



**SÖDERTÖRNS HÖGSKOLA** | STOCKHOLM  
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## Erasmus+ Policy Statement

### Erasmus Policy statement (EPS): your strategy

Södertörn University (Södertörns högskola, "SH") is a young, modern public HEI dedicated to intercultural and interdisciplinary teaching and research on a foundation of societal relevance, openness, and civic education. SH has an elaborate internationalisation strategy emphasising the importance of creating environments where ideas, knowledge and experiences can be exchanged.

The overall vision of SH is to be a university that contributes to sustainable societal development through research, education, and critical reflection on contemporary challenges. To realise this vision, a focus on internationalising our activities in education, research and collaboration is key. All levels of education, as well as research, have a natural place in international contexts. Through internationalisation ideas, knowledge and experiences can be exchanged. Creating environments where this exchange can take place is a necessity to the progress of science and crucial in order to meet the needs of a global labour market, and to contribute to sustainable societal development. Therefore, SH will strive to offer all students, faculty, and staff such environments.

The internationalisation strategy of SH has a specific focus on mobility for students, faculty, and staff. All students whether mobile or not should be offered international perspectives throughout their studies. Both inbound and outbound student-, teacher- and staff mobility is an important means to integrate international perspectives in courses and study programmes and to internationalise administrative support. The university's ambition is to develop and strengthen already established partnerships as well as to develop new forms of cooperation and joint educational projects with both European and non-European partners.

The prioritised activities thus include facilitation of student mobility, expanding our educational offering in English, continue building the relevant infrastructure for international and EU-projects. It also includes ensuring that recruitment of doctoral students and researchers is conducted internationally. Another key aspect is to highlight the international and intercultural experience and knowledge of staff and students, not least linguistically.

For SH, international mobility is an integrated part of the work with broadening participation, civic responsibility, and sustainable development. Internationalisation is a possibility for all within the University and the possibilities are actively promoted and paired with professional guidance. Internationalisation work at SH is characterised by the awareness of how to integrate international, intercultural, and global issues in order to increase quality. To enable all students and alumni to be engaged as active citizens is at the heart of what SH as educational institution sets out to achieve. Therefore, we strive to both utilize and be inspired by our current diversity as regards culture, language and experience in ways that actively include mobile and pre-/post mobile students. In close dialogue with the Student Union, we will also be open to new forms of collaboration related to municipalities in the region and civic organisations.

Södertörn University will participate in the development of sustainability in the Stockholm region and its regional urban centers. A sustainable working life will be prioritised during the upcoming Erasmus+ programme period. The university will increase awareness about the environmental impact of travel and offer a functional infrastructure for other ways of travelling, meeting, and using digital platforms more effectively.

Courses and programmes will be characterised by sustainable development and lifelong learning in many ways. They must provide knowledge and skills with long-term viability, making students capable of handling new and unexpected issues during their lives. Education will be offered in different formats to provide wide-ranging knowledge provision in society, with the aim of providing students with the capacity to make active contributions to sustainable development, both as members of society and in their professional lives.

SH strives to create long-term partnerships and attractive exchange opportunities with well sought-out partners that match the University's offerings and subject areas and/or where cooperation can be built in many different subject areas and on different educational levels. For this purpose, the Erasmus+ programme is a crucial tool, providing both funding and a general structure for partnerships and projects. During the period of 2021-2027, SH seeks to increase the number of close partnerships with HEIs and other relevant organisations that share our vision. During the last two decades, SH has built up an extensive network within the framework of European cooperation. In addition to this, research related to the Baltic region and Eastern Europe forms a knowledge environment that is among the best in the world.

One of the objectives of SH's overall strategy is to continue establishing university networks in the Baltic region, Eastern Europe, and the Nordic countries. For this purpose, Erasmus+ projects in this region are of especially high importance. Participating in Erasmus+ 2021-2027 will assist the University in building close relationships both throughout Europe and the rest of the world. Furthermore, it will help promote internationalisation both through mobility, project-based cooperation, and an increased internationalisation at home. Likewise, the Erasmus+ programme will encourage and help the University fund environmentally friendly ways to connect internationally and to assist SH in making international experience available also to those with fewer opportunities.

