

## **ISTANBUL OKAN UNIVERSITY- ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT**

### **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).**

Istanbul Okan University (OKAN), one of the youngest and the most dynamic universities of Turkey, was founded by OKAN Culture, Education, and Sports Foundation in 1999 and began its academic life in 2003-2004.

Since the 2006-2007 academic year, OKAN has reached 63 undergraduate, 41 master and 13 Ph. D. programmes under ten faculties, two vocational schools and three graduate schools and has opened University Hospital. OKAN offers its students traditional education as well as online education.

True to its motto, "The University Closest to Business Life," OKAN effectively combines theory and practice by employing an academic staff who are experts in their own fields, adopting a contemporary approach to education, and focussing upon practice-oriented studies which prepare the students for business life, starting from students' very first year of study. Indeed, the University, which had the pleasure of presenting its first graduates with their diplomas in 2006-2007, has fulfilled the promise of its motto, as all members of its first graduating class of graduates have found employment. OKAN has cooperation protocols with business institutions as well as academic institutions.

OKAN continuously endeavours to improve and modernise itself to contribute to smart and sustainable growth as a higher education institution. Accordingly, it has been involved in international programs such as Erasmus and ISEP since 2006. In addition, besides these programmes, OKAN has signed bilateral agreements with 85 universities and institutions. OKAN is also a member of International Association of Universities.

Participation in 2021-2027 Erasmus Programme will enable OKAN to realise its goals in terms of internationalisation and modernisation. Active participation in the Programme will not only increase the number of mobile students and staff and strengthen its internationalisation process, but will also urge OKAN to undertake further steps towards educational reforms to meet Europe's need for well qualified graduates and researchers. The Programme, by stipulating the use of common mobility tools, i.e., credit transfer system, based on student workload and learning outcomes (ECTS) and learning agreements, will initiate HEIs for more quality and transparency. OKAN, which has participated in the previous Erasmus Programmes, will continue to improve its transparency and work towards achieving excellence in its programmes.

As one of the fundamental principles of the Programme is to strengthen cooperation between HEIs and increase the number of mobile students and staff, it will enable Istanbul OKAN students and researchers to gain additional intercultural and linguistic skills and will help OKAN to boost its performance.

The Programme also enables HEIs to improve relevance of their academic programmes by stipulations for equipping graduates with the knowledge and core transferable competencies, by urging HEIs to orient research towards issues required for a sustainable and inclusive growth of European economy. Being part of the Programme will provide OKAN with the possibility of sharing experience and expertise with partner higher education institutions and the possibility of setting up common cross-border projects.

OKAN believes in the mutual benefit of close international cooperation and in flexible and modern curricula adaptable to specific needs. Production of knowledge can no longer be thought as a separate field of action. The knowledge triangle between higher education, research and business should be strengthened in order to achieve European and regional development. OKAN's participation and commitment to the Programme will support its continuous efforts to modernise its programmes for fostering strategic partnerships with the business world and to be a decisive actor in regional developmental issues.

OKAN supports for high quality education and has a key 21st Century skill, adaptability. Adaptability lies at the heart of innovation and collaboration. OKAN is also willing to adapt its education system and technology to Europe's digital transformation. Today, OKAN makes many of its transactions paperless with e-signature. It will be pleased to implement the Erasmus Without Paper

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<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)

project. As a result, OKAN considers the Erasmus Program as one of the essential tools for its modernization and internationalization strategy.

**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.**

Istanbul Okan University (OKAN) has set internationalization as one of its top priorities from the outset. Within this perspective, it has endeavoured to increase the number of international degree and mobile students by 20 percent every year and today, reached around 10% of its student body as international students. OKAN aims to keep the same ratio. In order to achieve this aim, the language of instruction and curricula of the programmes have been designed to facilitate international mobility and recognition. The Bologna Process was applied and ECTS grading is used to enhance quality and transparency.

OKAN is applying to not only KA1 mobility projects, but also KA2 and KA3 projects, either as a partner or a coordinator. Internationalization strategy of the university is based on several pillars : recruitment of international students from all around the world; increasing the number of mobile students and staff by participating in different exchange programmes, thus achieving internationalization abroad and at home; enhancing the number and contents of cooperation agreements so as to establish joint and double degrees and common research projects and last, but not least, modernisation of its curriculum and teaching methods to comply with international educational and global business needs. OKAN also gives utmost importance to the implementation of the Bologna Process as the main tool of its internationalization project, thereby contributing to the construction of EHEA and ERA.

