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EKA University of Applied Sciences

INTERNATIONALISATION AND MODERNISATION STRATEGY

2024-2028

Internationalisation and modernisation Strategy 2024-2028 of
the EKA University of Applied Sciences/ J. Titko - Riga, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

- [1] The strategic objective for the development of higher education (HE) in Latvia is the establishment of a HE system based on cooperation among public, private and academic environment, in order to ensure the competitiveness of Latvia as a country, its national economy and higher education system in the common European space. The achievement of this objective requires internationalization of the HE system as a whole and each individual higher education institution (HEI).
- [2] The Internationalisation and Modernisation Strategy of the EKA University of Applied Sciences (EKA) 2024-2028 (in Latvian - *Ekonomikas un kultūras augstskolas Internacionalizācijas un modernizācijas stratēģija 2024.-2028. gadam*, acronym- IMS2028) is a university-level medium term planning document, which has been developed within the framework of a higher level planning document *Development Strategy of the EKA University of Applied Sciences* (in Latvian - *Ekonomikas un kultūras augstskolas attīstības stratēģija 2024-2028*, acronym - EKAAS).
- [3] EKA vision, defined in the EKAAS 2024-2028, is: “EKA inspires individuals to embrace change and innovation, by offering top-quality education and research, based on values of diversity and sustainable development.” This, in turn, is aligned with objectives and planned activities within IMS2028.
- [4] Participation in Erasmus+ Programme is a crucially important prerequisite for successful implementation of IMS2028.
- [5] In achieving objectives of EKA-IMS2028, EKA undertakes to contribute to the goals of a European Education Area (EEA), and to perform in line with EU's renewed agenda for higher education. EEA focus topics are (<https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/eea-in-the-world>):
 - Improving quality and equity in education and training
 - Developing of a high-performing European digital education ecosystem
 - Strengthening the sustainability competences of all learners.
 - Strengthening international cooperation with countries and regions around the world
- [6] An implementation plan is developed to monitor the progress in the achievement of IMS2028 goals.
- [7] The Vice Rector for Science and International Cooperation at EKA is responsible for the development of IMS2028 and its Implementation plan, as well as for monitoring the progress.

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF INTERNATIONALISATION AND MODERNISATION STRATEGY

IMS2028 was developed on the conceptual basis of the strategy for the previous period (Internationalization and Modernisation strategy of the EKA University of Applied Sciences 2021-2023 (IMS2023), following the EKA Erasmus+ Policy Statement (<https://www.augstskola.lv/?parent=686&lng=lva>), and taking into account recommendations from Accreditation Commission statements for the study directions of Economics, Management, and Law in 2021, IT and Arts in 2023 (Table 1).

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2024-2028

Table 1. Recommendations from Accreditation Commission statements for the study directions of Economics, Management, Law, IT and Arts

Study Field	Recommendations for Internationalisation
Economics	<p>Re-think internationalization by setting up more incentives for outgoing students and staff</p> <p>Apply new didactic methods in the study process (e. g. Design Thinking, Problem based learning, Case studies)</p> <p>Foster academic thinking and writing by incorporating students into research projects</p> <p>To stimulate students to participate in ERASMUS+ exchange programs</p> <p>To implement more modules in English. This fact would encourage students to go abroad for studies</p> <p>Improve EKA scientific activities, at least look for possibilities to provide scientific services for companies, partner organizations and find out how to motivate more students to participate in these activities</p>
Business	<p>Set up a more clear strategy of internationalisation: defining staff, destination countries and institutions mobility priorities</p> <p>Continuously enlarge number of mobile students' to both EU and non-EU countries further improving mobility integration into curricula</p> <p>Encouraging full-time staff to prepare and participate in international mobility</p> <p>Wider representation of international students in students union</p> <p>Establish strategic international cooperation (Associations, networks)</p> <p>Involvement students in suitable international scientific and creative projects and work experience placements in Latvia and abroad</p> <p>Develop the system for coordinating the staff participation in research projects.</p>
Law	To increase number of cooperation agreements for traineeships
IT	<p>Make an inventory for all the ERASMUS agreements and leave only the agreements which work or will work in some coming years, make the corrected (real working) ERASMUS agreements for ICT field available for the students on the EKA's web page or in Moodle.</p> <p>Set the target value for each study field for taking part in respective field international bodies/associations</p> <p>Find a strong ICT focused practical research partner from Latvia or EU to collaborate in developing new projects and introducing new trends to students and to develop the study programme further.</p>
Arts	<p>Find ways how to engage more with industry to be up to date with latest trends and provide students with bigger exposure to the labour market</p> <p>Make and define more clear criteria for determining the reputation of cooperation partners and define the criteria for partner selection, including also international partners and cooperation with employers, employers' organisations, municipalities, non-governmental organisations, etc.</p>

