

In the following sections of the application form, you will need to explain how your institution will fulfil the ECHE principles if the Charter is awarded. You are encouraged to consult the [ECHE Guidelines](#) for support in completing this application.

Please note that your Erasmus+ National Agency will monitor your Erasmus Policy Statement and your answers to the questions given in the application. The Erasmus+ National Agency reserves the right to request more information on your activities and propose supplementary measures, for the purposes of monitoring and implementing the Charter principles by your institution.

## 1. ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS)

### 1.1 Erasmus activities included in your EPS

In this section, you need to tick the Erasmus activities covered by your Erasmus Policy Statement. Please select those activities that your HEI intends to implement during the entire duration of the Programme.

#### 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):

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

### 1.2 Erasmus Policy statement (EPS): your strategy

Your Erasmus Policy Statement should reflect how you intended to implement Erasmus after the award of the ECHE. Should you wish to add additional activities in the future, you will need to amend your Erasmus Policy Statement and inform your Erasmus National Agency.

What would you like to achieve by participating in the Erasmus Programme? How does your participation in the Erasmus Programme fit into your institutional internationalisation and modernisation strategy?

(Please reflect on the objectives of your participation. Please explain how you expect the participation in Erasmus to contribute towards modernising your institution, as well as on the

goal of building a European Education Area<sup>1</sup> and explain the policy objectives you intend to pursue).

Original language (and translation into EN, FR or DE if the EPS is not in one of these languages)

Internationalisation is an integrated part of Aalborg University's (AAU) core values and methods.

The overall policy goals of AAU are inherently modern such as being a young, internationally orientated network university. The participation in the Erasmus programme has long had a positive impact on our university's growth and international outlook and AAU's strategy goals and everyday practices naturally support the EU's intention of creating a European Education Area and the European Student Card Initiative for instance through support of Lifelong Mobility, improved quality and efficiency of education and training, participation in European Universities, continuous digitalisation of materials and procedures. Goals also include stronger student and staff exchange and close academic cooperation across borders. This helps us educate better students and our researches to help create jobs for the current and future labour market.

AAU wishes to increase the participation in excellent research and innovation cooperation with a specific focus on EU projects and prestigious research grants. The university will proceed to cooperate intensely with international partners, focusing on the development of excellence in research, education and innovation, talent recruitment and the development of excellence.

The university will continue to develop the international cooperation and to help develop the global citizens of the future. The Erasmus+ programme provides a strategic aim and a focus on global challenges which constitute an excellent match for AAU's Problem-Based Learning (PBL) profile, the university's solution-oriented research and innovation and its tradition for close collaboration with companies.

AAU's current international strategy "Knowledge for The World - Internationalisation Strategy" is part of the Aalborg University Strategy 2016-2021 and contains the following strategic goals:

- Through international research partnerships with a limited number of preferred partners, AAU strengthens its position as a university that offers excellent research results and research infrastructure.
- AAU facilitates international mobility and encourages researchers to go abroad as a means to support research career development.
- AAU strengthens systematic collaboration with international industry and organisations to bring welfare and cutting-edge knowledge to communities and industry as well as to deliver the global innovators of tomorrow.
- AAU candidates have a strong international profile and are attractive and ready for the regional, national and international job markets.
- AAU will establish close educational alliances, including but not limited to, double and joint degrees, student exchange and development of new ways of using PBL to underpin the internationalisation of study programmes.
- AAU campuses are attractive research and learning communities for national as well as international students and staff.
- AAU provides professional guidance and support for international students and staff, PhD students, guest researchers as well as accompanying families.

With a strong commitment to sustainability and the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, AAU has developed three megaprojects concerning Sustainable living, The circular region and Better Together (<https://www.megaprojects.aau.dk/>). The AAU megaprojects originate from the University's recognition that we must join forces across disciplines, industries, boundaries and borders. Megaprojects are interdisciplinary projects ranging across the whole university and involving large number of students working together. All projects are based on global problems as formulated in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the priorities of the European Education Area, such as recognition, digital skills, common values and inclusive education, please consult the following website: [https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en)

As mentioned above, AAU is also participating in a three-year pilot project within the framework of European Universities: The ECIU University (The European Consortium of Innovative Universities). The ECIU University will be open to students, researchers, industry and society at large, across borders. It will offer demand-driven, interdisciplinary and flexible education, tailored to the needs of society and students.

