

Key strategy “Expansion of international activities”

Global learning and global engagement

2021

Danube University Krems. The University for Continuing Education.



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1. Strategic approach

"Expansion of international activities" is one key strategy of the University for Continuing Education Krems (Danube University Krems). This document presents this concrete key strategy and thus supports the strategic goals of the university:

- Leading university for continuing education in Europe
- High Quality
- Well-developed research with a clear profile
- Attractive partner for scientific institutions and non-university partners
- Intensified research-driven teaching
- Good balance between study, work and family
- Higher percentage of women in leadership positions.

MISSION STATEMENT >



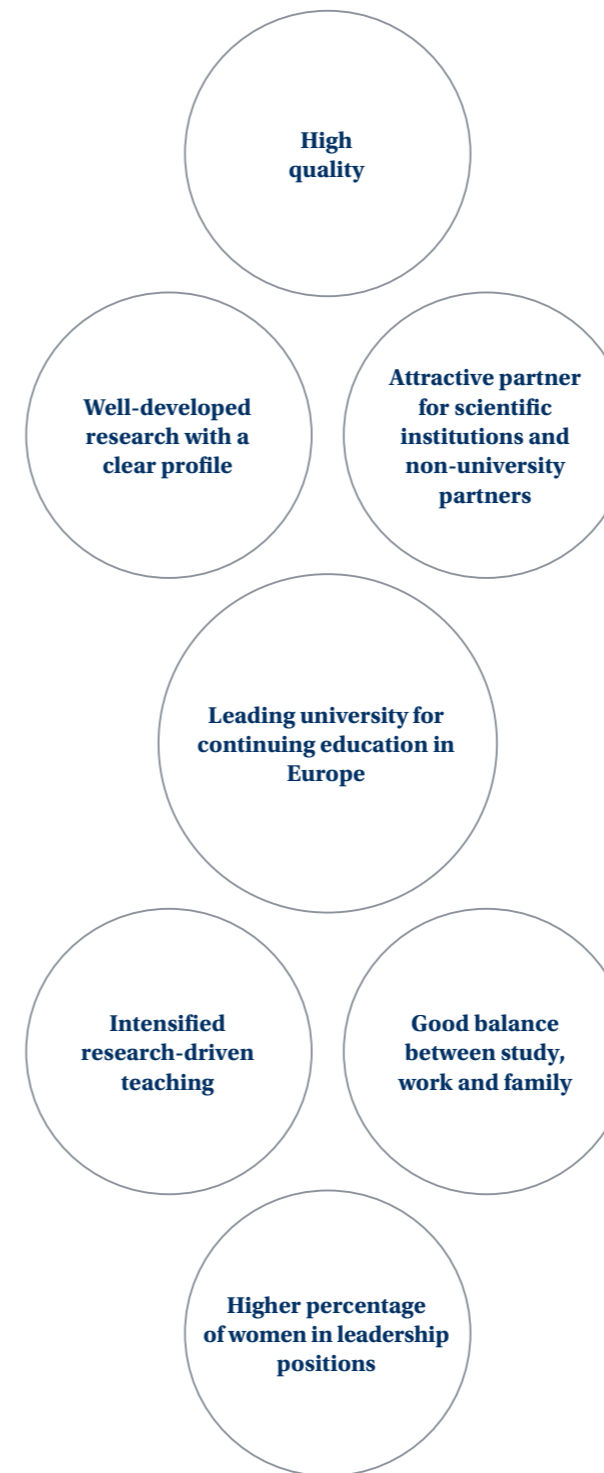
MISSION

University for Continuing Education Krems is the leading **public university** for **continuing education** in Europe. With its expertise in teaching and research it works to overcome **societal challenges**.

KEY PRINCIPLES



STRATEGIC GOALS >



KEY STRATEGIES >



1.1. INTERNATIONAL

The International Association of Universities emphasizes in its 5th global survey on internationalization of tertiary education¹ that 91% of the universities surveyed say that internationalization is a clear-cut part of their institutional strategies. Enhanced international cooperation and capacity building, improved quality of teaching and learning and, most importantly, increased international awareness of / deeper engagement with global issues by students are all significant benefits of internationalization mentioned in this context.² In order to achieve these goals, universities rely on activities such as student mobility, strategic partnerships, and international research cooperation³.

