

Erasmus Policy Statement of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences 2021-2027

The participation of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in the Erasmus+ programme is important for achieving the goals set in its Development Strategy 2018-2030 which include those for the internationalization of the institution. BAS aims to increase learning mobility and increase its quality while using the tools of a modern institution of higher education. The sources of competitive external funding such as the Erasmus+ programme as well as the development path outlined by the EC for universities in Europe are of great importance for achieving them. In addition to the mobility of doctoral students, BAS will continue to support the mobility of teachers. Their international experience will be particularly useful for those who have not yet benefited from a personal mobility experience. The following goals in the Strategy of BAS correspond directly to the objectives of the Erasmus+ programme:

- Development of an effective system for attracting foreign doctoral students;
- Attracting more doctoral students for training at BAS,
- Preparation and signing of appropriate agreements with higher education institutions, which will expand the opportunities for international exchange;
- The use of highly qualified staff of BAS and the unique scientific infrastructure in the educational process will undoubtedly increase the quality of higher education, in particular the training of doctoral students, and will support the staff renewal of the institutes with outstanding young and talented people;
- Creating an effective repository for digital learning content, suitable for use by various systems for managing educational processes.

We are convinced that the path for modernization of BAS as a leading institution training doctoral students in the country goes hand in hand with the goals of the Erasmus+ programme. The opportunities provided by the European Student Card and the transition to the so-called process of "Erasmus without paper" will make the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences a full-pledged participant in the common European Education Area. For this purpose:

- BAS will encourage every doctoral student to consider opportunities for mobility in order to make it a reality for all.
- Each doctoral student will be issued a European Student Card, which will give access to services in the host universities and will strengthen the sense of European identity.
- BAS will fulfill its commitment to full automatic recognition of periods of mobility abroad, incl. through the use of the Erasmus Dashboard.
- Incoming doctoral students will be provided with free Bulgarian language courses, and outgoing doctoral students will be provided with language support and will be encouraged to study the language of the host country in addition to the language of instruction.
- Teachers will be encouraged to provide online courses in order to realize the possibility of blended mobility.

The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences intends to participate in the Learning Mobility of students and teachers under the Erasmus+ Programme. BAS has experience with the organization of

Erasmus mobilities gained in 2014-2020 and before but in the future the new principles of the Programme will be applied and work will be done for higher quality of implementation. Partnerships will be established in cities, regions or countries where there is a demonstrable demand from our PhD students and staff. We will look for a geographical balance and a balance of the subject fields; we will work with partners with whom relations of trust have been established. BAS will consider Erasmus agreements as a first stage in a potentially broader academic and research engagement with the partner university. Erasmus agreements are the basis that allows the realization of mobility. The International Relations Department will develop a clear process for establishing new partnerships. The contracts will be initiated by the institutes / units / of the Academy or in rare cases by the department: the initiating employee sends an agreement proposal form to outline the nature of the relationship, how it will fit into the Academy's priorities, and describe the partner in detail. Necessary inspections are undertaken, incl. for quality of services. The processes of administration of the programme will be digitized in accordance with the process "Erasmus without paper", innovative teaching methods will be introduced such as conducting online courses to allow blended mobility. The training of the doctoral students of BAS as well as of the incoming doctoral students is carried out in the units of the Academy - institutes, laboratories, etc. They will nominate mobility candidates in response to an invitation from the Erasmus office. Candidates for incoming mobility will fill in an application form which they will send to the Erasmus office after which they will spend their periods of mobility in the units of BAS. The Scientific Secretary-General, who holds an academic position, will sign the Learning Agreements and the Transcripts of Records recognizing periods of mobility. The Erasmus office will coordinate the mobility with the institutes of the Academy.

Participation in the Erasmus+ programme is a recognized need for the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences as a modern institution of higher education in Europe. Providing high quality education for all is one of the best investments a society can make and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences intends to participate in quality assurance processes. Quality education is essential for personal, social and professional development as well as for employability. The scientists and lecturers of BAS, its doctoral students and employees have been proven to increase their professional motivation when participating in mobility which also prevents the processes of brain drain in the country.

The international ambition of BAS is an increase of 50% in the number of mobile doctoral students/staff by 2027. Each doctoral student / staff member will be encouraged to consider mobility options. More frequent information campaigns and other methods of promoting the programme, opening several invitations a year and other measures based on the experience gained will develop untapped potential. The Erasmus+ mobile application will facilitate the connection between the Erasmus office and PhD students. The Erasmus Dashboard will save time and resources that can be redirected to increase participation in the programme. We will work for an international culture of mobility that includes the entire academic community.

This quantitative indicator will be complemented by a higher quality of implementation. One of the criteria for it will be the satisfaction of mobile participants which should be at least 80% as per their reports. To this end, for example, mobile participants will be better prepared through lectures on intercultural competence and meetings with previous participants, an institutional strategy for safety during exchanges will be developed, psychological support will be provided to incoming and outgoing doctoral students, free Bulgarian language courses will be held for incoming doctoral students, there will be a clear procedure for complaints and

recommendations of mobile participants and applicants for mobility, etc. The academy aims to become a chosen destination for doctoral students from abroad, guest lecturers and staff by significantly increasing the services and support we provide, by creating a more favorable environment and supporting their integration. The introduction, periodic implementation and maintenance of the measures will start from the academic year 2021-2022 and should continue throughout the programme cycle.