

Erasmus Policy Statement (2014-2020)

Medical University–Pleven has a long-term history of developing international collaborations and participation in international programs and initiatives for cultural and academic exchange. There are two possible ways to develop further international collaboration: (1) increasing the number of bilateral and multilateral institutional contracts and (2) advancing the effective educational collaboration with renowned international universities and scientific organizations. Five priorities can be defined: (1) obtaining membership into international academic, educational and scientific organizations, (2) establishing relationship of cooperation with such organizations and (3) developing and participating in regional collaboration networks; (4) cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices; (5) cooperation networks with foreign business and research institutions in the frame of the 'knowledge triangle'

Regarding the selection of partners, MU-Pleven use the following criteria: compatibility of the educational programmes, mutual interests in research projects and doctoral studies, geographical dimension, academic excellence and compliance with international standards of medical education, quality and accreditation of study programs, use and allocation of ESTC, language of training as well as facilities provided to students. Our institution also plans to renew interinstitutional agreements with its partners who have proved to be trustworthy, experienced and corresponding to our student and academic staff requirements and expectations.

Our university strategy to getting exposure to modern and innovative educational and practical methods as well as to gaining access to cutting-edge medical equipment and treatment methods hinges on fostering partnerships with leading medical universities, teaching institutions and research centers in Western European and neighboring countries.

We have laid the foundation for establishing MU-Pleven as a leading educational institution in the areas of telemedicine, robotic surgery and endoscopic surgery in gynecology and urology. In order to continue successful development in these directions, we will focus on promoting the activities of Telecommunication Endoscopic Centre at MU-Pleven, removing all language barriers and, most importantly, attracting foreign teaching experts who can help elevate the educational process to the highest international standards and best practices.

MU–Pleven has established fruitful long-term partnerships with universities in Russia and Kazakhstan as well as with teaching hospitals in Japan where our international Japanese students have the opportunity to participate in summer traineeships. Over the next years, importance will be assigned towards extending our cooperation activities with counties of the former Soviet Union and Asia.

The key objectives for 2014-2020 mobility activities at MU-Pleven are to maintain and improve quality of the international cooperation and partnership. At present, MU–Pleven primarily focuses on facilitating the mobility of students pursuing a Master's Degree at the Medical School. In the future, we are planning to foster the mobility of additional target groups – students pursuing a Bachelor's Degree at the Department of Public Health and

Health Care. The University will encourage and support faculty and administrative staff mobility, in order to preserve and promote its European/International profile in education, research and practical training.

Another important priority is further popularizing of MU-Pleven as an international mobility destination and attracting ever-growing attention from foreign students participating in the Erasmus Program. We will do that by developing new advertisement materials, by improving the quality of information available about our university and our course curriculum, and by creating unparalleled social and cultural integration programs for foreign students. An additional way to boost interest in inbound international mobility is the creation of information packages based on personal testimonies from successful mobility program participants.

The ideal pace of mobility growth is mainly impaired by the negative demographic tendencies and persistent economic crisis, namely severely constrained household budgets. To overcome this impediment to growth, we have planned fundraising initiatives targeting external sources of financing. We realize that raising funds will take some time. Thus, to make exchange programs more affordable in the immediate term, we are also refocusing vulnerable groups of students and faculty staff to shorter mobility projects in countries with comparable living standards.

Medical University – Pleven has focused on improving the integration of European teaching standards, methods and approaches in the European Higher Education Sector via increasing the quality and volume of staff and student mobility across Europe, sharing own experience and facilitating development of contemporary practices in education and training, as well as supporting the development of innovative ICT-based content and practice for lifelong learning in Medicine.

All teaching and training projects are presented and discussed during academic council meetings. The academic board approves the projects and recommends consulting firms to assist the project implementation. There is an appointed subcommittee especially chosen for every project that monitors its implementation and tracking.

One of the key focus areas for the European Integration and International Affairs Center is furthering MU–Pleven participation in multilateral projects. The center is planning to encourage this process by providing comprehensive information about coming initiatives, periodically updating the university website with a list of international and national collaboration opportunities, and presenting current projects and programs announced by the European Commission. Another important task is to provide local team assistance in identifying the right higher education collaboration partners across European countries. University representatives for working sessions, seminars and tutorials accompanying international projects will be nominated.

The participation in the Erasmus+ Program will gain external power to the regional and local initiatives for modernization of MU-Pleven and will provide support in each of the priorities, as follows:

I. Increasing attainment levels

- Development of structured applicable itinerary for professional upgrade.
- Ensuring targeted financial support for promotion of further qualification.

II. Improving quality and relevance of higher education

- Increasing the efficacy of collaborative learning and graduate competitiveness by providing virtual access to multidisciplinary educational portals based on innovative approaches in the general fields of medical knowledge and adapted to the current market needs.
- Development of study programmes preparing students with knowledge and skills preferable on changing labour markets
- Motivating excellent teachers to use offered opportunities for international cooperation and educational exchange.

III. Mobility and international cooperation for quality

- Improving the local university system of credits recognition and cross-border cooperation in programs and internship courses development.

IV. Strengthening the “knowledge triangle”

- Providing opportunities for bridging the market gap with innovative skills learning, business cooperation and educational partnership.

V. Creating the right governance and funding conditions

- Shared learning of better models for effective utilization of institutional resources and balanced targeting of educational funding.