

Romanian-American University (RAU)

Erasmus Policy Statement – 2021

RAU Internationalisation Strategy

For the Romanian-American University (RAU), internationalisation is considered a strategic driver for institutional development and modernisation. RAU internationalisation strategy focuses on the following key areas: International atmosphere and partnerships; International experience for students; Academic programs and curriculum; International students; International staff; Staff training for internationalisation; Research and scholarly collaboration. RAU is currently developing a new institutional internationalisation strategy for the period 2021-2027, which will fully incorporate the directions outlined in the current strategy, will adhere to the principles of the new Erasmus+ Program and add relevant elements, and will include benchmarks for digitisation and environmentally friendly actions. The adoption of the new strategy will improve the current vision of the internationalisation of the university and will have an overall positive impact, also on the objectives set in the current strategy.

The Erasmus+ Program is an essential tool in RAU strategy and a core element which ensures that the objectives in the internationalisation strategy are successfully achieved. At the same time, the strategy encompasses the “Erasmus Policy Statement” (EPS) and was drafted according to relevant documents at national and European level. The new strategy will strengthen and further develop the directions outlined in the current strategy, while ensuring the compliance with the principles of the new Program. The core concept of the strategy is “Comprehensive Internationalisation”; the strategy was developed considering both the Romanian educational values and the global context, in which there is a high demand for specialists trained for a multicultural and globalized society. The strategy also aims to strengthen the “Internationalisation at home” process.

RAU participation in the Erasmus+ Program is and will remain the pillar that supports the institutional development and internationalisation of the university, underpinning both the current and future strategy.

Due to the 20-year experience that RAU has in successfully implementing mobility projects, the Key Action 1 (KA1) of the new Program will remain a particularly useful tool for operationalising the strategy; more precisely, within KA1, RAU intends to apply for mobility projects with both program countries (KA103), as well as with partner countries (KA107). In this regard, the objectives of participating in the new Program focus on: reinforcing the international atmosphere and increasing RAU international visibility at European and global level; strengthening the collaboration with European and non-European universities, as well as identifying new partners; organizing student mobilities for studies

and traineeships, as well as staff mobilities for teaching and training – these will boost the international dimension and the quality of the educational process and will accelerate research; complying with the principles of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) in organising mobilities; increasing the number of incoming mobilities, which will enrich the international experience of RAU students, by exposing them to a multicultural environment, thus intensifying the “internationalisation of home” process. Achieving these goals will have a significant impact on the modernisation of the educational process.

Student mobilities, full automatic recognition of the mobility results, training of academic and administrative staff, enhancement of students and staff language skills, are just a few directions of RAU internationalisation that contribute to the reinforcement of the European Education Area (EEA) and improve the educational results, by promoting and adopting the common values of the EEA.

In view of maximizing the participation in international cooperation projects (Key Action 2 – KA2), RAU has established a set of institutional priorities that potential projects should address: develop partnerships with institutions from strategic geographical areas, regions or countries; strengthen the strategic partnerships and enhance the cooperation with prestigious universities, thus gaining international recognition; increase the international dimension of research and the involvement in international cooperation projects; foster partnerships with local or regional authorities and companies in Europe; develop knowledge alliances in order to promote innovation and entrepreneurship, as well as business support facilities, such as incubators; launch new English taught study programs, to be offered within double degree or joint degree agreements – a particular consideration will be given to the partnerships with universities from partner countries.

A particular interest will be given to the European Universities initiative, which will increase the competitiveness of European higher education by creating alliances and networks of universities that promote excellence and innovation in all areas of higher education, such as teaching, research, cross-border cooperation. RAU prioritizes the investments in knowledge, innovation, and ICT, increasing the interaction with other universities, which is crucial in stimulating the competitiveness and growth of the EEA and, at the same time, contributing to the modernisation of the university.

RAU also envisages the affiliation with international organisations or networks relevant for the field of internationalisation of higher education, such as EAIE, NAFSA, EUA, AUF, and to maximize the benefits of these affiliations by increasing its participation in their events.

As for the policy reform (Key Action 3 – KA3), RAU intends to participate in projects in which its expertise will be made available to partners, especially to those from partner countries. Another direction is to support with data and expertise, within its technical possibilities and competencies, the prospective projects in the field of education, developed by national or international organisations.

RAU wants to exploit the full potential of education and culture as drivers for job creation, growth, and improved social unity, as well as means to experience the European identity in all its diversity, in the common interest of all EU member states, thus contributing to the development of the European Education Area.

