Erasmus statement on university policy

Description of the international (EU and non-EU) strategy of Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences

Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences (HSWT) has created a highly distinctive profile for itself, with its specific range of courses focusing on a careful and efficient approach towards nature and natural resources. With 43 Erasmus agreements and 77 bilateral university partnerships in place, the university maintains a well-developed network of international contacts which has resulted in several double-degree programmes and internationally oriented master’s courses. The university will continue to place emphasis on international partnerships when introducing master’s courses in the future, to help equip students for the global employment market. Numerous projects on a national and international level, along with increased cooperation with industry, have also allowed the university to build an excellent reputation as a research location. The Erasmus programme has contributed substantially to the university’s ability to offer a wide range of exchange opportunities. In the coming years the university hopes to maintain and expand upon the increased international mobility that this has brought. Every student or member of staff should be given an equal chance to participate in exchange opportunities, whatever their personal background. The university’s strategic goals also include developing its practical orientation in an international context, attracting international students, and strengthening participation in international research and development. These are set out clearly in the university’s objective agreements and in its mission statement, which demonstrates just how important internationalisation is to the university. In terms of target regions, the university’s priority is to work towards co-operation with European partners. In particular, the university plans to develop additional partnerships for new degree programmes. The choice of partner universities is a key quality criterion for which the departments are responsible. The choice takes place through contacts of the teaching staff, and also on the initiative of students to some extent. A number of modules in English are currently being prepared in order to increase the international focus of the university (particularly in light of the Bologna process) and to make the university more attractive for international students. These modules tackle the utilisation, management and preservation of natural resources from an interdisciplinary perspective, with an emphasis on sustainable engineering, and will be aimed primarily at international students. In the longer term we are also planning to develop a degree programme that includes an integrated semester abroad. To meet the great demand for flexible, innovative learning approaches and methods of knowledge transfer, the university has introduced Moodle and Mahara, creating a modern web-based learning platform to support e-learning. This gives students and HSWT teaching staff access to course content from anywhere in the world.

Description of Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences strategy for organising and implementing international (EU and non-EU) teaching and training partnership projects, with reference to projects carried out through the ‘Erasmus+’ programme

The university’s international master’s degree programme in Agriculture Management is an exceptional partnership project with great potential for expansion. More than 1300 students from more than 45 agricultural universities from over 30 countries have taken part in it since 2000, and in 2008 its quality was recognised when it was named one of the 'Top 10 International Master’s Degree Courses Made in Germany'. It is currently supported by 27 active partner universities, government departments, and companies. An expansion of the project is planned for all areas of academic mobility, with an emphasis on study-related Erasmus exchange visits for German students, research exchange visits, and double-degree agreements. As part of the EU-teach project 'Implementation of Relevant European Teaching Contents in the Studies of Landscape Architecture', HSWT examined Landscape Architecture teaching content and developed educational recommendations, together with four European universities, IFLA Europe
and ECLAS. The plan is to develop 'education clusters' in order to make essential knowledge available to students across Europe (www.euteach.eu). As a member of the ISEKI Food Association, HSWT belongs to a network of universities, research institutions, and companies from 59 countries in the field of food technology. The main goal is to contribute to academic continuing education and training through internationalisation, improvements in the quality of degree programmes, and other innovative developments. The network offers the ideal platform to further encourage international co-operation and mobility (https://www.iseki-food.net). The university is also planning to expand its participation in the government scholarship programme Ciência sem Fronteiras, which supports the international exchange of Brazilian students and scientists, and to participate in the development of an interdisciplinary programme of study in agriculture in Brazil.

**Impact on the modernisation of Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences, with reference to the policy goals that the university intends to achieve by participating in the 'Erasmus+' programme**

By improving the quality of the courses offered and creating a framework that meets international standards, Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences expects to attract more new students that are very well qualified, to lower the proportion of students giving up their studies, and to prepare students better for the employment market. One of the fundamental challenges that needs to be addressed in order to make university study accessible to a broader section of society is how to improve the permeability between professional and academic education, and how to provide purposeful continuing education formats. Advisory boards have already been established for several degree programmes for the purposes of reacting more quickly to the changing demands of industry and adapting course contents accordingly. The boards are made up of industry representatives and members of the university; they meet regularly to discuss how degree programmes can be structured more attractively for the future employment market. To guarantee a high quality of teaching despite high student numbers, the university is increasingly seizing the opportunities of digitalisation and 'new media'. A further connection between the university and the employment market has been created with the establishment of a central, interdisciplinary Career Centre that supports students in their job search and eases the transition from studying to employment. A central alumni management and mentoring scheme hopes to increase the connection that graduates feel with the university and to foster the process of life-long learning. The Erasmus programme is a vital strategic tool for expanding the mobility of students and staff, which substantially increases the employability of graduates. The university therefore undertakes to create the appropriate framework for this, such as with the expansion of course modules in English, intercultural offerings and language courses, as well as by establishing a degree programme with integrated periods abroad, and a central recognition procedure that ensures efficient recognition of achievements earned abroad. With its practically oriented, problem-solving research and teaching, the university already provides a vital contribution to the effort to meet society’s challenges in food security, alternative energy production, sustainable landscaping and the protection of resources. The university’s new Centre of Research and Continuing Education, combined with the successful acquisition of EU projects, third-party funding from industry, and endowed professorships, provide the ideal foundations for a synergy of university education, research, and industry.