

Key strategy “Focused expansion of international activities”

2025-2028

University for Continuing Education Krems



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1. Strategic approach

“Focused 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
- Active cooperation partner for academic and extra-university institutions
- Well-developed research with a clear profile
- Intensified research-driven teaching
- Good balance between study, work and family
- Higher percentage of women in leadership positions.

MISSION STATEMENT >



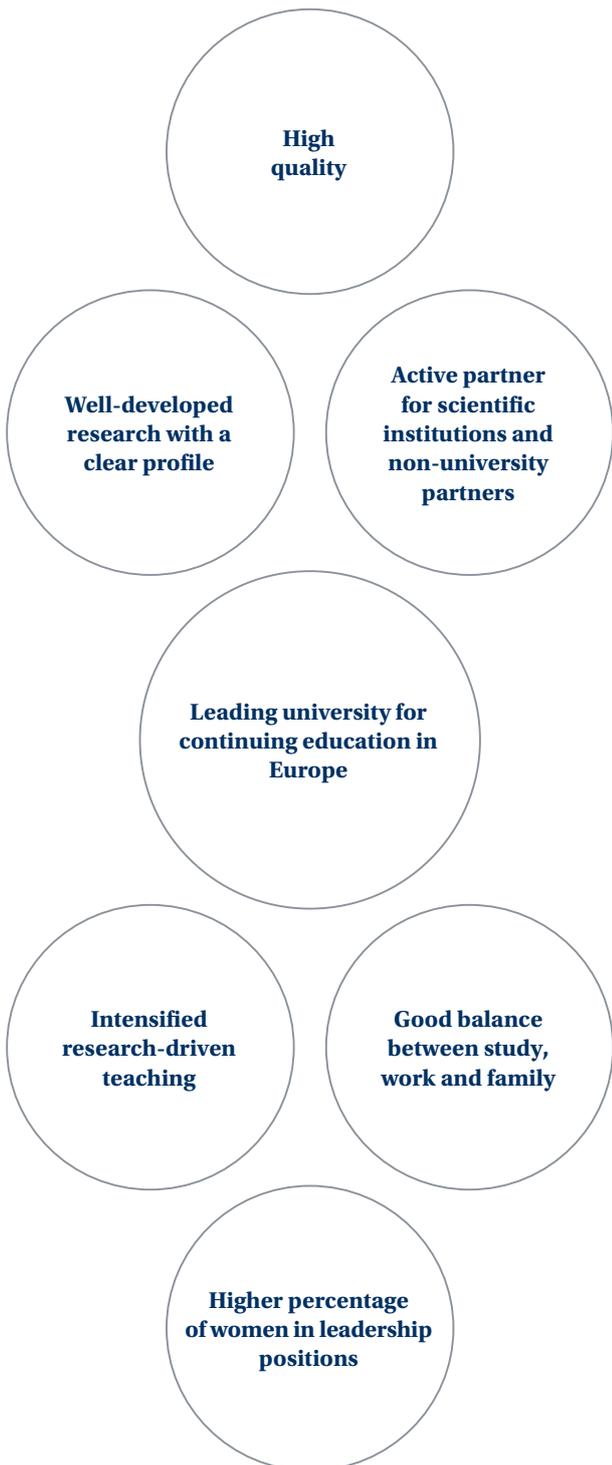
MISSION

The 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 NATIONAL AND REGIONAL

In 2020, the National Mobility and Internationalisation Strategy for Higher Education 2020-2030 titled “There are many routes to internationalisation”¹ was developed in Austria in dialogue with and with the involvement of the higher education landscape. The strategic goals “Promote an all-encompassing culture of internationalisation at higher education institutions”, “Promote mobility for all members of higher education institutions”, “Develop and implement innovative digital forms of mobility”, “Effective skills improvement and institutional learning” and “Global Mindset – Austria’s higher education institutions and their position in the world” are, in part, already being implemented at the University for Continuing Education Krems and are addressed for further development in the current key strategy “Focused expansion of international activities”.

