

# ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

## D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics ID details:

<b>PIC</b>	949717980
<b>Organisation ID</b>	E10110281
<b>Full name of the organization</b>	D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics
<b>Acronym</b>	TAE
<b>Erasmus University Charter No.</b>	BGSVISHTO02
<b>Registered postal address</b>	2, Emanuil Chakarov Str. 5250 Svishtov, Bulgaria BG321 Veliko Tarnovo
<b>Internet address</b>	www.uni-svishtov.bg
<b>Email</b>	erasmus@uni-svishtov.bg
<b>Telephone</b>	+35963166440
<b>Fax</b>	+35963160472
<b>Structure of organization</b>	Higher education institution (tertiary level)
<b>Status</b>	Public

## Erasmus activities included in our Erasmus Policy Statement

### Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility:

The mobility of higher education students and staff

### Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organisations and institutions:

Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices

Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities

Partnerships for Excellence - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees

Partnerships for Innovation

### Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3):

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support to policy development and cooperation:

## Erasmus Policy Statement: Our strategy

*The policy objectives we intend to pursue and our expectations on how our participation in Erasmus+ Programme will contribute towards modernising of the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, as well as on the goal of building an EEA.*

D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics (TAE) considers its internationalisation as one of the most significant factors for the modernisation of the university and for improving its competitiveness. The university management believes that the path for strategic development and transformation of the university passes through putting the international dimension at the heart of teaching and learning, research, project work, student and staff mobility, curricula and syllabi design, knowledge transfer and community engagement.

This management credo is embedded in the Strategy for university development (2020-2030) and the new Internationalisation strategy of the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics (2021-2027), which draw the following routes and areas of the university internationalisation:

Route 1: Internationalisation abroad;

Route 2: Internationalisation at home;

Area 1: Teaching and learning;

Area 2: Research;

Area 3: Engagement.

Participation in Erasmus+ programme will contribute to progress in the three areas of the both routes.

The Internationalisation strategy of TAE highlights the profound role of the international student and staff mobility and demands for providing more mobility opportunities and options for students and staff and for achieving higher involvement of students and staff in international mobility. It stresses on the significance and the need to activate and strengthen the international cooperation, collaborative partnerships, networking and strategic alliances with EU and non-EU institutions and organisations to enhance the quality of education and research and to foster the transfer of good practices and capacity building.

The Internationalisation strategy puts special attention on the importance of being internationalised at home and demands for offering more English-taught study programmes in full-time, distance and blended learning mode, more modules or full study programmes accredited by EC and worldwide

recognised professional associations, more double master degree and cotutelle programmes, more programmes with international relevance, more incoming mobility students and staff from EU and non-EU countries, and more academic and administrative staff with good language skills and international mindset.

The Strategy does not only draw the routes, it focuses on the need to continue the transformation process in the campus culture and to keep making the internationalisation of TAE visible. By publicity and memorable celebration of every major national or religious holiday, the faculty members' and students' perceptions of the university identity will be transformed from a national university to a global meeting place that creates memories.

The Internationalisation strategy of TAE considers the Erasmus+ programme as one of the main tools to reach the route destinations. By active participation in different types of Erasmus+ projects and initiatives as a coordinator or a partner, TAE aims to:

- 1) increase and diversify the mobility opportunities and options for its students and staff (e.g. for studies or traineeships; for physical or blended learning; for attending workshops or teaming; for participation in dissemination conferences and transnational meetings; for teaching, training or job shadowing; for short or long period; in Programme or Partner countries; in university, research institution or enterprise);
- 2) increase the outgoing student mobility by 10%;
- 3) increase the outgoing mobility of Doctoral students by 5%;
- 4) increase the incoming student mobility by 20%;
- 5) increase the incoming student mobility for studies from Partner countries by 30%;
- 6) increase the incoming mobility of Doctoral students by 10%;
- 7) increase the incoming mobility of the staff invited to teach at the university by 100%;
- 8) increase the incoming and outgoing staff mobility by 20%;
- 9) increase the outgoing staff mobility for teaching by 30%;
- 10) increase the outgoing staff mobility for training at public or private organisations by 100%;
- 11) increase the coverage and penetration of outgoing staff mobility for teaching (at least 20% of the academic staff from each faculty and field of study to take part in international mobility);

