

# Fontys Erasmus+ Policy Statement

Version 2023

Fontys University of Applied Sciences, hereafter Fontys, will work according to the strategy and vision for internationalisation that was developed in the past years. Next to that, Fontys will take new developments into account that influence internationalisation of our University. The COVID-19 situation showed a shift to more blended and virtual mobility, but also further steps to modernize and digitalize our Erasmus+ participation will follow during the current Erasmus+ period. Erasmus+ offers many new options from the start of call 2021 which Fontys embraces. The activities selected are based on previous activities and new opportunities. In case of additional activities, Fontys will inform the National Agency and amend the Erasmus Policy Statement.

## **Participation of Fontys in Erasmus+ activities:**

In line with Fontys mission and vision for internationalisation, we wish to achieve the following with the participation in the Erasmus Programme. The desired impact for Fontys is to provide our students with the best possible position on the labour market and be able to respond to the needs of the society and economic developments. Next to that, it is important to provide students the opportunity to develop themselves as civically engaged European citizens. We do this in a highly international region where competences, new insights and self-confidence are developed, thanks to internationalisation. Those are the key outcomes (expected impact) of the Erasmus+ activities at Fontys.

The necessary output to achieve this impact is linked to the priorities of the European Education Area. Fontys wants to achieve structural exchange and cooperation possibilities by participating in the Erasmus Programme. Students and staff from all Fontys schools can participate in Erasmus+ activities. Learning and studying abroad, as well as *internationalisation@home* activities, are the elements that prepares Fontys students for the labour market in the regions where we are active. The Erasmus+ Programme supports partnerships with Universities throughout Europe and beyond (we cooperate with partners with funding from Key Action 131 – International Mobility and Key Action 171) to facilitate mobility activities.

These quality-based partnerships benefit and provide sustainable content to the existing study programmes and research activities, on a structural base. Both students and staff members need to experience the benefit of the partnership in order to reach the desired impact. Fontys supports its students to graduate with an internationally oriented view on the world, ready to continue with the next step in their life.

In line with our efforts in the previous years, we will strive for an active use of the different possibilities the new Erasmus+ Programme will offer for international cooperation projects. International cooperation with other organisations and institutions fits in our institutional strategy. The aim is continuously modernise and innovate educational programmes at Fontys. This will benefit our students and the society. Not only in our regions, Brabant and Limburg, but also elsewhere. We are dedicated to actively contribute to the EU agenda on education and innovation, by joining forces with higher education institutes and stakeholders from other EU member states and countries.

One of the new possibilities of Erasmus+ (2021-2027) that Fontys embraces is the provision of additional scholarships for groups of students that meet the respective criteria. These students get this additional scholarship for their stay abroad. With this Fontys hopes to increase the impact of Erasmus+ and to reach a more diverse group of students. Next to the extra funding students will also be supported in extra support before and during their stay abroad. This is part of the Fontys wide inclusion programme.

Another new possibility of Erasmus+ is extra funding for students that use green means of travel. They receive extra funding and funded days. Fontys stimulates the use of green travel and promotes this to future participants by sharing experiences of previous participants. This goes for both students and staff.

Lastly an important shift took place in Erasmus+ usage due to the Blended Intensive Programmes that were made possible. They offer new opportunities for Fontys participation in various projects throughout Europe and it gives Fontys the chance to host short-term Blended Intensive Programmes in the Netherlands.

### **Fontys institutional internationalisation and modernisation strategy:**

Fontys policy is that everyone who has been educated to a certain standard and wants to develop their talent at Fontys is welcome. And anyone who graduates from Fontys enters the employment market with a minimum of the following: a solid basis of applicable knowledge, along with useful and modern (research) skills, good contacts with their field of work, a strong sense of social responsibility and an open, tolerant and therefore intercultural attitude. Anyone visiting Fontys in 2025 will see that our campuses are populated by students and staff with all sorts of different identities. This reflects our accessibility. Our doors are open to anyone who is willing, and able to meet our standards.

