution. Including social responsibility measures into the activities of the institution is one of the reasons determining bigger student attraction, increased loyalty of students and employees, a better image, and a positive view of public organizations and government institutions.

Starting with the introductory week AK introduces to students the organisation of the study process, international mobility opportunities and experience, striving to engage mobile students into civil society organisations, activities of student embassy AKSA, etc. AK takes the opportunity to create added value by actively promoting and organising activities that allow mobile participants to be civically engaged, develop their skills beyond the formal education setting, volunteer and take active part in their local society, .i.e. helping them to participate in the elections of their own country. AK aims to better integrate international exchange students in the local society by organising volunteer opportunities to ensure an exchange of values between the international students and the local community.

To ensure internationalisation at home, AK helps the academic community to overcome prejudice and leads to the acceptance of cultural diversity by implementing student and staff ambassador scheme, where mobility participants who have been on mobility share their experiences with potential applicants including those with fewer opportunities. They promote mobility and explain how envisaged obstacles to mobility can be overcome under the Erasmus+ programme and usually become mentors for incoming students.

AK is committed to ensure full automatic recognition of all credits based on the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System - ECTS gained for learning outcomes satisfactorily achieved during a mobility period of study and/or training abroad, including during blended mobility.

To guarantee the quality of mobility activities, including blended mobility, and transparency of recognition procedures AK will fully implement the use of ECTS as a common tool which facilitates the transfer of credits between different institutions, greater student mobility and more flexible routes to gaining degrees.

AK will apply the rule set out in the ECTS Users' Guide that states that: 'all credits gained during the period of study abroad – as agreed in the Learning Agreement and confirmed by the Transcript of Records – should be transferred without delay and counted towards the students' degree without any additional work or assessment of the student'.

60 ECTS credits will be attached to the workload of a full-time year of formal learning (academic year), with its associated learning outcomes. The students will not be expected to earn more than 60 ECTS credits but will be allowed to exceed this number if they wish to. Mobile students are considered to be full-time students and should complete a number of credits proportional to the duration of their mobility, as per institutional regulations and in line with the ECTS User's Guide recommendation: "The student is expected to take educational components of 60 ECTS credits per full-time academic year. Completing a lower number of credits during their mobility might cause an unjustified prolongation of their studies or misbalanced workload in the future studies".

For preparation and recording mobility using ECTS the following documents are fundamental:

- an up-to-date course catalogue with descriptions of degree programmes, single educational units and grade distribution tables (updated each semester) on the website of AK;
- a Learning Agreement (for studies and traineeships), signed by the sending and receiving HEIs / enterprise / organisation and the student, before the start of mobility;
- a Transcript of Records indicating the number of credits earned and grades achieved - for studies; a corresponding document Transcript of Work /Traineeship Certificate - for traineeships;
- proof that the work abroad has been recognised as outlined in the learning agreement.

A recognition framework (Order of the procedure) of AK includes the terms, conditions and practices of recognition procedures which ensure that the student's mobility activities are recorded in a transparent way (indicating the original course / subject titles at the receiving HEI in the Lithuanian and English languages) and that the credits gained abroad have been recognised as an integral part of the student's degree programme. All the credits that the student earns during the mobility period and which were originally agreed in the Learning Agreement/ Traineeship Agreement will be recognised by AK without requiring the student to take any further courses or exams and will be transferred without delay into the student's records, shall be counted towards the student's degree without any additional work or assessment of the student. That will be traceable in the student's Transcript of Records and in the final record of student achievements - Diploma Supplement for all graduates, issued automatically and free of charge, in the Lithuanian and English languages.

Striving to implement the goals of Erasmus+ programme AK mobility plan is prepared and confirmed every year. The staff members are given recognition for their mobility (teaching and training) as the assessment framework includes staff mobility as an integral part of staff professional development. Mobility activities are recognised as a component in the scheme of assessment competence improvement of staff, which is implemented every year at the intended periodicity.

According to the plan of mobility International Office provides information to AK staff about the possibilities for participation in mobility activities, introduces foreign partner institutions, their study programmes and mobility possibilities for AK staff as well as funding possibilities and institutional promotional measures: planning of travel, accommodation, etc. Staff working schedules are adapted to meet the demands of mobility; additional cultural/language preparation is available to mobile staff. All actual information regarding staff mobility is placed and regularly updated on the AK website and on the information system of Quality Management System.

The Charter and the related Erasmus Policy Statement will be displayed on AK website <https://alytauskolegija.lt> in a place that is easily accessible from the institution's main page, thereby demonstrating that the whole institution is committed to the Charter. The web link will also be provided for the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform.

Separate parts of the website in the Lithuanian and English languages are devoted to Erasmus+ Programme activities and results/outcomes. In addition, information on the Programme is embedded within everyday institutional information flows. Relevant information will be provided to all stakeholders, dissemination will be communicated in press and social media, all related

documentation will be placed on the Quality Management System which is available for all community members of AK.

The text of the Charter will be made visible and easily accessible to all interested parties. It will be displayed on the AK website in the Lithuanian and English languages and on the Quality Management System to be accessible to the academic community at all levels of the institution. International Office will introduce the principles of the Charter and their application to students and staff according to dissemination plan. The principles of the Charter, where possible and applicable, will be incorporated into the standard documents of the institution (e.g. with regard to credit accumulation, student and staff mobility, staff development, etc.).