- 12) provide more options for incoming student and staff mobility (e.g. studies; traineeships in university departments and centres; workshops; international staff weeks; training courses; job shadowing; physical, virtual and blended learning courses);
- 13) enlarge the network of university-partners from Turkey, Serbia, Spain, and Netherlands;
- 14) enlarge the network of business partners from Programme countries;
- 15) diversify, strengthen and further develop (beyond student and staff mobility) the established cross-border partnerships with university-partners from Eastern Partnership, Southern Mediterranean, Russian Federation, Asia, Central Asia, Other Industrialised Countries, Western Balkans, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Italy, Portugal, Turkey, Latvia and Germany and effectively utilise the membership of the university in the academic networks ASECU and BSEMAN by taking part in the design and implementation of at least 1 international multi-partner project for cooperation or policy reform per year;
- 16) effectively utilise the DG TAXUD's recognition of the modules within the study programme in Currency, Customs and Tax Control by networking with the 6 universities from Spain, Netherlands, Germany, Hungary, and France with EU Customs certificate of recognition;
- 17) improve linguistic and digital skills of the students and staff by offering at least 1 tailored-made blended learning course per year;
- 18) increase the efficiency of the process of mobility management by joining to the EWP and ESC initiatives;
- 19) deepen the collaboration with ESN Svishtov to keep changing the campus culture and converting TAE into a global meeting place;
- 20) enlarge the induction and socialisation programme of the incoming students by adding more activities that promote active citizenship;
- 21) improve the academic recognition process by embedding a mobility window in the curricula;
- 22) improve the access to mobility for students from disadvantaged and under-presented groups.

It is undisputable that, due to the Erasmus+ programme, TAE has been positively changed since 2016. The Programme encouraged the staff to improve their language skills, to search for international collaborations, to transfer the good practices experienced abroad at home and to keep its teaching methods and content relevant and up-to-date. Erasmus+ programme showed the students, staff and the local community the beauty

of the diversity in cultures and languages. That is why it is important to continue and upgrade what has been made.

Participation in Erasmus+ programme in the next programme period is expected to have considerable contribution to TAE on the priorities of EEA and national priorities. Complying with the EC's guidelines, one of the goals of the university is to further improve and fasten the academic recognition procedures and to provide to its mobile students in all study cycles full automatic recognition of all credits gained during the mobility period abroad. The university strongly believes that this goal will be achieved by embedding a mobility window with loosely-prescribed content in the curricula of Bachelor, Master and Doctoral degree study programmes and joining the EWP and ESC initiatives.

The university recognises the profound role of the linguistic and technology-based skills for the self-confidence. That is why, to boost the mobility and involvement in international cooperation projects, as well as to encourage the design of collaborative modules and study programmes in English, the university will continue to offer to the staff tailored-made language courses in blended learning mode.

TAE is among the first universities in Bulgaria, which offers distance learning study programmes. It is also one of the partners, which has taken part in the implementation of the Erasmus+ multi-partner project "Open mind" – a project which developed an innovative gamified MOOC in social entrepreneurship. Complying with the national priorities and the priorities of Erasmus+ programme, TAE directs its efforts on collaboration within a university network in order to gain synergetic effects in education, research and engagement, to be more prepared for the digital transformation, as well as to increase university global competitiveness.

The international mobility impacts positively on the participants' skills and employability and students from all backgrounds should be involved. Complying with the EC's guidelines and priorities, TAE carries out a consistent policy to provide inclusive and equitable education. By offering low tuition fees, low or no monthly rents for dormitory accommodation, distance learning study programmes and flexible study and examination timetables for students from disadvantaged groups, the university managed to provide an access to education for adults, people with lower economic backgrounds, part-time job, and family responsibilities. TAE believes that by enlarging the portfolio of mobility options (incl. blended mobility) and by offering additional financial support or counseling services, more students from disadvantaged groups will benefit from the Programme (especially own students and incoming students from Eastern Partnership, Southern Mediterranean, Central Asia, and Western Balkans regions).

TAE will continue to actively participate in international cooperation projects with its partners from Programme and Partner countries to contribute to its and their modernisation and internationalisation. Due to participation in Erasmus+ projects, TAE will be able to diversify its funding options, to improve the governance systems of these projects and to increase the effectiveness.

*Erasmus+ actions we would like to take part in, how they will be implemented in practice at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics and how they will contribute to achieving the objectives of our institutional strategy.*

Projects for learning mobility are the first generic group of Erasmus activities that TAE would like to implement during the programme period 2021-2027 as crucial to reach both route destinations in the university's Internationalisation strategy. The university has been an active participant in projects for higher education students and staff mobility between Programme countries since 2008 and in projects for higher education students and staff mobility between Programme and Partner countries since 2015. During the years TAE managed to establish and maintain a network of 85 university-partners from 20 Programme countries. By opening the Erasmus+ programme to the Partner countries, the university geographically broadens and enlarges its partnership network and currently it includes 53 HEIs from 9 regions, with 26 of which (from 7 of the regions) strategic partnerships were developed during the period 2015-2020.

