

According to Article 56, Paragraph 1, Item 35, of the Statute of the Union Nikola Tesla University, the Senate of the Union Nikola Tesla University, at the session held on 17 May 2019, unanimously adopts

INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY

Union Nikola Tesla University

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introductory framework

In an ever-changing world, a constantly growing number of problems is challenging all sectors of society and all educational levels – higher education as well. From globalisations to climate change, from poverty to increasing number of illnesses, universities are under ever growing pressure to produce resilient solutions to respond to these challenges, together with knowledgeable, competent, compassionate and ready-for-action professionals willing and able to contribute to the solution and agitate for a change. ‘Thinking globally and working locally’ as a motto calls for borderless knowledge – a prerequisite that must be met by all universities willing to successfully integrate their educational accomplishments and research outputs into the society and use them for the good of the society. Knowledge without borders is never easy to pursue – universities must take into consideration national socio-political context, legislature and regulations, teaching and research priorities of the others. Yet, as a young and ambitious university we see them as growing opportunities and not impediments.

The Strategy of Internationalisation of the Union Nikola Tesla University presents our roadmap for transitioning from our current position to the one where we would like to find ourselves in the next five years regarding the improvement and standardisation based on international norms and requirements, improvement of study programmes and deployment of joint degree / double degree programmes, development of student mobility programs, development of staff mobility programs, and participation and initiation of multi-institutional educational and research projects.

In the light of above-mentioned trends our strategy will be periodically evaluated, modified and improved, while our strong will and unrelenting commitment to contribute to overall advancement of internationalisation, cross-border and multi-institutional cooperation will remain constant.

1.2. International credentials

Although, Union Nikola Tesla University is a young one, from its very beginning in 2001 when it started as a Faculty for Construction Management, the university has been using all of its intellectual and operational capacities to establish, develop and expand international relations and cooperation with many educational, scientific and industry partners. For 6 years (2004-2010) we have had a joint master's degree programme in architecture and urban planning with Varna Free University, Bulgaria. This cooperation enabled intensive knowledge exchange between our staff and provided our students with opportunity to enrich their knowledge abroad through participating in Erasmus exchange programmes. We are intensively supporting students to develop parts of their masters and doctoral thesis through German Federal Environmental Foundation (Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt) scholarship. So far seven of them received this prestigious funding. Our staff is constantly honing their ideas through being funded by highly esteem international institutions such as Alexander von Humboldt, Open Society Foundation, together with their teaching and managerial skills through programs such as The University of Michigan Weisser Professional Development Programme. Additionally, we have been participating as partners in international projects, funded for example by DAAD Exceed programme.

Fellows of our university are also respected members of various organisations dedicated to specialised research, such as IASS-AIS (International Association for Semiotic Studies), ISOCARP (International Society of City and Regional Planners), etc.

Our international agreements range from worldwide agreements with Tambov State Technical University, Tambov, Russia, China Three Gorges University, Hubei–Yichang, China, Powislanski University, Kwidzyn, Poland, Chemnitz University of Technology, Chemnitz, Germany, Neapolis University in Pafos, Cyprus, to regional agreements with University of Primorska, GEA College – Faculty of Entrepreneurship, Ljubljana, Slovenia, Alma Mater Europaea, Dance Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Macedonia, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering Vinica, Goce Delcev University, Shtip, Macedonia, Smilevski Business Academy, Macedonia, Faculty of Dramatic Arts, University of Montenegro, Cetinje, Montenegro, Faculty of Mediterranean Business Studies, Tivat, Montenegro.

As a young university we are aware of our need and potential to grow and establish ourselves in the borders of our country as well as internationally further. Based on the success of the previously named collaborations we are eager to exchange knowledge with our existing and potential future parents in education and scientific research, as well as in industry.

1.3. Vision

Our vision is to positively contribute to the educational and hopefully economic development of local communities and the region, as we will strive to offer accessible educational programmes, which focus on developing professional skills.

The university wants to become locally and internationally recognized higher education institution in the field of construction, engineering and real estate management, as well in other disciplines it offers. Through high-quality educational activities, linking theory with practice and international cooperation, the university will develop candidates that are wanted in the domestic and the international labour market. Experience from our former students is most welcome in this vision, as many have found places within internationally recognized institutions and companies, and their advices are most welcome at informal and formal levels. The university will also be part of a system of joint-degree and the double-degree programs.