Within the “Austrian University Development Plan 2022-2027”² which attends to the transregionally coordinated and regionally distributed range of services offered by Austrian universities, system objective number 6 specifies the prioritization of the enhancement of internationalization and mobility as a goal for the further development of universities throughout Austria. With the current key strategy, the University for Continuing Education Krems is committed to the measures contained therein: to increase high-quality transnational and physical mobility as an integral part of an “internationalized curriculum”, to internationalize studies and teaching and to generally promote internationalization. Regionally, the university is an institutional member of the “Danube Rectors’ Conference.”³ Not only for this reason the Danube region and its extension, the Danube-Moldova region, are central fields of action for the university. As the only public university in Lower Austria, the University for Continuing Education Krems contributes to the region and its development on a societal level. Topics such as new types of employment, societal trends, migration, civic engagement, etc., must be researched and taught in cooperation with neighboring countries in order to ensure high-quality research and teaching at an international level. This also serves to counteract brain drain, a challenge for the region. Considering this context, the strategic objectives of the action plan “EU Strategy for the Danube Region,”⁴ in particular priority areas 7 (Knowledge Society), 9 (People and Skills) and 10 (Institutional Capacity and Cooperation), are already being implemented at the university and addressed in the current key strategy in order to be further developed.

1.2 EUROPE

In the European context, the University for Continuing Education Krems is committed to the documents and objectives of the European Higher Education Area with a special focus on lifelong learning, an essential element since the 2001 Prague Conference, a periodic and itinerant ministerial conference that evaluates the progress made and decides on new steps within the European Higher Education Area.⁵ The “European Strategy for Universities”⁶ published in 2022 addresses the topic of lifelong learning in more detail and in light of current events and notes the following:

“Universities have a key role to play in preventing skills mismatches and bottlenecks that risk hindering Europe’s recovery, and in enabling the development of learners as creative and critical thinkers, problem solvers and active and responsible citizens equipped for lifelong learning.”⁷

The Tirana Communiqué 2024 corroborates this and specifies the methods (flexible learning pathways, recognition of knowledge and competences acquired (mostly outside of university), micro-credentials) that universities can use to offer lifelong learning opportunities according to academic standards to a large number of people.⁸

1 The National Mobility and Internationalisation Strategy for Higher Education 2020-2030 (HMIS2030) aims for a holistic approach regarding the internationalization of studies and teaching that includes mobility and permeates all levels and areas of a university or higher education institution. https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/HS-Uni/Europ%C3%A4ischer-Hochschulraum/Bologna-Prozess/hmis_2030.html [accessed on April 26, 2024].

2 The Austrian University Development Plan (GUEP) is a technical and strategic planning instrument of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) designed to shape the overall Austrian university landscape. <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/HS-Uni/Hochschulgovernance/Steuerungsinstrumente/GUEP.html> [accessed on April 26, 2024].

3 The Danube Rectors’ Conference (DRC) is a network of 65 universities in the Danube region. <https://www.drc-danube.org/> [accessed on April 26, 2024].

4 The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) provides an integrated framework for strengthening cooperation between national states. <https://danube-region.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/EUSDR-ACTION-PLAN-SWD202059-final.pdf> [accessed on April 26, 2024].

5 At the Ministerial Conferences, the ministers decide on the key aspects of the European Higher Education Area, including its further development and the commitments of its member countries. The Ministerial Conference also decides on new applications for membership in the EHEA and on any other important changes to the process. A communiqué containing the decisions of the ministers is passed at each Ministerial Conference.

6 The European Strategy for Universities aims to help universities adapt to conditions, to thrive and to contribute to Europe’s resilience and recovery. <https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/communication-european-strategy-for-universities-graphic-version.pdf> [accessed on April 26, 2024].

7 Ibid, p. 12.

8 The Tirana Communiqué was adopted by the Ministers of the European Higher Education Area at the end of May 2024. <https://eha2024tirane.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Tirana-Communique.pdf> [accessed on September 5, 2024].

