

Erasmus Policy statement (EPS)

According to its strategy #2030 Satakunta University of Applied Sciences (SAMK) is a high-quality higher education institution. It offers international level education, which provides the students with top class skills for various tasks of the future and enables professional development. Development and implementation of the international activities and exchanges are an essential part of the mission, profile and vision statements. SAMK has an active role as a development agent for the international activities in Satakunta region. With international education, mobility and RDI actions, SAMK aims to develop Satakunta and its environs as a competitive, international region.

The Erasmus+ programme is significant in implementing these objectives. Student mobility and teacher and expert exchanges are key instruments in developing international perspective of the curricula as well as our RDI activities. All students graduating from SAMK will have qualifications for international activities, all students are also encouraged to participate in the Erasmus+ activities.

SAMK uses also other international cooperation instruments to support the objectives of the Erasmus+ programme. Those instruments include the Magellan Exchange, the FIRST+ exchange programme, Scandinavian Nordplus Programme, Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme, some exchange arrangements with individual countries (such as ASEM-DUO with Korea) and SAMK's own bilateral co-operation agreements with partner universities. Mobility numbers of these programmes are quite small, thus SAMK is planning to increase cooperation with long-term Erasmus+ partners to offer extensive opportunities in Europe and beyond.

The new strategy of SAMK emphasizes the employability of our students. The Erasmus+ programme helps us to achieve this goal since it is proven that a mobility period during studies helps students to find work after graduation (Erasmus+ Impact Study 2019). SAMK's vision is "All SAMK students will be employed". For this reason, persistent internationalization is a steering force in changing and developing education and research. Over 20 % of intake will be targeted to degree programmes taught in English, and the volume of education export will exceed 0.5 million euros. In addition, more than 50 % of the projects have international elements. SAMK will add the extent of international students and staff and will invest in the integration of international students, teachers, researchers and other experts by developing learning and working possibilities. Internationalization at home will lead to increased interest in exchanges and the Erasmus+ programme is the most convenient option to obtain international competence, to develop language skills and to get the knowledge needed in working life.

Functional and comprehensive Erasmus+ programme with its European cooperation possibilities offers ways to increase the amount of international know-how. By utilizing these possibilities SAMK will triple the number of international degree and exchange students in over ten international degree programmes during this strategy period. At the same time SAMK will augment the exchange possibilities of our national students and staff and strengthen internationalization at home.

SAMK is currently deepening the cooperation with active European partners and developing several new double degree programmes in many fields of study. The new SAMK strategy underlines the need to include a double degree possibility in each international degree programme. SAMK will increase the amount of inter-institutional Erasmus+ agreements concerning master's degree programmes. This will lead to better employment, wider networks and more fluent language skills. Erasmus+ programme will be more promoted to our international degree students to increase their awareness of international possibilities.

Compatibility of the exchanges in curricula is developed further. Joint and complementing modules are developed with partner universities, aiming also for double degree arrangements. Teacher and expert exchanges are key tools of the development strategy. SAMK is developing deeper cooperation with our strategic partner universities. Multilateral curricula and RDI projects are developed with partner universities and with our region. SAMK is well known for blended learning solutions and for example the bachelor's degree programmes of Logistics and Industrial Management are offered totally online.

The Erasmus+ programme has enabled SAMK to develop its internationalisation in such volumes which would never have been possible without the programme. To complete the objectives of the new strategy, SAMK will benefit from the Erasmus+ programme broadly from exchanges to cooperation projects in our focus areas such as automation, robotics and artificial intelligence, maritime management and services for the ageing.

Erasmus+ programme makes SAMK attractive higher education institution also for students from outside EU/EEA, because it allows international degree students to study part of the degree in another European HEI. At the same time, it attracts talented students from all over the world to Europe and strengthens international know-how.

Exchanges are focused on the 1st cycle, as they are the most feasible to facilitate on the bachelor level. SAMK promotes exchanges and provides courses in English in all faculties. All faculties host exchange students and teachers and offer international environment to all our students. Annually, SAMK offers about 1,000 new study places in over 30 degree programmes. SAMK has 9 bachelor's and 4 master's degree programmes conducted totally in English. Degree programmes taught in English contribute to the course selection for incoming exchange students too. Our master level students are often already in working life and have families, so arranging full term exchanges is difficult. SAMK develops short exchanges, student projects and online cooperation with key Erasmus+ and other international partners. Work placements abroad are also our focus activity. Placement is included in every degree programme, and all students have possibility to do it completely or at least partly abroad.

