

# European Policy Statement (EPS)

## Akkon Hochschule für Humanwissenschaften

### 1. Participation in Erasmus+

Akkon Hochschule für Humanwissenschaften (Akkon University of Applied Sciences for Human Sciences) intends to participate in the new Erasmus+ 2021- 2027 programme with the aim of fostering the mobility of students and staff to programme countries and selected partner countries. The focus of our Erasmus+ actions therefore lies on activities set out in Key Actions 1 (KA1) – Learning mobility of individuals.

By participating in KA1, Akkon University intends to provide students with the opportunity to study abroad at a partner higher education institution and to carry out traineeships at relevant work places abroad. To enhance the learning outcomes and the development of transversal skills, Akkon University encourages and supports students to combine study periods abroad with traineeships. The University also intends to enhance possibilities for academic and non-academic staff to participate in mobility, including teaching and training periods abroad at partner higher education institutions. To facilitate the participation from students and staff from all backgrounds and to ensure the inclusion of participants with fewer opportunities, Akkon University plans to complement physical mobility with opportunities for blended mobility. Increasing the number of individual student and staff mobility (incoming and outgoing) is of central importance to our internationalization strategy.

In order to ensure high quality regarding future internationalization efforts and the mobility of students and staff, Akkon University has appointed a Vice President for internationalization and a coordinator for the International Office. The International Office centrally administers activities under KA1. In close cooperation with the Vice President, the International Office is thus responsible for project management, promotion and implementation of Erasmus+ Programme activities.

To identify suitable partners, the International Office works closely with professors from various faculties, especially the Directors of the various study programmes. Inter-Institutional Agreements between Akkon University and partner Institutions have to be approved and signed by the Vice President for Internationalization of Akkon University. Signed inter-Institutional Agreements are monitored by the International Office. The International Office also works closely with the Directors of the various study programmes regarding the conclusion of Learning Agreements. The International Office helps students to prepare a proposal for their study programme, which has to be approved and signed by the Director of the respective study programme. In line with the Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition and the rule set out in the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide, all courses and credits agreed upon in the learning agreement and confirmed in the Transcript of Records are transferred and counted towards the students' degree. The same procedure applies regarding the recognition of traineeships.

In order to promote Erasmus+, the International Office works closely with the Department for Communication and offers several information events (online and at Akkon University) regarding the Erasmus+ programme as well as PROMOS. In addition, the International Office offers consultations for individual students and provides information material regarding Erasmus+ and PROMOS, via the university's intranet (CampusWeb). Information for prospective students will be published on the publicly available website of the International Office. As student mobility is increasing, the International Office intends to intensify its cooperation with former programme (Erasmus+ and PROMOS) participants by providing a platform to share their experience and provide prospective participants with a clear idea of what to expect.

The International Office also advises prospective incoming students, acting as a focus point regarding information concerning Akkon University, study programmes, courses and local student life. Akkon University also offers a buddy-programme to ensure integration and inclusion of international students. The buddy-programme connects international students with individual students (buddies) already enrolled at Akkon University who will assist their international peers to cope with everyday life in Berlin and at Akkon University, e.g. by welcoming students at the airport and explaining the public transport system, by accompanying them to public authorities or by introducing them to fellow students. Students volunteering for the buddy-programme will be issued a certificate for their engagement.

Akkon University encourages proposals by individual departments for activities regarding Key Action 2 (KA2) – Cooperation among organisations and institutions. Furthermore, Akkon University is open to project ideas concerning Key Action 3 (KA3) – Support to policy development and cooperation, but there are currently no concrete plans for submitting applications.

## **2. Strategy, objectives and impact**

In accordance with its founding mission, Akkon University is committed to democratic principles and the values of open-mindedness, global citizenship and equal opportunity, regardless of ethnic origin, faith, gender, sexual orientation, age or disabilities. Founded by Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe e.V. (St. John Accident Assistance), one of the largest humanitarian organisations in Europe, Akkon University aims to tackle societal challenges concerning health, science, demography, the environment and politics.

At Akkon University, we integrate these phenomena of social change into our study programmes, explore them through research projects and encourage our students of creative, independent and critical thinking, enabling them to develop sustainable solutions to the diverse ecological, social, political and economic challenges of a globalized world. As Germany's first university of applied sciences focussing on human sciences, we offer interdisciplinary, practice-oriented study programmes in fields such as nursing and global health, education and social work, humanitarian aid, development cooperation and civil protection, thus working closely with national and international social and humanitarian organizations, associations and public institutions.

As a university with partner organisations across Europe as well as Asia, Africa and the Americas, we perceive internationalization as an important driver of innovation, improvement and modernization, comprising all of the university's core activities (teaching, research and

administration). Akkon University strongly believes that internationalization is an important foundation for the creation of an inclusive society, based on humanistic values. Consequently, Akkon University encourages international mobility of students and staff, intending to foster intercultural competences and an appreciation of diversity.

