

Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz is a public higher education institution with a tradition of teacher training. Nowadays following the example of the outstanding European universities Kazimierz Wielki University aims at developing into a modern, competitive and mobility-oriented institution. As a beneficiary of Erasmus University Charter for many years, the University increased its competitiveness supporting students and teaching staff mobility in line with the principles set out in Bologna Strategy. Currently, the University pursues to continue and expand existing collaborations with Institutions of higher education located in the Programme Countries and Partner Countries. Apart from maintaining existing partnerships, the University makes efforts to establish new agreements with other institutions of higher education. Interest in developing cooperation within Europe results from the similarities between institutions of higher education in Europe: compatible education systems, application of ECTS, English-taught study programmes, etc. Moreover, the University pursues to attract students, academics and researchers from Partner Countries such as Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan and The Near East, as well as some African countries, to name a few countries only. To attract potential partners and become visible internationally, the University staff actively participate in the conferences, trainings abroad, organise international conferences.

Participating in the Erasmus+ Programme will make Kazimierz Wielki University (UKW) meet the assumptions of its internationalisation and modernisation strategy. This strategy acknowledges the key contribution of mobile staff and students and of participation in European and international cooperation projects, to the quality of higher education programmes and students experience.

The University's authorities are working on a new internationalisation strategy for 2020-2024, being a separate document, concentrating solely on internationalisation.

Excerpt from the present strategic plan devoted to supporting the University's internationalisation:

Strategic objective: to ensure the highest quality of education.

Specific aim: to care for teaching environment; internationalisation of teaching.

Action: to aim at increasing the number of foreign students studying at UKW.

Task: to intensify activities aiming at increasing the number of foreign students studying at UKW - promotion.

Task: to apply for Erasmus+ funds and other programmes in order to obtain financial support for the scholars.

Strategic objective: to acquire knowledge from foreign researchers.

Specific aim: to internationalise scientific research.

Action: to increase staff mobility.

Task: to support and encourage teaching staff to participate in mobility programmes.

Task: to attract academic staff/researchers from abroad.

Task: to share knowledge with international researchers.

Therefore, mobility and cooperation are the core elements of institutional policy of internationalisation.

By participation in Erasmus+ Programme, the University undertakes to further modernise and contribute as much as possible to the goals of a European Education Area laid down in the communication on "Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture".

Objectives to be pursued:

- develop cooperation with partners in other countries in the framework of a clear strategy for internationalisation,
- promote and support student and staff mobility using non-discrimination policies,
- pursue a clear policy towards the development of integrated, transnational teaching activities,
- recognise the importance of the results achieved by staff members engaged in individual mobility or cooperation projects with strategic partners,
- improve international performance of the University by monitoring and analysing the international mobilities and cooperation activities,
- increase visibility of the University in Europe and outside of Europe,
- create a truly international community at the University.

Aware of the demographic ageing and shrinking numbers of potential recruits Kazimierz Wielki University pursues to increase the number of students by attracting the disadvantaged groups. In order to meet this challenge the University supports students with disabilities offering numerous practical solutions allowing for full participation in study process. To give an example, a student with special needs is assisted during his/her day by his/her fellow student. The University strives to equip students with the knowledge indispensable to succeed in the modern labour market. To achieve this goal, the University adjusts curricula to current market needs by supporting staff exchanges for training and teaching and including study and training periods in study programmes. Also, it is worth mentioning that the University graduates are offered placements abroad with the aim of increasing their chances on the labour market. Kazimierz Wielki University stresses the significance of individual mobility that constitutes a perfect tool for increasing professional, social and intercultural skills and employability. The University aims at increasing number of students completing a study or training period abroad. Therefore, efforts are made to build learning mobility into curricula and ensure the efficient recognition of credits gained abroad by means of consistent use of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement. Also, the University pursues to attract students, academics and researchers from outside the EU. In order to recruit students from non-participating countries the following issues must be addressed in the nearest future: continuous improvement of quality studies, expanding ECTS course catalogue, improving flexibility of recognition and transparency of recruitment procedures.

As centre of knowledge, expertise and learning, the University is responsible for fostering exchange of knowledge, staff and expertise. To meet his goal, currently the University cooperates with the industry/business in the numerous areas such as engineering, genetics, water protection, humanities, biology, biotechnology, etc. and offers wide scope of possible forms of cooperation: research projects, individual and group trainings, expertise, scientific conferences, traineeships, research and development works. With qualified teaching staff, study-oriented approach, modern infrastructure, and high-quality equipment, Kazimierz Wielki University strives to be recognised internationally as a trustworthy and reliable partner in the business and academic world.