The University for Continuing Education Krems is the only public university for academic continuing education within the German-speaking world, and as such, it pursues the goal of lifelong learning at the highest international standards. To this end, the efforts are directed towards becoming a Central European competence center for continuing education, paying special attention to the European Union's expansion. For this reason, one of University for Continuing Education Krems' key strategies for 2022–2027 refers to the “Expansion of international activities”, i.e. international mobility and cooperation. Staff members from currently 25⁴ and students from currently 78⁵ countries contribute to this goal, creating an international and diverse atmosphere. Erasmus+ Programme Country and International Mobility, Memoranda of Understanding, Inter-institutional Agreements, research and education projects, Erasmus+ Mundus programs, as well as the membership in international networks, support the university's strategic goals: to become the leading university for continuing education in Europe and an attractive partner for national and international institutions and non-university partners.

The key strategy “Expansion of international activities” is anchored in this context in the university's strategic framework, dedicated to mobility and cross-border cooperation. Global learning and global engagement are promoted via multiple international mobility, cooperation, and research projects, aiming to ensure that all interested individuals, regardless of their social and economic background, are given access to quality education while being made aware of the world's cultural heritage and its diversity, as well as of the associated global responsibility. This ongoing contribution is shared internationally with partners in the ASEAN-Uninet⁶, Eurasia-Pacific Uninet⁷, Africa UniNet⁸ and the Magna Charta Universitatum⁹ networks.

1.2. EUROPE

In the European context, the University for Continuing Education Krems commits to the European Union's political strategy documents. The Paris and Rome Communiqués from 2018 and 2020 as well as, in particular, the six dimensions of the vision for the European Education Area¹⁰ published in 2020 and the four priority areas of the European renewal agenda for higher education¹¹, drafted by the European Commission in 2017, are worth emphasizing. The university offers access to academic continuing education to academics with a bachelor degree as well as to individuals who dispose over long-term professional experience and who have reached an equivalent educational and competence level via their education and continuing education. Therefore, significant measures are taken in order to avoid future imbalances between demands and availabilities of expertise and in order to promote outstanding performances regarding the development of expertise.

Academic continuing education is a highly important instrument for social permeability and responds to societal and demographic developments (including age, gender, diversity, origin, and educational structures). While better qualifying individuals for their professional life and promoting a diversity-oriented and non-discriminatory culture in all areas and fields of action of the university, academic continuing education delivers a significant contribution to the further development of society

1 Marinoni, Giorgio. *Internationalization of Higher Education: An Evolving Landscape, Locally and Globally*. Berlin: DUZ Academic Publishers. 2019.

2 Ibid, p. 25.

3 Ibid, p. 28.

4 Survey of the HR Management as of 5 November 2020.

5 Survey of the Service Center for Students as of 4 November 2020.

6 The ASEAN European Academic University Network (ASEA-Uninet) is a university network consisting of European and Southeast-Asian universities committed to the goal of continuously advancing international education and research: <https://asea-uninet.org/>.

7 Eurasia-Pacific Uninet is a network aimed at establishing contacts and scientific partnerships between Austrian universities, universities of applied sciences, other research institutions and member institutions in East Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific region: <http://www.eurasiapacific.net/>.

8 The goal of Africa-UniNet is to create a long-term, stable basis for cooperation between Austrian and African universities and research institutions: <https://africa-uninet.at/>.

9 The Magna Charta Universitatum was launched in 1988 as an initiative of universities, which upholds principles of university life. The agreement on principles has been signed by about 890 universities: <http://www.magna-charta.org/>.

10 European Commission. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on achieving the European Education Area by 2025. Brussels: European Commission. 2020: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/eea-communication-sept2020_en.pdf [accessed 4 November 2020].

11 European Commission. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European Renewal Agenda for Higher Education. Brussels: European Commission. 2017: https://erasmusplus.at/fileadmin/Dokumente/education.erasmusplus.at/events/2017-11-30_Modernization_Agenda/COM-2017-247-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF [accessed 25 May 2020].

and to competitiveness. The University for Continuing Education Krems shapes and develops this contribution with partners in the Danube Rectors' Conference¹² as well as with additional bilateral partners and consortia in the Erasmus+ and Horizon funding programs. In doing so, it fulfills the European renewal agenda's second priority and contributes to the creation of inclusive and interconnected higher education systems.

The University for Continuing Education Krems attends to current and future societal challenges by identifying and orienting its study programs and research accordingly. The university's studies address relevant questions regarding societal, technological, and organizational development. The University for Continuing Education Krems therefore conducts teaching along future societal challenges in all three faculties. The research activities are in line with the same principle of high societal relevance and effectiveness and include the university-wide fields of research “Digital Transformation, Health and Innovation in Cohesive and Sustainable European Societies”, “Evidence-based Health Research”, “Cultural Heritage”, “Preventive and Regenerative Medicine” and “Continuing Education Research”. This approach is consistent with the European Higher Education Area's third priority and ensures that higher education institutions contribute to societal innovation.

