

ERASMUS Policy Plan

In its policy plan, K.U.Leuven explicitly mentions international co-operation as one of the main points of attention. European co-operation in general, and co-operation within the context of the Erasmus programme in particular, has always held a prominent place among its international activities. From the very beginning in 1987, K.U.Leuven has been actively involved in the Erasmus programme. Today, it continues to stimulate participation in Erasmus e.g. during the Study Abroad Day which is organized each year and which attracted over 1.000 student visitors last year. Each faculty has appointed one or more Erasmus co-ordinators and contact persons that continue to promote mobility activities with their staff and students and to provide them with the necessary support and information to facilitate and increase mobility within the various faculties and departments.

K.U.Leuven has a strict policy that guarantees gender equality and non-discrimination of all staff and students and ensures the compliance of all staff and students with this policy, e.g. via a designated ombudsperson. The university provides a wide range of health and social services for the students, including student restaurants, a medical centre for students and a contact person for students and staff with special needs so they can easily obtain all necessary information about the various facilities offered by the university.

K.U.Leuven has a long-standing tradition of co-ordinating and participating in other Erasmus activities, such as thematic networks and intensive programmes. Academic staff has also been involved in or co-ordinated a wide variety of other projects, e.g. Minerva, Grundtvig, Comenius and Leonardo projects. Although the university favours a bottom-up approach with regard to its participation in EU project, leaving the necessary freedom of initiative to academic staff, central support by the International Office is provided. The objective of K.U.Leuven is to increase the level of central support even more in future, and to launch new initiatives at the central level, promoting activities in the field of innovation and including the use of ICT and virtual mobility.

K.U.Leuven is a member of the K.U.Leuven Association. The K.U.Leuven Association is currently developing an international policy plan that pays special attention to the following topics : increasing the opportunities for students to have an international experience; developing international study programmes and courses that may lead to double or joint degrees; attracting outstanding international students to the institutions; promoting an intercultural environment within all member institutions; promoting new initiatives in the field of development co-operation; engendering international partnerships, both on a bilateral basis and within international networks; and developing institutional policy plans in the field of internationalisation that incorporate EU policy and global development.

Quality of academic mobility activities

To ensure a high academic quality in K.U.Leuven's student mobility activities, the ECTS credit system is being applied to all exchanges. When issuing academic documents to outgoing or incoming students before, during, or after their exchange, the standard ECTS forms (e.g. learning agreement, transcript of records) are used. An online ECTS information package and course catalogue is available to incoming students. All course descriptions follow ECTS guidelines and are translated into English. All outgoing students receive full

recognition for the ECTS credits obtained abroad. As a consequence, K.U.Leuven received the ECTS label from the European Commission in 2005.

Both incoming and outgoing Erasmus students receive information about their study programme through the academic Erasmus co-ordinators and contact persons of their faculty, during information sessions or one-on-one counselling. Twice a year, the university's Vesta Committee, bringing together staff from the International Office and the various Student Services, organizes Orientation Days for all international students. The Committee has also set up a 'buddy system' linking a K.U.Leuven student to an international student. The Housing Service provides students with temporary accommodation and helps them find a permanent room (Kotnet-system, translating contracts, etc.). Free Dutch courses are offered to all incoming Erasmus students. LOKO International, the Leuven international student organization, is fully integrated in LOKO, the representative body for K.U.Leuven students. Each year, the 'Living in Leuven' guide, with practical information about day-to-day life in Leuven, is given to all international students.

International experience and activities will be taken into account when K.U.Leuven teaching staff is considered for promotion. The Vesta Committee also organizes short courses on international and multi-cultural topics for academic and administrative staff throughout the year.

Quality of student placement activities

As a research-intensive university and a member of LERU-network (a network of leading European research universities), K.U.Leuven has always had strong links with industry and with the business world. The university has engendered numerous spin-off companies (e.g. IMEC) and 25% of its revenue is obtained from research contracts awarded by industry and the corporate world.

Against this background and in order to maximize the employability of the thousands of students that graduate from K.U.Leuven every year, special attention will be given in the coming years to the development of high quality student placements in innovative companies.

The strong link that already exists between the university and the corporate world is one of the factors that will ensure the quality of the placements that are offered. Furthermore, the same high standards that have been set for the university's Erasmus student exchanges, will be set for the student placements. As a result, full academic recognition will be given to the credits that students obtain during their placement and there will be full transparency with regard to the evaluation procedure at the end of the placement period. Only placements that are an indispensable part of the student's study curriculum and through which credits can be obtained, will be offered. The participating students will be supervised by a co-ordinator both at K.U.Leuven and at the partner where the placement is implemented : in this way, an optimal work-programme will be guaranteed.