In view of this, the University for Continuing Education Krems supports the flagship projects of the European Strategy for Universities through its “Erasmus Policy Statement”⁹ and its current key strategy. The future of European academic continuing education is particularly being developed through EU.ACE (European University for Academic Continuing Education)¹⁰, together with European partner universities from currently ten countries, including Switzerland and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a focus on supplementing the Bologna Process with a fourth pillar dedicated specifically to academic continuing education and lifelong learning at university level.

As lead coordinator of the EU.ACE partnership, the University for Continuing Education Krems also maintains and promotes exchange with other European alliances in order to make an even better joint contribution to achieving the goals of improving the international competitiveness of European universities, promoting European values and identity and thus advancing the further development of the European Higher Education Area.

The University for Continuing Education Krems also supports the implementation of the European Skills Agenda (Pact for Skills) with its range of study programs and participates in the “Skills Partnership for the European Health Industry” via the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) Health. This partnership aims to address challenges of the healthcare sector, develop a European model for the future, attract new talent and support current workforce through academic continuing education.

Since 2021, the University for Continuing Education Krems has also been a member of the European University Association (EUA), Europe’s largest university association, and its Council for Doctoral Education (EUA-CDE). Within the European Higher Education Area, the university is also an institutional member of the European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN), the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA), and the University Network for Social Responsibility.

The university makes extensive use of opportunities to participate in calls for proposals in the EU research and innovation framework program, Horizon Europe, and in the Erasmus+ program in order to strengthen its research and international cooperation. It promotes the exchange of knowledge and expertise through increased cooperation with leading international universities and research institutions. By participating in missions and EU partnerships (e.g. EIT Health, Pact for Skills) and the European Research Council (ERC), the University for Continuing Education Krems can position its research strengths in Europe and build further international cross-sector networks to promote innovation.

1.3 GLOBAL

At the University for Continuing Education Krems, global learning and global engagement are supported through numerous international mobility, cooperation, and research projects in order to ensure access to high-quality education to all individuals while taking into account diversity and inclusion. This promotes awareness of worldwide cultural pluralism within society and makes individual responsibility in a global context more visible. The university shares this contribution on an international level and in consideration of the values of the Magna Charta Universitatum 2020¹¹ with:

- students, including the international students (26%)¹²,
- universities in the ASEA-Uninet¹³, Eurasia-Pacific Uninet¹⁴ and Africa UniNet¹⁵ networks,
- partner universities outside the EU (in Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, India, Israel, Japan, Kosovo, Singapore, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and the USA)¹⁶.

9 The Erasmus Policy Statement includes a commitment to the principles of the Erasmus University Charter. <https://www.donau-uni.ac.at/dam/jcr:7fb9cc75-042e-4428-b848-34598c515a40/Erasmus%20Erkl%C3%A4rung%20zur%20Hochschulpolitik.pdf> [accessed on April 26, 2024].

10 The European University for Academic Continuing Education (EU.ACE) is a powerful university alliance focused on the development of innovative tailored lifelong learning paths as an integral part of the Bologna system and the European Education Area, designed to respond to the demands of 21st century society and the labor market. <https://euace.eu/> [accessed on April 26, 2024].

11 Magna Charta Universitatum, a declaration and affirmation of the fundamental principles on which the mission of universities should be based, was signed in 1988 on the occasion of the 900th anniversary of the University of Bologna and updated in 2020. <https://www.magna-charta.org/magna-charta-universitatum/mcu2020> [accessed April 26, 2024].

12 Winter semester 2023/2024, see Intellectual Capital Report 2023: <https://www.donau-uni.ac.at/en/university/about/reports.html>.

13 The ASEAN- European Academic University Network (ASEA-UNINET) is a university network made up of European and Southeast Asian universities with the aim of promoting the continuous internationalization of education and research. <https://asea-uninet.org/> [accessed on April 26, 2024].

14 The Eurasia-Pacific Uninet (EPU) is a network that establishes contacts and scientific partnerships between Austrian universities, universities of applied sciences and other research institutions and member institutions in East Asia, Central Asia, South Asia and the Pacific region. <https://www.eurasiapacific.org/> [accessed on April 26, 2024].

15 The Austrian-African research network Africa-UniNet was initiated to create a long-term, stable basis for cooperation between Austrian and African universities and research institutions. <https://africa-uninet.at/en/> [accessed April 26, 2024].