An effective and efficient higher education system is promoted via the study programs' specific design and their flexible and creative setup (modular formats, block courses, combined digital teaching and learning formats). These allow for studying modes, which accompany and adapt to different phases of life, reconciling working life with practical and reflective abilities. The principles of the didactic orientation are laid down in the didactic mission statement of the University for Continuing Education Krems. Graduates, exchange students and cooperation partners share these with their communities and, as such, recommend the university as an institution for continuing education to others.

In summary, the key strategy “Expansion of international activities” strives in its objectives to contribute to the European Higher Education Area dialogue, especially against the background of becoming a member of the “European University Association” in 2021.

1.3. NATIONAL

In Austria, the National Higher Education Mobility and Internationalization Strategy 2020–2030 “Internationalization in Many Ways”¹³ was developed in 2020 with the involvement of and in dialogue with the higher education landscape. The University for Continuing Education Krems was part of working groups on the thematic fields as well as represented in the Dialogue-Mobility Forum for the strategy's further development. “Promotion of a Comprehensive Internationalization Culture at Universities”, “Mobility Promotion for all University Members”, “Development and Realization of Innovative Digital Mobility Formats”, “Effective Competence Development and Institutional Learning” as well as “Global Mindset - Austria's Universities in the World” set the strategic goals and are to some extent already being implemented at the University for Continuing Education Krems. They are further being attended to in the present key strategy “Expansion of international activities”, which aims for their (further) development.

In the “Overall Austrian University Development Plan 2022–2027”,¹⁴ which serves the nationally coordinated and regionally balanced range of services offered by Austrian universities, an increase in internationalization and mobility is prioritized as a goal for the further development of universities throughout Austria in System Goal 6. With the present key strategy, the University for Continuing Education Krems commits to the measures contained therein, which target to increase the quality of transnational and physical mobility as an integral part of an “internationalized curriculum”, to internationalize studies and teaching, and to strengthen internationalization in general.

1.4. REGIONAL

As the only public university in Lower Austria, the University for Continuing Education Krems commits to contribute socially to the region and its development. In this respect, cross-border cooperation in the Danube-Moldova border region is a significant focal point of internationalization. As a result, new forms of employment, societal trends, issues of migration, social engagement, etc., are researched and taught in cooperation with the Czech and German neighbors, as well as with those along the Danube. This is exemplified by the cooperation with the Institute for the Danube Region and Middle-Europe as well as

12 Danube Rectors' Conference is a strong network of 70 universities in the Danube region, aimed at promoting higher education in teaching and research as well as the further development of member universities through sustainable contacts: <https://www.drc-danube.org/>.

13 For example, on 24 October 2019, the Dialogue Mobility Forum took place to further develop the 2016 Higher Education Mobility Strategy into a “National Strategy for Qualitative Transnational Mobility and the Internationalization of Teaching at Austrian Universities”: https://pubshop.bmbwf.gv.at/index.php?article_id=9&sort=title&search%5Btext%5D=hochschulmobilit%C3%A4t&pub=858 [accessed 4 November 2020].

14 <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/HS-Uni/Hochschulgovernance/Steuerungsinstrumente/GUEP.html> [accessed 24 June 2020].

via the membership and active involvement in the presidency of the Danube Rectors’ Conference. The participation in ARGE Donauländer (Working Group Danube Countries) of the Office for European and International Affairs of the Federal Government of Lower Austria, in the working group Europaregion Donau-Moldau (Euroregion Danube-Moldova), and in the scientific network Scola Telcz further facilitates the regional-international cooperation and the university’s ongoing development in teaching, research and administration.

2. Target group and stakeholders

Stakeholders for the proposed measures, which contribute to the implementation of the key strategy, are the staff and students of the University for Continuing Education Krems:

- Academic staff
- Administrative staff
- Part-time post-graduate students
 - Credit mobility students
 - Degree mobility students.

Stakeholders addressed by the concrete fields of action are the University for Continuing Education Krems’ structural units:

- Faculties
- Departments
- Centers
- Administration.