**Reflect on the Erasmus actions you would like to take part in and explain how they will be implemented in practice at your institution. Explain how your institution's participation in these actions will contribute to achieving the objectives of your institutional strategy.**

#### **KA1 – mobility of individuals**

The major part of activities will be within KA1, mobility of individuals. Under KA1 SH wants to continue the exchange of students on BA, MA, and PhD level, both inbound and outbound students for studies and/or traineeships. Teachers and administrative staff alike will be encouraged to participate in shorter mobilities for pedagogical development, exchange of experience and learning new skills as well as regular guest lecturing. The University also intends to take advantage of the possibilities of blended mobility and virtual exchange. Following SH's institutional strategy, special emphasis will be on increasing the number of outgoing students. This will primarily be done through structured support to departments and subject/programme collegiums, who will need to be closely involved in planning the academic aspects of the mobilities. Also, the International Office will create an action plan for how to improve the number of students with fewer opportunities participating in physical and digital exchanges. In general, the number of participants is expected to grow, as the tailored quality of our exchange agreements, as well as the possibilities of Erasmus+, continues to develop.

A majority of Erasmus+ mobilities will be conducted with HEI's in other Programme countries where SH has more than one hundred partnerships. SH also intends to increase the number of mobilities with selected partner institutions in Partner countries. SH recognises that there is a conflict of interest between international mobility and sustainability. On the other hand, international collaboration is more than ever needed to save the climate. SH will, therefore, support sustainable travel for both students and staff and invest in digital platforms that facilitate travel-free international contacts. Participating in Erasmus+ is thus an important means for SH in how we as an educational institution can contribute to sustainable societal development and reflect on contemporary challenges.

SH will strive to make the opportunities and results of the programme widely known both within and outside of the institution. Calls for application and eligibility criteria will be communicated in a transparent and structured way. The support available to participants will be highlighted whenever possible and regardless of the presumed needs. Evaluation and selection criteria will follow the principles of meritocracy and equal opportunities. The International Office, and in particular the Erasmus+ Institutional Coordinator, will closely monitor that relevant structures are in place and followed for the full duration of the programme.

## **KA2 – Cooperation among organisations and institutions**

Under Key Action 2, SH wishes to increase close partnerships with educational institutions and organisations in Europe and beyond. Partnerships for exchanges of practices, educational innovation and course development or joint degrees will generally be initiated by subject areas or educational programmes according to their needs. The University will provide support regarding project applications, guidelines and reports and will promote the opportunities to schools and departments. The project management will in most cases be handled by the schools and departments themselves.

Partnerships for European Universities is a very interesting way to develop close cooperation with other institutions that is further explored by SH. If a network with a suiting profile can be developed, SH intends to participate in applications for European Universities Initiative. So far, the University has applied as associated partner of one EUI network. New initiatives and opportunities will be closely observed by the University to make the most relevant decisions serving our institutional profile.

Both KA 1 and KA 2 will contribute to SH's vision and internationalisation strategy in the following ways:

- 1) The inflow and outflow of staff will increase, to achieve even higher research quality and new perspectives in both education and administration.
- 2) The exchange of students will increase, which will strengthen their position on the labour market and bring back valuable perspectives and new insights to the involved institutions.
- 3) More students with fewer opportunities will participate in mobilities, both virtual and physical. This will be an important pillar in SH's objective to better utilise and be inspired by our current diversity as regards culture, language, and experience.
- 4) SH's educational offerings in English will be expanded and our ability to teach and cooperate in international educational contexts will increase. The project models available in Erasmus+ will be highly relevant for this development.

## **What is the envisaged impact of your participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on your institution?**

### **KA1.**

#### Quantitative targets:

The most obvious target for implementing Erasmus+ KA1 will be the number of mobile participants per year. SH's ambition is to increase participation with 10 % each academic year (corresponding to each new E+ call). We believe that especially blended mobility, student exchange for traineeships (SMP), shorter PhD exchange (SMS) and staff exchange (STT) all have the potential to reach higher numbers.

