



VIA's Erasmus Policy Statement 2021-2027

VIA University College's Erasmus Policy Statement 2021-2027

VIA University College is one out of six university colleges in Denmark and is located in the Central Denmark Region on the peninsula of Jylland. VIA has a total of eight campuses in seven cities. Here, just shy of 20,000 students attend classes and other activities while a similar number follow continuing education programmes and courses. In addition, VIA has eight research and development centres.

VIA has a strong tradition for developing study programmes in close collaboration with the businesses and public workplaces to which we graduate. VIA's strength is a combination of state-of-the-art research and learning environments, as well as our knowledge of challenges and opportunities related to practice. This makes it possible for VIA to educate students able to solve real-life problems by use of innovative and sustainable solutions. As a perennial receiver of the award for most entrepreneurial educational institution in Denmark, VIA maintains a strong strategic focus on innovation and entrepreneurship in our new organisational setup. VIA has a holistic view on entrepreneurship and a strategic goal of remaining a central player in an innovative and entrepreneurial ecosystem ensuring the opportunity for all VIA students to realise their potential and contribute to the future of Denmark. The UN Sustainable Development Goals is an integrated part of VIA's strategy. Sustainability is central to VIA and it pervades the entire organisation from the principles of VIA's strategy to teaching in every classroom. We develop new courses and content for teaching to provide VIA students with the right tools to integrate sustainability and circular thinking at their future workplaces in a socially responsible way. Sustainability is both a formative and educational focus at VIA.

VIA's strategic ambitions for international work

In 2020, VIA has placed additional focus on the importance of the international skills of students and employees. From 2021, all study programmes at VIA will thus have an international element. VIA graduates must as global citizens have a global mind-set and international skills, no matter if they have studied abroad as such, or participated in other types of international activities at VIA. It is essential for all students independent of study programme to possess international skills, as all VIA students must be able to contribute with knowledge and skills in the meeting with other cultures in Denmark, as well as abroad. At the same time, international skills contribute towards the general formation and maturity of the individual and greater insight into the professions that VIA provides education for.

VIA's strategic ambitions and the implementation of an international element in all of VIA's study programmes unfold in a number of different ways, including;

- The primary focus in the acquisition of international skills is being able to offer VIA's students a portfolio of relevant and attractive opportunities for studying abroad.
- VIA's employees contribute to expanding the horizon and improving the international skills of students and VIA thus continues to prioritise employee's international competences and skills.

- Increased focus on the cooperation between VIA's Danish and international students, expanding the students' understanding of different cultural approaches to working together, just as it strengthens the inclusion of all of VIA's students on campus and in the teaching.
- Continued development of existing international activities in VIA, including virtual collaborations, blended learning and summer schools giving students the opportunity to develop international skills, regardless of whether the students study abroad for a longer period of time.
- Increased focus on internationalization of curriculum and use of international guest lecturers able to contribute with an international perspective within specific areas of knowledge.

VIA's participation in the Erasmus programme

VIA's strategic focus on internationalization permeates the entire institution and the many activities VIA initiates and participates in. VIA successfully participates in a number of Erasmus projects in the scope of the Key Actions. The projects range widely, but all contribute to forming international competences and knowledge for VIA's students and employees, as well as development and implementation of international projects between VIA and our many skilled partners.

At VIA, the interests and wishes of the students are the primary points of departure, when it comes to engaging in bilateral cooperation with partners from around the world. This ensures a portfolio of relevant and attractive exchange opportunities for students to choose from based on their academic affiliation. In addition, established partnerships provide the option of expanding collaboration to other study programmes, projects and networks, and in the coming Erasmus programme period, VIA will continue to focus on quality assurance of a relevant portfolio of relevant educational institutions, internship- and project partners etc. in Europe and the rest of the world.

The close cooperation between VIA and the market employing VIA graduates substantiates VIA's ambition of ensuring international skills for our students during their studies. International skills are in demand among both public and private businesses independent of profession. VIA's participation in the Erasmus programme is significant in fulfilling this ambition, as Erasmus offers the framework and opportunity for VIA's students to gain deeper cultural insights and international competences primarily through studying abroad. This also goes for students who, for many different reasons, are not able to study abroad for longer periods of time during their education, but who receive knowledge of and insight into the surrounding world through the international experiences of fellow students.