OKAN seeks diverse and efficient cooperation with partners in terms of student and staff mobility, common research projects and transfer of knowledge and innovation. Compatibility of curricula, use of ECTS credits and mutual interest in exchanging students and staff are the major criteria for partner selections. The university establishes two types of cooperation agreements: EU and non-EU bilateral agreements for mobility and inter-institutional protocols for cooperation on a wider scale. Within Europe, OKAN actively participates in the Erasmus programme, increasing the number of mobile students and staff by 25% every year. It also adheres to ISEP, the international student exchange programme, comprising more than 350 higher education institutions worldwide. Other inter-institutional protocols encompass higher education institutions ranging from China, Korea and Japan to the universities in Europe and in the USA.

Although OKAN, as an institution in the European Higher Education Area, has stronger ties with European HEIs, it does also prioritise establishing partnerships with HEIs in the Balkans and Eurasia. International degree students are recruited mainly from Africa, Middle East and Eurasia. A high number of grants are allocated to international students coming from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, thus expanding educational diversity.

The main target of mobility is first and second cycle students and junior level academic staff and researchers. Although currently OKAN strongly encourages first and second cycle students to spend at least one semester abroad, its objective is to integrate compulsory mobility in the curricula and provide its students with international experience before they are integrated into the labour market. Short cycle students are encouraged to participate in the Erasmus placement programme. As for staff mobility, OKAN gives mobility priority to junior level academic, administrative staff and researchers.

OKAN believes in the importance of joint and double degrees to provide the highly qualified workforce which is needed to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe. Within this perspective it strives to increase the number of joint and double degrees with its European partners who are in the EHEA. The university also aims to augment the number of double degrees for short cycle programmes in view of vertical mobility.

OKAN believes that student and staff mobility is one of the main tools for ensuring quality and transparency in higher education. Mobility also increases the compatibility between institutions and prepares the path for joint projects in Bachelor's and Master's degrees. OKAN aims to achieve its internationalisation strategy by placing mobility as a priority, by improving the quality of student and staff mobility, and by establishing cooperation with HEIs and enterprises within this perspective.

OKAN also works towards providing its students with the possibility of studying abroad for at least one semester during their Bachelor's or Master's degrees by increasing the number of its cooperation projects.

OKAN attaches great importance to fostering cooperation and setting up joint projects with EU and non-EU neighbouring countries. Under the auspices of protocols signed with higher education institutions in neighbouring countries and cross-border cooperation projects, OKAN aims to facilitate student and staff exchange and develop knowledge alliances with neighbouring countries, so as to attract more students into higher education.

OKAN describes itself as the "university closest to the business world" and has worked towards establishing strategic alliances with enterprises, non-governmental organisations and local governments. OU has made it a priority to consult all stakeholders before designing educational programmes and curricula. It has also set up several tailor-made Master's programmes to meet the requirements of enterprises and to enable adult and students with family responsibilities to undertake further studies, thus making quality higher education accessible for under-represented groups.

OKAN acknowledges the importance of the dissemination and visibility of the results of successful staff mobility or international cooperation with strategic partners.

**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.**

Istanbul Okan University (OKAN) continuously endeavours to improve and modernise itself to contribute to smart and sustainable growth as a higher education institution. Participation in the Programme will enable OKAN to realise its goals in terms of internationalisation and modernisation.

Active participation in the Programme will not only increase the number of mobile students and staff and strengthen its internationalisation process, but will also urge OKAN to undertake further steps towards educational reforms to meet Europe's need for well qualified graduates and researchers. The Programme, by stipulating the use of common mobility tools, i.e., credit transfer system, based on student workload and learning outcomes (ECTS) and learning agreements, will initiate HEIs for more quality and transparency. OKAN, which has participated in the previous Erasmus Programmes, will continue to improve its transparency and work towards achieving excellence in its programmes.

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OKAN, being a private foundation HEI, attributes utmost importance to flexibility in governance and independent funding of projects and research. Governance flexibility is required for quick adaptability to ever changing economic and international conditions. OKAN believes that independent funding will contribute to investment in target oriented research, thus producing results and answers to what Europe needs for establishing the knowledge triangle between higher education, research and business for the betterment of the society.

OKAN is willing to adapt its education system and technology to Europe's digital transformation. Today, OKAN makes many of its transactions paperless with e-signature. It will be pleased to implement the Erasmus Without Paper project. As OKAN, until 2021, we are planning to meet with the software companies to integrate the system into the University by taking support of OKAN IT department. OKAN will accept applications on the online platform and complete the agreements online until 2021. Our target is to have full deployment of the project during 2021.