Envisaged Erasmus Actions

Romanian-American University (RAU) participation in the new Erasmus+ Program 2021-2027 will follow the priorities of the European Agenda for the Modernisation of Higher Education.

An important aspect and a fundamental component of the internationalisation strategy is to increase the quality of the educational process through mobility and cross-border cooperation.

Besides encouraging the mobility of its students and staff, RAU aims to attract the best students, professors, and researchers from prestigious partner universities, to add value to “internationalisation at home”, and to boost international research. Furthermore, RAU will encourage its own professors to interact with peers from partner universities on teaching and research and will instil in mobile students the idea of cultivating the connections built during their mobility abroad. Last but not least, RAU will enhance the cooperation with the business environment in Romania and abroad, in order to continuously improve the Erasmus experience provided to students.

The expansion of partnerships and directions of cooperation are in line with the internationalisation strategy. The agreements with European universities, and particularly with non-European institutions take into account strategic options related to the specificity of each country or region (for instance, regions or countries that have not been covered yet, countries prioritizing research activities and funding, countries of interest in terms of collaboration prospects, countries in which the universities manage to adequately bend the education system to the needs and opportunities of the labour market, countries where universities apply high-performance educational systems in the delivery and assessment of skills in entrepreneurship, languages, social and civic education, digitisation and ICT usage, content creation, etc.). Other important criteria rely on the international recognition of partners and the similarity of study programs, in order to cover all fields of study offered by RAU.

After 20 years of experience in the implementation of mobility projects with European partners and over 5 years in projects with partner countries, RAU succeeded to develop an effective framework for managing these projects, and established and optimized selection, monitoring, and dissemination procedures, that are both clear and efficient (these consist in specific regulations, but also in procedures and rules meant for internal use). Moreover, RAU supports the less experienced partners (especially those from partner countries), by offering training programs with the main purpose of providing clarifications on project implementation and mobility organisation stages. RAU also provides useful presentations and information for its partners, sets of standardized but adaptable procedures, documents, and standardised forms (such as announcement templates for different types of mobilities SMS/STA/STT, registration forms, dissemination examples, etc.). These procedures are constantly chiselled and optimized (also according to the changes in the yearly Calls for Proposals).

Ensuring the quality of mobilities is a constant concern and a continuous process, which takes place before, during, and after the mobility. Transparency and equal opportunities for all are constantly pursued for each stage of mobility. Every semester during the selection period, RAU organizes events to present the educational offer of its partners, as well as information sessions, ensuring that students are well prepared for the mobility and possess the required intercultural and linguistic skills. The Erasmus+ Office provides assistance for both incoming and outgoing participants, in preparing their mobility, obtaining visas, finding accommodation or insurance. During the mobility, the incoming students and staff have the same rights and obligations as RAU students / staff, are integrated into the daily activities of the university and are constantly monitored. After the mobility, RAU students are encouraged and reintegrated into the academic community, while the administrative and academic staff get recognition for the training or teaching activities carried out abroad, their results being disseminated at the department / school / university level.

The Erasmus+ Office is responsible for carrying out the objectives and activities specific to the Erasmus+ Program; the workflow is ensured by 2 full-time advisers and a coordinator.

Expected Impact

The strategic objective of the Romanian-American University (RAU) is to reinforce the internationalisation process, mainly through better capitalisation of the partnerships with prestigious universities, but also through affiliation with relevant international networks, with the goal of expanding the educational offer, increasing the mobility of staff and students, and intensifying the scientific research cooperation. RAU participation in the new Erasmus+ Program will sustain these endeavours.

The following indicators will be considered:

- Increase the number of student mobilities and enhance their quality. The goal will be to provide more mobility opportunities for students so that, at least for the program countries, the degree of satisfying the demands be maximum for those students who meet the minimum requirements and are admitted following the selection process. An important measure will be to raise awareness about the existing study and traineeship opportunities abroad, the objective being to increase the number of student mobilities by 20% in the first 3 years of the Program, compared to the current volume, and to consolidate this process until the end of the program. The new types of mobilities (such as short-term mobilities), as well as mobilities for graduates, which can be exploited in a more consistent manner, will be encouraged.

- Increase placements opportunities abroad, by identifying new partners to offer internships for students. The number of European partners for traineeships is expected to increase by 20% by the end of the Program in 2027.