1.4 Mission

The Union Nikola Tesla University implements and promotes basic, applied and developmental research in all scientific fields and art.

Based on its own, and foreign research, the Union Nikola Tesla University educates artists and professionals qualified for leading sustainable development, taking into account the tradition of the European Enlightenment and Humanism and with regard to human rights. We are dedicated to developing talents in form of grants for best students.

The university encourages interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary study, and has experts that publish their results in scientific journals, and which also cooperate with other institutions, thus contributing to the local and world knowledge treasury as well passing it on to the students and other users.

The university cooperates with private companies, following the tradition from the early days of Faculty of Construction management, where students could learn about their profession directly from experts on building sites, but also extends cooperation with public sector and state organizations. With this cooperation university gives opportunity to students for better and more direct learning and contributes to the social development. With active involvement in economy and society, we tend to follow new paradigms in all aspects of our education and research.

2. INTERNATIONALISATION CORE AIMS AND SPECIFIC GOALS

As our uttermost aim we have set working towards making our university recognised, from local to regional and international level, as an active entrepreneurial university, known for its support of creative synergies between education, research and industry, so as to create innovation for and with society. With this aim in mind we are set to forge international

partnerships in order to rise to the challenges in the higher education. Based on the framework of this strategy, our university's working plans, and our main aims we have determined following core internationalisation aims:

- to establish ourselves as one of the leading universities in Serbia open for creative and visionary international collaborations;
- to become one of the leaders in initiation and facilitation of internationalisation efforts in the region;
- to position ourselves as highly reputable and reliable partners in international projects and efforts in higher education in Europe as well as worldwide.

The aforementioned internationalisation core aims will be met through the following objectives:

1. Improvement of curriculum based on international norms and requirements,
2. Development and deployment of joint degree/double degree programmes,
3. Development of student mobility programs,
4. Development of staff mobility programs,
5. Participation and initiation of multi-institutional educational and research projects.

2.1. Further development of curriculum based on international norms and requirements

Internationalisation, standardisation and further update of the curriculum will be carried out from policy level to daily teaching practice. One of the highest priorities will be cross comparison of best international practice so that the curriculum is harmonised with state-of-the-arts educational content and pedagogical approaches internationally. Particular attention will be paid to developing interdisciplinary study programmes and collaborative multi-institutional teaching courses. Local and international labour market situation will be closely monitored, and course content constantly updated so that the graduates are equipped with the knowledge and skills that would increase their competitiveness. With many of the former students working abroad, especially in Europe, we will strive to create a formal feedback system based on their experiences, as well as keeping continuous contacts with them. As the university which supports entrepreneurial spirit knowledge transfer partnerships will be forged so that students can test and enrich their knowledge through practice and put the university knowledge to the service of industry. We will continue to further develop 'live projects' with members of the society, exchange knowledge with our international partners, thus, enabling the latest knowledge to be integrated and used for the good of the local people.

We will continue to increase the number of study programmes offered in English. Consequently, we will foster foreign language capabilities and intercultural competencies of our staff and students. Moreover, we will continue informing staff and students about national and international funding opportunities, such as Erasmus and DAAD. We will forge new and

exploit the existing partnerships in order to apply for funding for raising institutional capacity, and further improvement of teaching programmes (e.g. through Erasmus +).

2.2. Development and deployment of joint degree / double degree programmes

Based on our positive experience with Varna Free University we will strive to develop joint/double degree programmes with other respectable international partners. All integrated faculties will work on this aim in their respectable fields in relation to all three levels of study – undergraduate, master`s and doctoral studies. Establishing such programmes as a part of internationalisation strategy can have positive effect on both Union Nikola Tesla University and our partners. The butterfly effect of such synergetic endeavours can greatly improve curriculum quality, bring innovation in teaching standards, creativity in teaching methods, impact the quality of staffs` teaching skills, and ultimately lead to students` deeper knowledge of the subject matter and broader understanding of the applicability of that knowledge in a globalised world.

2.3. Development of student mobility programs

One of the top priorities will be the development of short and mid-term students exchange programmes through collaboration with our international partners. Following the success of the harmonisation of our curriculum with the plans and programs of international leaders in the field, we will strive to contribute to the effective exchange and recognise students` accomplishments through ECTS system. We will explore the possibility of creating distance learning courses and programmes, available for international students on exchange also.