On 13 February 2024, IMS2028 was discussed during the Administration meeting. EKA Rector, Vice-Rectors, Quality Manager, and programme directors analysed the strengths and weaknesses of EKA in the area of internationalization and modernization. Strengths and weaknesses were analysed also at the meeting by EKA Erasmus+ Coordinator and representative of EKA Student Union. The results have been summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. EKA strengths and weaknesses in the field of internationalisation and modernisation

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular international events • EKA has a diverse International scientific conference with the high brand value • Large number of international participants attending EKA conference etECH • Large number of foreign lecturers during International Academic Week • Large interest of foreign students to Erasmus+ opportunities • Large number of teaching staff members use specific ICT solutions/tools during the course • Large number of international partners within Erasmus+ programme • EKA staff members attend international conferences and seminars • Membership in various European level educational associations • Growing number of international cooperation partners and their diversity. • An increase in the level of international networking of the staff • A successful digitization process at EKA and the provided flexible study forms create an environment adapted to participants from groups with fewer opportunities (people with health problems, geographical barriers). • Participation in "Combined Intensive Mobility" (BIP) projects. • Successful inclusion of lecturers' experience in the work. • Great interest from incoming Erasmus+ students. Increase in the number of incoming students. • Expanded list of international Erasmus+ agreements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low interest of local students about Erasmus+ opportunities • Low number of foreign teaching staff members • Low cooperation with foreign employers • No projects for IT and Law study directions • Low cooperation with many of international partners • Low number of international mobilities in some study programmes • Foreign students are not involved in the local student community life • Currently, EKA does not have an inclusive "Inclusion and Diversity" strategy, nor is there a person responsible for inclusive issues. • The internationalization strategy of EKA does not mention aspects related to mobility participants' knowledge of Europe and European values, as well as civic engagement. • More promotion of green travel options for all mobility participants to reduce the negative impact of mobility on the environment

On 14 February 2024, IMS2028 was approved by the EKA Senate meeting (Minutes No 193).

PRIORITIES OF THE EKA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONALISATION AND MODERNISATION

“Internationalisation can [...] offer students, staff and the organisation several benefits. It can advance strategic thinking leading to innovation, offer advantages in modernising pedagogy, encourage collaboration between students and staff, stimulate new approaches to learning, and new research collaborations.” (HEInnovate, 2024)

Internationalisation is one of the priorities defined in EKA development strategy. The key objective is to enhance EKA international competitiveness by promoting students and academic staff mobility, strengthening international cooperation, involving foreign academic staff in the study process and supporting integration of international students into university life, thus contributing to the internationally recognized brand of the university and providing high quality multicultural learning environment.

The vision of EKA internationalisation: EKA is an internationally competitive and recognised, science-based and innovation-oriented higher education institution that:

- attracts internationally recognised and qualified employees to perform scientific and academic activities;
- ensures multicultural environment to support students’ and staff competitiveness both in the local and international labour markets;
- is a place for globally-known international research and academic events;
- actively cooperates with other universities, institutions and employers in Latvia and beyond in academic, research and creative activities.