Since 2012, the AAU International Office has been involved in the strategic selection of Erasmus+ partners and the university has developed a more general approach to criteria for partner selection and signing of exchange agreements which is also reflected in the ongoing and centrally coordinated review of Erasmus+ agreements. This approach will continue hand in hand with and support the inclusive process for selection of preferred partners, explained in the section on "Envisaged impact of participation".

AAU aims to apply the following indicators of the strategic value of any given agreement:

- Strategic significance
- Availability of relevant courses at the, potential, partner institution
- Teaching language and language requirements at the partner institution
- Broad geographical distribution of AAU's agreements
- Semester structure at, potential, partner institutions
- Focus on maintaining and developing course offerings for incoming guest students

AAU participates in several double/joint degrees and aims to enhance our involvement in the future. The university continuously works on the central guidelines to make it easier for faculties to engage in these types of partnerships, but also to ensure that the responsibility and quality assurance remain placed at a more strategic level than the individual lecturer. And while the academic and, where applicable, financial responsibility lies with the five faculties of AAU, the International Office offers coordination and guidance throughout the process.

As part of the quality assurance of the programmes offered in collaboration with foreign universities, a standard cooperation agreement is being used to sign a contract with the foreign university. The standard agreement outlines responsibilities and which rules apply in what situations and is in general a roadmap for how cooperation in training and supervising the students take place.

In addition, the AAU International Office is constantly improving the practical aspects of how to enrol and welcome students at these special programmes as it is important to support and strengthen the exchange of students between European and non-European universities.

Please reflect on the Erasmus actions you would like to take part in and explain how they will be implemented in practice at your institution. Please explain how your institution's participation in these actions will contribute to achieving the objectives of your institutional strategy.

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#### **The mobility of higher education students and staff**

AAU's engagement in the mobility of students and staff with programme partners has taken place for more than two decades, and in 2016 we added The International Dimension to our portfolio. We keep having a strong interest in continuing this work to the benefit of our students, staff, institution itself as well as our partners in programme and partner countries alike. Thus, the work of promoting student and staff exchanges and the handling of these activities would continue to be the main activity of our International Office.

In practice, this means that the International Office will continue to be responsible for

- Coordinating the applications for each call
- Coordinating inter-institutional agreements
- Guidance of and support to our own and our partners' students and staff
- Guidance of students going on Erasmus+ mobility, both exchange and traineeships
- Processing applications
- The budget and the disbursement of Erasmus+ grants

Besides being a goal on its own, exchanges of students and staff support other valuable goals in the AAU internationalisation strategy: to establish close educational alliances, e.g. double and joint degrees and development of new ways of using our teaching method Problem-based learning to underpin the internationalisation of study programmes. In addition, it will ensure that AAU graduates continue to meet the challenges of the labour market in Denmark as well as internationally. Moreover, when AAU strengthens its international capabilities, we provide our staff and students with the most attractive international experiences and learning environments at home and abroad.

#### **ECIU European Universities - Partnerships for Excellence**

Along with our valued and long-time partners in the ECIU (The European Consortium of Innovative Universities) network AAU is taking part in a pilot project within the frame of the KA2 European Universities; Cooperation for Innovation and exchange of good practices (project phase 2019-2022). The aim is to establish the ECIU University: a pan-European university focusing on The UN Sustainable Development Goals for cities and communities. All involved universities will be joining forces pioneering with a challenge-based university, in close collaboration with society and industry. This means that learners at ECIU University will be tackling real and important problems in society and help shape a better world.

By developing this new educational model, the ECIU University responds to the urgent societal challenges the world is facing. The ECIU University will create a European platform where students, researchers, society and industry can work together to find innovative solutions to real-life challenges. It is intended to enhance the flexibility of education by granting learners "micro-credits" for individual courses, which they can gather in a competence passport tailored to their needs, instead of offering a fixed "one-size-fits-all" degree. This increased flexibility will also enable life-long learners to access education more easily. The ECIU University will work closely with society, establish pop-up laboratories to test innovative teaching and research practices, and will foster ideas to enhance physical, blended and virtual mobility among universities. Mobility and transnationality are at the core of the ECIU University.

#### **Partnerships for Excellence - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees**

AAU has been, still is and will continue to participate in several Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees at all levels of commitment as this supports our institutional strategy to strengthen our international capabilities and provide AAU staff and students with the most attractive international experiences and learning environments, at home and abroad.

