

## **Erasmus Declaration on Higher Education Policy at Bielefeld University**

Bielefeld University is an internationally successful and globally networked institution. It strives to **firmly anchor experiences of internationalisation** in every aspect of the University.

Bielefeld University sees itself as a place of social reflection characterized by international exchange and cultural openness.

It sees internationalisation as a process of change that leads to an intensification and qualitative enhancement of international relations within and outside the University. This process of change affects not only research, teaching and study, but the entire institution and the culture of togetherness. Internationalisation at Bielefeld University lives from and with its internationally co-operating academics and students and is characterized by **personal interaction and open communication**.

Participation in international co-operation projects in studying and teaching is an essential part of internationalisation. The **Erasmus programme** is a central element here. For more than 30 years, Bielefeld University with all its faculties has participated in the various Erasmus activities and is thus able to draw on essential experience in the international context. Within the framework of participation in the Erasmus programme, management structures have been created which have a far-reaching effect on the University. All members of the University can benefit from mobility programmes. Students in all three study cycles can receive support for their stay in programme and partner countries for the following purposes: studying, internship, research, specialised courses, doctoral studies. It also promotes the exchange of teaching staff coming to Bielefeld and going abroad. In addition to the Erasmus short-term lectureships, the University has set up an international guest lecturer programme in which guest academics from all over the world are invited to come to teach; these measures reinforce internationalisation on site. The Welcome Centre provides excellent support for international guests in organizational matters such as accommodation, health insurance and visas. Administrative (e.g. library, press office and academic) staff participate in Erasmus mobility; Erasmus mobilities are thus also an important part of the internationalisation of the University Administration.

In addition to **individual mobility**, participation in **joint projects to strengthen European strategic co-operations as in Key Action 2 (KA 2)** is of great importance. Here partnership projects have and will continue to run with selected European partner universities with specific thematic focuses, the **NEOLAiA** network will begin its work under the leadership of the Universidad de Jaén, new **Erasmus Joint Degree projects** which incorporate the University's diverse experience with Double Degree Programmes (DD) are conceivable and desirable.

**Paying due respect to the ECHE guidelines**, participation in the new Erasmus programme will pursue the overarching goal of creating together with other European universities a **European education area** that offers students the best educational opportunities as well as EU-wide employment prospects. The European identity of all members of the University should be constantly developed to create an awareness of the diversity of Europe.

All target groups within the University – students, researchers, teachers and administrative staff – will participate in the Erasmus programme, with an increased focus on **equal opportunities and social participation**: in particular, students with children, those from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, with physical disabilities or with refugee experience should be able to participate in the Erasmus programme to a greater extent than up to now. Teacher training takes place in 9 faculties at Bielefeld University, and more attention should be paid to student teachers and their later role as multipliers in the classroom. Inclusion should be experienced and felt.

The **social commitment** of all should be (further) expanded with the aim of training up active and socially committed members of society who, for example, work on international projects as country ambassadors, as mentors for international guests or as international students working on international projects with pupils as part of the "Europa macht Schule" project. Mobility should become the norm. The overarching goal of all mobility measures is the acquisition of international experience, intercultural competences and the promotion of linguistic diversity, and learning foreign languages. Internationality in studying and teaching is conducive to further academic qualification, intercultural understanding and secures social peace in Europe.

Multicultural experiences exert a preventive influence on discrimination and xenophobia, as is evident from the reports of students and teachers. Bielefeld University's cosmopolitan, inclusive and barrier-free position and associated values are also manifested in the "University without Prejudice" campaign launched in 2013, the work of the Refugee Counselling Office and the Diversity Policy Statement published in 2019.

A central point of the internationalisation and modernisation in higher education is the personal, professional and intercultural development of all members. Key competences, digital competences, linguistic competences and common values are to be conveyed. Erasmus affords the greatest consideration to this objective.