The rapid globalisation of our society means that we are intensifying our efforts in the field of internationalisation. Especially in these times and in this highly international region, it is essential for almost every student to gain international experience and intercultural skills. We are giving internationalisation a form close to 'regular' education and research, but internationalisation goes much further than just student exchanges. It also means developing education, conducting research and professionalising together with foreign partner institutions and partners in the work field. All of this requires leadership, focus and choices. And the realisation that if we don't do this, it won't be possible to turn students into professionals who are at their best in an increasingly international employment market.

Changes in society and in the student population call for more flexible education, both in terms of content and the learning process. It sounds simple: making education more flexible. It is, however, far from simple. It goes much further than simply time- and location-independent learning. It goes down to the foundations of our organisation: to curricula, the professionalisation of lecturers and our back office. The goal is a personal learning trajectory, at your own pace, close to the relevant field of work and with room for content from other programmes and disciplines. Examples include the bank employee with a busy family life who studies part-time at the teachers' college for primary education and is allowed to 'demonstrate' her learning outcomes in a way of her own choosing: on paper, by video or in an interview. Or the lecturer/study coach who keeps checking with the student how much study load they can handle in each period.

The enormous steps being taken in the field of digitalisation are having a major impact on Fontys. On the social value and 'status' of knowledge, which is becoming more freely accessible. But it is also having an impact on the context of learning: intelligent systems are making flexible and personalised education possible. A nice example of this is data-driven learning analytics, which we will use even more often than at present (always transparently and with integrity!) to take education to a higher level. Another consequence of digitalisation is that professions are changing under the influence of technology, which obviously has a major impact on our study programme portfolio. Finally, the impact on our lecturers is that since 2020, we have been accelerating our efforts to learn about the opportunities offered by digitalisation. The result is blended learning, a balanced embedding of online education in our curricula.

In line with the above quoted strategy of Fontys 2025 we aim to reach the following objectives in the field of Internationalisation. In 2025:

- Is internationalisation a part of the vision and strategy on education and research in each Fontys institute and knowledge centre / centre of expertise.
- Has each degree international, intercultural or global dimensions integrated in its curriculum or learning outcomes.
- Offers Fontys' educational portfolio possibilities to obtain international experience for each student.
- Meets our inflow of international students and the educational portfolio that they can take part in the needs of society and the region where our graduates will work. Taking into consideration the requirements that are needed for this and conditions like housing and accommodation opportunities.
- Are we seen by international stakeholders as a leading partner within a number of chosen topics practice-based research.
- Offers our organisation a good learning- and workenvironment to international students and staff with sufficient support aimed at their integration in the Netherlands.

## **Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1):**

### **Network of Partners:**

Mobility of students and staff starts with the network of Partners. The institutional strategy cannot be implemented without a sustainable network. This network is necessary for the participants to obtain valuable competences and to meet the desired impact of the Erasmus-Programme. The majority of cooperation with Partners and the choice of Partners takes place within every individual Fontys' school. They have autonomy in the way they implement the policy on internationalisation in their study programmes and choice of international partners. They make sure the quality of the education at the partner university is suitable for receiving students from Fontys and they ensure they work within the quality framework we are developing. Next to the international partners of the individual Fontys' schools, Fontys has as well centrally coordinated and chosen partners. We check those partners on quality of their education and research and evaluate regularly.

Until now, the focus of this Erasmus+ partner network was mostly European (KA131). In 2019 Fontys ran a pilot with cooperation with partner universities outside Europe (KA171). This type of mobility will continue in the future and will grow significantly and also KA131 will be expanded with international partners outside Europe (International Mobility of KA131).