TAE respects all ECHE principles and will implement the mobility projects in compliance with them. Two types of mobility flows (incoming and outgoing) and two types of target groups (students and staff) will be covered. From the geographical point of view, universities efforts will be targeted towards both Programme and Partner countries. Relying on its experience, internal regulations (general rules and specific methodologies and procedure for particular type of flows and operations) and Erasmus+ guidelines, the university will undertake the following actions:

### **I. Before mobility.**

1) In compliance with national and internal regulation, TAE will regularly update and publish by the end of June its ECTS Info package for the forthcoming academic year with information about the university and the living standard in Svishtov, deadlines for application, course catalogue, grading scales and grade distribution tables, visa and insurance issues.

2) As a part of university promotional strategy, TAE will widely promote the opportunity to apply for Erasmus+ mobility abroad. Depending on the target group (students or staff), designated Info days will be organised before the

calls for applications. During the Info days the general information about Erasmus+ programme and the specific options and requirements will be presented. Special attention will be paid on the application and selection procedure, selection criteria, granting schemes, LA and MA composition, academic recognition issues, Erasmus+ App, OLS and other type of linguistic support, environmentally friendly policy of the university and additional support (financial or/and counselling) that will be provided in case of special need or disadvantaged participant. Erasmus+ alumni and/or current mobility participants will be invited to take part in the Info sessions to answer to questions and share their experience. The call for applicants will be made visible in the Erasmus+ programme section on the university website and distance learning platform, as well as in the university's Facebook page.

3) The selection of students and staff will be conducted by a committee and on the basis of criteria and evaluation methodology, which are officially published on the university website. The methodology is clear, fair and documented and it includes two types of evaluation – administrative compliance and eligibility of the applicant and quality of the application. The evaluation of the quality takes into consideration student's performance, language proficiency, motivation, in case of student mobility application, and motivation, importance for the career development, compliance with the priorities of the university and Erasmus+ Programme, in case of staff mobility application. The committee members will follow given guidelines for evaluation, which are easily accessible from the university website.

4) After the selection, a personal administrative mentor (Operational Erasmus+ coordinator) and a counsellor (in case of special need or disadvantaged participant) will be assigned to each of the selected participants (both for incoming and outgoing). In case of outgoing mobility, the administrative mentor should send the nomination to the host institution and after the nominee's acceptance (through the Erasmus+ Dashboard), the mentor should support student and the Departmental Erasmus+ coordinator in LA preparation by providing general information for the university, course catalogues, deadlines for application, necessary application documents, etc. The role of the personal counsellor is to inform the participant about the host university-partners with special equipment and facility, blended learning options, low or no monthly rent for dorm, etc. and how to request for additional financial support. The Departmental Erasmus+ coordinator is an academic staff member who provides assistance in LA composition and advises students what to do for full academic recognition. Assistance in completing the MA and application forms will be provided to the nominated staff too. A personal administrative mentor will be assigned to every staff member (incoming and outgoing). Mentor's role is to contact the International offices (for outgoing mobility) and departments (for incoming

mobility) that will host the mobile participants, to arrange their visit and assist in travel, visa, insurance, and accommodation issues. In case of incoming students and staff, personal administrative mentors will assist in visa, insurance, travel, and accommodation arrangements, as well as will send visiting/weekly schedule to the participants before the mobility. TAE implements a buddy system and before the mobility, every student will be assigned a social mentor/buddy (local student), who will assist in socialisation and integration by meeting them at the airport, bus and train stations.

5) Before the mobility, an individual financial agreement will be signed with all outgoing mobility students and staff. The financial agreement will be signed only in case if there is a 3-party signed LA or MA and if the mobility fits the parameters of the IIA.

6) Outgoing students and staff will be required to pass a mandatory training about their rights and obligations during the mobility (Erasmus+ Student Charter and the Statute of the Erasmus+ student), as well as reporting and recognition requirements.

7) Every semester Erasmus+ office will organise blended learning linguistic courses targeted for students or staff to support and prepare its mobile participants for the exchange abroad.

