

Document title:

Academic Mobility Strategy

CONTENTS:

INTRODUCTION

COMMITMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY ACTIVITIES

PRINCIPLES

ACADEMIC MOBILITY

MEASURES FOR THE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

ACADEMIC MOBILITY MANAGEMENT UNITS

STRATEGY PROMOTION

STRATEGY IMPROVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Promoting the mobility of academic staff has become a matter of increasing importance in European higher education policy. Academic mobility is usually considered an element of human resources development and a way to improve the quality of higher education and research at national higher education institutions. At the same time, mobility and internationalization represent key aspects of the Bologna Process as highlighted in the document "Mobility strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area" adopted at the EHEA Ministerial Conference in 2012.

The University of Niš (hereinafter: the University) aims to promote academic mobility in the context of cooperation agreements with other countries and their institutions of higher education, thereby increasing its participation in EU research initiatives.

Most of the academic staff mobilities are financed through international partnership programs, such as the European Commission's Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus+ KA1 programs. Additional funds come, for example, from the CEEPUS regional program (The Central European Exchange Program for University Studies), bilateral cooperation with Germany (DAAD Program) and the USA (Fulbright Program), cooperation with Turkey (MEVLANA) and the like. Each of the programs has certain specificities. Thus, the special feature of the CEEPUS Program is that there is no transfer of funds, but each country covers the costs of incoming teaching staff. Mobility is mainly realized within the networks of higher education institutions established under the auspices of CEEPUS, while the periods of mobility range from 5 days to 10 months and can involve participation in research or conferences as additional activities. In addition, individual teaching staff exchanges take place on the basis of unilateral, bilateral or multilateral cooperation between higher education institutions or within local or regional networks of higher education and scientific institutions that are responsible for the financial support and coordination of such activities between partner institutions. Most of these mobility programs are focused on the mobility of teaching staff. In that respect, the University provides academic staff with complete logistical and institutional support for collaboration with colleagues from abroad.

Academic mobility programs can therefore be national, bilateral and regional programs for fostering academic mobility in higher education. National programs are organized at the national level, whereby the country is responsible for their financing and coordination. Bilateral programs are based on intergovernmental cooperation of two countries, where both contribute to the financing and organization of a joint program, while regional programs cover more than two countries from one part of the European area.

The forms of academic staff mobility may vary depending on whether they involve the mobility of teachers, teaching assistants or researchers. They may be distinguished by the length of time spent outside the institution (short-term and long-term mobility or training abroad), but also, much more importantly, by the purpose of mobility. Thus, teachers can benefit from mobility for study visits, as lecturers or as participants in academic exchange. In this connection, short-term mobility may also involve a specific type of mobility for participation in

international scientific conferences. Mobility can vary in terms of funding as well, since it can be financed from the allocated support or scholarship funds, but it can also be provided by the employment contract, such as paid leave of absence, for example.

In order to encourage the mobility of academic staff, the Law on Higher Education offers opportunities for spending a sabbatical leave of absence, lasting up to one academic year, abroad. After five years spent teaching at a higher education institution, a teacher may be granted such a sabbatical leave. These leaves generally involve research, and in some cases they can also be used for professional advanced training or teaching at another higher education institution. The realization of mobility entails the existence of cooperation agreements between institutions of higher education.

At the same time, the need to strengthen the international mobility of foreign scientists and researchers toward our universities (so-called incoming mobility) is increasingly emphasized, and highlight the goals to attract quality researchers from around the world are accentuated. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to change national and institutional programs so as to facilitate the organization and coordination of activities related to joint research, development and innovation.

In particular, incoming mobility may be applied for by professors, researchers or artists from foreign universities, invited by faculties or the University as visiting professors. They may be engaged for carrying out seminars and workshops, but also for teaching, research or artwork at the University or its constituent faculties. The period of stay may range from 1 to 12 months.

With the aim of establishing and implementing academic mobility, the University defines the Academic Mobility Strategy (hereinafter: Strategy) which includes:

- national policy objectives related to academic mobility in higher education;
- national programs of academic mobility in higher education.

COMMITMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

University activities

The position of the University is determined by Article 33 of the Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Serbia, according to which the University is an independent higher education institution that in carrying out its activities combines educational and scientific-research, professional and/or artistic work constituting the components of a single higher education process.

University mission: integration into the European higher education area in accordance with the highest quality standards of education, research and professional work.

University vision: a modern and recognizable university that is comparable to foreign higher education institutions of the highest rank in terms of, inter alia, the quality of principles and conditions for the realization of academic mobility.

Principles

The basic task of the Strategy is to establish the principles and a comprehensive organizational structure responsible for the implementation of academic mobility.

The establishment, implementation and further improvement of the Strategy will be based on the participation of all members of the academic community. The implementation of the Strategy will create conditions for the University and faculties in its composition to respond to contemporary trends in the development of higher education institutions within the higher education system of the Republic of Serbia, which will fully meet the requirements, expectations and needs of academic staff, founders and the society as a whole.

Academic mobility will be grounded on a flexible structure of organizational units that will enable it to adapt to the new needs and requirements of the academic community of the University.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY

Promoting and implementing academic mobility in higher education is the main goal of the Bologna Process, since high quality mobility contributes to strengthening the competencies, knowledge and skills of those involved in it. It contributes to the expansion and improvement of academic cooperation, to the dissemination of innovations and knowledge within the European Higher Education Area, to the continuation of internationalization of higher education institutions and their upgrading through mutual comparison, to the promotion of employability and personal advancement of academic staff and to the consolidation of the cultural identity of Europe. Academic mobility is one of the prerequisites for ensuring the high quality of higher education.