Each year, SH will systematically review the number of participants to/from different partner institutions and countries in order to keep track of the exchange balance. Similarly, the University will monitor subject and programme areas that commonly have less mobility and take measures to improve their exchange options.

At the end of the programme period 2021-27 we aim to have at least 100 mobile participants per academic year.

#### Qualitative targets:

The International Office (IO) at SH will closely monitor the EU Surveys of inbound and outbound participants as a direct follow-up of the qualitative aspects of the mobilities. Furthermore, IO will continuously work to improve service and information for mobile participants. In close dialogue with student representatives from the Student Union and faculty representatives from the Advisory Board for Internationalisation, the International Office will evaluate the results of the mobility programmes and what could be improved to ensure high satisfaction rates. This will be done on a yearly basis, for example in connection with the final report. Participation for students with fewer opportunities is an inherent aspect of the quality work. In Sweden, income or ethnic background is something HEI are not allowed to register. However, with a timely and transparent process with information about extra support available to all, we will nonetheless take action to ensure that the programme is indeed available to all. SH is a University with great diversity both culturally and linguistically. We have therefore made sure to have exchange opportunities available also in non-Western languages, such as Arabic and Japanese. If requested by the students, this is an area that could be even further developed.

## **KA2.**

The purpose of these partnerships is to support the exchange of best practices, joint course development, problem-solving and innovation related to education in order to achieve high quality education for our students; to build networks and strengthen our capacity for cooperation through “seamless” partnerships; contribute to increased visibility and competitiveness for the institution and strengthen particular subject fields in an international context. Digitalization has already been a theme of several KA2-projects that SH has participated in, and we expect this to continue even more in the new programme.

The University also aims to support projects containing blended or entirely virtual exchanges. These initiatives might be more accessible to participants that are not able to travel or live abroad for longer periods, for example participants with fewer opportunities.

The type and number of KA2-projects will be based on the needs and wishes of departmental faculty. Therefore, it is not possible to state in advance a quantitative target. The University will however closely monitor the applications and hope to achieve both a higher number of applications and a higher success rate. We also find it plausible that SH will participate in at least one application for joint masters during the upcoming programme period. The potential impact of such a project would create both visibility and serve as a quality indicator for the master’s programmes involved. It will support long-term collaboration, build capacity, and support diversity.

As mentioned above, participation for students with fewer opportunities is an inherent aspect of quality work. In Sweden, income, nationality or ethnic background is something HEI:s are not allowed to register. However, with a timely and transparent process with information about extra support available to all we will nonetheless take action to ensure that the programme is indeed available to all. SH is a University with great diversity both culturally and linguistically. We have therefore made sure to have exchange opportunities available also in non-Western languages, such as Arabic and Japanese. If requested by the students, this is an area that could be even further developed.

SH has appointed coordinators for students with disabilities. Together with the support from the Swedish National Agency, we can offer outbound participants with a permanent disability the support needed. Incoming participants are encouraged to contact the University early, in order for us to make an assessment of the special needs support that is required. The International Office works closely together with the disability coordinators to create accessible information and a coherent support structure for students with these needs.

## 2. Implementation of the Fundamental Principles

### 2.1 Implementation of the new principles

SH will strive to make the opportunities and results of the programme widely known both within and outside of the institution. Calls for application and eligibility criteria will be communicated in a transparent and structured way. The support available to participants will be highlighted whenever possible and regardless of the presumed needs. Personal guidance on how to plan an exchange period and the application documents are available to all. Evaluation and selection criteria will follow the principles of meritocracy and equal opportunities. The International Office, and in particular the Erasmus+ Institutional Coordinator, will closely monitor that relevant structures are in place and followed for the full duration of the programme.