After secondary level education all students can apply to SAMK. We develop possibilities for immigrant students to enter the education and to seek for the European labour market after graduating. Also, lower income students are supported by the no-fee studying and affordable housing options. SAMK also develops adult and further education for adult students to obtain higher education and skills needed

in tomorrow's working life. Ensuring access to mobility for all students and staff is a priority at SAMK. Exchange possibilities are offered in all degree programmes and studies and work placements completed abroad are fully recognised. Students with disabilities are offered more assistance in finding suitable destinations and students coming to SAMK can choose suitable study methods according to their needs. All application periods, selection criteria and documents are offered equally and fairly to all SAMK students and staff. SAMK staff helps incoming students with accommodation, visa and insurance issues.

Teaching staff and other personnel at SAMK are offered information on staff exchange possibilities in annual development discussions, by email and on SAMK website. In the past there has been one application period but to make the process more flexible there will be an ongoing application period via the online mobility system. We are planning to have more info sessions for staff to inform them well in advance about their possibilities. Incoming staff members are offered international weeks and meetings with our teachers and researchers. Staff is encouraged to plan and implement courses together, do research and teaching projects and boost pedagogical and intercultural skills. SAMK develops teaching and training actively in international cooperation projects with our partners. SAMK has defined the focus areas of higher education, and the four areas of expertise (faculties) develop the activities through international cooperation projects. That serves also other stakeholders in our region in Western Finland. Their needs are taken into account in planning our international activities within study and work placement activities, teacher, staff and research mobility and international projects.

The Erasmus+ programme is very significant in implementing these means at SAMK, and it gives the framework also for using other project tools. We have defined international strategic partner universities and agreed to develop the content and forms of activities using the Erasmus+ and other development projects. SAMK is active in several international higher education networks in the fields of business management, technology, maritime industry, health and welfare, intelligent processes, logistics and fine arts. We work with the partners in best practices, teacher cooperation, intensive projects, staff training weeks, curriculum development, online and distance applications, student projects and work-related training projects.

SAMK also participates in helping international partners to develop their activities by introducing our innovative education methods, such as the student enterprise accelerator, business cooperation, problem-based learning, student centered education methods, mentoring and expertise in our focus areas of education and RDI. We also have experience in including non-European partners in Russia, China, USA and other countries in the European higher education programmes.

SAMK has ca. 200 international partner universities, and they are divided into the strategic partners, key partners of faculties and exchange partners. We develop educational and RDI activities and services to Satakunta region through mobility and other cooperation with our international partners. Choosing the partners is based on the needs of our educational areas and RDI objectives. We also discuss the needs and focus areas with the stakeholders of Satakunta region. Inter-institutional agreements are currently being renewed, the focus being on the quality of mobility. Internationalisation is at the core of SAMK's new strategy for the years 2021-2030. One goal is to have three new strategic partners in addition to two partner universities in China and Namibia, at least one of them being from Europe. Areas highlighted in the strategy are Europe, China, Vietnam, Russia, Ukraine and the Gulf countries.

The economic activities of the Satakunta region are strong with European area, but also with China, Namibia, Russia, South Korea and other South East Asian countries. Economic cooperation is developed also with other African countries, there is demand for our expertise in social and health care, maritime education and energy and environmental technology. We lack resources for co-operation with Latin American countries. Cooperation with the USA and Australia is important also, because the exchange possibilities with native English-speaking countries in Europe is limited. However, resources for mobility and other cooperation has been limited with these far-off locations.

The strategy of the university is based on the needs of Satakunta region. The age gap is significant challenge, as the big generations from the 1940's and 1950's are retiring and the younger generations active in working life become smaller. The role of SAMK is essential in working with other stakeholders in the region, and with our international partners. SAMK works to provide more graduated experts, who take the responsibility for developing the businesses and services in our region and in Europe. With Erasmus+ mobility periods these learners gain more soft skills such as problem-solving and communication skills, intercultural skills and awareness, all of which are valued skills by the future employers.

The diversity and strong growth in industrial sector make Satakunta one of the most important regions in Finland. In terms of trade Satakunta has double the country average and it provides significant impact in boosting the country's economic growth. The region produces around 25% of Finland's electricity, making Satakunta one of the biggest electricity producers in Finland. Also, it is the leading industrial cluster in Finland. All vital industry sectors in Finnish economy are strongly presented in Satakunta.

Inside the European Union, we work to develop deeper curriculum cooperation, strategic mobility activities and RDI projects with the partners that we have gained good cooperation experience with. That includes active partner universities in the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, Germany, France, Baltic countries and in the areas of health and welfare also with universities from the UK, Spain and Czech Republic. Exchange programmes such as the Erasmus+ programme offer hundreds of incoming and outgoing students of SAMK the possibility to internationalise themselves. Some of the students stay in their host country even longer if they complete their placement or summer job abroad and thus create sustainable networks and contacts with European colleagues to utilise later in working life. One of the strategic goals of SAMK is to enable more exchange students to complete also a degree in SAMK by thickening the cooperation with European partner universities and set up multiple double degree agreements. As mentioned earlier, the target is that in the end of the Erasmus+ programme period each international degree programme shall have at least one double degree agreement in active use.