Increasing digitalisation forms one of the challenges in the Erasmus 2021/27 programme. A modern internationalisation strategy cannot be fit for the future without effective **digital networking and digital management**. Bielefeld University is currently introducing “Erasmus without Paper” (EWP); the University sees itself in a good position for this step with the Mobility Online database provided by SOP, which has been used for 4 years for all international co-operations. The creation of the new Inter-Institutional Agreements (IIA) through EWP, the introduction of Online Learning Agreements (OLA) as well as the Student App and the European Student Card (ESC) are being strategically pursued.

**The digitalisation of teaching** will be a new component of Bielefeld University's modernisation and internationalisation efforts. Already in 2018, the University initiated a strategy process for studying and teaching in the context of digital transformation and identified clear priorities and objectives. The expansion of its campus management system has laid very good foundations for digitalisation in studying and teaching. Important goals are flexibility options, promotion of interaction and visualisation, but also forms of co-operation made possible by the use of digital formats. These strategic considerations will be increasingly implemented in practical terms during the online semester in summer 2020, among other things in the form of cross-university co-operations. These digital possibilities play an important role in internationalisation processes. With regard to integrated, transnational teaching activities, this concerns joint courses, modules, curricula as well as double, multiple and joint degree programmes. The goal is to increase **blended mobility** as a form of student mobility. Online forms of co-operative learning and teamwork are to be introduced. Individual lecturers at Bielefeld University already successfully use forms of online collaboration to co-operate with international colleagues and international partner universities. These advances are to be further developed in the future in the sense of "internationalisation at home".

Networking with partner universities in Europe, but also worldwide, is a prerequisite for highly qualified research and teaching. Joint Master's and doctoral programmes and international Research Training Groups play an important role here. Bielefeld University co-operates with partners who fit its profile in terms of subject matter, so that synergy effects can be achieved.

Bielefeld University has offered double degree programmes for several years now; currently there are 12 DD programmes, including 5 with the Università di Bologna, with which there have been Erasmus contacts for decades. International Research Training Groups ensure highly qualified Master's and doctoral training in co-operation with international partner institutions. Furthermore, individual "Cotutelle" projects at doctoral level are also given support. The University has also established strategic partnerships beyond Europe, for example with the University of Osaka (Japan), focusing on "Cognitive Interaction Technology". The personal contact between researchers and scientists within the framework of excellent research co-operations guarantees high-quality results and for example smooth-running student mobility with mutual credit transfer. Bielefeld University is a top location in several research fields with high international visibility, relevance and is very attractive for scientists from abroad. Every year it welcomes several hundred visiting scholars and students from all over the world to Bielefeld. This also includes at-risk and refugee researchers, refugee prospective and current students, who are supported by the University, for example, through the Natural Science Orientation Studies (NaWiOS) preparation course. Programmes run in English – 11 degree, 12 double degree and 5 degree programmes with an international track – prepare students from Germany and abroad for the international job market. In this way, students acquire intercultural competences in an environment characterized by diversity.

In addition, the University is active in DAAD-funded projects, e.g. projects with universities in emerging and developing countries. The Faculty of Sociology was instrumental in establishing the Centre for German and European Studies at St. Petersburg State University. For about ten years, the University has been one of the leading founding universities of the Turkish-German University in Istanbul, with the Department of German as a Foreign Language responsible for the TGU's Language Centre and the introduction of the DaF degree programme.

Regional connections are also fundamental. In the action Group "It's OWL" (Intelligent Technical Systems OstWestfalenLippe), the region of East-Westphalia Lippe is to be developed into a location for cutting-edge technology. Here, universities and companies in the region work closely together. The 5 OWL universities have opened a joint office in New York to strengthen co-operation with universities and research institutions in North America.

The constant optimisation of study programmes, service and counselling as well as the development of concepts and measures for quality assurance all contribute to guaranteeing sustainability. An international culture of study and teaching is a prerequisite for the education of international and German students on their way to becoming academically highly qualified, responsible citizens able to act globally.