At SH we are generally promoting widening participation within the whole student population, in Erasmus+ guidelines referred to as inclusion of students with fewer opportunities. For example, both faculty and international coordinators try to especially motivate those without previous experience from international mobility to seize the opportunity, and we try to keep the application requirements as accessible as possible. Also, students that have not previously participated in an Erasmus+ mobility will be ranked higher than those applying for their second exchange period in order to not cause crowding-out effects of those applying for the first time.

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**Explain what measures your institution will put in place to implement the European Student Card Initiative and promote the use of the programme's Erasmus+ mobile App to students. Please refer to the timeline indicated on the European Student Card Initiative website.**

The importance of digitalisation in education, research and administration at SH will continue to increase over the upcoming programme period. The digitalisation of Erasmus+ mobilities in the new Erasmus+ programme will be a priority for the International Office at SH. The University's digital competence and infrastructure will be strengthened, and SH will continue to develop education formats that utilise the opportunities offered by digitalisation and respond to the expectations of students and the surrounding community vis-à-vis our flexibility and accessibility.

Today, both student and staff mobilities are mostly handled through Mobility Online (MO) which has full support for Erasmus Without Papers. SH believes that the European Student Card initiative will provide very positive features for mobile students. We will therefore work closely together with the MO provider SOP in order to implement all its functionality for in- and outgoing students at SH. We will also include other participants, such as mobile staff.

Indicative timeline for implementation of Erasmus Without Papers and the European Student Card initiative:

**2020/2021**

- Handle Inter-Institutional Agreements in MO, utilizing digital signatures.

**2021**

- Handle Online Learning Agreements in MO, utilizing digital signatures.

**2022**

- Handle Nomination and Acceptance of student mobility in MO

**2023**

- Handle Transcripts of Records in MO



**Explain how your institutions will implement and promote environmentally friendly practices in the context of the Erasmus+ programme.**

SH's institutional strategy recognised the conflict of interest between environmentally friendly practices and increased international mobility. SH will, therefore, support sustainable travel for both students and staff and invest in digital platforms that facilitate travel-free international contacts. We work together with our contracted travel agency to ensure all staff participants can make an informed choice regarding the best travel option for the environment. A link to SH's travel policy is always included for staff participating in Erasmus+ mobility.

Södertörn University will participate in the development of sustainability in the Stockholm region and its regional urban centers. A sustainable working life will be prioritised during the upcoming five-year period. The university must increase awareness about the environmental impact of travel and offer a functional infrastructure for other ways of travelling, meeting, and using digital platforms more effectively.

In 2018, SH started a project to support students and staff taking the train or bus to their Erasmus+ exchange destination. The financial support is currently 200 Euro from OS-funds to those who can show a valid train and/or bus ticket to help cover their extra costs. In our experience, motivation for sustainable travel is high among SH students. The main obstacles are probably finance and lack of information. In some cases, an additional insurance can be needed for the students' return trip.

In addition to this ongoing support, we plan to set up a guidance system for students regarding environmentally friendly traveling, primarily through the Erasmus Student Mobility App. An online forum where students can share their advice with peers, for example their experience of longer train journeys where the Interrail pass was used. From the IO, we hope to be able to share our experience with other HEI and to learn from best practices related to environmentally sustainable travel.

In the future, we intend to support staff members with "extra travel time" when they choose a lengthier travel option that has a lower carbon footprint. This would be an important improvement as we know time is a prime concern for most academics. For incoming students, the IO will also think about not assuming they arrive in Stockholm by flight. Instead, we will work towards ensuring the Stockholm University Network has welcome guides and possibly joint traveling also for those arriving by train, bus or ferry.

**Explain how you will promote civic engagement and active citizenship amongst your outgoing and incoming students before, after and during mobility.**

Internationalisation work at SH is characterised by the awareness of how to integrate international, intercultural, and global issues in order to increase quality. To enable mobile students to be engaged as active citizens is at the heart of what SH as an educational institution sets out to achieve. Therefore, we strive to both utilise and be inspired by our current diversity as regards culture, language and experience in ways that actively include mobile and pre-/post mobile students. In close dialogue with the Student Union, we will also be open to new forms of collaboration related to municipalities in the region as well as civic organisations.