## **II. During the mobility.**

1) In case of incoming mobility from Partner countries, personal administrative mentors will assist the mobile participants to open a bank account and to sign a financial agreement.

2) All students will be assigned an academic mentor/tutor (academic staff member) who will assist in academic integration and advice in academic issues.

3) Every semester Erasmus+ office will organise Bulgarian language course for incoming students.

4) During the mobility, many special events for incoming students will be organised in collaboration with ESN Svishtov. The events will be included in the induction, socialisation and integration calendar for the semester.

5) Equal treatment will be provided to the incoming participants and the same services and conditions as to the local students and staff. TAE is an experienced provider of distance learning study programmes, it provides an online access to the course resources to all students and thus the equal treatment of full-time and blended learning mode is intrinsic. Incoming students will have a free-of-charge access to the university laboratories,



computer halls, sports facilities (pool, bicycles, tennis courts, football stadium), digital libraries, distance-learning platform, e-file system.

6) Erasmus+ office will be in a contact with the International office of the host/home university or supervisors (outgoing student mobility for traineeship) and will provide the mobile participants with the contact details of the Embassies in advance.

7) During the last month of mobility period, TAE will transfer the last part of the grant due to the incoming students from Partner countries after completing their EU surveys.

### **III. After the mobility.**

1) To support the fast recognition at home university, TAE will issue to all mobile incoming students a Transcript of records or Traineeship certificate up to one week from the end of the mobility period. To verify participant's stay, the university will also issue a certificate of stay/attendance at the last day of the mobility or up to 2 days from the end of the mobility period.

2) Once the students' mobility documents are received (through the Erasmus+ Dashboard), the recognition committee will start and complete the recognition process up to 3 working days. As there are no any translations, certification, legalisations, checks for authenticity, university accreditation and statute, as well as all courses in mobility window have been pre-accepted by the professors, the recognition procedure will be fast and without any financial and administrative burdens for the student.

3) TAE will issue to all outgoing students who have taken part in Erasmus+ mobility for studies or traineeship in a Programme country an Europass mobility certificate. Europass mobility certificate will be issued for each mobility and it will be reported to the National Europass Centre.

4) TAE will issue to all incoming and outgoing students who have taken part in Erasmus+ project under KA107 an Erasmus+ mobility certificate, which will include information about the Erasmus+ mobility, student's ToR, grading system and conversion to the ECTS. The certificate will be signed by TAE, its partner and the mobile student.

5) TAE will issue a Diploma supplement to all students, incl. mobile students. The Diploma supplement includes student's achievements during the mobility abroad.

6) As a relevant tool for promoting the Programme and providing a relevant reintegration of the students who were abroad, TAE implements an ambassador scheme and all Erasmus+ students and staff are invited to join it and to give their contribution by sharing their experience abroad and supporting the future incoming and outgoing students and staff.

7) The university has its own Career development system and in accordance with the methodology for evaluation of the personal career development score, particular points will be awarded for the Erasmus+ mobility for teaching or training. According to the internal regulations, the staff mobility will be also recognised by awarding additional points during the regular performance reviews of the academic staff.

TAE will continue to follow its internal rules and ECHE principles in order to provide the high-quality service to the incoming and outgoing students and staff from all backgrounds. The responsibility and devotion of the Erasmus+ officers could be demonstrated by the participants' feedback on particular services provided by them and the very high overall satisfaction (on average, almost 100% incoming participants from Programme and Partner countries are very satisfied).

Projects for cooperation are the second generic group of Erasmus activities that TAE would like to implement during the programme period 2021-2027. The university fully encourages its staff and those, who want to take part in international cooperation projects, will receive the necessary support at the stage of project preparation, submission and implementation. All initiatives and invitations from international partners will be discussed within an ad-hoc multifunctional work group and evaluated for relevance and compliance with the internationalisation strategy of the university, its priorities and capabilities. If the project idea and the expected long-term impact fit the university priorities, a team for project preparation will be assigned. The team work will be supported by the Erasmus+ officers, who will advise the team members on the documents needed, assist with administrative steps and preparation of supplementary documents, provide guidance in submission of the proposal, budget composition, etc.

Since 2016 TAE has been actively participating in international cooperation projects, as well as learning mobility projects. As the incoming and outgoing Erasmus+ staff mobility flows have been activated, many bonds with foreign colleagues were created. This also pushed the university and its partners to reconsider their membership in the networks ASECU and BSEMAN and to try to utilise the membership benefits by joint preparation and submission of Erasmus+ projects for exchange of good practices, innovations that will bring modernisation to both academia and the real economy, policy reforms regarding recognition, refugees and migrants, and excellence through offering double master degree programmes and joining European university network.