Summarising, located in the centre of Poland, Kazimierz Wielki University contributes to the development of the region and the improvement of the city's life quality. The main mission of the University is to prove the society with well-educated and entrepreneurial citizens, create and disseminate knowledge and expertise, as well as to pursue scientific, technological, cultural, and artistic excellence within a framework of the international quality standards.

Kazimierz Wielki University declares to participate in Key Actions 1 and Key Action 2 with the emphasis on Key Action 1 "Learning Mobility": The mobility of higher education students and staff. High quality mobility of staff and students and cooperation with strategic partner institutions worldwide are the core elements of institutional internationalisation policy.

At Kazimierz Wielki University organisation and implementation of European and international mobility is managed by the International Relations Office. In the field of international mobility, the IRO cooperates with Erasmus Institutional Coordinator, Erasmus Departmental Coordinators, colleges directors, deans for education and student's offices in the relevant faculties. IRO organises selection of candidates and awarding beneficiaries with grants in a transparent and documented way. With regard to communication and promotion measures, IRO offers counselling every day except weekends. IRO holds, on a regular basis, information sessions, information stands (among others during *Bydgoszcz Science Festival*, the stand is called European Corner), updates its official website www.bwm.ukw.edu.pl and social media, produces and distributes promotional materials (international student guide, step by step for outgoing students), publishes monthly Newsletter, offers individual and group consultations, communicates with the teachers and students via email, organises mobility stays for staff from partner universities, offers support related to partner search, establishing contacts with partners, organisational support.

In practice Erasmus+ actions will be implemented by:

- annual application for funds in Key Action 1,
- application for funds in Key Action 2 (either as a coordinator or a partner),
- respecting the principles of non-discrimination, transparency and inclusion,
- ensuring equal and equitable access and opportunities to all participants,
- ensuring full recognition of mobility outcomes (ECTS credits for students),
- ensuring the quality of mobility activities and cooperation projects,
- implementing the priorities of the Programme:
 - by undertaking the necessary steps to implement digital mobility management,
 - by promoting environmentally friendly practices in all activities related to the Programme,
 - by encouraging the participation of individuals with fewer opportunities in the Programme,
 - by promoting civic engagement and encouraging students and staff to get involved as active citizens before, during and after their participation in a mobility or project,
 - by introducing blended mobility scheme (which actually started due to the restrictions caused by the pandemic of coronavirus following the NA instructions).

The University has an internal management structure and human resources, it ensures project organisation from preparation through recognition, dissemination and evaluation. There will be one person in International Relations Office responsible for outgoing students and incoming staff, another one for incoming students and outgoing staff and one dedicated to KA2 actions. There is the capacity to implement the activities in place and ensure their sustainability.

Spending time abroad broadens people's horizons and helps them acquire skills that are valued by employers – from foreign languages to adaptability and greater intercultural awareness. Participating in courses in a foreign language students gain significant linguistic and intercultural competences indispensable in the modern world. In this way, mobility boosts job prospects and encourages labour market mobility later in life. For academic staff mobility it means, among others, professional development, improvement of research contacts and teaching skills. With regard to the above statements the most important objectives of the University mobility activities and areas for the forthcoming years is to increase competitiveness at home and abroad through supporting students and teaching staff mobility.

In order to attract international students, the University will pursue to increase the number of subjects and complete study programmes in English as well as strive to develop double/multiple or joint degrees with partner universities in Europe and outside of Europe. In efforts to create more competitive and attractive degree programmes the University will have in mind key priorities related to Bologna Process namely: mobility, employability and quality. To that end, the University will make efforts to constantly develop quality standards by consistent and transparent application of European Credit Transfer System. In order to attract international students, the University offers a support system including: academic (Erasmus coordinator) and student (buddy system) support, free of charge Polish course, assistance with organisational arrangements, welcome week, intercultural training, etc. With regard to outgoing students the University will continue to support and promote student mobility for training and study periods. Students will be encouraged by different means to consider a period of study and/or training abroad as natural part of their university education. In addition, efforts will be made to build mobility into curricula. Integrating mobility component into a study programme will help students develop intercultural, linguistic and social skills. The University will strive to develop scholarship schemes for those in difficult financial situation. Taking into consideration fierce competition on the education market the University will take every possible measure to reach the potential students with the information of its education opportunities. In order to achieve this goal the University will extend the Course Catalogue, provide transparent information on the University website(s) and social media, offer informative online and/or printed materials dedicated to the international audience.