The University recognizes the importance of the academic staff mobility and establishes programs for mobility and internationalization of the teaching staff as its primary objectives. The University supports the mobility of academic staff not only in terms of their academic or scientific dimension, but also in order to develop their professional skills and competences. Moreover, the results of academic mobility can be integrated into the institutional system of career development of academic staff. The University will also promote teacher mobility as one of the conditions for the election to a teacher rank.

The strategic plan for the mobility of academic staff includes recommendations such as fostering two-way international mobility of teachers, professional associates and researchers. Enabling academic staff to be engaged in research at leading European and world institutions is now considered a contribution to the formation of high-quality research and development personnel.

The University recognized the promotion of internationalization and increased mobility of academic staff as important goals that should be associated with a specific national policy on staff mobility in higher education. In this connection, academic mobility programs support both incoming and outgoing mobility. The

University emphasizes the mobility of teaching staff as a key element of the higher education strategy aimed at improving the quality as well as the international credibility and competitiveness of higher education.

The University distinguishes two main types of academic staff mobility at the University and its constituent faculties: short-term (for a few days, several weeks or one month) and long-term mobility (several months to a year). Both mobility types involve going to another higher education or scientific institution within the context of the employment contract.

The University defines only a framework of academic mobility programs which are tailored for the participation of teaching and research staff, or PhD candidates, teaching associates and researchers, especially those at the beginning of their career, not ignoring the more experienced researchers. PhD candidates who are not employed at the University are considered students, and in such cases their mobility is not taken as the mobility of academic staff.

The University particularly insists on a significant increase in the mobility of researchers within special mobility programs or national research programs. Special attention is devoted to researchers at the beginning of their careers (doctoral students and/or postdoctoral researchers). The University provides appropriate tools to support mobility of researchers at different stages of their careers.

In order to facilitate academic mobility and to increase its transparency, the University will set up at least two databases for systematic monitoring of mobility: (a) on scholarships and financial forms of mobility support; and (b) on realized mobility of academic staff.

The University coordinates activities in the academic mobility planning and implementation, that is, in the establishment of a network of academic mobility through the Center for International Cooperation and the International Relations Office, or the Interface Center.

The University makes efforts to include academic mobility in research programs, strategic programs, individual programs, as well as in targeted mobility programs. In particular, the University insists on programs that encourage the incoming and the outgoing mobility of academic staff.

Like many foreign higher education institutions, the University recognizes specific types of teacher mobility for the purpose of teaching languages (for example, the mobility of foreign language instructors) and/or culture of a foreign country. Financing of such incoming mobility is provided, as a rule, from the funds of international cooperation programs. The University also supports outgoing mobility with the aim of studying the language and culture of the host country if there are financial and other important assumptions for the realization of this kind of mobility.

MEASURES FOR THE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

In order to implement the Strategy, it is necessary to amend and supplement relevant general acts of the University, or the faculty in its composition. For the

efficient planning, implementation and monitoring of academic mobility, it is necessary:

- to determine the competence of the existing University bodies which are in charge of academic mobility,
- to constitute, if necessary, new organs and bodies for the monitoring and development of academic mobility with a clear definition of their scope of work, competencies, powers and modes of operation.

The Strategy implementation will begin after the adoption of appropriate laws and constitution of the corresponding organs and bodies. During the implementation, the following activities will be undertaken:

- Definition of the Strategic Action Plan for the period 2015-2020;
- Implementation of an institutional support system for the academic staff intending to use some form of academic mobility;
- Elimination of barriers at different levels that may affect significant expansion of academic mobility at the University;
- Carrying out procedures for the evaluation of realized mobilities;
- Continuous and systematic monitoring, providing and improving conditions and mechanisms for the realization of all types of academic mobility;
- Implementation of a systematic monitoring of mobility (a system of academic mobility databases);
- Ensuring balanced academic mobility at the University;
- Providing better information on academic mobility;
- Taking measures to increase the motivation of academic staff to use some form of academic mobility;
- Promoting the Strategy to the academic public, as well as to the scientific and wider community.

ACADEMIC MOBILITY MANAGEMENT UNITS

The procedures for monitoring, providing and improving academic mobility are the duty and obligation of the Center for International Cooperation and the International Relations Office. This complex process also includes all the organs, organizational units and services of the University, in accordance with the University Statute and other accompanying normative acts of the University.

Undertaking of coordinated measures for systematic monitoring, providing, improving and developing academic mobility becomes a task of relevant bodies, organizational units and services of the faculties within the University.

STRATEGY PROMOTION

The University has the obligation to publish and promote the adopted Strategy at the University itself and at its constituent faculties, i.e. in the scientific and professional public.

The University shall publish the information from the previous paragraph in the form of a publication in printed or electronic form, as well as on the University website.

STRATEGY IMPROVEMENT

The Strategy is in line with the strategic orientation of the country, as well as with the European objectives related to the exchange of higher education and scientific potentials. As such, it is also emphasized in the Scientific Research Program at the University of Niš.

Based on the annual report on the realization of academic mobility, the University reviews and improves conditions and mechanisms for creating prerequisites for a better academic mobility.