For SH, active student participation means that students are invited to co-create their education. All students must be met with the expectation of interest and encouraged to search for knowledge independently; forms for student influence needs to constantly be vitalised and deepened. At Södertörn University, students should not be passive consumers in the classroom, but active participants in a shared learning process. This means that students are encouraged to become personally involved, to develop a broad understanding of society, and are given tools to aid their participation in society as knowledgeable and active stakeholders.

According to the Swedish Higher Education Act (1992:1434), students are entitled to be represented in all the decision-making bodies where decisions or preparations that affect students are made. At SH, students are encouraged to make use of their right to representation and the Student Union is responsible for appointing student representatives. International students are encouraged to participate as student representatives and language adjustments will be made when possible and/or needed. The University believes student representation is an important pillar of the Swedish Higher Education system and an inherent aspect of democratic governance. In our opinion, student representation contributes to better and more relevant decisions, helping to create transparency and accountability.

Connected to the Student Union, students are also free to participate in and initiative their own student associations which can both create training for future civic engagement but also be a part of utilizing one's citizenship. Many students' associations work towards creating platforms where contemporary societal issues or political viewpoints can be shared or discussed. One student association at SH is the Erasmus+ Student Network, where both incoming mobile students and outgoing pre-/post mobile students can connect and engage in activities outside of their studies. SH provides a yearly support from OS-funds to the network's social activities

Each term, SH also employs student ambassadors who participate in activities connected to recruitment and widening participation of higher education. This can for example entail participating in educational fairs, visits to neighboring high schools or On Campus Summer Schools for secondary students to highlight the possibilities of higher education to prospective students. SH also intends to employ incoming exchange students as ambassadors as a way of promoting exchange studies.

Civic engagement and new forms of cooperation with the surrounding community is also an integral part of many courses and study programmes at SH. One example is the Open Lab course “Challenges for Emerging Cities: Open Lab Multidisciplinary Project Course”, 7,5 ECTS credits. This Master’s course is offered as part of a multidisciplinary collaboration between higher education institutions in Stockholm and public authorities, which aims to create sustainable solutions to societal challenges. Students develop projects that use design thinking to work on real-world problems in areas such as urban development and healthcare. The course is held in English and open to both Swedish and International students.

For the Erasmus+ 2021-27 programme period, SH will continue to create opportunities for civic engagement for all categories of mobile students and continue developing our cooperation with neighboring organisations. We believe it is important to give back to the local community also when the focus is international cooperation.

**Please describe the concrete steps you will take to ensure the full automatic recognition of all credits gained for learning outcomes achieved during a mobility period abroad/ a blended mobility, according to the Council Recommendation on Automatic Mutual Recognition.**

All outgoing Erasmus+ students from SH needs to have a signed Learning Agreement for Studies and/or Traineeships before starting their exchange period. This will apply also for students participating in blended mobility. The Learning Agreement is to be signed by the same departmental coordinator that has the right to make decisions on recognition. The process for obtaining full recognition is easy and timely with a minimum of paperwork.

When outgoing participants successfully have completed their mobility period and returns home, credit transfer will take place, and the participant will continue studies at the University without any loss of credit. There will be no extra requirements for students to fulfil in order to transfer the credits. The courses are agreed upon in a learning agreement between SH and host institutions before departure. Participants get both oral and written information about the credits system and transfer of credits both before and after the mobility period. All participants that complete a mobility period receive either a transcript of record or a certificate of traineeship about a month after the mobility. In addition, the mobility period will be mentioned in their Diploma Supplement.

From 2021, SH will use the Online Learning Agreements which will speed up the process of recognition even further. When online sharing of Transcripts of Records is implemented in the Erasmus+ Dashboard and Mobility Online, this will ensure that the process for outgoing students is almost automatic. It will be very easy for students to collect the documents themselves when they have already been shared with SH through Mobility Online. SH will work towards a system where students get an automatic e-mail when their transcripts of records have been obtained from the partner university in MO.