The list of programmes includes:

- Joint European Master Programme in Environmental Studies, Cities and Sustainability (coordinating institution 2014 to 2018)
- MA Advanced Development in Social Work (ADVANCE) (partner 2013 to 2017)
- MA Advanced Development in Social Work (ADVANCES) continuation of ADVANCE (coordinating institution since 2018)
- Media Arts and Cultures (Media AC and then MAC) (partner since 2014)
- MSc Digital Communication Leadership (DCLead) (partner since 2013)
- Erasmus Mundus Master in Economic Policies for the Global transition (EPoG+) (associated partner since 2019)

In practice, the participation is implemented by taking into account the nature and level of AAU's involvement (coordinator, partner or associated partner) in each project. The AAU International Office is always involved in enrolment of, and, where applicable, scholarship payments to, students (guests as well as full degree programme). There is usually an academic coordinator in the subject area of the programme and for programmes that AAU coordinates, the department where the programme is anchored has allocated various types of human resources, e.g. financial officers for budget handling and administrative coordinators to support students and staff.

#### **Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices and Partnerships for Innovation**

AAU's engagement in strategic cooperation and partnerships for innovation will continuously aim at strengthening the impact of research and education. Building strategic partnerships in Europe is essential and is part of the university's mission for strategic involvement in the European cooperation.

AAU considers knowledge transfer and cooperation as essential parts of the university's DNA. The activities are conducted on several levels focusing not only on traditional knowledge transfer activities such as patents, spin-outs, licenses, contracts, and research projects, but also on informal knowledge transfer activities such as networks, student-business cooperation, and engagement in well-established European, national and regional activities.

Cooperation and partnerships at all levels are central to facilitate knowledge flow among actors. The cooperation schemes build bridges between actors and facilitates the matchmaking of complementary partners.

In the coming years, AAU will take further steps into strategic cooperation at European level both facilitated by Erasmus+ and via the larger European innovation landscape. AAU will strongly focus on activity within the EIC programmes and seek involvement in EIT. AAU is a keen actor in building innovation eco-systems at both national and European level. AAU will continue to build partnerships within the university's strategic areas of expertise for continued learning and sharing of best practices.

Entrepreneurship and employability are fundamentals for a strong innovation capacity and build on the university's learning approach – the PBL model. The PBL model of education combines excellence in research with innovative pedagogy, research-based education, peer-based learning.

AAU is currently implementing the Aalborg University Business School that boasts a stronghold which leans on the DNA of AAU. Specializing in value creation, innovation and business design, Aalborg University Business School is an internationally oriented and regionally anchored business school contributing to solving grand problems. AAU is ambitious about creating value to our immediate partners which include universities across the world, global and local companies, society and public sector organisations, entrepreneurs and the rest of the Faculties at AAU.

Boosting innovation in higher education and business builds on strong strategic partnerships between universities and businesses and the partnerships are central drivers for enhancing sustained economic growth, innovation, productivity and competitiveness in the European knowledge-based society.

What is the envisaged impact of your participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on your institution?

Please reflect on targets, as well as qualitative and quantitative indicators in monitoring this impact (such as mobility targets for student/staff mobility, quality of the implementation, support for participants on mobility, increased involvement in cooperation projects (under the KA2 action), sustainability/long-term impact of projects etc.) You are encouraged to offer an indicative timeline for achieving the targets related to the Erasmus+ actions.

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#### Strategic focus

AAU sees European collaboration and the Erasmus+ Programme as an extremely important lever for strong and continuous internationalisation of education, research and knowledge collation. Participation in the Erasmus+ Programme will in the coming years result in a deeper understanding of internationalisation and a better intercultural understanding at the university.

AAU regards internationalisation as very important and as an essential means to reach the university's full potential and achieve the targets set out in the AAU-strategy 'Knowledge for the World 2016-2021'.

The overarching theme of the AAU strategy is a keen focus on quality in all activities. To support the internationalisation across the university, AAU has adopted an internationalisation strategy that describes the priorities and actions specifically related to internationalisation.

The focus on strengthening quality also in internationalisation means that the university has decided to shift from measuring internationalisation quantitatively to measuring it in a qualitative way. More specifically, the university has moved from striving to reach higher numbers of e.g. mobility agreements and new projects with new partners every year, to focusing on fewer, carefully selected partners and networks with which a large number of collaboration activities will be carried out.