Despite many years' participation in Erasmus+ Programme, the internationalisation of Kazimierz Wielki University is still in its early phases. International activities are still add-on activities rather than something common, permeating the institution. Erasmus+ Programme helped a lot, especially in creating mobility opportunities, summer school and occasional thematic

networks. The impact of Erasmus+ has been overwhelmingly positive on individuals who participated in the exchanges: their life and career trajectories have been profoundly affected. But these individuals remain only a minority. The individual efforts of internationally oriented academics, Erasmus coordinators and international officers are frequently impressive and positively influence individual student's experiences every day, but they reach only a few. The vast majority of students and academics still have little international exposure during their studies. Surprisingly, more and more applications are submitted but unfortunately there is a high percentage of withdrawals. That happens so mainly because the individual support is not enough and students cannot afford going on mobility and another reason is that majority of students have part time jobs in Poland and they fear losing the job (information from anonymous questionnaires).

Erasmus+ Programme will definitely make the University benefit from having a broad network of institutional contracts that give students a wide variety of choices of host institutions and develop stronger partnerships on multiple levels. Such partnerships will enable international cooperation activities to complement each other and create synergy effects of much higher added value. It seems optimistically supposed that the opportunity that the new generation of EU Programmes and EU initiatives can fill in some of the gaps and take advantage of some of the missed opportunities in further internationalisation and modernisation of Kazimierz Wielki University.

Targets:

1) International mobility of students and staff

The University targets at the increase in student participation in the Erasmus+ mobility scheme. The average number of outgoing students is 70 (there are about 6.000 regular students at UKW). Even 20% rise in the international student mobilities within 5 years would be significant. There is a high discrepancy between different disciplines as to the participation of students in Erasmus+ mobility. On average, students from linguistic studies, social sciences and tourism are most eager to participate in Erasmus+ mobility; less so students from other disciplines. Our goal is to activate other students.

The number of mobile staff remains at similar level. The quantitative indicator (about 50 out of total about 600 academics) seems quite satisfactory. What needs improvement is the quality of applications and strategy of experience sharing and promotion so that the Erasmus+ staff mobility is very much in line with the University's internationalisation. It has been observed that a certain group of staff members have applied repeatedly whilst a majority has never done so. We would like to activate staff members who have remained inactive so far.

In order to encourage students and staff with weaker language proficiency, the University offers funding of foreign language courses (English). Moreover, all courses offered to Erasmus+ students are offered also to Polish students to help them work in a multicultural groups, to test and improve their language skills. This way Erasmus+ influences the University community and is supposed to increase the number of outgoing students.

2) Internationalisation of study at home

However, it is quite difficult to interest students and staff in the exchange programmes. It is usually so because of financial reasons, but the mentality of people also plays a role. The next target is therefore set at internationalisation of study at home and staff participation in international partnerships. Non-mobile students should develop international knowledge and competences. This should be achieved by attracting and integrating foreign students, quality of international programmes, employing foreign lecturers, launching joint and double degree programmes, teaching foreign languages, long distance teaching, etc. Some effort should be put on internationalising the curriculum so that it provides students (home students) with international and intercultural knowledge and abilities, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally, socially, emotionally) in an international and multicultural context. Another measure can be teaching and learning in an international classroom – foreign students and domestic students accommodated in the same classroom with the potential of an added value that the intercultural dimension of the teaching and learning in such a setting can bring: appreciation for other cultures and an improved ability to communicate and interact with persons from different backgrounds.

In order to attract foreign students, the University will expand its catalogue of courses and pay attention to the language proficiency of teachers. Academics are invited to participate in English language courses and tutoring sessions conducted under a project financed with EU support. The teachers can take part in a methodological training at a partner university. One of the project aims is to develop an offer of subjects taught in English, hence each project participant is obliged to work out a new subject and add it to the catalogue.

3) Strategic partnerships and networks

Kazimierz Wielki University would like to develop a strategic approach to internationalisation by establishing the partnerships and joining the international networks. So far the University has participated in three Action 2 projects (one as a leader) but there is a noticeable increase in application submission. We would like to achieve the number of at least 2 new projects within the following 5 years (either as leaders or partners).