3. Methodology

A survey investigating the university’s international status quo laid the basis, upon which the measures for implementing the key strategy “Expansion of international activities” developed. For this purpose, the departments and divisions nominated contact persons for the Service Center for International Relations. Together with these contact persons, the status of internationalization and future visions were documented, to then serve as the foundation for the development of strategic measures. Seven fields of action for internationalization were drawn therefrom:

- Geographic dimension
- Curricular and extracurricular mobility
- Internationally available research
- Inclusion and diversity
- Digitalization
- SDGs and sustainability
- Internationalisation at Home.

The corresponding draft was subsequently submitted to the university for review and comment, and the resulting feedback then incorporated into the final version.

4. Fields of action

4.1. GEOGRAPHIC DIMENSION

The cooperation agreements¹⁵ of the University for Continuing Education Krems that are recorded at the central level count 63 agreements with higher education institutions within Europe and 9 agreements with higher education institutions from other parts of the world. Of these, 48 apply at the institutional level and 24 at the faculty/department level. Strategically focusing the international activities top-down, involving a predetermined geographical dimension, would not be conducive in order to be able to continue this trend. Instead, the freedom to design cooperation agreements remains intact via the definition, regular review and further development of geographic focus zones. Each year, significant cooperation partners (regarding essential activities in networks and consortia) are to be identified and documented by means of actual activities (number of mobility activities, number of cooperation projects). Based on this, the strategic geographic focus zones can be reviewed and, if necessary, edited every third year, following the regular revision of the university’s development plan, so as to determine the strategy’s direction and the implementation of the respective measures and to define further procedures.

For the time period 2021–2023, increased activities in the areas of mobility, cooperation projects and research activities have been surveyed, which determine the following strategic geographical, but not exclusive, focus zones:

- The European Higher Education Area (membership in the European University Association) and in particular the Danube Region (intensive activities due to the membership in the Danube Rectors’ Conference network by means of cooperation and research projects as well as staff members exchange activities)
- Scandinavia (intensive activities due to Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree consortia as well as cooperation and exchange activities)
- South and East Asia (intensive activities due to the membership in the networks Eurasia-Pacific Uninet and Asea Uninet by means of staff mobility, study and research trips and double and joint degree activities)
- North America (intensive activities in the field of transdisciplinarity).

4.2. CURRICULAR AND EXTRACURRICULAR MOBILITY

An existing core competence of the University for Continuing Education Krems is the design of study programs with a flexible and creative setup (modularization, block courses, combination of digital teaching and learning formats as well as classroom courses, etc.). Within the framework of the key strategy “Expansion of international activities”, the university aims to broaden these models into “blended mobility”¹⁶ formats (mixed mobility: short-term mobility combined with virtual mobility, the latter taking place in virtual space). Following the principles of inclusion, this is planned in order to reach an internationally competitive level, to promote a diverse study and mobility culture in the academic courses, and to cultivate the students’ and staff’s international and intercultural skills. The objectives in this regard are:

- The extension of the “blended learning” model to “blended mobility” models
- The establishment of further mobility opportunities and activities in the curricula.

4.3. INTERNATIONALLY AVAILABLE RESEARCH

In its research, the University for Continuing Education Krems deals with current and future societal challenges and is thus dedicated to international issues to a significant extent. In this context, it is necessary to continue to improve the international availability of the university’s research at various levels by firmly establishing sustainable research projects with high visibility in European projects as well as at conferences and congresses, concentrating on:

- Enhanced cooperation with international universities and research institutions
- Additional participation in international networks and projects, especially within the framework of Horizon Europe, both by applying for and carrying out research projects, as well as by contributing to calls and participating in the evaluation process

¹⁵ Survey of the Service Center for International Relations as of 15 October 2020.

¹⁶ European Commission. Erasmus Charter for Higher Education 2014–2020 (Annotated Guidelines). Brussels: European Commission. 2016, p.7: “Blended mobility [describes] short-term physical mobility combined with virtual mobility [...]”

- Increased publication activity, in international peer-reviewed scientific journals as well as in form of presentations of research results at international conferences, and organization of international congresses
- Further development and accreditation of PhD programs according to international standards
- Expansion and further development of research cooperation in the Danube region
- Increased involvement of international visiting professors and international scientists within the framework of cross-border funding programs.

