



Catholic University in Ružomberok

INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY 2024 - 2030

Ružomberok 2024

© May 2024, Catholic University in Ružomberok

Discussed at the nineteenth session of the KU Rector's College

Approved by the rector of the University of Ružomberok doc. Ing. Jaroslav Demko, CSc. on 3 June 2024

..... doc.

Ing. Jaroslav Demko, CSc.

rector KU

Context

The Catholic University of Ružomberok (hereinafter referred to as "KU" or "University") adheres to the tradition of Catholic universities with the aim of protecting and promoting human dignity, forming individuals into mature and responsible personalities and responding to the challenges of the present. The internationalization strategy determines the main lines of direction of foreign cooperation of the university, its faculties and components. With the aim of further development of members of the academic community, improving the conditions for accepting foreign students/colleagues and creating a background for joint scientific, research and artistic cooperation in the international community. International cooperation is an important part of the educational and training life of members of the KU academic community, enshrined in the KU Long-Term Plan and in the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education assigned to the relevant program period. This internationalization strategy is an expression of our desire to become a global player in education and research. We are convinced that openness to the world and the ability to cooperate with partners from all over the world will move us forward and enable us to achieve excellence in all areas of our activity. In this strategy, we are committed to building strong partnerships with universities and research institutions around the world, to attracting and supporting talented students and academics from different corners of the world, and to creating an environment that promotes cultural diversity and understanding. We believe this strategy will lead to higher quality education, innovative research and contribution to global efforts to solve the most pressing problems of our time.

STARTING POINTS

The development of the university's internationalization strategy with its goals requires a careful consideration of the existing conditions, goals and possibilities that KU has. We perceive the following as starting points and part of the internationalization strategy:

Assessment of the current situation: A thorough assessment of the current status of international initiatives at the university, including the number of international students, existing partnerships with other universities, international research projects and support for international staff and student mobility. This assessment will help identify strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats in the field of internationalization.

Defining goals: Establishing clear and measurable internationalization goals that will be aligned with the mission and vision of the university. These goals should include increasing the university's international scientific profile, developing international academic and research relationships, improving international reputation and competitiveness, and promoting scientific excellence and cultural diversity on campus. We list them below.

Determination of priority areas (measures) and goals: Identification of key areas and goals on which the internationalization strategy will focus. These can be, for example, an increase in the number of foreign students, the expansion of international scientific research projects, the strengthening of partnerships with universities in certain geographical areas, or the development of international teaching programs.

Development of an action plan: Creation of specific measures and steps that will be necessary to achieve the set goals of internationalization. This action plan should include a timeline, assignment of responsibilities, allocation of resources and measurable indicators of success. Action plans should be developed for each set measure.

Gaining support and engaging stakeholders: Gaining support and commitment from all stakeholders including university leadership, faculty, staff, students and external partners. It is important to involve all stakeholders in the process of planning and implementing the internationalization strategy.

Monitoring and evaluation of progress: Regular monitoring and evaluation of progress in achieving the goals of the internationalization strategy. These evaluations should serve to identify successes, but also to identify areas that require further improvements or adjustments to the strategy. These should be linked to individual annual reports.

These starting points provide a framework for developing an effective KU internationalization strategy that will stimulate global competitiveness and the quality of education and research.

The internationalization strategy is based on the current and planned direction of the university's development in the field of international relations and is in line with the European education development policy. The basic pillars leading to the improvement and development of KU in the field of international relations are:

- 1) Support of mobility of individuals (incomings and outgoings)**
- 2) Internationalization of education**
- 3) Internationalization of science, research and other creative activities**
- 4) Membership in international organizations and networks**

We will fulfill these pillars through goals that we perceive as important for the development of internationalization at KU, and without them it is impossible to continue development. We formulate them on the basis of surveys, long-term observations and experiences, and the requirements of KU employees and students. At the same time, the goals and strategies listed below are based on the Long-Term Plan of KU. The chosen goals are based on the criteria determined within the performance contracts and recommendations of the Accreditation Agency of the Slovak Republic. At KU, we plan and want:

Objective 1: Increase the number of international students: Focus on attracting more international students and increase their share in the total number of university students.

