



VAA ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT 2021-20217

Vilnius Academy of Arts (VAA) 2020-2028 Strategic Plan embeds internationalisation into at least 3 of its strategic goals:

1. Provide university level education of international standing in the areas of arts, design and architecture;
 2. Seek to produce excellent work in the fields of artistic creation as well as artistic and scientific research that is recognised internationally;
 3. Enhance the influence that the Academy exercises in the areas of culture and arts locally and internationally.
- VAA aims to achieve these goals through a number of support mechanisms, offered by the new Erasmus+ programme.

The Academy is highly committed to preparing highly skilled, socially engaged people for the European and global job markets. VAA recognises the intrinsic value of European and international cooperation, student and staff mobility activities as well as international collaboration on research, and will maintain its focus on expanding and diversifying those, simultaneously devising internal social inclusion policies for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, thus, ensuring equal and equitable access to all participants.

In line with the 5th strategic goal, VAA seeks to 'foster creativity, responsibility, and entrepreneurship that enable the growth of a talented individual', hence equipping students with a set of key competences for lifelong learning, as defined by the European Commission in the 'New Skills Agenda for Europe. VAA plays great importance on instilling the spirit of European and global citizenship, as well as supporting the notion of active citizenship. In order to achieve this goal VAA seeks to promote volunteering and the involvement of alumni in the activities of the Academy.

The Academy pursues to invest into continuous professional development of its academic and administrative staff in order to enable them deliver high-quality international education (for academic staff) and provide efficient and timely support for international students, staff and partnerships as well as create effective governance mechanisms in support of excellence (for administrative staff). VAA will make active use of the funding mechanisms and activities offered by the new Erasmus+ programme to support this goal.

In order to ensure individual and societal advancement, provide highly skilled human capital and articulate citizens for economic growth and prosperity, VAA will strengthen the knowledge triangle between education, research and business by cooperating to a greater extent with businesses, given the state promotion of collaborative R & D activities between business and science, as well as further maintaining its Centres of Excellence, providing leadership, best practice, expertise, methodologies, research, support and training for staff in a particular area. At present, the Academy runs the following Centres of Excellence: Institute of Fine Arts, Open School of Arts, Design and Architecture, and Design Innovation Centre. VAA will, in this instance, use the educational and research tools introduced by the new programme.

Hence, by pursuing the goals set above, and consolidating mutual work together with its European and international partners, VAA commits towards the EC's initiative of building a European Education Area.

In 2020, VAA aims to devise a supporting Internationalisation Strategy, identifying necessary measures and tools in order to achieve the strategic goals outlined in the 2020-2028 institutional strategic plan.

VAA has been an active participant under the Erasmus+ 2014-2020 programme, aiming to maximise its contribution to the EU's smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Within the context of the new 2020-2028 VAA strategic plan, implementation of the Academy's accompanying internationalising strategy will be supported by a number of key activities under the new Erasmus+ programme.

KEY ACTION 1: STUDENT AND STAFF MOBILITY WITHIN AND OUTSIDE EUROPE

Student and staff mobility has been a core part of the VAA's degrees and constitutes paramount importance for the continued professional development of the VAA academic and administrative staff. Participation in exchange programmes and traineeships outside their home country does not only enhance students' learning experience but equips them with a set of key competences and skills for lifelong learning such as multilingualism, digital, interpersonal and entrepreneurial skills, cultural awareness and active citizenship. In case of staff mobility, mobility programmes are catalyst for innovative and improved teaching practices and the creation of valuable academic contacts and networks. VAA aims to continue actively promoting and increasing reciprocal student and staff mobility, providing favourable and equal conditions for participation. A special focus will be given towards increased involvement of research students into the new programme, as well as a more active use of the added value given by the international credit mobility with Partner countries.

VAA has also identified the creation of a joint Master's degree as part of its strategic plan. In order to achieve this goal, the Academy is going to consolidate its expert academic knowledge and prepare a proposal for an Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree (EMJMD), jointly delivered by an international consortium consisting of the Academy's trusted academic partners.

Thus, the Key Action 1 will contribute to achieving the VAA institutional strategic goal to „provide university level education of international standing in the areas of arts, design and architecture”.

KEY ACTION 2: COOPERATION FOR INNOVATION AND THE EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTICES

VAA has already benefited from participating in some of the KA2 actions under the 2014-2020 programme. Yet, there is a lot of scope to further promote and develop the activities brought forward by the Erasmus+ programme under this action. Hence, VAA aims to invest much more time and efforts into raising the awareness of the VAA staff regarding the KA2. This will be done by running workshops together with the VAA Project Department and inviting the departments who have been active under this call to share their successful case studies with the VAA community.

VAA International Relations Department commits in being an active member in announcing the relevant calls in a timely and efficient manner as well as providing general information and ensuring promotion of the KA2 actions. VAA Project Department will provide specialist advice and support in compiling project applications.

The Academy also aims to use the expert advice and experience of its Centres of Excellence: Institute of Fine Arts and Design Innovation Centre – in order to further strengthen the knowledge triangle between education, research and business, and use the educational and research tools introduced by the Erasmus+ programme under the KA2.

KEY ACTION 3: SUPPORT FOR POLICY REFORM

VAA has not taken part in this action during 2014-2020, yet would like to tap into this area under the new programme.

We believe that our specialist knowledge in the field of arts, design and architecture could contribute to the development of relevant country-specific and thematic analysis, including through cooperation with academic networks, which could be supported under the KA3.