VIA's employees – both lecturers and administrative staff – similarly contribute to a continuous dispersion of knowledge of and options for studying abroad by actively participating in the activities offered by the Erasmus programme. Likewise, the development of e.g. curriculum, assignments etc. is challenged and improved by the staff's insight into and meeting with other institutions' practices domestically and abroad.

Over the course of the past three years, VIA participated in around 15 Erasmus+ projects. As the projects focus on solving cross border challenges, the solutions often involve experts from organisations outside of Denmark. VIA wants to educate students with the innovative skills in demand by employers and society as such. The Erasmus collaborations contribute to this by providing VIA with the opportunity to work with relevant knowledge institutions, employers and other actors in Europe on together developing methods, modules and teaching materials for use all over Europe.

Participation in Erasmus+ contributes to making VIA a more attractive and international institution by providing students with better opportunities for exchange, while giving them skills and an education in demand across borders. For lecturers, participation is an opportunity to gain new knowledge and inspiration for their own teaching.

Implementation of new Charter/international strategy

As an institution of education, VIA is obligated to contribute globally with new education solutions and with knowledge and research in the areas in which we possess special knowledge. At the same time, this makes it possible for us to gain valuable international experience and thus improving the skills of our employees and students for the benefit of the industries and professions in which they unfold these skills.

The Erasmus programme is essential for VIA's work internationally and the new goal in the charter of, among other things, digital skills and inclusion constitutes the base of VIA's internationalization strategy and future educational and organizational development.

As the first educational institution in Denmark, VIA has employed a Vice Rector Digitalization, who is a part of VIA's executive board. The digital mind-set is a part of VIA's DNA and is thus a part of the way we drive and develop internationalization. Over the course of a number of years, we have implemented the administration and operating system MoveOn and now the system contains all international activities.

In relation to inclusion, it is considerably easier for students to educate themselves across borders with Erasmus and for employees to bring internationalization home for the benefit of the home institution. VIA has institution-wide and quality assuring guidelines for transparency and equal opportunities for all students independently of e.g. disabilities, financial situation, cultural background, similar to that of the Erasmus programme. We ensure support in the pre-, during and after phases for all VIA students, incoming, as well as outgoing.

Studying abroad for students is recognized with ECTS and the new charter will, in the charter period, ensure, among other things, that we, under the Erasmus programme, in cooperation with our international partners, will be able to develop new and sought-after curricula living up to academic regulations, while providing students with the necessary ECTS points and international educational experience as well as life experience.

VIA's engagement in Erasmus and the acquisition of the new charter is of the utmost importance for VIA's position as an international institution of education, and for the way we continue to be able to carry our responsibility for education and research development nationally and internationally.

As mentioned earlier, VIA successfully participates in a number of Erasmus projects within the various Key Actions for the benefit of VIA's students, employees and the institution as such. The projects range widely and primarily reach the students in the shape of mobility, but also in the academic study environments through mobility of employees, research and development, innovation centres and the central administration. The Key Actions and VIA's participation in these all contribute to the transfer of international skills and knowledge for VIA's students and staff, as well as development and implementation of international projects between VIA and our many skilled partner institutions.

Internationalization is one of the cornerstones in VIA and in our strategy of being an attractive institution for students as well as employees, and an attractive partner for both national and international businesses and public institutions. This way, VIA's continued participation in the Erasmus programme through the many different projects allows us to remain a highly recognized University College contributing to the development of local and global societies.

Basically, participation in Erasmus+ programmes and projects reflect an ambition of adding a dimension to VIA that challenges our own approach to each individual profession and its purpose in society both locally, nationally and internationally. VIA has started to work systematically with the synergy in KA107 applications and Erasmus+ projects KA2 Action. It is exactly through staff exchange that understanding of each other's values, didactics, understanding of learning and methodology comes to be. It is in this intersection that great ideas for projects and reflection on international professional practice arise.

The basic understanding of each other's positions contributes to the sustainability of the projects.

Looking at the quantitative and qualitative indicators in relation to both staff mobility and projects, VIA's new organization of each unit provides the option of setting individual goals for participation in Erasmus programmes and projects locally on each study programme.

Qualitative goals are set locally by the study programmes but for VIA in general, there are the following three goals:

1. New knowledge of how professions work in the community.
2. New knowledge of the professions in their own right
3. New knowledge of didactics in teaching within the professions

The quantitative goals will therefore, as mentioned above, depend on the ambitions for each academic field. These are currently being mapped out, but it can safely be concluded that our participation in the Erasmus+ projects develops VIA as an educational institution and provides cohesion.