Bielefeld University sees international co-operation as a basis for achievements in research, study and teaching and will therefore continue with the strategic development of internationalisation in a co-ordinated manner and in accordance with the culture of the individual subjects.

Bielefeld University sees international orientation as a necessary prerequisite for ensuring top-level research and good teaching. Strategic and sustainable internationalisation, as it is firmly anchored in the University, is a central task for ensuring long term competitiveness at a high level.

Internationalisation demands close co-operation with partner universities worldwide. In addition to the approximately 220 Erasmus partner universities, Bielefeld University maintains particularly active partnerships with the following institutions: Université de Paris, Università di Bologna, Universidad de Guadalajara and Osaka University. In addition, Bielefeld University forms part of an OWL consortium (together with Paderborn University, Bielefeld University of Applied Sciences and OWL University of Applied Sciences) with the Alberta Coalition (University of Alberta, Concordia University of Edmonton, MacEwan University and Northern Alberta Institute of Technology). There are also around 80 other partnerships, e.g. with universities in Japan, China and the Americas. There are also numerous research projects with international involvement. The University wants to continue to internationalise its campus. Researchers, teachers, doctoral students and students coming from all over the world are an integral part of university life.

In the new Erasmus programme, co-operation agreements as they already exist now are to be concluded with universities in all programme countries and also with universities in Switzerland. It is planned to continue co-operations with universities in Great Britain. In addition co-operations are to be expanded with partner countries (currently there are co-operations with 2 universities each in Israel, Nepal and Russia).

Bielefeld University plans to participate in all Erasmus Actions:

**Key Action 1: Learning mobility:**

1. Continuation and expansion of student mobility with universities in programme and partner countries. The co-operation is based on years of experience and mutual trust, the exchange is professionally organized, the selection is transparent according to predefined criteria, the recognition of study achievements is ensured through the application of ECTS. Academic and institutional support is guaranteed both at Bielefeld University and at the host institutions.

2. Continuation and expansion of internships at institutions such as schools, non-governmental organizations, laboratories, etc.
3. Continuation and expansion of the exchange of teaching staff: the implementation of Erasmus short-term lectureships serves the professional development of staff as well as internationalisation on site. A digital co-operation for the implementation of online offers for virtual exchange is a component fit for the future.
4. Continuation and further development of staff mobility: Colleagues from administration areas as well as academic staff are to be encouraged to participate in vocational and advanced training measures as well as language courses. Participation is already good, but should be continuously increased.

**Key Action 2: Co-operation between organizations and higher education institutions:**

Increasing networking with higher education institutions and other institutions in Europe is of central importance. Projects are to be planned which have a thematic focus. This in fact reflects reality as it has been for years – shown by the participation in and co-ordination of various projects (strategic partnerships). In 2020, for example, the Bielefeld School of Education (BiSEd) submitted its proposals for the project "International Teachers for Tomorrow's Schools" with several European partner institutions.

In order to strengthen and internationalise Bielefeld's science hub, the city of Bielefeld itself and also the economic area of East Westphalia-Lippe on the one hand, and to raise awareness of the topics of diversity and inclusion across state borders on the other, Bielefeld University is also participating in a new network consisting of young and dynamic institutions of higher education in Europe. The NEOLAiA alliance has answered the European Union's call and recently applied to become a Joint European University (Macron Initiative). The common mission of the consortium as well as the resulting activities and innovations which are to be implemented in education, research and society are shaped by the basic idea of valorising and vitalising the European regions where the universities are located, i.e. the Europe beyond the metropolises.

Following many years of participation in Erasmus Mundus projects in Quantitative Economics for a Master's and PhD degree as well as a joint Master's Degree in Biology, new international Master's programmes offering double or multiple degrees are now to be established for excellent students from all over the world. Bielefeld University has extensive experience through the establishment and implementation of its current 12 DD study programmes. The Bielefeld academic co-ordinator for the double Master's degree in History with the Università di Bologna himself came to Bielefeld many years ago as an Erasmus student from Bologna.