4.4. INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

The University for Continuing Education Krems commits to the “National Strategy on the Social Dimension in Higher Education’s” principles of non-discrimination, transparency, as well as inclusion and diversity regarding mobile individuals and cooperation projects.¹⁷ The Service Center for International Relations strategically establishes clear and transparent selection and application criteria for all Erasmus+ and other international activities, which are published on the website and intranet and guarantee that underrepresented groups are adequately advised and supported. In doing so, frameworks are set up to promote social inclusion, gender equality and diversity with reference to internationalization. In making personal (tele)support possible and available, additional transparency is ensured. Transparency at all stages of the mobility process, as well as in the inquiry and complaint processes, ensures adherence to additional principles of non-discrimination, transparency, and inclusion.

The priorities regarding inclusion and diversity are as follows:

- Gender balance among mobility participants
- Increase of student (short-term) mobility
- Prioritization of junior scientists and administrative staff
- Reduction of financial, structural and administrative barriers to mobility.

4.5. DIGITALIZATION

One of the six priorities the European Commission has set for 2019–2024¹⁸ involves prioritizing the digital age when endeavoring the European Education Area’s objectives¹⁹. In particular as a university for continuing education, whose guiding principles are societal effectiveness, quality, and innovation, the university is especially challenged to contribute to shaping the societal change associated with digital transformation. Against this background, the University for Continuing Education Krems commits to digitalization as an integral part of its internationalization activities. It aims at:

- Digitalization of administrative processes in the Erasmus+ program along with the European Commission’s time schedule and as an environmentally friendly and contemporary practice.

4.6. SDGs AND SUSTAINABILITY

Through the direction given by its research and academic continuing education, the University for Continuing Education Krems actively shapes society. In this context, the topic of “sustainable development” was firmly anchored in the development plan for 2022–2027. It is also part of the university’s Code of Conduct, corresponding to the membership in the Alliance of Sustainable Universities in Austria. Furthermore, sustainable development is firmly integrated as a key strategy in the development plan 2022–2027 and is thus intended to visibly align the university’s research, teaching, and administration with the principle of sustainability in the comprehensive sense of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The objective of the internationalization activities related to the principle of sustainability aims at:

- Setting incentives towards environmentally friendly transport use for and during mobility activities.

4.7. INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME

Internationalisation at Home efforts are to be intensified in order to tap into additional international target groups and to include non-mobile students in international experiences. This is especially important against the background of aiming to balance out the different conditions of access to international mobility. For this purpose, the goals include:

- Establishing a seminar on “International and intercultural competences” in preparation for mobility activities as well as for activities in international consortia.
- Creating a welcome culture in order to facilitate the onboarding of international students and staff.

¹⁷ Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Economy. National Strategy on the Social Dimension in Higher Education. Vienna: Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research (Administrative area Education and Research). 2017.

¹⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/priorities_de [accessed 25.05.2020].

¹⁹ European Commission. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Strasbourg: European Commission. 2017: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-strengthening-european-identity-education-culture_en.pdf [accessed 25.05.2020].

5. Specific measures for implementation

(FURTHER) DEVELOPING THE STRATEGIC GEOGRAPHIC INTERNATIONALIZATION FOCUS ZONES

Field of action	Geographic dimension
Description of the measure	The university determines the actual internationalization activities – mobility activities, international research projects, international cooperation projects, active bilateral agreements – on a yearly basis and revises the strategic internationalization focus areas every three years if necessary. The Research Service and Grant Acquisition view and record existing research cooperation activities and identify those that are of particular strategic importance in collaboration with the departments, to subsequently add to this overview. This result is shared by the Service Center for International Relations every three years in a report on internationalization with the university in order to strategically inform and support the initiation of significant international cooperation.
Objective	Overview of existing international cooperation activities as strategic assistance for the purpose of continuous definition of geographic focus zones on a triennial basis.

CREATION OF ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS FOR CURRICULAR AND EXTRACURRICULAR MOBILITY

Field of action	Curricular and extracurricular mobility
Description of the measure	Development of procedures in order to plan mobility windows in curricula and to facilitate the organization of extracurricular study trips. Guidelines are created and funding possibilities depicted and shared with the university by way of information sessions, informational materials, webinars, and face-to-face meetings.
Objective	High-quality, if possible funded curricular and extracurricular mobility windows and study trips.

STRENGTHENING RESEARCH AND MAKING IT INTERNATIONALLY AVAILABLE

Field of action	Internationally available research
Description of the measure	By further strengthening the range of services offered in the area of research services (Research Service and Grant Acquisition), targeted support for international funding programs is to be made possible in close cooperation with the faculties. Support for the acquisition of European projects is to be further developed by means of an internal university system of initial funding, intensive information about calls for proposals in Horizon Europe, close coordination with the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) within the framework of the ERA dialogue, and appropriate training.
Objective	To secure a sustainable funding structure and administrative support for the further development of research at an internationally high level.