16 Survey by the Service Center for International Relations as of April 25, 2024 (dormant and not included are collaborations with universities in the Russian Federation).

2 Target groups and stakeholders

The target groups of the proposed measures for implementing the key strategy are the employees and students of the University for Continuing Education Krems:

- academic and administrative staff,
- students in continuing education programs and exchange students.

The stakeholders addressed in the fields of action correspond to the university's Organizational Chart:

- Faculties
- Departments
- Centers
- Research Labs
- University administration.

3 Methodology

The update of the key strategy "Expansion of international activities" is based on the evaluation of its implementation in the period 2021–2023. The evaluation resulted in proposals for additions and corrections to the original key strategy, which were formulated to further promote the implementation of internationalization measures. The following proposals were identified in the respective fields of action:

- Field of action: Geographic dimension
 - Suggestion of a revision of the geographical focus zones, which provide orientation for future partnerships and at the same time enable bottom-up activities to reflect the current state of developments at the university;
 - Encouragement to add measures for responsible handling of partnership requests from countries and regions where EU values are not in focus.
- Field of action: Curricular and extracurricular mobility
 - Proposal of measures to add international activities in curricula (incl. study trips).
- Field of action: Inclusion and diversity
 - Suggestion of measures to include international activities (e.g. stays abroad) to career development talks;
 - Encouragement to add measures to involve students in the planning of mobility projects.
- Field of action: Digitalization
 - Proposal of measures to involve the Division of Teaching Development and Digital Transformation in the ESCI project (European Student Card Initiative).

The Service Center for International Relations has incorporated these suggestions for additions and corrections into the draft of the updated key strategy and coordinated them with the Rectorate.

4 Fields of action

4.1 GEOGRAPHICAL DIMENSION

At the end of 2023, the university had a network of 64 bilateral partner agreements (26 Memoranda of Understanding and 38 inter-institutional agreements; 58 of these in the European Higher Education Area and 6 worldwide).¹⁷ In April 2024, central bilateral Memoranda of Understanding and inter-institutional partnership agreements with partner universities, i.e. those that can be used by the entire university or an entire faculty, cover the following countries:

- EU: Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Cyprus
- Non-EU European Higher Education Area: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Switzerland, Turkey, and Ukraine
- Asia: China, India, Israel, Japan, and Singapore
- North America: USA.

In addition, network-memberships enable activities and projects in the following regions:

- ASEA-UNINET: Southeast Asia
- Africa-UniNet: Africa
- Eurasia-Pacific Uninet: East, Central and South Asia, and the Pacific region.

Hence, the following strategic geographical, but not exclusive, focus zones have been identified for the period 2024 - 2026:

- Danube Region (to continue to support existing intensive activities in the region)
- European Higher Education Area (to continue to support existing activities, particularly with regard to EU.ACE)
- North and South America (to expand activities in these regions).

In addition to the focus zones and considering the actuality of the topic of knowledge security, it should be ensured that current and future partner universities of the University for Continuing Education Krems represent similar values in international cooperation. To support the university in this respect, the development of guidelines for high-quality international partnerships is being planned.

4.2 CURRICULAR AND EXTRACURRICULAR MOBILITY

Internationalization has been included as a mandatory curricular structural element of the university's new curricula: offers for acquiring international skills must be anchored in every curriculum of a continuing education study program leading to an academic degree (bachelor's and master's study programs). These can sometimes be implemented through mobility (stays abroad). A "Toolbox: Internationalization of the curriculum - funding" has already been developed to support curriculum designers. As part of the revised key strategy "Expansion of international activities", these curricular offers, as well as extracurricular mobility, will receive increased support:

- through a focus on funded short-term mobility with a virtual element;
- via the EU.ACE partnership, especially through the partners from the Danube region (for example through joint micro-credential programs or continuing education study programs);
- as part of a central internationalization module at renowned universities in countries outside of the EU (e.g. Singapore, USA), without funding.

