

Erasmus Policy Statement

The vision of Boğaziçi University (BU), as officially stated in its strategic plan, is to achieve international excellence in education and research. The key issues regarding internationalization explicitly identified in the strategic plan are: i) to increase international components in education and research activities, ii) to improve the students' international experiences, iii) to increase international mobility of the staff, iv) to increase the number of institutional collaborations with international universities, research centers and research networks, and v) to ensure the comparability of academic and administrative procedures with international practices and also to ensure their sustainability. With this vision in mind, the University has been continuously expanding the number of its international partners and its visibility in the international arena. BU is member to many international academic and research networks; it has been a member of the European University Association since its inception, and its current Rector has recently been elected to serve in the Association's Board for the 2013-2017 term.

The most common instigators of international partnerships are the personal contacts of our teaching and research staff, many of which have obtained their second and/or third cycle degrees at esteemed international HEIs. Their backgrounds, combined with the heritage of the University, have historically favoured partnerships with HEIs at which the official language of instruction is English. With Turkey's increasing involvement in the Erasmus program, BU has had a chance to expand its international mobility opportunities to include many European HEIs; these partnerships have been instigated both at the departmental level, mainly initiated by the efforts of individual faculty members and sometimes at the request of students, and the institutional level through agreements instigated at the Faculty-School-Institute and/or Provost level comprising multiple subject matters and programs. With increasing mobility, the numbers of our Erasmus agreements and European partners have increased to levels exceeding those of non-EU mobility programs. This trend has been observed to be persistent, and also the number of students participating in Erasmus mobility programs has surpassed the number of those participating in non-Erasmus exchanges.

In addition to North America and Europe, BU also aims to increase its visibility in the East and South Asia by establishing new partnerships with the well known HEIs of these regions. In this context, India, China, Singapore, Australia and Japan are the subjects of the University's most immediate efforts, but the list is not exhaustive and is expected to include other countries of the region as well.

The primary target group of mobility activities are the students, mainly first-cycle, who participate in both study and traineeship programs in significant numbers. These activities provide invaluable opportunities, especially to those students who plan to apply for second and/or third cycle studies at international institutions: many students have not spend much

time abroad before, and by taking part in the mobility they get a chance to test both their academic performance and their social skills in competitive international environments. The traineeship mobility has also proved to be a very valuable learning experience but unfortunately, due mainly to visa and permit requirements for Turkish nationals, such traineeship activities have not led to many employment opportunities in the EU. The mobility provides second and third cycle students the additional opportunity to conduct research for their theses as well as taking courses from well-known researchers in their fields. The mobility of academic staff is also a priority for the University and it has been received with increasing demand over the years; this demand is expected to continue to rise in the coming term.

In the past years, Turkey opted out of Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programme activities. This decision unfortunately resulted in BU's non-participation in such activities even though various HEIs had expressed their intentions and proposals to establish partnerships under these programs. This situation is expected to change significantly for the better with the upcoming term, in which the University aims to establish partnerships for joint and double degrees. Until now, double degree programs have been established either at the request of a department and announced to the students, or have been prepared as tailored programs for specific students' needs. In the last few years the majority of these programs have been co-tutelle programs with French HEIs. Recently a new agreement has been signed with Columbia University, New York, USA, for a double MS degree program in Civil Engineering. All such agreements need the approval of the Senate after thorough review by the Committee for Academic International Relations.

Two key components of Boğaziçi University's strategic plan with regards to internationalization are to increase international components in education and research activities and to increase the number of institutional collaborations with international universities, research centers and research networks. These aims are in complete accordance with the Programme's cooperation for innovation and good practices action. In this regard, the University aims to expand its list of cooperation with both HEIs and local and international enterprises in its pursuit of achieving the objectives of the Modernisation Agenda. The establishment of research oriented alliances are expected to benefit significantly from the experiences of the staff members who have actively participated in various FP6 and FP7 and who, with the help of such projects, have established international networks. Boğaziçi University has also been involved, through its Lifelong Learning Center, in a Comenius project related to educational content development as the leading partner and in a Leonardo da Vinci project related to innovation transfer as a partner. Such projects, involving HEI partners from other countries and local authorities like the Ministry of Education, have contributed to Boğaziçi University's efforts in establishing partnerships with key stakeholders. Boğaziçi University will increase its involvement in structured and long term cooperation which will be implemented with the

help of its Lifelong Learning Center, the Office of the Vice-Rector for Education, and the Office of the Vice-Rector for Research, and the Office for Sponsored Research. These units will help with the planning and coordination of all cooperation projects, with the Office of International Relations providing support when needed.

Boğaziçi University expects its participation in the Erasmus+ programme to impact all the five priorities as per outlined below:

1. Increasing attainment levels to provide the graduate and researchers Europe needs: The demand for BU is very high and its first-cycle students rank within the top 0.5% of about 1.5 million high school graduates taking the National University Entrance Exam. BU's participation will help its capacity to provide international experience to its student body and it is imperative for providing financial support to students from lower income backgrounds, thereby providing them with the opportunity to build their confidence to compete on the international scene. BU prides itself on its high number of female participants in mobilities and the opportunities generated by the Programme will help to further encourage participation of women in post-graduate education and research.

2. Increasing the quality and relevance of higher education: Exposure to the teaching and research practices of HEIs from different countries has contributed positively to BU's strive for perpetual improvement. With the challenges posed by the demands of the digital age, BU will have to reconsider many of its long standing practices. First-hand experiences gained by the mobility participants will provide acquaintance with successful innovations and practices to help in developing a greater variety of study modes and enable the development of more effective methods.

3. Strengthening quality through mobility and cross-border co-operation: BU's international mobility target of 30% by 2020 is higher than the EHEA's 20%. BU has always promoted mobility and worked to eliminate any barriers to cross-border cooperation and exchanges, including implementation of various improvements for efficient recognition of credits obtained abroad. Participation in the Programme will be a crucial ingredient in sustainable revisions and reforms for effective quality assurance.

4. Linking higher education, research and business for excellence and regional development: Past mobility has increased the awareness levels of students and staff members regarding demands of international enterprises. Participation in the Programme will ensure the continuity of this awareness and provide additional motivation to implement changes that will lead to improved cooperation models with the business world as well as strengthening knowledge-transfer infrastructure.

5. Improving governance and funding: BU's relations with international HEIs will expand its visibility and increase research collaborations leading to development of centers of excellence, and also help to attract public and private funding through research and development projects involving its select partners. Mobilities and network memberships will continue to help BU study and benefit from

different governance and funding mechanisms in place in Europe and elsewhere, and BU will use such shared knowledge and best practices for improvement.