The university finds that deep partnerships imply better quality in the activities for both students and staff, have more impact on companies and civic society and are more sustainable in the long run. Based on an inclusive and bottom-up process, AAU will in the second half of 2020 select the strategic partners and networks that are going to be the preferred partners at institutional level.

AAU regards the Erasmus+ Programme as a very important instrument in this process towards improving quality and impact of internationalisation as it will enable the university to link various activities and establish multifaceted collaborative partnerships where AAU carry out more and more activities within especially KA1 and KA2 with the same and new partners throughout the next Erasmus+ programme period. We expect this approach will result in better and faster results combined with lower transaction costs. By the end of 2021, the effect of this strategic approach will be evaluated to allow for timely adjustments for the next AAU-strategy, adjustments that will of course respect the Erasmus Charter obligations and aim at developing them even further within the organisation.

### **Monitoring the impact**

To maintain the organisational awareness and to strengthen the impact of international activities, the board of directors and the university board have set up a very elaborate system for monitoring and evaluating all strategic actions. Depending on the nature of the activities, different types of targets have been defined. Four times a year the board of directors will survey the expected progress of the planned actions and, if needed, establish further or corrective measures. The same procedure is undertaken in the university board twice a year. This means that the top management several times a year discuss and evaluate the internationalisation activities, thereby securing a constant focus on goal attainment.

### **Students**

The AAU student body has a strong international profile and is educated for the society of the future. International experience, intercultural understanding and the ability to analyse and solve complex problems are in-demand competences in a global world. Students graduating from AAU will be ready to contribute to solving the grand challenges faced by society today and they are able to work in new and collaborative ways in increasingly connected and digital environments.

AAU will prepare its students to thrive in and contribute to an interconnected world by offering an attractive portfolio of degree programmes with a visible international dimension and by offering attractive internationally oriented learning environments. Based on the PBL learning model, AAU will develop a variety of models through which all students get a truly international learning experience.

The internationalisation strategy states that AAU encourages student mobility and that mobility for students should be easy, attractive, meriting and appreciated. To support the students' preparations for stays abroad, AAU has established a professional support structure for both outgoing and incoming students. This support structure will be further developed in the coming years.

Presently, AAU is experimenting with blended mobility and online mobility as we believe that more students should be encouraged to experience new ways of learning and be able to 'study at' the universities in Europe where they have the best educational programmes in various subjects relevant to the students. However, we know from experience that many students find it difficult to do a physical mobility for a semester. There are many and extremely varied reasons for this, and therefore we find that blended and online mobility can be a possibility for the underrepresented groups of students, for instance people with handicaps, single parents or financially disadvantaged students.

We do not think that blended and online mobility will replace traditional mobility, we believe it to be a supplement that will increase the intercultural understanding at the university and in the European countries in general when students graduate and start their careers across the continent.

### **Staff**

For all researchers at AAU, internationalisation is a necessity to start and develop an academic career. Therefore, mobility for researchers is strongly recommended both as a means to strengthen individual career development and as a way of building research networks with research environments. To underpin and support mobility, international experience and networking will be assessed positively when recruiting permanent staff at the university. Moreover, all PhD study plans must include a plan for internationalisation.

In the university's framework contract with the Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science, AAU has expressed an ambition to strengthen excellent research through targeted recruitment of international staff. Over the past three years, the total number of international staff has increased from 29% of all staff to 31%. The number is expected to increase further in the coming years as the international strategy unfolds. The Erasmus+ Programmes will be an important instrument to achieve this; not least in the form of more and stronger cooperation projects under KA2.

### **International Staff Unit**

To support the incoming staff members and help them and their families get settled in Denmark, AAU has established an International Staff Unit (ISU) that offers professional support and personalised guidance to all international staff members and guest researchers that come to pursue their career at AAU.

In 2019, ISU helped with onboarding and on-arrival service for a large number of international staff members and their families. ISU arranged about 30 cultural and social events for more than 700 participants. They organised cultural training workshops where Danish and international staff met (about 170 participants) and they started a spouse network.

Established two years ago, ISU has already proven a valuable part of the administrative support structure, which is important for making it possible for all academic staff, Danish and international, to get an intercultural experience, irrespective of social or financial situation.