EKA main goals stated in IMS2028 are:

- To support EKA staff and students’ excellence by providing opportunities and motivating to participate in international mobility
- To establish the multicultural environment at EKA to ensure “internationalisation at home”
- To enhance the quality of the study process at EKA by attracting internationally recognised and qualified teachers to perform academic activities
- To support tolerance and diversity in the classroom by providing opportunities to develop intercultural and social communication skills among students and staff
- To raise awareness about environmental and climate-change challenges among students and staff and increase interest in social entrepreneurship in the field of circular economy and environment protection
- To promote civic engagement and active citizenship among students and staff
- To increase digital and research competences of EKA students and staff
- To promote the implementation of innovative teaching methods into the study process
- To increase the relevance of curricula by strengthening the cooperation with employers and providing problem-based learning and offering international mobility.
- To increase the number of programmes and study courses taught in English
- To increase international recognition of EKA and raise its reputational value in the academic and scientific environment

- To strengthen the existing and to expand the cooperation with other universities, institutions and employers in Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America in the field of research and creative activities
- To enhance the quality of research process at EKA by attracting internationally recognised and qualified researchers to perform scientific activities

IMS2028 goals are aligned with the priorities of the Erasmus+ Programme:

- Inclusion and diversity
- Digital transformation
- Participation in democratic life
- Environment and fight against climate change

The development and implementation of EKA IMS2028 is based on the future vision of education described in the *Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027* (project version https://www.izm.gov.lv/sites/izm/files/iap2027_projekta_versija_apspriesana_160720201_2.pdf). The Guidelines emphasize the necessity to strengthen lifelong learning opportunities and skills, specifically digital skills. Social skills (civic engagement, openness to different views and cultures, ability to change) are also treated as very important for the future.

The goals of the IMS2028 support the improvement of EKA staff and students' competencies. In defining the core competencies to focus on, EKA committed to the Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/council-recommendation-on-key-competences-for-lifelong-learning_en

Thus, the goals of IMS2028 are printed towards improvement of Digital and technology-based competences (Pr3 GOAL 4), entrepreneurship competences (Pr4 GOAL 3), active citizenship (Pr3 GOAL 3).

The EKA University of Applied Sciences also focuses on the integration of the international dimension in the study process ("internationalization at home") in order to provide the opportunity for those who do not participate in international mobility to acquire skills that are required for the international environment and globalized world.

GOALS AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS OF THE EKA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONALISATION AND MODERNISATION

IMS2028 PRIORITY 1 (Pr1): IMPROVEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF EKA STUDENTS AND STAFF

Pr1 GOAL 1: To support EKA staff and students' excellence by providing opportunities and motivating to participate in international mobility

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr1_G1_KPI):

Pr1_G1_KPI1: Number of IIA with universities and organisations from Programme countries for each study direction (within the framework of the Erasmus+ KA131 programme)

Pr1_G1_KPI2: Number of IIA with universities and organisations from Partner countries for each study direction (within the framework of the Erasmus+ KA171 programme)

Pr1_G1_KPI3: Number of organized promoting events for students and staff and events to share education abroad experiences (Target: at least 1 per semester)

Pr1_G1_KPI4: The number of students experienced international mobilities in every study programme (Target: at least 1 per year)

Pr1_G1_KPI5: The number of EKA students participating in international mobility (Target: 20% of graduated students)

Pr1_G1_KPI6: The number of staff experienced international mobilities (Target: 20% of permanently employed staff every year)

Pr1_G1_KPI7: Proportion of teaching staff participating in international scientific conferences per year as a percentage of the total number of teachers (except EKA organized) (Target: 80% of permanently employed staff every year)

IMS2028 PRIORITY 2 (Pr2): CREATION OF INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AT EKA (“INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME”)

Pr2 GOAL 1: To establish the multicultural environment at EKA to ensure “internationalisation at home”

Pr2 GOAL 2: To enhance the quality of the study process at EKA by attracting internationally recognised and qualified teachers to perform academic activities.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr2_G1_KPI):

Pr2_G1_KPI1: Number of available study courses taught in English (*for each study direction*)

Pr2_G1_KPI2: Number of incoming mobility students

Pr2_G1_KPI3: Foreign full-time students’ proportion, as a percentage of the total number of students

Pr2_G1_KPI4: Number of international events organized at EKA for staff (Target: at least 1 per year)