The participation in Key Action 1 – Learning Mobility of Individuals gives Akkon University the means to provide a growing number of students and staff with an opportunity to gain international experience and to promote key values of the European Higher Education Area such as such as freedom of expression, academic freedom, and respect for human dignity, equality and human rights.

By promoting student mobility, Akkon University aims to provide students with global perspectives on their various disciplines and future professions, to increase their employability in an increasingly globalized labour market, to foster transcultural sensibility and to promote responsible global citizenship. Students benefit from international experience in multiple ways, both professionally and personally as it facilitates the development of transversal and forward looking skills as well as personal growth. Enabling students with fewer opportunities and students generally underrepresented in mobility to participate in student mobility is of major importance to our internationalization strategy.

Mobility of academic and non-academic staff is being seen as an important driver for innovation and high quality education. By teaching abroad, academic employees can acquire new teaching methodologies, pedagogical skills and ideas for transnational and transdisciplinary curriculum design. Furthermore, academic staff mobility can be used to establish new contacts for future collaboration, to build trust between partner institutions and to evaluate the academic quality and/or support structures for international exchange students at partner institutions. At Akkon University, we see mobility for non-academic staff as equally important as it allows administrative staff to familiarize themselves with processes and procedures of partner institutions, to exchange best practises, to strengthen their language skills and to experience the impact and benefits of internationalization efforts first hand.

For the majority of students of Akkon University, mobility within the European Higher Education Area, especially with Erasmus+ programme countries, is highly attractive and will thus be at the centre of all future internationalization efforts. The internationalization strategy also acknowledges that students of some study programmes, e.g. those studying "International Emergency and Disaster Relief" (B.A) or "Global Health" (M. Sc.) are particularly interested in exchange opportunities with Erasmus+ partner countries, including countries in the Neighbouring East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East. In addition to Erasmus+, the PROMOS programme and the expansion of partnerships with Universities outside the European Higher Education Area are therefore an important pillar of our internationalization strategy.

Within Key Action 1, the focus lies on increasing the number of student mobility for studies and for traineeships. Nevertheless, staff mobility for teaching and training are of growing importance and Akkon University intends to foster staff mobility to the best of its ability. The goal to increase staff mobility rests on the deeply rooted idea to promote and foster lifelong learning of all academic and non-academic staff.

For the participation in Erasmus+ Akkon University has identified the following objectives:

- 1) Revise the existing internationalization strategy in line with the renewed agenda for higher education 2021 – 2027.
- 2) Provide students of all fields of study with an opportunity to participate in high quality mobility for study and traineeships and increase the number of outgoing students for study and traineeship.
- 3) Create a culture of welcome and increase the attractiveness of Akkon University for international students.
- 4) Promote staff mobility for teaching and training and provide academic and non-academic staff with an opportunity to participate in staff mobility.

### 3. Indicators

The achievement of the objectives identified for the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 will be measured by the following indicators:

#### a) **Revise the existing internationalization strategy in line with the renewed agenda for higher education 2021 - 2027.**

- By mid-2023, the Academic Senate of Akkon University has adopted a revised internationalization strategy.

#### b) **Provide students of all fields of study with an opportunity to participate in high quality mobility for study and traineeships and increase the number of outgoing students for study and traineeship.**

- By the end of 2022 the publicly available website of the International Office has been revised, providing information regarding all mobility programmes offered by Akkon University.
- By 2025, Inter-Institutional Agreements are in place with partner universities covering all fields of study such as development studies and humanitarian assistance, social work, disaster risk management, global health, education, nursing and health care.
- By 2025, mobility windows for study and/or traineeship are integrated in all degree programmes offered by Akkon University.
- Continuously increase the number of non-traditional forms of mobility complementing physical mobility, such as virtual summer schools, online panel discussions in collaboration with partner universities.
- Support for outgoing students is continuously increased (number of information events for prospective outgoing students, additional support by the equal opportunity representatives for students with special needs, additional handbooks e.g. on sustainable travel).
- By 2025, Akkon University has implemented major steps regarding digitalization and has introduced the European Student Card and Erasmus+ App.

- By the end of 2027, a minimum 10% of Akkon University graduates have completed a study relevant stay abroad.

**c) Create a culture of welcome and increase the attractiveness of Akkon University for international students.**

- By the end of 2022, the publicly available website of the International Office has been revised, providing information for prospective incoming students in English.
- Support for incoming students is continuously increased (e.g. information material regarding visa requirements, accommodation, insurance).
- Students of all study programmes receiving incoming international students are actively involved in the buddy-programme.
- By 2024, an academic orientation programme for incoming students has been introduced.

**d) Promote staff mobility for teaching and training and provide academic and non-academic staff with an opportunity to participate in staff mobility.**

- By mid-2023, mobility opportunities for academic and non-academic staff are part of the overarching internationalization strategy.
- Support for outgoing staff is continuously increased and further measures have been implemented to recognize staff mobility and to facilitate the exchange of experience.
- The International Office informs regularly about mobility options and ensures that new employees are informed regarding possibilities for individual staff mobility.