Finally, there are plans to continue participation in Jean Monnet European integration projects, in particular in co-operation with the Faculty of Law, which many years ago initiated the qualification programme "Europa Intensiv" on an interdisciplinary basis.

Planned partnerships for innovation round off the spectrum of possible co-operations.

### **Key Action 3: Support for policy development and co-operation**

Whilst there are currently no concrete plans to participate in policy support projects to strengthen European education systems, participation in new projects is not ruled out in the coming years.

An indispensable prerequisite for the implementation of all the above-mentioned Erasmus activities and thus for the further development of internationalisation efforts is professional management. Bielefeld University can draw on excellent experience in this area: this is confirmed by the award of the Erasmus Quality Seal in 2012 and the award as an example of good practice for the 2015/17 project. The procedures are well-practiced and well-proven: the academics establish international contacts and provide academic support for the co-operation measures. Support is given by faculty management staff. The Erasmus team in the International Office provides the faculties with support in all projects. The Vice-Rector for International Affairs and Diversity is in regular contact with the International Office and the faculties to encourage and support internationalisation measures. Since 2009, the International Office has expanded considerably in terms of personnel and funding, with the establishment of a Welcome Centre for international academics, the development of the "Studium Internationale" and the introduction of the International Guest Lectureship Programme. Internal support programmes for staying guests as well as comprehensive services for the different international groups, such as the "International Student Services Centre" or special language offers in the PunktUm Language Learning Centre are important building blocks of internationalisation at Bielefeld University and guarantee the successful organization of internationality. Good co-operation with the Department for Research Funding and Transfer (FFT) also plays an important role. Since 2019, projects in the Erasmus area KA 2 have been accompanied by the EU officers there, who have expertise in supporting applications in research projects.

Graduates of Bielefeld University should command international skills so that a variety of career paths will avail themselves in a globalised world - both inside and outside academia. To this end, the University promotes the mobility of its students with partner universities all over the world on the one hand, and integrates international elements into the degree courses together with the faculties on the other – ranging from "international tracks" in individual degree programmes to Master's programmes taught entirely in English. Bielefeld University continues to pursue its plan

for progressive internationalisation in teaching. These events are of interest to both international students (degree students and Erasmus students) as well as German students. In addition, every semester offers “Global Studies” and “Interculturality Reflexive” courses, which are open to all students and are awarded credits as individual supplementary courses. These offers are also intended to motivate Bielefeld students to study abroad and contribute to further increasing the numbers of students from partner universities. The Erasmus programme is an integral part of these internationalisation efforts at Bielefeld University.

Bielefeld has a University which is strong in research, with international orientation, global networks and high teaching standards. Excellence and quality form the focus, the assurance and sustainability of which are guaranteed in many different ways. The internationalisation strategy points the way ahead and forms the framework for the objectives of Bielefeld University's international activities, including mobilities, co-operations and research projects.

Quality assurance regarding all aspects of international work has always been a top priority at Bielefeld University. For example, the University was among the very first higher education institutions to take part in the audit "Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions" of the German Rectors' Conference (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz, HRK) in 2009/10, to receive independent, systematic internationalisation advice, and so go on to be successfully audited. Likewise, Bielefeld University was among the higher education institutions with which the HRK successfully piloted a re-audit in 2012/13. The results of the auditing procedures have been consistently implemented since then and have subsequently provided valuable impetus. In order to continue the quality of international relations at a high level, the Online Quality Assessment Tool for International Co-operation (eQuATIC) will be tested as a monitoring measure. In addition, funds from the Pact for the Future for Studies and Teaching will benefit the internationalisation efforts and their quality assurance measures.

With regard to international mobility, the following figures (average values based on the last three years, i.e. 2016/17 to 2018/19) and targets (for the duration of the new Erasmus programme period, i.e. from 2021-2027) are worth mentioning:

- **Incomings:** The annual number has levelled off over time at 106; the target is 160 by 2027, supported by expanding co-operations with partner countries.