Pr2_G1_KPI5: Number of international events organized at EKA for students (Target: at least 1 per year)

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr2_G2_KPI):

Pr2_G2_KPI1: The number of incoming teaching staff mobilities

Pr2_G2_KPI2: Share of foreign teaching staff engaged in implementation of study programmes at EKA (EKAS 5%)

Pr2_G2_KPI3: The number of guest lectures conducted by teachers from foreign partner institutions (Target: at least 1 per year in each study programme)

IMS2028 PRIORITY 3 (Pr3): IMPROVEMENT OF COMPETENCES OF EKA STUDENTS AND STAFF

Pr3 GOAL 1: To support tolerance and diversity in the classroom by providing opportunities to develop intercultural and social communication skills among students and staff

Pr3 GOAL 2: To raise awareness about environmental and climate-change challenges among students and staff and increase interest in social entrepreneurship in the field of circular economy and environment protection

Pr3 GOAL 3: To promote civic engagement and active citizenship among students and staff

Pr3 GOAL 4: To increase digital and technology-based competences of EKA students and staff

Pr3 GOAL 5: To enhance research competences of EKA students and staff

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr3_G1_KPI):

Pr3_G1_KPI1: The number of organized events devoted to the intercultural communication issues, tolerance and diversity in the classroom, as well as events to share traditions of different cultures (Target: at least 1 per year)

Pr3_G1_KPI2: Number of EKA students participating in international projects

Pr3_G1_KPI3: Number of EKA staff participating in international projects

Pr3_G1_KPI4: The number of EKA students participating in international events, including those taking place at EKA

Pr3_G1_KPI5: The number of EKA staff members participating in international events (for instance, international academic weeks), including those taking place at EKA

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr3_G2_KPI):

Pr3_G2_KPI1: Number of sustainability, circular economy and environment protection oriented activities at EKA, including awareness-raising activities

Pr3_G2_KPI2: Number of students participating in the sustainability, circular economy and environment protection oriented activities

Pr3_G2_KPI3: Number of staff members participating in the sustainability, circular economy and environment protection oriented activities

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr3_G3_KPI):

Pr3_G3_KPI1: Number of staff/students' visits to social enterprises (Target: at least 1 per year in each study field)

Pr3_G3_KPI2: Number of guest lectures delivered by social entrepreneurs or lectures on socially important topics (Target: at least 1 per year in each study field)

Pr3_G3_KPI3: Number of foreign students participating in EKA Student Union

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr3_G4_KPI):

Pr3_G4_KPI1: Number of virtual classrooms (Target: at least 1 in each study field)

Pr3_G4_KPI2: Number of study courses with specific software utilized (Target: at least 1 in each study programme)

Pr3_G4_KPI3: Number of training events to increase digital and technology-based competences of EKA students and staff

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr3_G5_KPI):

Pr3_G5_KPI1: The number of EKA staff members participating in international research groups (Target: at least 1 from each study programme every year)

Pr3_G5_KPI2: The number of EKA students participating in research activities (Target: at least 1 from each study programme every year)

Pr3_G5_KPI3: Share of teaching staff invited as international Conference section leaders or key-note speakers

IMS2028 PRIORITY 4 (Pr4): INTERNATIONALISATION AND MODERNIZATION OF CURRICULA

Pr4 GOAL 1: To promote the implementation of innovative teaching methods into the study process in order to develop students' creativity, problem-solving skills, entrepreneurship and innovation skills, and digital literacy.

Pr4 GOAL 2: To increase the relevance of curricula by strengthening the cooperation with employers and providing problem-based learning and offering international mobility.

