

Pursuant to Article 54, paragraph 1, point 17 of the Statute of Union University Belgrade and the recommendation of the University Senate approved on 12th of May 2020, the University Council session held on 19th of May 2020, has adopted the following

## **STRATEGY FOR THE INTERNATIONALIZATION**

### **OF THE UNION UNIVERSITY BELGRADE**

**(2019-2023)**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

With respect to the University vision to be regionally and internationally recognized as a higher education institution promoting research, distinctive study programmes and concepts, and to the underlying principles of its operation set out in the University Statutes, the University Council has adopted the Strategy of Internationalization (hereinafter referred to as „Strategy“). The Strategy is a constituent part of the continuous effort of the University to enhance the quality of higher education, in line with the current Quality Assurance Strategy.

Since its founding, the University has advocated the importance of professionalism, academic excellence, integrity and honesty as some of the underlying principles of its functioning, with the aim of training employable professionals and continuously improving the curriculum and the academic and administrative staff competences. The University operates on the principles of promoting social equity and non-discrimination, respecting differences, promoting interdisciplinary studies and intercultural communication, social inclusion, life-long learning, continuous quality improvement in line with academic standards, establishing amicable academic relations through student, academic and non-academic staff mobility programmes, and supporting junior researchers and teaching assistants.

The University consists of Faculty of Computer Science, Belgrade Banking Academy - Faculty of Banking, Insurance and Finance, Union University Faculty of Law, and Faculty of Law and Business Studies Dr Lazar Vrkić. They provide higher education within four scientific fields: formal sciences, social sciences, applied sciences and art.

The University and its constituent faculties (hereinafter referred to as Faculties) have participated in various international cooperation programmes, both bilateral and within a wider network of regional and European projects and organizations. The strategic goal of internationalization for the University now implies more intensive inclusion of the University into the mainstream of academic cooperation in the region, Europe and the world. The University seeks to support future international cooperation, and develop institutional capacities of the University and the Faculties, in order to implement sustainable internationalization policy. The University is particularly interested in developing and implementing bilateral and multilateral projects, increasing student and staff mobility, designing joint study programmes and supporting joint research projects.

## **STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES**

Internationalization strategy is based on the following principles:

- Keep up with the latest trends in higher education and research and harmonize various aspects of the University and Faculties organization and function with these trends;
- Continuously improve and innovate the curriculum, in the light of global trends;
- Invest into education and training of both academic and non-academic staff at the University and Faculties;
- Improve the quality of research, encourage initiative and creativity, and promote innovations by formulating and implementing long-term socially responsible projects;
- Cultivate an open door policy through openness and cooperation with regional, European and global partner institutions.

## **STRATEGIC GOALS**

In the aforementioned time span, the University and its constituent faculties are committed to achieving the following strategic goals:

### **1. Institutional Capacity Building**

The University and Faculties shall invest more effort into capacity building, in order to establish a long-term sustainability of international relations, and to adopt the best practices. Capacity building shall include the development of different aspects of the University and Faculties' organization and function – teaching and research, administration and technical service, as well as an integrated system for planning, organization, coordination and

implementation of international mobility programmes. With this goal in mind, the University will institute an International Relations Office and clearly define the lines of responsibility and task distribution with regard to international programmes. Capacity building shall also include staff training. Already existing offices and procedures related to international cooperation shall be harmonized with this Strategy.

The University shall further develop and strengthen the cooperation with relevant government offices and institutions, in order to facilitate the implementation of international programmes (e.g. providing adequate accommodation, visas and health insurance for incoming mobile students, etc.). Cooperation with employers and civic organizations will be of particular significance, so that the University could develop study programmes that correspond to the needs of the community, as well as local and international labour market.

The University shall set up the systems for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the international cooperation implementation process, both at the University level and at the Faculties' level. The results of international cooperation programmes will be publicized by means of promotional activities.

## **2. Promotion and further development of international cooperation programmes and the University and the Faculties, and encouraging academic mobility**

Building on the scientific and professional results achieved to date, the Union University continues to invest efforts to establish new forms of international cooperation and to strengthen the existing ones. These actions will primarily be focused on the increased participation in the EU programmes (Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, COST, etc.), regional projects in the South-Eastern Europe and Western Balkans, as well as the IPA cross-border cooperation programmes and the Danube Region cooperation programmes. The University will focus on establishing cooperation with partner institutions from the former Yugoslavia and neighbouring countries, because of similar higher education system structures, as well as linguistic, cultural and economic ties. At the same time, the University will strive to expand the cooperation with the EU HEIs, as their more advanced education and research networks would provide valuable experiences and insights for our academic staff.