- Increase the number of outgoing staff mobilities. The academic and administrative staff have always been interested in teaching and training mobilities, the absorption of funds allocated for STA and STT mobilities in the previous finalised mobility projects has been 100%; this performance is to be achieved in the coming years as well. In this context, a growth in the number of staff mobilities depends on increasing the funding or identifying other financial sources. RAU intends to increase the number of staff mobilities by 20% in the first 3 years of the Program and to consolidate this process until the end of the program, aiming to reach a share of 40% mobilities of the total staff. Mobilities aiming the improvement of digital skills and curriculum development will be highly encouraged.

- Improve the quality of staff mobilities by setting clear objectives. The teaching mobilities will focus on: exchanging best practices in teaching methods; attracting incoming students and professors; clarifying some practical aspects regarding student mobilities. The main objectives for training mobilities are: personal development of participants; acquiring new skills in line with the institutional development goals; launching new cooperation projects. In this sense, the training needs will be assessed periodically, and the priorities will be: curriculum development; management of international cooperation or research projects; improvement of language and intercultural skills; development of entrepreneurial skills.

- Hone the linguistic and intercultural skills of RAU administrative staff, by participating in training mobilities or by attending courses taught by foreign visiting professors; these activities will lead to the development of an international environment and to a better understanding of the multicultural reality. In this regard, RAU objective specifies that every year at least 10% of the training mobilities should address the training of the administrative staff, or at least one course taught by foreign professors shall be organized to target this category of personnel.

- Enhance the “internationalisation at home” process through: exchanging best practices and academic expertise, by inviting professors from partner universities or specialists from the business environment or research, to increase the quality of the teaching process and ensure the co-creation of knowledge and innovation; developing and internationalising the curriculum, by introducing new courses, on the basis of actual needs, and also by consolidating the international content of the Romanian taught courses; creating an intercultural atmosphere for non-mobile students; continuing the guest courses program of extracurricular courses taught by foreign professors – it is envisaged to ensure a

constant number of courses throughout the academic year, also by organizing online courses (the first online courses are planned for the academic year 2020-2021).

- Extend and strengthen the international partnerships, mainly with universities and institutions from EEA, USA, and other geographical areas. The goal is to identify new partners to cover all study programs offered by RAU and to increase the number of partnerships for certain fields (such as law, sports and physical education) by at least 10% in the next 7 years, so that RAU can offer multiple mobility options to all students, regardless of their field of study.

- Enhance the international dimension and visibility of RAU through participation in alliances, networks, and consortia of universities, and affiliation to renowned organisations in the field of education. Specifically, RAU will boost its networking plan, by participating yearly in the most important events, conferences, and fairs in the field of internationalisation of education.

- Create a synergy between the internationalization of education and the internationalization of research, through greater involvement in the development of cooperation projects and the identification of new collaboration opportunities within various financing lines. RAU will constantly seek to enhance the interactions between practice, research, and the educational process, by organizing joint scientific conferences with international partners, attracting contributors to RAU journals and publications, collaborating in research projects. From the operational point of view, the following actions are considered: organise staff exchanges with existing partners, with a special focus on research activities; attend various international research-oriented events; identify and contact universities which have high-quality research activities, in order to establish ways of communication and explore future research collaboration.

- Increase the quality of implementation. In this regard, RAU is committed to comply with the principles of the Erasmus Charter regarding equal and equitable opportunities, inclusion of participants with fewer opportunities, full automatic recognition of mobility outcomes; to pursue the priorities of the program in terms of digitisation, sustainability, civic engagement, encouraging participants with fewer opportunities; to extensively disseminate the priorities and results of the new Program; to regularly inform its academic community and partners about the international events to be organized by RAU; to offer efficient and quality support for all participants; to disseminate widely and intensively the professors' and students' mobility experiences, encouraging them to become Erasmus+ ambassadors; to stimulate the dialogue between students and decision-makers in the educational sector.

- Explore the opportunities to launch new study programs in collaboration with international partners, within double degree or joint degree partnerships, or even a co-supervision Doctoral School, showing a special interest in EEA and US universities, but not limited to them.

- Interest in developing other types of projects such as: short-term programs (summer schools) in international partnership; identifying opportunities for collaboration in COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) projects or smaller ones (such as international project week), involving online collaboration between RAU students and professors, on the one hand, and students and professors from partner universities, on the other hand, in which the participants can take full advantage of virtual or blended mobilities.

- Organize various events facilitating the international communication and multicultural integration. At RAU, the most popular events, such as International Week, Japanese Culture Days, study trips (to Japan and South Korea), international scientific conferences, have become a yearly attraction and tradition. Other events dedicated mainly to students are on the RAU agenda to be organized at least twice per year, that are internationally focused and adapted to multicultural exchange, by involving Romanian, international and Erasmus incoming students.