- **Outgoings SMS:** There has been a sharp increase here, especially from 2016/17 (174) to 2017/18 (236), which can be explained in particular by the increased participation in studies abroad by law students. The average number is 204. Numbers of those studying in programme and partner countries is to be increased to 300, which would correspond to an increase of approx. 50% in 7 years. Mobility with partner countries outside Europe should also receive increased attention.

- **Outgoings SMP:** In the last few years, a decrease in numbers can be observed, so that the average value is now 54. This decline is due in part to the fact that student teachers benefit from DAAD programmes. The number of SMPs is to be increased to 80 annually through intensified advertising measures with the individual faculties. Here, too, the declared aim is to achieve an increase of approx. 50% within the new programme generation.
- **Outgoings STA:** The annual number amounts to a constant 24. Here, an increase of approx. one third is envisaged by 2027, which would mean an increase to a total of 30.
- **Outgoings STT:** The average value of 19 was exceeded last year by reaching 23. This can be attributed to an increase in advertising for Academic Writing in Galway/Dublin and for English language courses in general. The current year 2019/20 has already seen an increase to around 30. The aim is to consolidate on the upward trend and increase the number by approx. 150%, i.e. to 45 per year by 2027.

To ensure achieving the goal of increasing the number of outgoings and incomings, the excellent service – including academic and institutional support for outgoings (before, during and after their stay abroad), orientation weeks, accommodation assistance, mentoring programmes and German language courses at all levels by the PunktUm German Learning Centre for incomings, offers by the University Language Centre for a wide range of languages as well as courses on intercultural reflection for all interested parties and as a contribution to "internationalisation at home" – is to be intensified still further.

The activities within the framework of the Erasmus programme are implemented using transparent and clearly defined criteria for participation, equality in the selection of programme participants and internal monitoring and these are guaranteed through annual evaluation meetings of all involved. Students can contact the Erasmus Co-ordinators of their faculty or the University Erasmus Co-ordinator at any time if they have any questions, the Dean or the Rector in the case of fundamental problems in academic contexts, and the head of the International Office or the Chancellor of the University in the case of significant organizational problems. There are currently plans to set up an ombudsman's office for complaints management. The recognition of achievements acquired in the context of Erasmus exchanges is - always and regardless of the form of mobility involved (SMS, SMP as well as for STT and STA) – the major focus of attention. Since the ECTS is not (yet) used at some partner universities, practicable modalities for recognition have been agreed as necessary with partner countries within the framework of the mobility. Certificates for international competences are being planned for students and administrative staff; a certificate for teachers is also to be introduced in co-operation with the University Centre for Teaching and Learning.

Participation in international co-operation projects in studying and teaching is an essential part of internationalisation at Bielefeld University. This leads to an increase in quality in the specialist departments, which in turn further boosts the image of the individual faculties. There are numerous strategic co-operation projects in many subjects, based on the commitment of individual academics. Participation in EU projects (including research projects) should not only be continued, but also expanded, including those with non-European partners. Currently, projects relating to inclusion in teacher training education are of particular interest. The results of the projects are to be disseminated internationally as best practice and incorporated into future training at the participating partner universities. Participation in the European University call with the NEOLAiA consortium has expanded and strengthened the network activities of Bielefeld University. The European University Alliance hence represents a new, additional building block of internationalisation, from which innovative impulses will emanate in many directions within and outside the University.