For the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 period, the University will strive to develop an online application system for recognition which will require a minimum of work from the student. To ensure student autonomy, it is important that the students actively can choose which

courses should be recognised and in which way. For example, some students will have the option to choose between complementary studies or substitute studies (credit-for-credit recognition).

One (=1) Swedish Higher Education Credit corresponds to one (=1) ECTS credit which makes credit-for-credit easy within the European Higher Education Area. In Sweden, HEI:s are allowed to freely choose their preferred grading-scale. Subsequently, grades at Södertörn University are generally awarded on a three-point grading scale:

Pass with distinction (VG, Pass (G) or Fail (U).

In addition, all incoming international students studying in English at SH will receive their credits on a seven-point grading scale (A-F), corresponding to the ECTS A-F grading scale. This adjustment has been made in order to make credit transfers easier for international students studying at SH.

For Swedish students, the ECTS grades are translated in the following way:

A – Pass with distinction (VG)

B – Pass with distinction (VG)

C – Pass (G)

D - Pass (G)

E - Pass (G)

F – Fail (U)

Credits are awarded only when the course has been successfully completed.

**Please describe your institution's measures to support, promote and recognise staff mobility:**

The inflow and outflow of academic and other staff members is a priority of the Universities Internationalisation Strategy and is actively promoted and facilitated. Both teachers other staff members are encouraged to benefit from an international experience by visiting partner universities, or taking part in international conferences, projects and networks as well as professional skills development and sharing of best practices.

Recruitment, promotion and competence development for researchers and teaching staff are central components in building up strong academic environments. Employees must have good working conditions and have the opportunity for their qualifications to be assessed as part of clear and established career paths. International experience and participation in staff or teacher mobility is therefore considered a merit when teachers or administrators apply for a promotion within SH.

SH has an organisation in place that handles all issues related to staff mobility. Assistance with visas/residence permits, housing, and welcome services are available to all. Outgoing staff members are also fully insured and will get the assistance they need through our academic and administrative contacts already established at the host or partner organisation.

Erasmus+ staff mobility is actively promoted to all new and current staff members. It is highlighted as a unique opportunity to become more engaged in international partnerships or practice a foreign language as no previous experience is required. Information and application guidelines are easily accessible via the Employee Web and regular information sessions are held. During the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme period, a closer collaboration with the HR department will be developed in order to increase the visibility and follow-up of staff mobility even further.

**Please describe how you will ensure that the principles of this Charter will be well communicated and applied by staff at all levels of the institution.**

Promotion of Erasmus+ opportunities, as well as monitoring of the responsibilities following this Charter, will take place on different levels within the University.

The University has an Advisory Board for Internationalisation with elected faculty representatives from all schools. The Board meets regularly during each term and will be responsible for strategic priorities and evaluations of the university-wide internationalisation strategies. The faculty representatives serve as important points of connection and promoters for internationalisation at each school. The Board also consists of student representatives (including both undergraduate and graduate students). Support is given by the International Office and the Board is regularly briefed by the Erasmus+ Institutional Coordinator.

The International Office will ensure that the opportunities and results of the programme are widely known both within and outside of the University. Calls for application and eligibility criteria will be communicated in a transparent and structured way during staff and faculty meetings and through the external and internal website. For example, a "Handbook for Internationalisation" is available on the Employee Web. The support available to participants will be highlighted whenever possible and regardless of the presumed needs. For the Erasmus+ 2021-27 period, the International Office also intends to create an International Newsletter for staff members.

Subject and Programme Collegiums will be responsible for suggesting new Erasmus+ mobility partners. This process will be both facilitated and supervised by the International Office. An academic contact person will be appointed for each new Erasmus+ mobility partnership, with the purpose of ensuring quality and long-term development of the partnership. For Erasmus+ KA2 projects a project leader, and if possible, a substitute, will be appointed. The Office of the Vice-Chancellor, which is also the Universities Legal Advisor, will make the final decisions regarding all Erasmus+ Inter-Institutional Agreements and Erasmus+ project applications. For Erasmus+ KA2-projects an approved co-funding plan and official support from the Head of School is also required.