The University will work towards achieving these objectives by participating in the following activities focused on three target groups: building networks for *teachers and researchers* within a broader international context; increasing *student* mobility, establishing and strengthening student alumni associations and their inclusion into European and global

networks (ESN, Erasmus Study Network, etc.); improving knowledge and skills of the *non-academic staff*. Particular attention will be paid to promoting and supporting outbound and inbound mobility of all three target groups.

According to UNION University Belgarde document: **Erasmus Policy Statement (EPS)**, the Union University intends to:

- Ensure equal and equitable access and opportunities to current and prospective participants from all backgrounds, paying particular attention to the inclusion of those with fewer opportunities.
- 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 period of study/training abroad, including during blended mobility. It will be supported by the digital projects - *Erasmus Without Paper, EMREX, EGRACONS tool* and the *European Student Card*.
- Charge no fees, in the case of credit mobility, to incoming mobile students for tuition, registration, examinations or access to laboratory and library facilities.
- Ensure the quality of the mobility activities and of the cooperation projects throughout the application and implementation phases.
- Implement the priorities of the Erasmus+ Programme:
  - By undertaking the necessary steps to implement digital mobility management in line with the technical standards of the European Student Card Initiative;
  - By promoting environmentally friendly practices in all activities related to the Erasmus+ Programme;
  - By promoting European values engaging and encouraging students and teaching and other staff to become active citizens in student and other organizations before, during and after participating in a mobility or project in the Erasmus+ Programme;
  - By promoting civic engagement and encouraging students and staff to get involved as active citizens in before, during and after their participation in a mobility or project.

The Union University intends to create a platform for implementing joint degree programmes - *Erasmus Mundus*, together with our closest international partners, taking into consideration the needs of businesses and practice in the new Erasmus+ Program period.

A particular goal is to increase the number of international students and to help them adapt to the local community (e.g. setting up a Buddy Network or similar programmes). Staff mobility programmes should be focused on the engagement of prominent foreign professors and researchers at the University. Language preparation is a crucial element to ensure success of mobility programmes. The University and the Faculties will ensure that Serbian language courses are available for incoming students, academic and non-academic staff.

### **3. Developing joint study programmes with international partner institutions**

On the basis of the Faculties' experience in implementing study programmes in English, as well as study programmes that result in a joint/double diploma, the University will work on improving conditions for developing joint study programmes with foreign HEIs, at the undergraduate, graduate and doctoral level. These activities will also involve adjustments to the curriculum and building capacities for teaching in a foreign language (English and other languages).

Besides academic programmes, the University and the Faculties will work on developing professional and specialist programmes, as well as life-long learning and continuing education programmes, in line with the local and international labour market demand.

### **4. Scientific research internationalization**

The University has recognized the need to further enhance the quality of scientific research and will invest effort into joining the international network of research institutions.

The University is committed to its internationalization agenda with regard to the research projects and publications of the University academic and research staff. The University shall organize international conferences, initiate and participate in joint research projects, with the aim of exchanging academic, research, cultural and other experiences.

## **STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

In order to successfully implement this Strategy, the University Council has adopted the Action plan for the duration of the Strategy. The Action plan identifies the activities necessary to achieve the strategic goals, sets the timeframe for achieving the strategic goals, identifies

the lines of responsibilities for their implementation, the necessary funding, and determines performance indicators.

Strategy Implementation will include:

- Adjusting the existing organization structure and procedures to the strategic goals;
- Organizational changes at the University and the Faculties – founding the International Relations Office;
- Establishing procedures and mechanisms for adequate governance of programmes and activities;
- Establishing the system for monitoring and evaluation of results

The Rector's Council is charged with monitoring the Strategy and Action Plan implementation, and reporting on its progress to the University Senate, at least once a year.

The University Senate shall determine the procedures necessary for Strategy implementation by creating bylaws or other regulation acts, which can be supplemented by the Faculty Statutes.

**University Union Council Chair**

**Slobodan Vukadinović**