### **Programme Management:**

Team Internationalisation manages the Erasmus+ Programme at Fontys. The Erasmus-coordinator in this team is responsible for the correct implementation and management of the programme. The practical implementation is on the one hand done by the Internationalisation Coordinators at the Fontys Schools (e.g. inform and prepare participants, preparation of documentation for the mobility Abroad, such as learning agreement, course content and staff training content etc.). A dedicated team manages the funds and makes sure all regulations are met. Fontys has 1 Erasmus-coordinator that keeps the overview and 2 staff members that work on the processing of applications and scholarships. They are responsible for the overall management, selection of participants and financial management of the Erasmus+ Programme.

A support team at Fontys IT-department manages the IT-system that is used for all mobilities of Fontys, Mobility Online. They work closely together with the Erasmus+ team. That is why there is a smooth connection between the IT-system that participants use and necessary steps (e.g. Scholarship payment, language course and visa/accommodation application for incoming students). Fontys has a long experience in managing this Programme. We always look into where the improvements are possible. Especially those improvements that lead to a decrease of administrative burden on participants.

### **Participation in networks:**

European and National networks are an important source for Fontys to exchange ideas and practices when it comes to the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme in practise. In addition, the National Agency is an important stakeholder.

### **Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) and Key Action 3 (KA3):**

Throughout the Erasmus+ programme 2014-2020, numerous Fontys schools from our campuses in Tilburg, Eindhoven, and Venlo have participated in Erasmus+ cooperation projects, thereby innovating higher education in their domains, including among others, engineering, logistics, nursing, arts, business management and teacher education. These projects are mostly strategic partnerships for innovation of higher education, but also include centrally administered project types (capacity building in higher education, forward looking project).

Pursuing our efforts from the previous years, we intend to take part in multiple cooperation projects during the new Erasmus+ programme period 2021-2027. Efforts will again be primarily geared up to actively promote and support the development and implementation of project partnerships for innovation of higher education (strategic partnerships, knowledge alliances), both as partner and project coordinator. Other potential partnerships will be explored when the opportunity arises, including KA2 partnerships for cooperation and excellence (capacity building, Mundus) and KA3 (policy development).

Aim is to activate even more Fontys schools to participate in Erasmus+ cooperation projects in collaboration with strategic partners from their international networks and with new partners. Thereby further strengthening the international profile of Fontys, and complementing our increased efforts to display and strengthen our applied research at European level. We believe that international partnerships and projects in both education and research can be mutually reinforcing and can benefit from an integrated approach. In 2019, Fontys has joined the UASNL network, consisting of 14 Dutch Universities of Applied Sciences that decided to work together for a stronger voice in Europe and to increase access to European networks and funding. The UASNL network partners acknowledge that valorisation and practice-oriented research is intertwined with their educational activities.

Every individual Fontys school has significant autonomy with regard to their involvement and commitment in EU funding bids and projects. We will continue our efforts at Fontys central level aimed at all Fontys schools to promote the different possibilities within the Erasmus+ programme. Furthermore, we will support new applications and projects. Both team Fontys Grant Office and Fontys team Internationalisation are situated at the Fontys central Department of Education and Research, ensuring information sharing and close collaboration in the support of Fontys schools. Fontys central department of Finances provides support to Fontys schools in implementation and administration of EU funded projects.

Our objective is to contribute to a higher success rate and increased access to EU funding. International cooperation projects in the framework of Erasmus+ KA2 and KA3 offer valuable opportunities for Fontys schools to work together with organisations and institutions in other countries on shared challenges and values, complementary to other EU funding programmes such as the Interreg cross-border cooperation programmes.

**For Society:**

The title of this strategic plan says it all: Fontys does not exist for its own sake, Fontys is not for students or staff alone, or for the field of work. No, Fontys is there for society. As a public higher professional education institution, we have an important social task: to develop talent. The talents of students, first and foremost, but also the talents of our staff and the professionals from the region.

