

European Policy Statement 2001

The new mission statement and development vision of the University of Latvia (UL) has a stress on preserving the academic traditions of the Latvian society, promotion of the Latvian culture and provision of higher education of European standard. The mission of the University of Latvia is to educate young people who are well informed about the global issues and to promote the intercultural dialogue through a variety of exchange activities. The UL continues the implementation of the objectives of the Bologna Declaration and the introduction of the international dimension into academic and research activities.

The current activity priorities are the following:

- to develop a European level research infrastructure at the University in priority disciplines;
- to ensure opportunities for free development at all levels of study programmes, while giving the priority to the Master's and doctoral programmes;
- to implement an academic staff development programme;
- to ensure high quality of academic work;
- to promote inter-disciplinary cooperation and programmes within a framework of multiple research fields;
- to set up quality management systems.

The European cooperation strategy is developed taking into consideration these priorities. The UL will continue the integration of internationalisation into teaching, research and services. Further development of interdisciplinary approach in academic work and integration of studies and research will ensure a free development of the **study programmes**. The existing multidisciplinary Master's degree programmes "Baltic Studies", "European Studies", "Environmental Science and Management" and professional study programme "International Relations" include courses in political science, law, economics and management, environmental problems of the region. These courses should promote more the international (European) perspective for 95% of non-mobile students. The number of visiting lecturers, who are actively participating in teaching and joint-curriculum development, is growing every year. The EuroFaculty courses commit much in the understanding by the students the EU policy and integration processes. The recently established Centre for European and Transition Studies as well as Information Centre for European Studies and Political Science will foster the further introduction of European dimension into the degree courses. The multi-disciplinary programme "Baltic Studies" is the first attempt to create an international classroom. It is a new learning opportunity both for international exchange and national students.

Programme content (additional international content into course, focus on international context of the profession), visiting lecturers, joint degree courses, comparative and cross cultural approaches, virtual forms of education, international classrooms – these are some possible elements of a “stay at home” programme and study opportunities for the incoming students.

One of the strategic objectives is to create and maintain a stimulating and supportive academic and cultural environment for international students and scholars. Flexible learning models in foreign languages has already been introduced and the UL strives to improve the accommodation conditions.

The established forms of cooperation: participation in international associations, exchanges within the bilateral cooperation agreements, participation in European and regional networks (EUPEN, ESSENCE, Biotechnology Network, Baltic Sea Region University Network, IROBALT, etc.) facilitates further integration of European dimension into curricula, teaching activities, research as well as helps to implement innovative elements into the quality assessment.

One of the UL priorities is the **staff** development – increase the prestige and remuneration of the academic personnel, encouragement of international teaching staff mobility. It will help to improve the efficiency and professionalism of performance, quality and methods of teaching. The growing numbers of visiting lecturers (European and international) helps to improve quality of teaching, stimulates the professional development of the home teaching staff, introduces multiplicity into the study courses.

The UL will continue to undertake further steps in the fulfilment of the University concept on teaching **foreign languages**. Proficiency in languages is achieved by studying a foreign language during the first year as an obligatory subject and later as a free choice subject. The UL tries to introduce the studies of the majority of European Languages. The participation in European special programme “Interpreter”, which gives the possibility to master several languages, will stimulate the introduction of additional language courses.

The UL strives to maintain its status in international **research** by participating in RTD Framework programmes, UNESCO, NATO and Nordic projects. It strengthens the research capacity and promotes the exchange activities. The CORDIS Human Potential Network project “The Baltic Sea Area Studies: Northern Dimension of Europe” investigates the interrelationship of the concepts “Baltic Sea Region” and “Europe’s Northern dimension”, seeks to ascertain the significance of the Baltic Sea Region as a cultural, political and economic factor in the development of the Northern dimension to Europe. The UL is actively involved in this work.

Two existing Excellence centres: UNESCO Biomedical Research and Study Centre, EU Solid State Physics Institute and UNESCO department at Institute for Environmental Studies and Management will help much in creating

Postgraduate School of the University of Latvia. The objective of this school is to increase the number of doctoral students and create the basis for the further development of innovative science and technological structures in Latvia.

The UL requires a more focused approach in the goals we set up and the actions we take in order to pursue these goals. The main task of the UL involvement into SOCRATES activities is now not only intensive student and staff exchanges, but a wider participation in joint curriculum development (UL - possible coordinator of 2 IP projects, participation in 8 IP and 7 CDA).

The UL has set up a special SOCRATES fund within the University budget with the purpose to give additional financial support for student mobility. The faculties cover the travel expenses within TS. The University Foundation has founded Morberg Scholarship Fund from the real-estate management profit, which will give financial support for the students. The UL is also looking for external finances to support the objectives of internationalisation.

The UL has been always committed to the principle of equality for female and male and it has been always multinational. We have condemned racism and xenophobia and always tried to support those who have economic difficulties. The UL has worked out an investment project to improve the university facilities for the disabled people, but the state financial support has not been approved yet.

The UL study programmes have been accredited with the participation of European experts. All UL study programmes have the Programme Boards, the Senate has above all Academic and Strategic Committees. These committees are actively involved in quality assessment and evaluation measures. The UL has participated in two external evaluation procedures: within PHARE Multi-country programme in higher education and by Salzburg Seminar visiting Advisor's Team (see www.lu.lv/english/news). The conclusions mark the positive achievements and efforts of the UL in the field of internationalisation.