Objective 2: Expand the global network of partnerships: Actively seek and build relationships with other universities and research institutions around the world based on research collaborations, student and academic exchanges and joint programmes.

Objective 3: Develop international scientific research projects: Support cooperation between research teams from different countries to solve global challenges and stimulate the creation of international scientific research programs.

Objective 4: Improve the international profile of the university: Increase awareness of the university internationally through marketing campaigns, participation in international exhibitions and conferences and strengthening the online presence.

Objective 5: Support even more international student exchanges through incoming and outgoing mobilities: Provide support for students participating in international student exchanges to feel integrated and to make the most of their studies abroad. Create favorable conditions in connection with the offer of study subjects in the English language for foreign students who would be interested in coming to us for mobility.

Objective 6: Develop international study programs: Create study programs that are tailored to the needs of international students and include global perspectives and experiences.

Objective. 7: Develop the language skills of students and staff of KU: Strengthen the offer of language courses and programs at the university in order to support the language development of students and staff, which will facilitate communication and cooperation with international partners and scientific project activity.

Objective 8: Increase staff mobility: Support exchange stays and internships for researchers and teachers, which will enable the sharing of know-how and the latest scientific knowledge with international colleagues.

Objective 9: To develop cultural diversity at KU: To create an environment that promotes tolerance, understanding and mutual respect between students and staff of different cultures and nationalities.

Objective 10: Collect measurable tracking and evaluate the level of success of internationalization initiatives: Develop metrics and evaluation tools to monitor and evaluate progress in achieving the goals of the internationalization strategy at KU.

Objective no. 1: Increase the number of international students: Focus on attracting more international students and increase their share in the total number of university students

Measure 1 During the academic year, organize a seminar with incoming mobility students on a chosen topic.

Measure 2: Employee seminars on the topic: Cultural differences that I encountered during mobility or market experiences from other cultural environments.

Measure 3: Active recruitment of foreign students through KU student and employee mobility at foreign universities.

Measure 4: Regular participation of employees of the international relations department in domestic and foreign "Staff Week" activities.

Measure 5: Provide support for foreign students in their integration into the new environment. This may include language courses, cultural activities.

Measure 6: Implementation of activities related to the integration of students into the new university environment from the Student Adaptation Support Program at the Catholic University in Ružomberok.

Measure 7: Continuous (annual) increase in the number of subjects in a foreign language (mainly in English), at individual faculties.

Measure 8 Promotion of quality KU accommodation that is provided at affordable prices, which may be important for international students who are new to the destination country.

Measure 9: Sending foreign partners information about open calls aimed at obtaining financial support/scholarships for the stays of foreign students and scientific and research workers in Slovakia.

Measure 10: Regular monitoring and evaluation of the results of the measures through the feedback of foreign students in order to adapt the measures to the needs of foreign students.

Indicators of completing goals:

- Number and share of foreign students enrolled to study at KU.
- Geographical structure of foreign students enrolled to study at KU.
- Number of KU foreign students - graduates.
- Number of foreign/English study subjects
- Number of entire study programs in teaching languages other than Slovak.
- Number of implemented activities and business trips aimed at fulfilling the above measures.

Objective 2: Expand the global network of partnerships: Actively seek and build relationships with other universities and research institutions around the world based on research collaborations, student and academic exchanges and joint programmes.

Measure 1: Create project and research bilateral and consortia contracts for the purpose of creating joint study programs and exchange stays of researchers, educators and students. Identification of the key goals of cooperation for individual KU study fields.

Measure 2: Participation in international university fairs, conferences and other networking events with the aim of actively searching for potential foreign partners for cooperation.

Measure 3: Development of the university Euroaxess Service Center and its activities aimed at recruiting researchers and students from abroad. Support and provision (service) during the stay of foreign teachers and researchers in Slovakia.