TAE will support initiatives for taking part in Erasmus+ projects by building an administrative capacity for project preparation and implementation. The university encourages, supports and recognises staff participation in trainings on project building or implementation issues. An alumni network

within the Institute of Scientific Research was established in 2014. More experienced network members will regularly deliver to the less experienced staff (administrative or early-stage career staff) trainings on international project building and implementation issues.

TAE recognises its participation in Erasmus+ projects as vital for its modernisation, digital transformation, and better positioning in the global educational market.

*Envisaged impact of our participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, targets related to the Erasmus+ actions and indicators in monitoring the impact, as well as an indicative timeline for achieving the targets.*

It is undisputable that participation in Erasmus+ projects has a positive impact on individual, institutional, regional and national level. In compliance with the drawn routes for internationalisation and the goals of the university's Internationalisation strategy, it is expected an improvement in the cultural and social competences, tolerance towards diversity, professional knowledge and competences, linguistic and digital skills, volunteering and active citizenship skills, employability options, career development options, personal and professional network of the students and staff.

The university management believes that the participation in Erasmus+ mobility and cooperation projects will help to create a growing cadre of students and staff on campus with international mindset, who will want to embrace the internationalisation at home. The involvement in Erasmus+ projects is expected to impact positively the university and its contribution to the SDGs. Incoming and outgoing mobility of staff and students, number of double-degree programmes with international partners, number of courses delivered in foreign language, and mobility opportunities are key criteria for the ranking, institutional and programme accreditation of the university. The university environment will be improved and the relations with international academic and non-academic partners will be strengthened.

By joining the EU initiatives such as EWP, ESC, etc., the mobility management will be also improved. TAE will be more attractive for students as it will provide more options for mobility and inclusive education and less staff and student burden.

Svishtov is a small city and the university plays a significant role for its development. Attracting more international students will change the city life and make people more tolerant and aware of cultural and language differences.

In accordance with the university's goals and expected impact in short and long term, the following indicators will be monitored and both hard and soft data will be used to measure the progress and performance for the whole programme period up to 2027:

A. Individual effects: number of outgoing students who feel an improvement in their personal development – analytical, problem-solving skills, adaptation, etc. (on average, at least 70% according to the EU survey); number of outgoing students who feel an improvement in their employability – better chances for good job, better opportunities for traineeship, etc. (on average, at least 70% according to the EU survey); number of outgoing staff who feel an improvement in their personal and professional development – learned good practices, enhanced curriculum designed skills, improved competences in the use of ICT, etc. (on average, at least 80% according to the EU survey).

B. Institutional effects: number of outgoing mobility students (increase of 10%); number of outgoing mobility students in 3rd cycle (increase of 5%); number of incoming mobility students (increase of 20%); number of incoming Partner countries students who were involved in studies (increase of 30%); number of incoming Doctoral students (increase of 10%); number of incoming staff members who were invited to take part in incoming teaching mobility (increase of 100%); number of ingoing and outgoing mobility staff (increase of 20%); number of outgoing teaching staff (increase of 30%); number of staff members who took part in outgoing mobility for training at public or private organisations (increase of 100%); number of academic staff from different departments and fields of study who took part in outgoing staff mobility for teaching (at least 20% of the academic staff from each faculty and field of study to take part in international mobility); number of joint study programmes (at least 2 new programmes); number of submitted project proposals under KA1, KA2 or KA3 (at least 2 per year); number of staff members involved international projects (at least 15%); number of staff with improved language skills (at least 25%); TAE accreditation score (above 9); TAE ranking position (move up with min 1 position); number of participants satisfied with their Erasmus+ experience (at least 90%); number of participants satisfied with the services (e.g. assistance in accommodation, visa, travel arrangements) provided by the Erasmus+ officers (at least 80%); number of incoming students satisfied with the teaching and learning at the university (at least 80%); number of outgoing staff members satisfied with the recognition of their mobility (at least 80%); improved mobility management (full utilisation of Erasmus Dashboard, EWP and ESCI by 2025); share of mobile students who have used Erasmus+ App (100%); share of mobile students and staff who have used environmentally friendly transport (at least 5% of participants); share of mobile students and staff from disadvantaged groups (at least 10% of

participants); higher quality of the project proposals (reviewer's feedback above 70 points); number of co-initiatives with the partners (at least 2 per year).