4.3 INTERNATIONALLY AVAILABLE RESEARCH

In its research, the University for Continuing Education Krems addresses current and future societal challenges. In the interest of transdisciplinarity, it builds bridges between basic research and application, between individual disciplines and, in its role as a public university for continuing education, bridges to societal needs. In this context, it is important to continue to support the international visibility of the university's research, particularly at the following levels:

¹⁷ Intellectual Capital Report 2023: <https://www.donau-uni.ac.at/en/university/about/reports.html>

- Continuation and expansion of the mobility grant for female early career researchers;
- Increased involvement of international visiting professors from EU.ACE partner universities and increased participation in European research and society projects (science-to-society), as well as in peer reviewed publications with EU.ACE partner universities, especially those from the Danube region;
- Participation in EU.ACE Living Labs;
- Additional participation in international networks and projects, especially within the framework of Horizon Europe, by applying for and carrying out research projects, helping to design calls for proposals and participating in the evaluation process.

4.4 INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

The University for Continuing Education Krems is committed to broadly anchoring equality, gender, and diversity as part of fulfilling its societal objectives. An Inclusion Coordinator has already been trained and named within the Service Center for International Relations and an “Inclusive Mobility Kit” and “International Skills Certificate for Staff” have been developed at the university. These are intended to ensure the participation and inclusion of all groups (students and staff) in mobility activities. Specifically, these measures aim to promote the acquisition of professional, international and intercultural skills associated with mobility activities. Future priorities in this area are defined as follows:

- Increase in short-term student mobility and ensuring its recognition after mobility;
- Further prioritization of junior academic staff and administrative staff in mobility activities and further increase in staff teaching mobilities, which are underrepresented;
- Recognition of international staff activities as an increasingly important feature of performance and qualification agreements as well as career development talks.

4.5 DIGITALIZATION IN THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAM

Digitalization in the Erasmus+ program is significant for the future of European higher education cooperation. The digitalization of the Erasmus+ program is summarized as the “European Student Card Initiative” (ESCI). The initiative consists of two blocks:

- Digitalizing and streamlining student mobility administration processes via „Erasmus without paper” (EWP);
- Rolling out the „European Student Card” and enabling easier and faster access to campus and other services via „European student card project”¹⁸

In order to implement the goals of the initiative, the Mobility Online software solution was acquired, and an EWP Coordinator was trained and named within the Service Center for International Relations. As a result, it is possible to make inter-institutional agreements online since 2022 and incoming learning agreements since 2023. The prerequisite for this was and is the European Student Identifier (ESI), which was implemented in August 2021 through participation in eduGAIN. Further digitalization measures within the Erasmus+ program will follow according to prioritization and synergies with the ongoing digitalization of the study organization.

4.6 SDGS AND SUSTAINABILITY

The increased consideration of the SDGs is one of the key strategies in the current development plan of the University for Continuing Education Krems. At the beginning of 2023, the “Platform for Sustainable Development (SDGs)” was founded for purposes of implementing the SDGs. In this context and as a contribution from the point of view of internationalization, a “Green Mobility Kit” was developed at the university. The kit provides support for deciding on whether to travel at all and how, as well as information on how best to travel abroad using sustainable means of transport within the Erasmus+ grant program. The objective of internationalization activities in connection with sustainability concerns:

- The increased use of the Green Mobility Kit and of subsidies for environmentally friendly travel.

¹⁸ See graphic on the „Erasmus+ Goes Digital” page: <https://erasmusplus.oead.at/de/hochschulbildung/hochschulen-und-ihre-partner/erasmus-going-digital-european-student-card-initiative/erasmus-goes-digital> [accessed on January 28, 2025]

4.7 INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME

Internationalization has been adopted as a mandatory curricular structural element of the university's new curricula: every continuing education study program leading to an academic degree (bachelor's and master's study programs) must include opportunities for students to acquire international skills. These can be implemented through measures of *Internationalisation at Home* or *Internationalisation at a Distance*. As part of the updated key strategy "Focused expansion of international activities", further development of these opportunities will be given increased support as follows:

- With the EU.ACE partners, particularly those in the Danube region (for example, through joint micro-credential programs and/or continuing education study programs open to international students and lecturers in Krems);
- By developing the Welcome Center to facilitate onboarding for international students and staff and to simplify temporary stays for exchange students and guests.