Measure 4: Create, at the level of the departments, a list of excellent scientific and artistic workplaces (with which we already cooperate and those with which we do not yet) that could be potential partners for proposals for joint international scientific and artistic projects.

Measure 5: Publish on the website of the university and faculties, departments the thematic areas of science, research and art in which workplaces have scientific or artistic potential (creative teams) to achieve a significant (A) to top (A+) level of creative activities as an offer for international cooperation.

Measure 6: Update information on partner universities and information and contacts on top/excellent foreign scientific workplaces on the website at regular intervals.

Indicators of completing goals

- The number of foreign scientific research projects obtained at KU.
- Number of foreign projects of creative activity obtained at KU.
- Share of creative workers involved in solving international projects from the total number of creative workers.
- Receipt of funds from foreign scientific research projects and other foreign projects.
- Number and share of mobility of workers in the field of science, research and art.

Objective 3: Development of international research projects: Support cooperation between research teams from different countries to solve global challenges and stimulate the emergence of international research programs.

Measure 1: Increase the visibility of KU by supporting the participation of KU employees in international events in the field of internationalization of higher education (e.g. European Association for International Education (EAIE), Association of International Teachers (NAFSA)) in order to establish cooperation on a global level.

Measure 2: Promotion of KU as a high-quality project partner and at the same time a destination (Liptov region) ideal for the stay of foreign students and researchers.

Measure 3: Organize an interdisciplinary international scientific conference for researchers and doctoral students once a year at KU, where the results of research and scientific projects of KU workplaces will be presented to an international audience.

Measure 4: Create conditions at the faculties so that creative teams gradually start to be created in accordance with the thematic areas of science, research, art and innovation supported by the Horizon Europe program in its calls (Project Partner Search Form).

Indicators of completing goals

- Number of visited international events in the field of internationalization of higher education by our employees
- Number of campaigns aimed at promoting KU as a high-quality scientific workplace and at the same time as a region, at the international level
- Number of research and development and innovation projects financed from EU structural funds
- Number of interdisciplinary international scientific conferences
- Number of project consortia of which KU became a member

Objective 4: Improve the international profile of the university: Increase awareness of the university internationally through marketing campaigns, participation in international exhibitions and conferences and strengthening the online presence.

Measure 1: Development and implementation of marketing campaigns at the international level aimed at raising awareness of the university at the international level, focusing on the strengths of the university such as high-quality education, individual approach, freedom in deciding on study programs, strength of the community, international environment of students from all over the world, high-quality adaptation support program for all KU students, high-quality accommodation and campus spaces, etc.

Measure 2: Focus on obtaining international certificates and standards oriented towards human resources management, introduce ethical rules in research and create an environment enabling networking of professional workplaces (e.g. European Charter for Researchers, Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers), which is part of the Strategy of human resources for researchers - HRS4R.

Action 3: Strengthen online presence. Update and improve the university's website and social media in English or other language versions. Focus on creating content that appeals to an international audience, such as research articles, student experiences, and information on international study programs.

Measure 4: Support the development of a multicultural environment at KU through cultural events, support programs for international students (Program for supporting adaptation of students at KU), services of the Euraxess Service Center for foreign researchers, creation and addition of bilingual names of spaces throughout KU, etc.

Measure 5: Regularly organize Staff Week at KU.

Measure 6: Coordinate activities for promotion abroad through the newly created brand "Study&Research in Slovakia" under the current brand Good Idea Slovakia.

Indicators of completing goals

- The number of marketing campaigns at the international level
- the number of obtained international certificates oriented, e.g. into the management of human resources or the quality of science and research

- the quality and processing of websites and social media of the university and faculties in English
- the number of events and activities at KU aimed at developing the multicultural environment of KU
- the number of Staff Weeks organized by KU

Objective 5: To further promote international student exchanges through incoming and outgoing mobilities: Provide support for students participating in international student exchanges to feel integrated and to make the most of their studies abroad. Create favorable conditions in connection with the offer of study subjects in the English language for foreign students who would be interested in coming to us for mobility.