We aim to significantly increase the number of students on exchange in Serbia and abroad primarily through mobility schemes funded by the European Union, and also through other international ones. Additionally, our intention is to double the number of foreign students completing their study at our university in the next five years.

In order to achieve this, we will assist students in the visa application processes, provide sufficient information on accommodation (when needed in cooperation with licenced agencies that can guarantee good quality and affordable prices), provide information on adequate health and accident insurance, give guidance for students social and cultural life. Our goal is that international students find useful information through web and on the premises of university itself, giving them official legal information about stay in every aspect, but also offering advices about other aspects of staying in Serbia based on checked sources. Additionally, we will form alumni club making particularly strong bonds with our alumni abroad. After the mobility period we will issue the transcripts and confirmation of stay in English language. We will continually improve our webs its content in English.

2.4. Development of staff mobility programs

Union University Nikola Tesla is strongly determined to amplify its efforts in supporting incoming and outgoing members of staff, taking part in both short and mid-term exchange programmes. We will enable members of staff to take sabbatical and other forms of short leaves together with all other necessary conditions carefully planned to support exchange. The university will support the incoming staff from abroad through in all administrative matters from visas issuing requirements, accommodations, travels and social life – supporting them to be as fully as possible integrated in the academic and social life at our University.

We will continue to hone our relationships with existing regional and international partners and forge new ones. We will pay particular attention to our academic diaspora and our citizens working at foreign universities.

Our academic staff that has previously participated in exchange and will provide relevant data and share their experiences. Our web site we will give clear directions towards possible funding sources in Serbia and abroad, for both outgoing and incoming staff (e.g. Erasmus +).

Amplifying staff exchange, with the focus on academic and research staff, we will significantly improve professional competences of our employees. While the outgoing staff upon their return will enhance the quality of our teaching programmes, methods and approaches; the outgoing staff will have a supporting environment at our university to disseminate their own best practice.

2.5. Participation and initiation of multi-institutional educational and research projects

Academic staff at Union Nikola Tesla University will use its previously acquired experiences and contacts for further internationalisation of educational and scientific work. Previously deliberated staff exchange objective will also help the university to forge new partnerships. We will target standard funding schemes such as Horizon 2020, as well as nonstandard ones more and more used by the young millennial staff members e.g. crowdfunding for science. We will particularly target funding sources that support synergetic projects connecting research and education with industry and local communities. The university will take the key role in initiating collaborative projects with local and international companies, so as to enable knowledge transfer from research to industry, and *vice-a-versa*. The benefits of this synergetic projects we expect to have butterfly effect on our master and doctoral studies. The university will use its full intellectual capacity not just for the advancement of science *per se*; but equally important for creating solution to an ever growing number of global challenges and translating these solutions to be relevant for tackling local challenges with local communities.

3. INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

In order to ensure coordination of internationalisation across the university we will establish a dedicated International Office. The office will comprise of three qualified professionals experienced in international collaborations – from academic staff director of internationalization and internationalisation coordinator, and from administration staff internationalisation officer all appointed by respective Deans decision. Director of internationalisation will be at the forefront of intensifying collaboration with foreign partners, networking with foreign institutions organisation and associations in the domain of education, science and industry. He/ she will be in charge of composing and signing strategic partnership agreements, bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements, actively take part in devising internationalisation strategy and resultant acts plans, initiate and organise preparation of analytical documents and other data aiding the decision making regarding internationalisation of the University, and oversee the work of the International office.

If the need arises, the university is willing and capable to further expand this team.

International Office will hold monthly meetings, where they will discuss ongoing collaborations, evaluation of current exchanges and partnerships and plan future engagements. Additionally, every faculty will have appointed International Relations Officer, in charge of all academic international pursuits related to corresponding faculty itself.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Through the creation of The Strategy of Internationalisation of The Union Nikola Tesla University, the University commits itself to continuous development and pursuit the goals of internationalisation – improvement of curriculum based on state-of-the arts knowledge, international mobility of staff and students, participation and initiation of multi-institutional educational and research projects at home and abroad which enable synergy between education, research and practice.

The University is always open for constructive criticism and suggestions from our current and future partners which are according to this Strategy, our professional goals and the good of the larger society.

The above laid out INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY of THE UNION NIKOLA TESLA UNIVERSITY comes into force at the date of its enacting. The Strategy shall be published on the University's web site and shall be delivered to all the faculties within the University.