



Erasmus Policy Statement

Erasmus Charter for Higher Education 2021-2027

Participation of Zuyd in Erasmus+ activities

Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility:

The mobility of higher education students and staff

Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organisations and institutions:

Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices

Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities

Partnerships for Excellence – Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees

Partnerships for Innovation

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support to policy development and cooperation

Strategy

The participation of Zuyd University of Applied Sciences (*Zuyd Hogeschool*) in the Erasmus+ Programme is an important part of our institution's internationalisation and modernisation strategy. In this strategy, the importance and relevance of internationalisation is underlined as a valuable contribution to the sustainable economic and social development of our cross-border (Eu)region by increasing the international and intercultural competences of our students and staff. It is Zuyd's goal and duty to prepare future professionals for a (Eu)regional and international labour market in a globalising context. Internationalisation is an important tool that contributes to the quality of education and research, the development and employability of professionals and the sustainable development of our region, which is actively pursuing economic growth and in which the recruitment and retention of talents and professionals with intercultural and international competences is stimulated.

The Erasmus+ Programme is one of the major instruments applied at Zuyd to strengthen international and intercultural skills and competences of students and staff, by enabling them take part in exchange programmes in the Euregion Meuse-Rhine, the European Union and other parts of the world. International experience broadens the scope of our students and staff and contributes to awareness of cultural differences and the development of global minds.

Zuyd attaches great importance to dealing with challenges concerning sustainability, inclusion and civic engagement within and beyond the scope of the Erasmus+ Programme. By signing an SDG Charter in 2019, Zuyd has shown commitment to contribute to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN, also in its international cooperation projects. Access to the Erasmus+ Programme should be available to all students and staff, regardless of their 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, as defined in Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. In this respect, Zuyd applies a strict non-discrimination policy. As an educational institution, we believe it is our duty to contribute to an inclusive and socially coherent society, in which freedom, non-discrimination and tolerance are key conditions. Zuyd ensures that those who need special facilities are given adequate support and follows the nation-wide joint ambition statement for student welfare and inclusion

(Gezamenlijke Ambitie Studentenwelzijn en Inclusie). It goes without saying that this also applies to participants in the Erasmus+ programme.

The network of partners that has been built and extended in the current and previous Erasmus Charter periods has provided a solid foundation for a successful continuation in the period 2021-2027. As an institution of higher education in the heart of the Euregion Meuse-Rhine, close to the Belgian and German borders, Zuyd has built strong relationships with partners across the borders and beyond, in order to contribute to the establishment of a European Education Area through the active promotion of mobility, the mutual recognition of ETCS credits and cooperation in applied research, focusing on themes related to regional transition and innovation such as the strengthening of vitality and participation (inclusion) through innovative technology, the smart use of data, the improvement of a sustainable living environment and climate-neutral production. Through an international exchange of knowledge and expertise and participation of international students and research staff in these themes, we aim to create more impact for the development of our region.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the consequent lockdowns in education have led to an increasing awareness that blended and virtual mobility can be valuable instruments to modernise our institution's approach in continuing and extending access to international experience. This type of mobility will be further developed in addition to internationalisation at home and physical mobility, which is still the preferred and most effective tool to increase intercultural and international skills, because of the immersion of students and staff in an international environment. By adding blended and virtual options, inclusion can be facilitated, and a reduction of the carbon footprint can be stimulated.

Contribution of the Erasmus actions to the objectives of our strategy

Zuyd University of Applied Sciences (Zuyd Hogeschool) intends to continue participation in student and staff mobility, (strategic) partnerships for cooperation and exchange of practices, knowledge alliances and networks, focusing on cross-border cooperation in the Euregion Meuse-Rhine, Europe and worldwide. For this purpose, Zuyd has signed agreements of cooperation with a wide range of partner institutions to ensure impact in the curriculum and smooth recognition of results achieved. These agreements provide a foundation as well as a vehicle for cooperation in student and staff mobility, educational and research activities, knowledge exchange and a strengthening of intercultural and international competences that are indispensable in our cross-border region and a globalising world. Existing double degree programmes and a Joint Master Degree that is being developed with international partners provide additional added value for students in terms of international employability.