Another important objective is the expansion of international study programmes, especially DD projects, i.e. bi-national study programmes with curricularly integrated mobility phases. By 2019, 12 DD programmes had already been introduced, and more are already being planned. By 2027, the number of double degree programmes should have increased to at least 16. In DD study programmes, the quality of the implementation is guaranteed on the one hand by the joint co-ordination of the curricula and on the other hand by the respective national accreditation of the study programmes. All German-French double degree programmes at Bielefeld University are also distinguished by their inclusion in the Franco-German University network (Deutsch-Französische Hochschule), which stands for cosmopolitanism, mobility and excellence. The programmes are regularly evaluated by the FGU and also by the programme participants, which additionally and significantly contributes to quality assurance. In line with the Excellence Strategy, considerable efforts will also be made in the future to establish further study programmes with double degrees or multiple degrees (including Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees; from 2020, a joint degree within the framework of the European University piloted under the leadership of Bielefeld University (Diversity and Inclusion Studies); by 2027, the establishment of up to 3 joint degrees). Expansion of the international study programmes, services and counselling (both analogue and digital) which already exist as well as the development of new concepts and measures for quality assurance will define the internationalisation measures in next few years, with the aim of creating a European Higher Education Area. Ultimately, Bielefeld's ability to attract international as well as domestic students should be increased even more on the basis of the offers and measures described.

The overarching goals for 2027 can be summarised as follows:

- Internationality and diversity are a living reality at Bielefeld University and environmentally friendly international mobility has become the norm.
- At least 15% of all Bielefeld graduates have completed an Erasmus semester abroad (currently approx. 7%).
- The mobility figures for staff in science, administration and technology have increased significantly (STA: increase of 33%, STT: increase of 150%).
- All existing co-operation agreements have been extended, 10 new partner universities have agreed to co-operate (7 in programme countries, 3 in partner countries).
- Internationalisation on site is firmly anchored institutionally in all faculties.
- The digitalisation of the framework conditions of the mobilities as well as the administrative processes have progressed so much so that easy-to-use, virtual processing has become standard.
- Strategic and content-related co-operations with partner universities have been intensified both bilaterally and within the framework of network activities
  - o through the continuation and new establishment of DD and JD projects, i.e. the systematic anchoring of stays abroad in study programmes,
  - o through the piloting of the European Higher Education Alliance NEOLAiA.

The time-scale implementation of the individual goals and milestones is as follows:

**2020/21:**

- Introduction of EWP: Creation of all IIA through EWP (approx. 370 agreements with 230 partner universities with programme and partner countries)
- Intensification of co-operation in the NEOLAiA network (piloting of a joint degree in Diversity and Inclusion Studies)
- Active participation in co-operation projects (both as co-ordinating and participating institution)
- Further development of diversity-specific measures to increase mobilities (physical and digital accessibility)
- Establishment of information events on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to make international mobility greener
- Creation of a European copse: A tree is to be planted on campus every year on Europe Day (09.05.).

**2021/22:**

- Use of the OLA
- Implementation of SMP and STT in the Mobility Online database

- Expansion and further development of events to motivate more students to go abroad, such as “Should I stay or should I go” for undecided students
- Further development of the workshop offered to those returning from abroad
- Further offers for internationalisation on site, including offers for virtual exchange with partner universities
- Introduction of the certificate International Competences for Students
- Exploration of the interfaces between the Erasmus App and ESC with Campus Management

**2022/23:**

- Processing of all student nominations (outgoing and incoming) by EWP
- Integration of application procedures with 2 faculties (pilot project) in the Mobility Online database
- Further development of internationalisation in the University Administration

**2023/24:**

- Exchange of Transcripts of Records through EWP
- Introduction of the Certificate of International Competences for administrative staff
- Expansion of the international study programmes through the introduction of further programmes with multiple degree options

**2024/25:**

- Integration of all faculties in working with Mobility Online
- Integration of all international activities in the Mobility Online database

**2025/26:**

- Digital management of mobility (before, during and after return) through the Erasmus App and ESC
- All Bielefeld faculties work on application procedures with the Mobility Online database.
- Digitalisation is anchored in Erasmus management and is being further developed in accordance with prevailing standards.

**2026/27:**

- All planned measures have been successfully implemented, thus achieving all overarching goals.