The indicators of the activities and results by the development projects are defined in the quality system of SAMK, based on the European targets, the objectives of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and of the strategy of the university. SAMK works to support growth and jobs in our region and with our international cooperation partners. That is an integral part of the university strategy and activities in education, research & development as well as regional cooperation activities. The European goals and the objectives and indicators of the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture are integrated in our quality policy.

The quality of education and effective studying are developed further, so that all students have the possibility to obtain at least 60 ECTS credits annually and to graduate in the planned time. This is possible also when students participate in the exchange programmes, as SAMK ensures with the partner universities that the credits gained from abroad are fully recognised in the students' degree.

According to the EU Survey results of 2018 SAMK offers high quality teaching for incoming students. Support offered by SAMK personnel and student organisations was also estimated to be very good. SAMK's incoming students are more satisfied with their overall exchange period (rather satisfied and very satisfied: 98%) than the national average (97%). They were also satisfied with students' equal treatment and integration to SAMK. The course offering in our course catalogue still needs improving and this is something that SAMK will continue to work with.

Outgoing students' results of the EU Survey 2018 show that SAMK offers necessary services for students planning to go abroad. Students opinions about administrative support arrangements have improved in recent years. They were also satisfied with the help they got for their personal problems. Academic mentoring services are above the national average. SAMK still needs to refine the recognition process: 63 percent of students say that they have received full recognition of their studies abroad (national average being 84%). One improvement for SAMK is that we should make the positive impacts of the Erasmus mobility period more visible to students for example by organising an orientation day for returning students, since only 54% of students felt that they gained new knowledge and skills during their mobility period.

For Erasmus+ work placements, SAMK students were more satisfied than the national average (rather satisfied + very satisfied: 100%). They also feel that the selection process was fair and transparent (88%). Learning Agreement was signed by 100% of students in 2018 and grant payments were on time.

Concerning teacher and staff exchanges, SAMK's performance varies a lot: in 2018 100% of incoming teachers and staff were very satisfied with their exchanges in SAMK whereas from the outgoing teachers only 45% answered that they were very satisfied. Outgoing staff members in 2018 were more satisfied than the national average: 86% to 77%. The method of recognition being "part of yearly workplan", this is how satisfied the SAMK personnel was: outgoing teachers 64% to national average being 78% and outgoing staff 86% to national average being 72%. As a conclusion, SAMK should invest more to the level of recognition of teaching staff. All staff members are quite satisfied with the level of encouragement received towards mobility by SAMK.

SAMK improves the quality and relevance of higher education, so that Satakunta region can play an active part in the European higher education area and in the economic Single Market. All students graduating from SAMK have qualifications for international activities. Satakunta is a strong industrial region with an active international cooperation. That gives potential to our international activities within study and placement exchanges, teacher, staff and research mobility and international projects.

SAMK works to strengthen the cross-border cooperation with students, teaching staff and researchers, both within Europe and with our partners in Russia, China, India, Vietnam, USA and other countries. The online activities provide a broader access to this cooperation. SAMK has an active model of links with enterprises and public services and we work with international partners to introduce and develop the practices, such as our entrepreneur education further in Europe. We develop also the governance of projects with private and non-EU partners, committing the partners to work together for common goals of future growth.

With the Erasmus+ programme SAMK aims to improve the exchanges of international teachers and researchers between partner universities. This is also a priority both in SAMK's strategy and in the agreement between SAMK and the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. It is stated in the SAMK strategy that when recruiting professionals, international experience is valued. Also, the current staff needs these networks and the competence gained from an international and multicultural working environment. In addition, one target is to recruit at least 20 international experts to teach and conduct research in SAMK. Other planned activities to increase the international know-how of SAMK staff members and to deepen the collaboration are for example longer full-time or part-time exchanges for teachers and researchers. SAMK wishes to develop cooperation with EU and non-EU partners by offering distance learning and benefiting from the distance learning provided by the partner universities. These objectives are fundamentals with our European partners during the new programme period.

At the time of submitting the ECHE application the COVID-19 pandemia effects on all planning and implementing the Erasmus+ programme. SAMK has set as mobility targets to at least maintain the current numbers. SAMK aims to increase the number of mobile students by 20% and the number of mobile staff by 15% during the programme period. The number of incoming students completing a European double degree will be significantly higher than in 2020.

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