5. Specific measures for implementation

5.1 DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUIDELINES FOR QUALITATIVE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Field of action | Geographic dimension |
| Description of the measure | Development of a “Safe mobility kit” to support the university in establishing new partnerships with international partners, while taking into account the principles of responsible internationalization with regard to European values and foreign interference. |
| Objective | Creation of the “Safe mobility kit” |

5.2 SUPPORT OF CURRICULAR AND EXTRACURRICULAR SHORT-TERM MOBILITY

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Field of action | Curricular and extracurricular mobility |
| Description of the measure | Networking towards (EU.ACE and renowned universities in North America and Asia) and managing mobility activities with a focus on funded short-term mobility with a virtual element and on curricular mobility. |
| Objective | Ideally funded, high-quality stays abroad for continuing education students |

5.3 STRENGTHENING AND INTERNATIONAL VISIBILITY OF RESEARCH

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Field of action | Internationally available research |
| Description of the measure | Networking towards Living Labs, European research and societal projects, publications, guest professors and activities for junior scientists with a focus on EU.ACE. |
| Objective | Securing a sustainable financing structure for the further development of EU.ACE and thus research at a high international level |

5.4 INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN STUDENT MOBILITY ACTIVITIES

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Field of action | Inclusion and diversity |
| Description of the measure | Networking with a focus on EU.ACE partners for Erasmus+-funded joint modules, micro-credential programs and continuing education study programs that have been developed with student needs in mind. This makes it easier to identify study opportunities available abroad while recognition of credits completed abroad can be carried out in an uncomplicated manner. In this way, several groups of students are addressed. |
| Objective | Further increase in outgoing students |

5.5 INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN STAFF MOBILITY ACTIVITIES

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Field of action | Inclusion and diversity |
| Description of the measure | Networking towards the mobility of junior academic staff, administrative staff and of teaching staff, with a focus on EU.ACE partners while expanding the recognition procedure for international staff activities. |
| Objective | Increase in the number of stays abroad for junior academic staff, administrative staff and in mobility activities for teaching |

5.6 DIGITALIZATION IN THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAM

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Field of action | Digitalization in the Erasmus+ program |
| Description of the measure | Further digitalization measures as part of the Erasmus+ program, such as digital transcripts of records, will follow according to prioritization and while maintaining synergies with the ongoing digitalization of the study organization. |
| Objective | Timely implementation of the mandatory digitalization steps within the Erasmus+ program |

5.7 ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY STAYS ABROAD

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Field of action | SDGs and sustainability |
| Description of the measure | Increased promotion of the Green Mobility Kit in preparatory talks for stays abroad by students and staff, including presentation of the Erasmus+ grants for the use of sustainable means of transport. |
| Objective | Reducing the environmental footprint of students and staff when traveling abroad |

5.8 CONTINUATION OF THE WELCOME CENTER

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Field of action | Internationalisation at Home |
| Description of the measure | Continuation of the Welcome Center to facilitate onboarding for international students and staff and the temporary stay for exchange students and guests, with a focus on information on arrival and stay in Krems. |
| Objective | Further increase in incoming students and guests |

6 Contact and reference documents

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

Reference documents:

- Strategic Framework of the University for Continuing Education Krems
- Development Plan of the University for Continuing Education Krems 2022–2027
- Development Plan of the University for Continuing Education Krems 2025–2030
- Performance agreement between the University for Continuing Education Krems and the Republic of Austria 2022–2024
- National Mobility and Internationalisation Strategy for Higher Education 2020–2030 „There are many routes to internationalisation“ (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research)
- Austrian University Development Plan 2022–2027 (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research)
- Austrian University Development Plan 2025–2030 (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research)
- Ministerial Declarations and Communiqués (EHEA Ministerial Conferences, 1998–2024)
- European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (European Commission, 2020)
- European Strategy for Universities (European Commission, 2022)
- Erasmus Policy Statement (University for Continuing Education Krems, 2020)
- Magna Charta Universitatum 2020

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