Measure 1: Regular events and promotion of mobilities among students through seminars, workshops and meetings with students who already have experience with mobility programmes.

Measure 2: Preparation of students to leave for mobility through meetings at the Counseling Center at KU focused on coping with new things, changes and intercultural communication.

Measure 3: Reduce bureaucracy as much as possible in the context of submitting and processing applications. The electronicization of these processes is also related to this.

Measure 5: Extend and modify the schedule of individual calls as well as the opening period of individual calls for students so that every student really has time to submit an application.

Measure 6: Increase the number of study subjects in the English language at individual departments so that incoming foreign students have no problem choosing the required subjects (with the corresponding credit load) by the sending university.

Measure 7: Start building a Welcome Center and a Language Center at the KU, which would create support services for incoming international students who would be interested in studying at the KU.

Measure 8: Create, within all KU study programs, the so-called mobility windows, defined by Act no. 131/2002 Coll. on universities and on the amendment of certain laws as amended and by which certain laws are amended and supplemented. The goal of the adjustment is clearly to ensure the possibility of academic mobility when compiling the study program, so that students can acquire competences and knowledge in an international

environment, respectively at other universities (the so-called "mobility window") and thus enable as many students as possible to gain international experience during their studies without fear of sanctions for not fulfilling the expected obligations required by the university. Since the possibility of mobility is not relevant for everyone, an alternative solution will also be taken into account (e.g. forms of virtual mobility, forms of COIL - collaborative online international learning, joint classes with foreign students, etc.). For undergraduate students, mobility will be mandatory optional (within all available and possible mobility programs) and for doctoral students, mobility will be mandatory.

Measure 9: Renew and expand the network of buddies in individual departments.

Indicators of completing goals

- The number of activities aimed at supporting and recruiting students for various forms of mobility available at KU
- The number of meetings and workshops at the KU Counseling Center
- The number of study subjects in English within individual study programs.
- Creation of the KU Welcome Center
- The number of study programs in which the so-called mobile window.
- The number of buddies at KU.

Objective 6: Develop international study programs: Create study programs that are tailored to the needs of international students and include global perspectives and experiences.

Measure 1: Update existing study programs or create new joint programs in foreign languages that include curricula and materials emphasizing global perspectives, cultural diversities, and international trends.

Measure 2: Internationalize not only the content of study programs, but also the teaching process itself by ensuring interaction between Slovak and foreign students in joint teaching.

Measure 3: Ensure the internationalization of education and new approaches in education by hosting foreign university teachers at KU. This develops the professional knowledge, language skills and intercultural competence of future KU graduates and makes them more attractive on the labour market.

Measure 4: Actively search for possible consortia within which it is realistic to create joint study programs through the mobility of KU employees.

Indicators of completing goals

- The number of joint study programs.
- The number of implemented joint teaching of Slovak and foreign students.
- The number of visiting foreign teachers at KU.

Objective 7: Develop the language skills of students and staff of KU: Strengthen the offer of language courses and programs at the university in order to support the language development of students and staff, which will facilitate communication and cooperation with international partners and scientific project activity.

Measure 1: Search and implementation of projects focused on the language education of employees and students.

Measure 2: Increase the number of foreign development projects oriented towards the development of higher education and use their orientation to develop the international experience of teachers and students.

Measure 3: Create a system of intercultural communication courses for all KU employees and thereby facilitate communication with international scientific institutions and partners.

Indicators of meeting goals

- number of language courses for KU students and employees
- the number of international development projects oriented towards the development of higher education
- number of implemented intercultural communication courses

Objective 8: Increase staff mobility: Support exchange stays and internships for researchers and teachers, which will enable the sharing of know-how and the latest scientific knowledge with international colleagues.