All these activities will contribute to the objectives of Zuyd's internationalisation strategy, which aims at equipping future professionals with intercultural and international competences that are required on the labour market. In a number of study programmes (e.g. International Business, European Studies, Translation, Hotel Management), the Erasmus exchanges and internships abroad are a structural part of the curriculum. In other study programmes the international experience is an option, which is nevertheless promoted. In those cases, short-distance exchange opportunities in Belgium and Germany can lower the threshold of participation.

By providing funding to support the goals pursued by Zuyd, the Erasmus Programme provides a financial foundation for the implementation of our objectives. Staff mobility provides staff with the opportunity to acquire intercultural and international competences, to share best practices with partners and/or to gain an extra insight into policies and implementation that can be disseminated to colleagues and students at our institution.

Envisaged impact of our participation in the Erasmus+ Programme

The Erasmus+ programme will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the modernisation of our institution in line with the Modernisation Agenda of the EU. The Erasmus+ Programme enables our students to acquire foreign language skills and intercultural competences, which will enhance learning outcomes that will provide them with a solid basis for their future careers on the Euregional, European and international labour market. Through mobility programmes and international cooperation projects that are facilitated by Erasmus funding, administrative and financial barriers to participation can be removed so that more students can have access to international experience and gain international and intercultural competences. These competences are indispensable in Zuyd's cross-border Euregion and in a globalising context. The Erasmus+ Programme is fully in line with

Zuyd's policy regarding the development of these competencies. Incoming students add to Zuyd's goal to establish international classrooms and increase our students' intercultural awareness and an international mindset. The Erasmus+ student and staff mobility figures have been fairly consistent over the past few years and we do not expect a substantial increase in these figures in the future. Zuyd strives to offer as many students as possible an invaluable international experience through high-quality virtual/blended mobility and activities. Strengthening our exchange programmes for incoming international students will be the main focus.

Through international cooperation and continuous quality control of our fully accredited educational programmes, Zuyd can increase its relevance in the European Higher Education Area. By linking high-quality higher education, research and cooperation with partners in business, industry and not-for-profit institutions in an international context, Zuyd can have more impact on the sustainable development of our region and the European Union. This is underlined by Zuyd's continued contribution and investments in the social and economic development of our region. Cooperation in the fields of education and research provides benchmarking opportunities that will have a mutual benefit for the quality of all partners involved. Zuyd strives to increase its involvement in KA2 cooperation projects focusing on the area of E-mentoring.

In order to increase and guarantee the quality of our international programmes, several of these have acquired international accreditation (e.g. EPAS accreditation for our Bachelor-degree programme of International Business). The impact of mobility on the personal development of students and staff can be monitored through the Global Mind Monitor, developed by Zuyd researchers in the research centres of International Relationship Management and Global Minds @ Work. The feedback in the Erasmus Participant Reports serves as a valuable tool to measure the participants' satisfaction and to assist Zuyd in further improving the quality of the Erasmus experience.

The International Office sees to the transparent provision of pre-arrival information, a welcoming programme, housing and administrative support. Together with student counsellors, academic tutors and other administrative services, they provide a welcoming learning environment for incoming students and staff. At the same time, outgoing students and staff are encouraged to gain international experience and are assisted in this process by the academies and the International Office. The overall satisfaction scores in the previous two Final Beneficiary Reports (Calls 16 and 17) show an overall satisfaction score of 88.46% - 84.76% for Zuyd's inbound students and 94.42% - 93.73% for outbound students. Similar positive results have been obtained for staff mobility. The results of these reports and personal interviews with students and staff will be used to monitor and maintain the current high appreciation rates and further improve the Erasmus experience annually.

It is our aim to continue the nearly 100% participation rate for student mobility in our international study programmes and to consolidate the current participation rates in other study programmes. In our 2019-2023 internationalisation strategy, academies are encouraged to provide all students with at least one Euregional or European experience during their study, including options offered through the Erasmus+ programme.

In the first year of the new programme, we will implement EWP within our Erasmus+ processes. We also intend to look into the possibilities of extending online options besides physical mobility, such as blended and/or virtual mobility, in close consultation with our partner institutions abroad, so that these can be implemented more extensively starting from 2022-2023 onwards, taking into account the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, we will explore and promote further ways to reduce the carbon footprint of mobility. Besides this, we will continuously monitor the developments regarding the European Student Card so that this tool can be implemented as soon as it is available.



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