Overall, by means of the Erasmus+ programme actions listed above VAA would be able to comply to its vision - to be among the leading higher education institutions of art, design and architecture globally as well as achieve its strategic goals to provide university level education of international standing and quality, high-calibre artistic and scientific research and significantly increase its impact in culture and arts internationally.

VAA has been actively promoting student and staff mobility, aiming to contribute to the EC's set Bologna target of 20 % mobile participants by 2020. Even though we have not reached the EU quantitative targets yet, the interest in outgoing mobility amongst VAA students and staff has been high over the 2014-2020 period. VAA seeks to build on that further throughout the new Erasmus+ cycle. To do so, we have set the quantitative targets for student and staff mobility.

We aim to consolidate efforts and increase student and staff mobility annually by 10 %, thus doubling the number of outgoing mobile participants by the end of the new Erasmus+ programme. We do admit that the real implementation of the set targets largely depends on the allocated Erasmus+ funding. Provided the funding is considerably higher than the one we have received annually to date, we do see the potential to increase the targets above to an even higher degree.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

VAA institutional strategy supports the principles of non-discrimination, transparency and inclusion set out in the Programme. It is clearly communicated on the VAA website and intranet as well as in the internal Erasmus+ guidelines for students and staff that applications from all participants regardless of their sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation are welcomed. The selection is done in a fair, transparent, coherent and documented way, in line with the provisions of its contract with the National Agency, as well as the internal documents. When setting up a Selection Committee annually VAA makes sure it is representing the interests and needs of various target groups, thus ensuring that any individual or group are treated equally and equitably, in accordance with Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Special attention is given to students and staff with fewer opportunities for either economic, social, cultural, geographical, health reasons or for reasons such as disability or educational difficulties and extra support is granted to them based on their needs. VAA allows students and staff to disclose their special needs at the time of the application process and ensures their privacy is respected.

Top-up grants are awarded to students from lower socio-economic background, in line with the national and institutional requirements. VAA also provides for extra time during exams/coursework for dislexic students and students with other learning difficulties.

VAA commits to supporting applications (both outgoing and incoming) from students and/or staff with disabilities and acting as an intermediary on the behalf of outgoing participants when discussing their special needs with a host institution.

Students with family responsibilities, part-time jobs or enrolled in programmes where being mobile is difficult etc., are offered and encouraged to benefit from blended mobility opportunities, thus, ensuring equal and equitable access to all participants.

VAA highly values and supports the new European Student Card Initiative. To date, VAA has been using the Erasmus+ Dashboard for the approval of both outgoing and incoming exchange students' online learning agreements.

VAA will make full use of the simplified administrative procedures brought forth by the Erasmus Without Paper (EWP)

network initiative, as well as a secure exchange of student information and documents. In line with the timeline of the

EWP network, VAA aims:

- 2021 - to manage inter-institutional agreements and online learning agreements
- 2022 - to send and receive student nominations and acceptances
- 2023 - to exchange transcripts of records related to student mobility

Concept of sustainability is also actively promoted at VAA in creative and artistic fields. The Academy is inviting guest lecturers to deliver creative workshops embracing the notion of sustainability. E.g., a creative workshop run by a visiting professor Arūnas Ošlapas from Western Washington University (USA) and a VAA lecturer Barbora Adamonytė 'Sustainable design pop-up "Re/Matter" ', which took place in December 2019. Design pop-up "Re/Matter" showcased VAA Industrial Design students' ideas and possibilities of responsible production and consumption. VAA will continue promoting environmentally sustainable and responsible behaviour among its participants.

VAA agrees that students with an exchange experience are far more engaged in civil society organisations and volunteering activities, in comparison to their peers.

Promotion of civic engagement and active citizenship constitutes a part of the VAA's strategy. Values of civic and ethical responsibility are incorporated into the VAA curriculum.

VAA has been ensuring full automatic recognition of mobile students' study and/or training period abroad under the current Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020), and commits to continue doing so under the new programme. Necessary learning outcomes for mobile students are identified by the student academic coordinator at VAA prior to mobility activities abroad and agreed by signing a Learning agreement for studies/traineeship (signed by all 3 parties accordingly). On successful completion of a mobility period abroad and submission of the Transcript of Records or Traineeship Certificate, VAA automatically recognises all the credits earned by the student during a mobility period abroad.

Head of International Relations Office is responsible for the administration and management of staff mobility at VAA. The Academy is following the internal approved guidelines, clearly defining various steps of staff mobility (before, during and after), grant award and management, accountability and recognition. The guidelines are being reviewed and modified in line with the EU rules and requirements, and easily accessible by all VAA staff on the staff intranet pages.

Overall, interest in staff mobility opportunities under Key Action 1 amongst VAA staff has been really high over the past 7 years. Annually, approximately 45 staff members participate in staff mobility for teaching and training across Europe and beyond. This makes up 8 % of mobile staff annually. The interest has been higher than the amount of the allocated Erasmus+ and national funding. Additionally, around 15 staff members took part in various mobile activities under the Nordplus network.

Gaining international experience is of crucial importance for the VAA staff members, who seek to produce excellent work in the fields of artistic creation as well as artistic and scientific research that is recognised internationally.

Participation in staff mobility activities is considered as part of continuous professional development.

All staff members are recording their mobility activities in annual staff reports. These are reviewed and discussed during performance appraisal reviews with the heads of the departments on a yearly basis. Afterwards, any arising needs for further professional development are identified (including participation in future international staff teaching and/or training opportunities).

In case a staff member is willing to upgrade his/her pedagogical or artistic qualification, international experience gained during staff mobility for teaching/training counts towards such an assessment.