

# Erasmus Policy Statement for VID

## VID's general international (EU and non-EU) strategy

VID Specialized University is a merger institution, which in 2016 is in a transitory period from four former independent higher education institutions with their own strategies and priorities. The year of 2016 will lay the foundation for many strategies, including a strategy for internationalization, of which the Erasmus+ programme will be an important part. Therefore, the following presentation is provisional, but is expected to be part of the considerations on which the overall institutional strategies will be built.

Internationalization in research and education is a central part of the university's functions. It is a goal to develop research and education of high international quality and relevance, and education that focuses on multicultural challenges in professional practices in education, health and social care, in faith- and value based welfare organisations, churches and congregations of different denominations. International cooperation and mobility inside and outside of Europe are tools to achieve these goals. Besides regular mobility for staff and students, VID specialized University intends to participate in Strategic partnerships, Knowledge Alliances and Capacity Building projects, and will use its network of partners both in Europe, and in Africa and Asia to realize its goals.

VID Specialized University is comprised of educational programs and research interests with historic origin and stakes in cooperation with international partners in the Global South, as well as in the traditional Western countries. There are strong ties with national and international NGO's, and cooperation and partnerships often have ties to national and regional churches. Preferred partners will often, but not necessarily, identify with the value base that VID Specialized University builds on. The value base finds an expression in education and research where it aims to address issues like poverty, marginalization, health, multicultural challenges and religious ideas and practices. This value-based approach to society is sometimes expressed in the Christian faith-based concept Diakonia, which while it is Northern-European in its origin, finds similar ideas expressed in education, research and NGO's, globally, among HEI's, churches and denominations. Preferred HEI partners will have a strong education- and research portfolio in areas that matches VID's own education- and research in health and social care, education, cultural and religious studies, theology and diakonia.

It is a goal to develop these connections to strengthen the quality of VID's own education and research that centers on society and health, multiculturalism, globalization and religion. The quality of both research, education and practical placements benefits from contextual understanding. In a world where physical migration as well as the migration of ideas and religions are global phenomena with a profound impact on modern society, VID Specialized University considers cooperation with international partners outside of both the national and the European cultural sphere a necessity in order to adequately meet its goals in research and education. Social enterprises and not-for-profit social institutions are highly relevant as partners for VID in Erasmus+ projects, together with HEI's with similar concerns and value base. The shared value base is expected to motivate cooperation and lend credibility to the modernization and internationalization efforts, and promote intercultural understanding and social innovation as response to issues in modern society.

Regarding mobility partners there must be academic overlap between the institutions and a mutual interest among staff and students in developing mobility cooperation. Sometimes relevant partners are not part of the higher education sector, for example practical placement partners. The guiding principle will be whether the students get the chance to develop personally and professionally according to the VID Specialized University's learning goals for placement periods, at the enterprise in question.

The most important objectives and target groups of the mobility activities at VID Specialized University centers on the development of the professional capacity in a broad sense, of its students. In first and second cycle, the professional capacity centers on the professional services, hence, for students in first and second cycle mobility opportunities includes both study mobility and practical placements. For third cycle students the professional capacity regards relevant academic

networks and access to knowledge and methodology appropriate for developing high quality research.

## Strategy for the organization and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) cooperation projects within the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme.

Project cooperation within the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme is normally anchored in the organizational structure that has an interest in the project outcome. For projects that span several departments and programs, International Office normally takes a coordinating function. Regardless of institutional ownership, the college supports cooperation projects by offering relevant administrative support at the central level. This may be information about possible partners and funding options in relation to university strategy, support regarding applications, support for project administration, and assistance regarding dissemination of results through the college's information system and partner relations.

## Expected impact of the Erasmus+ Programme on the modernisation of VID

### 1. Increase the number of higher education graduates.

Due to the strategic objective of the four merged institutions to use internationalization to reinforce quality in education, VID considers that the added value of student and teacher mobility will contribute to an engaged learning process. This is expected to materialize in committed students, who graduate with accomplished participation in the educational programs.

### 2. Improve the quality and relevance of teaching and researcher training, to equip graduates with the knowledge and core transferable competences they need to succeed in high-skill occupations.

An academic mobility experience both contributes to, and expose the participants to, the life in a complex, demanding and significantly globalized society. VID expects that the exposure to the complexity of culture meetings and learning systems with different reference points for excellence and accomplishment, either through own mobility or the mobility of incoming teachers and students, will help create a learning, teaching and research environment that approximates the demands in the real life professional conduct. See also the last paragraph above.

### 3. Provide more opportunities for students to gain additional skills through study and training abroad, and to encourage cross-border co-operation to boost higher education performance:

VID sees international cooperation and mobility as «added value», which not merely adds something different, but also adds skills and knowledge of direct and competitive relevance for students and staff. Hence, providing encouragement, support and ease of access to partner HEIs, is a prioritized task for the institution. VID expects that mobility will help its staff and students to develop the flexibility and creativity that is necessary to success in modern, globalized society. See also the last paragraph above.

### 4. Strengthen the «knowledge triangle», linking education, research and business.

It is a goal for VID Specialized University to ensure that the connection between education and research is strong, and based on strategic plans. The connection is expected to increase in strength due to new and creative ways of preparing students for research already in 1<sup>st</sup> cycle programs, and for researchers in utilizing their research in education. Moreover, robust methodological skills might turn out to be the most effective way of preparing students for research mentality and activity.

VID Specialized University considers Social Innovation to be an important aspect of the knowledge triangle, especially relevant for VID's institutional profile. Innovation in social services in public- and civil society is central for the type of professional education VID provides, and is an important type of added value in modern society. Social Innovation in the church, health- and social sector

aims at cultivating soft values like integration, networks, well-functioning social communities, modern welfare services, etc., all of which are important values in contemporary, globalized society.

Since VID's educational and research portfolio is exclusively within the health- social work, education and church sectors, the connection with commercial business activity is not emphasized. However, not-for-profit business understood as NGO's, enterprises and social innovation in the health and social work sector in hospitals, clinics, churches, welfare services, etc. has a very strong position in both education and research and is a focus of research in and by itself. This connection is at the core of VID's function in Norwegian society, and it will continue to have clear focus in short- and long-term strategies for education and research.

#### 5. Create effective governance and funding mechanisms in support of excellence

With the merger, the four institutions have reinforced its international advisory capability. Coupled with an expected strategic aim to develop effective administration and a diverse funding scheme, it is the overall concern of the institution to utilize its focus on internationalization to support governance and funding. VID also expects to develop robust governance and funding capabilities in order to support international cooperation and mobility, which all in turn may support excellence in education as well as in research.