ENSURING THE INCLUSION OF ALL STAFF MEMBERS IN MOBILITY ACTIVITIES

Field of action	Inclusion and diversity
Description of the measure	The following measures are planned in order to ensure the participation and inclusion of all staff members in the Erasmus+ program and in order to strengthen teaching mobility and mobility of administrative and junior staff, especially women: a learning outcome system, mobility grants (for assistant professors employed at the university, staff members with a dissertation agreement, and PhD students), and internationalization measures (mobility, international publication activity, participation in European programs, international reviewer activity) as a future feature of staff members' performance and qualification agreements.
Objective	Expanded scholarship, nomination, monitoring, and recognition procedures for mobile staff.

ENHANCING OUTGOING STUDENT NUMBERS AND ENSURING THE INCLUSION OF ALL GROUPS IN MOBILITY ACTIVITIES, FOCUSING ON SHORT-TERM AND BLENDED MOBILITY

Field of action	Inclusion and diversity
Description of the measure	At the University for Continuing Education Krems, outgoing student mobility takes place only sporadically with mostly self-paying students from the Erasmus Mundus programs being mobile. Under the new Erasmus+ program 2021–2027, short-term mobility and “blended mobility” are possible, both of which meet the profile of the university's part-time students and fit the existing “blended learning” model. Study trips, for which a guideline will be drawn up, complement the plan to use these forms of mobility considerably.
Objective	To increase the number of outgoing students by structurally anchoring short-term and “blended mobility” for outgoing students within and outside the curricula (i.e. through study trips).

DIGITALIZATION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES IN THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAM IN LINE WITH THE TIME SCHEDULE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Field of action	Digitalization
Description of the measure	The European Commission's time schedule provides for many digitalization plans for 2021–2027. Starting 2021, inter-institutional agreements as well as learning agreements can be exchanged digitally. Sending and receiving student nominations by 2021, exchanging Transcripts of Records by 2023, and recognizing ECTS points in a fully automated way by 2025 should also be possible digitally. For the time being, the Erasmus Dashboard will be used at the University for Continuing Education Krems. In case of soaring student mobility numbers due to short-term and/or “blended mobility”, an internal or external program management solution will be set up to assist.
Objective	Timely implementation of the digitalization steps within the Erasmus+ program of the European Commission.

DEVELOPING AN INCENTIVE SYSTEM FOR THE USE OF ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY TRANSPORT FOR AND DURING MOBILITIES

Field of action	Sustainability
Description of the measure	Individuals who travel are encouraged to use sustainable modes of transportation and, whenever possible, to travel by train rather than by plane or car; this is supported by the federal government's travel fee regulations. An incentive system for environmentally friendly travel in the form of a Green Mobility Kit is intended to supplement these recommendations and, in particular, to make rail use the standard for business trips of up to 750 km.
Objective	To ensure environmentally friendly travel and reduce the ecological footprint of travelers.

DEVELOPING FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS FOR AN INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME CONCEPT

Field of action	Internationalisation at Home
Description of the measure	In addition to English signage on campus, the following measures are planned: a guideline for implementing spring/summer/winter schools, the annual participation in the Erasmus Days, as well as the conception and realization of a seminar on international and intercultural competences.
Objective	Welcome culture and administrative and intercultural frameworks for incoming students and staff as well as for non-mobile students and staff.

6. Contact and Reference Documents

If you have any questions, comments, or ideas regarding the key strategy "Expanding of international activities" please contact international@donau-uni.ac.at at any time.

Reference Documents:

- Danube University Krems Strategy, May 2019
- Development Plan of the University for Continuing Education Krems (Danube University Krems) 2022-2027
- Performance Agreement 2019-2021 between the University for Continuing Education Krems (Danube University Krems) and the Republic of Austria.
- Higher Education Mobility Strategy for the Promotion of Transnational Mobility at Austrian Universities, Universities of Applied Sciences and Private Universities (Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, 2016).
- National Higher Education Mobility and Internationalization Strategy 2020-2030 "Internationalization in Many Ways" (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, 2020).
- National Strategy on the Social Dimension in Higher Education (Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, 2017).
- All-Austrian University Development Plan 2022-2027 (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, 2020).
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a European Renewal Agenda for Higher Education (European Commission, 2017).
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 (European Commission, 2020)
- Rome Ministerial Communiqué (2020)

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