Pr4 GOAL 3: To increase the number of programmes and study courses taught in English

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr4_G1_KPI):

Pr4_G1_KPI1: The number of training events at EKA on application of innovative teaching practices (Target: at least 1 per year)

Pr4_G1_KPI2: Number of staff using innovative teaching methods, share

Pr4_G1_KPI3: Number of study courses that apply innovative teaching and didactic methods (20% of study courses in each programme)

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr4_G2_KPI):

Pr4_G2_KPI1: Number of cooperation agreements with employers, including internship agreements

Pr4_G2_KPI2: Number of study visits to enterprises (Target: at least 1 per year in each study programme)

Pr4_G2_KPI3: Number of products or services (including research) ordered by industry

Pr4_G2_KPI4: Number of guest lectures delivered by business representatives (Target: at least 1 per year in each study programme)

Pr4_G2_KPI5: Number of student participation in competitions organised by national, international, professional associations

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr4_G3_KPI):

Pr4_G3_KPI1: Number of study programmes delivered in English, total at EKA

Pr4_G3_KPI2: Number of study programmes delivered in English in the study field (Target: 50% of study programmes in each study field)

Pr4_G3_KPI3: Number of study programmes with individual courses or study modules taught in English

IMS2023 PRIORITY 5 (Pr5): EKA INTERNATIONAL PROFILE AND RECOGNITION

Pr5 GOAL 1: To increase international recognition of EKA and raise its reputational value in the academic and scientific environment

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr5_G1_KPI):

Pr5_G1_KPI1: Number of international ratings EKA takes place in

Pr5_G1_KPI2: Number of memberships in international organizations and associations (Target: at least 1 in each study field)

Pr5_G1_KPI3: Number of students of foreign universities participating in the EKA Student Conference

Pr5_G1_KPI4: The participation rate of external stakeholders in EKA International Scientific conference ETECH, as a percentage of the total number of participants

Pr5_G1_KPI5: The number of staff members representing foreign institutions participating in EKA organized international events (International Academic Week, Staff Training Week)

IMS2023 PRIORITY 6 (Pr6): INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN ACADEMIC, RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Pr6 GOAL 1: To strengthen the existing and to expand the cooperation with other universities, institutions and employers in Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America in the field of research and creative activities

Pr6 GOAL 2: To enhance the quality of research process at EKA by attracting internationally recognised and qualified researchers to perform scientific activities

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr6_G1_KPI):

Pr6_G1_KPI1: Number of cooperation agreements with higher educational institutions in Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America

Pr6_G1_KPI2: Number of cooperation agreements with other institutions (NGO, employers) in Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America

Pr6_G1_KPI3: Number of international projects' applications where EKA acts as a coordinator or partner (Target: at least 1 per year)

Pr6_G1_KPI4: Number of international projects where EKA acts as a coordinator or partner (Target: at least 4 running projects every year)

Pr6_G1_KPI5: The number of joint study programmes (Target: at least 1 in each study field)

Pr6_G1_KPI6: The share of international funding in total budget per year

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Pr6_G2_KPI):

Pr6_G2_KPI1: Number of foreign researchers involved in scientific cooperation with EKA researchers

Pr6_G2_KPI2: Number of joint scientific publications with foreign researchers in each study direction (Target: at least 1 per year in each study field).

THE IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROCESS OF THE INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY

At the end of each academic year, EKA Vice-Rector for Science and International Cooperation assesses the progress of the IMS2028, based on results expressed in key performance indicators and target values described in IMS2028 Action plan.

The Action Plan is developed, following the structure shown in Table 3:

Table 3. IMS2028 Action plan report (example)

Goal	Key Performance Indicators		Person in charge
	KPI	Target value	
<p>Pr1 GOAL 1</p> <p>To support EKA staff and students' excellence by providing opportunities and motivating to participate in international mobility</p>	<p>Pr1_G1_KPI1:</p> <p>Number of IIA with universities and organisations from Programme countries for each study direction (within the framework of the Erasmus+ KA131 programme)</p>	<p>At least 10 for each study direction (at least 5 countries)</p>	<p>Erasmus Coordinator</p>

EKA staff members responsible for data collection to complete the report of the IMS2028 Action plan:

- Erasmus+ coordinator
- Quality coordinator
- Head of the development of the Scientific institution
- Research coordinators
- Directors of study programmes

EKA staff members responsible for achievement of IMS2028 goals:

- Erasmus+ coordinator
- Project coordinator
- Research coordinators
- Directors of study programmes
- Heads of study fields
- Vice Rector for Science and International Cooperation