The envisaged impact of the mission is visible in Fontys Internationalisation Strategy. In this strategy, Fontys defined several focus areas. All have a connection with the participation of Fontys in the Erasmus+ Programme. The Erasmus+ Impact Tool, developed by the Dutch National Agency for Erasmus+, is a guideline for Fontys in defining the impact of the participation in the Erasmus+ Programme and in defining the implementation strategy for the focus areas. The desired impact for Fontys is to provide our students with the best possible position on the labour market and be able to respond to the needs of the society and economic developments. Next to that, it is important to provide students the opportunity to develop themselves as civically engaged European citizens. We do this in a highly international region. In this light, they develop new competences, new insights and self-confidence, partly thanks to internationalisation of students and staff. Those developments the key outcomes (expected impact) of the Erasmus+ activities at Fontys.

**Impact indicators:**

In order to reach this expected and desired impact, it is necessary to reach a certain output. The following quantitative output indicators can be used to monitor the process towards impact:

1. The annual targeted number of student/staff mobility is 1000 students and 350 staff that participate in KA131/KA171 mobility by the end of the new Erasmus-programme (2027). Students with fewer opportunities are encouraged to participate as much as others. At the start of the previous Erasmus+ programme, this was 327 (students) and 48 (staff) and for next year we applied for around 735 students and 220 staff mobilities.
2. Improved and acquired competences, new insights and self-confidence are values will be measured every year by the collection of survey answers from students and staff that participated in the Erasmus-mobilities. The programme has to contribute to this to a high extent with more than 75% of the participants noting that their participation in an Erasmus+ mobility, made them acquire or improve their competences. The timeline for this is that it will last the entire ECHE period of 2021-2027.

The targets can only be reached if the qualitative indicators are reached as well. For this, support to participants and satisfaction of this support by the central and decentral structures that are involved, are crucial. Solid and well-organised partnerships and modernisation are of the qualitative indicators for this. Therefore, the participation of Fontys in the Erasmus+ Mobilities Programme will be a success when the next 4 indicators are met according to the timeline:

3. With a new programme on Strategic Partnership management, Fontys wants to review their Partnership portfolio and organise this, in line with its vision on internationalisation, in a better structured and futureproof way. This process is expected to end in the beginning of 2021.
4. The COVID-19 situation has shown that flexibility and innovative ways of international mobility need to be considered and experimented. Blended and virtual mobility will be taken into consideration and during the coming 7 years of the new programme, we expect these ways of mobility to become more standardized (e.g. Blended Intensive Programmes).
5. Furthermore, digitalization and modernisation of the Erasmus-procedures (EWP / European Student Card Initiative) will increase the quality of the service towards participants and will decrease the time everyone has to spend on it. This will increase the speed and efficiency the processing of Erasmus+ mobilities. The timeline for this is that it will start in 2020 and we will follow European guidelines and deadlines to complete the digitalization procedure.
6. The implementation will be more environmentally friendly; following the latest European developments on mobility when additional funds are available for green traveling this will be implemented in the Erasmus+ Programme during the first 2 years of the new programme period.
7. The availability of additional funding for students and staff in certain categories will give a boost to a more diversified and for many participants less uncertain stay abroad. The additional scholarships and support measures related to it will be developed from the beginning of the new programme and will be strenghtend by participation of Fontys in national focus groups and sounding board meetings.

**Targets for cooperation projects:**

We strive for improving internal registration and decision-making procedures. This will benefit the monitoring and reporting on numbers, budgets and results. It is also necessary, to ensure the embedment of project outcomes at Fontys and to strengthen their wide-scale dissemination. Furthermore, we will provide maximum support to new international cooperation applications and projects, in the framework of Erasmus+ as well as other national and EU funding programmes.

Fontys Department of Education and Research (Fontys grant office, team Internationalisation) will organise among other things Erasmus+ possibilities and peer-learning sessions. These are sessions for both Fontys staff already involved in international cooperation projects and newcomers. This facilitates and stimulates the internal exchange of knowledge and experiences between Fontys schools with regard to the development, implementation and administration of international projects and sharing of good practices. Thereby it contributes to the institutional capacity of Fontys to successfully participate in the Erasmus+ programme.