Measure 1: Make the KU visible to potential university teachers from abroad by publishing job offers on available public portals through the Euraxess Service Center. In this way, we will achieve international openness of jobs for university teachers and researchers with the aim of stimulating the employment and retention of quality workers in equal competition with foreigners.

Measure 2: Increase the quality of KU services for foreign researchers and employees through the Euraxess Service Center and trained employees.

Measure 3 To the greatest extent possible, apply digitization to the processes of implementing mobilities.

Measure 4: Setting a calendar of challenges for employees, with regard to the efficient processing of documents related to the implementation of their mobility.

Measure 5: Creating a directive on the so-called Release of KU employees from tasks. Such release of a university teacher from the fulfillment of pedagogical (or other) tasks and tasks according to §74 par. 2 of the Act on Universities allows a teacher to devote himself only to scientific work or artistic work, including the possibility of scientific or artistic work outside the Slovak Republic. At the same time, this does not affect the provisions of employee remuneration. This is reflected in the amendment to the Act on Universities by changing § 77 par. 9, where the university is obliged to develop an internal regulation (until 31.12.2026), based on which a university teacher could use this possibility of creative leave for a period of at least 6 months in a planned and predictable manner. At the same time, clear rules on the claimability of such release of KU employees from tasks also give the institution a clear framework for human resources planning.

Indicators of meeting goals

- The number of published job offers on available public international portals.
- The number of foreign teachers working at KU.
- The number of realized mobilities of KU employees.
- The number of realized releases from the work tasks of KU employees.

Objective 9: Development of cultural diversity at KU: To create an environment that promotes tolerance, understanding and mutual respect between students and staff of different cultures and nationalities.

Measure 1: Implement the mentioned intercultural communication courses for all KU employees, including first contact workers (gatekeepers, study departments, personnel departments, etc.), which will reflect the needs of foreign students and scientific and pedagogical staff coming to KU. These needs will be ascertained through an online questionnaire.

Measure 2: Build a Welcome Center of comprehensive services for all incoming foreign students and teachers, scientific workers, which will provide comprehensive services aimed at their integration into the KU environment and the Ružomberok community.

Measure 3: Organize diverse cultural events, such as festivals, lectures, exhibitions and art events, which will allow students and staff to share their cultural wealth and experiences.

Measure 4: Implement individual adaptation activities contained in the Program for supporting adaptation of students at KU.

Indicators of meeting goals

- The number of intercultural communication courses for KU employees.
- Construction of a Welcome Center for students and employees from abroad.
- The number of cultural events focused on the diversity of cultures of foreign students and employees working at KU.
- Number of implemented activities from the Student Adaptation Support Program at KU.

Objective 10: Collect measurable tracking and evaluate the level of success of internationalization initiatives: Develop metrics and evaluation tools to monitor and evaluate progress in achieving the goals of the internationalization strategy at KU.

Measure 1: Create a tool for measuring the quality of internationalization in all areas at KU. This tool should include qualitative and quantitative aspects of internationalization initiatives, such as some of the above-mentioned indicators of the fulfilment of goals (number of international students and employees, level of academic exchanges, established international partnerships, quality of international publication scientific outputs and projects, etc.)

Measure 2: Regularly monitor and collect feedback from foreign students and scientific-pedagogical staff on the level of services provided to them at KU.

Indicators of meeting goals

- Number of tools for measuring the quality of internationalization processes at KU.
- Quality and quantity of feedback from foreign students and scientific-pedagogical staff.

The implementation of the strategy is methodically managed and coordinated by the Department for International Relations of the KU under the leadership of the relevant vice-rector, in close cooperation with individual vice-rectors and deans and vice-deans of the faculties. In general, every employee is responsible for the international dimension of the activities they carry out in accordance with their mandate within the university, with an emphasis on preserving the safety and equality of all involved persons. For the functioning of the internationalization system, it is necessary to allocate sufficient personnel, financial and material resources at the university, which correspond to the size of the university and the scope of educational, creative and other related activities.

doc. Ing. Jaroslav Demko, CSc.
Rector of the Catholic University in Ružomberok