

BOKU's STRATEGY FOR INTERNATIONALISATION, 2021-2025

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1) Introduction: Vision / Mission / Core values / Overall objective of the strategy

Vision: BOKU is one of the leading European universities with regard to multi-dimensional Sustainability in Life Sciences, combining topics of natural, technical and socio-economic sciences to tackle local up to global challenges, reduce conflicts and enhance synergies – regional, national and worldwide. We are leading innovation in sustainable development and the green economy. We aim to be

- One of Europe's best sustainability-focused university
- A pioneer in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and teaching
- Taking a leading role in providing expertise and young talents for society, economics and politics

BOKU's internationalisation strategy actively contributes to achieving the following goals and professional focus in our research and teaching through integration of a global perspective. Consequently, international cooperation fosters, among others, to reach the goals of BOKU's **mission statement** (which to the majority challenge society and economy on a trans- or international level):

- Protecting and improving the use of natural resources
- Managing natural resources
- Safeguarding food and health
- Sustainable societal and technical transformation

BOKU's core values with regard to internationalisation are the following:

- Striving for **excellence** (in research and teaching)
- Taking **responsibility**, particularly e.g. in Capacity Building projects, for the global challenges, society, the environment, multidimensional sustainability
- **Transparency and Co-operation** in inter- and transdisciplinary approaches (stakeholder involvement)
- **Innovative concepts** through strategic partnerships and **co-operation** with stakeholders
- General **open-mindedness** and appreciation of diversity (including academic and administrative support for migrants, refugees and under-represented groups in general)

As national and international responsibility is one of BOKU's core values, BOKU takes **comprehensive internationalisation** as a commitment, confirmed through action. Consequently, the overall **objectives** of BOKU's strategy for Internationalisation are the following:

- Infuse global perspectives throughout BOKU's research, teaching and service mission activities

- Shape institutional international ethos and values among all students and staff members, thereby creating a truly globally-minded university
- Develop further a Quality Management System that assures the regular review of this strategy and the implementation of its objectives via qualitative and quantitative indicators

Corresponding goals of other BOKU strategies reflect and take up these objectives (e.g.: Sustainability Strategy, Diversity Strategy, Language Policy Plan, European Policy Statement...). BOKU's strategy for internationalisation also includes elements – among others - of the EU Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025, the EU Communication on a new ERA for Research and Innovation, the Digital Education action Plan 2021-2027 and Bologna; the European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience, the Austrian GUEP and HMIS etc. and is based on BOKU's Development Plan 2027.

According to the Development Plan 2027, BOKU's internationalisation strategy focuses upon the following **thematic topics** that are in line with the Grand Challenges and Sustainable Development Goals and are therefore of general importance for BOKU when starting and enhancing international cooperation:

- BOKU's six **competence areas**:
 - Ecosystem Management and Biodiversity
 - Agricultural Production and Food Science
 - Renewable Raw Materials and New Technologies
 - Biotechnology
 - Landscape, Water, Habitat and Infrastructures
 - Resources and Societal Dynamics
- BOKU's six **specific core areas/priority topics**:
 - Climate impacts, environmental and natural risks
 - Bioeconomy
 - Social, environmental and geology-focused long term research
 - Digitalisation in agriculture and forestry (smart farming and forestry)
 - Habitat of the future (Green-Blue Smart Habitat)
 - Food and Health Security

In addition to subject-specific cooperations and networks that are overseen by departments or professors, international networks are a part of visibility and positioning at BOKU. These networks are important drivers for research and teaching and can enable BOKU to position itself as a "specialist university" with forward-thinking topics and core areas, also outside the typical life science areas. The basis for the success and visibility of BOKU are strategically selected international networks as well as the leadership and participation in European initiatives in the upcoming European initiatives as e.g. the next Horizon Europe calls and the participation in the European University EPICUR (EP 2027 Chapter 6). The BOKU has the clear ambition to become a leading researcher in the research network European Bioeconomy University (EBU) and to play a role in the European Bioeconomy University (EBU) and in the

European University EPICUR together with top European universities such as the University of Freiburg, University of Amsterdam, University of Strasbourg, etc., to establish new networks in research and teaching (GUEP, system goal 7). Existing networks such as ICA-CASEE (EP 2027 Chapter 6) and projects within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region support these goals. In addition to Europe, BOKU will continue research and teaching projects in Africa, Asia, the USA and Latin America. At the same time, the BOKU fulfils its social responsibility by educating students from these regions, to fulfil social responsibility in the sense of sustainable development of these regions by educating the next generation of local leaders for these regions. Within the framework of the Austrian-Africa Universities Network, BOKU has set itself the goal together with its African partner universities to support sustainable regional development.

Based on the competence areas, the international visibility in research, teaching and social responsibility should be maintained and further expanded. In the sense of an ongoing profile sharpening, the six priority topics according to EP 2027 should ensure to position BOKU internationally in order to competitiveness through the following activities:

- Representation of BOKU interests within the European life science university networks ICA, CASEE and ELLS
- Contribution of competences and establishment of the BOKU topics in the framework of the European University- project EPICUR
- Assumption of international responsibility in the field of development research with the establishment of an Africa focus or the Africa-UniNet
- Expansion of the EBU research network
- Promotion of international research and teaching programmes as well as co-operation as part of the network activities and stimulus for joint large-scale projects
- Acquisition and development of international and intercultural competences of all BOKU members
- Virtual and real mobility offers as an aid to internationalisation, the development of blended learning strategies and continuing education as well as staff mobility and internationalisation-at-home
- Promotion of academic exchange (stays abroad, guest professorships, etc.) as part of career development, knowledge transfer in research and teaching as well as the strengthening of international BOKU networks

By acting as a truly global university, **BOKU will achieve the following benefits and thereby contribute to implementing BOKU's core values. These are presented in summary for each target group and explained in detail in the following sub-sections:**

For scientific and administrative staff:

- Enhanced cooperation and establishment of networks of international excellence to tackle transnational, international and global challenges.

- Stronger visibility of national and transnational solutions to highlight the role of BOKU as a leading life science university.
- Fostered integration in large-scale research projects and support the acquisition of international funding to develop innovative concepts.
- Discussion of transnational, international and global challenges and solutions in research-led teaching in order to enhance the involvement of international students' perspectives on the one hand and compare diverse strategies to cope with global challenges and enhance the quality of living in a cross-continental perspective on the other hand.

For students and alumni:

- Reviews and information on international exchange programs as a support for decision making whether to study abroad. Encouragement by students who gained international experience to spark interest for studying abroad. Share of international perspectives during courses at BOKU.
- Communication of benefits of tackling trans- and international topics in the final thesis (Master, Doctoral program) and support through international co-operation in supervision.
- Knowledge of international strategies and complementing approaches to facilitate the access to the (international) job market.

For external stakeholders:

- Stronger visibility and recognition of benefits of regional co-operation projects (e.g. with local communities)
- Facilitated access to research collaboration and networks for third-party stakeholders (companies, government organizations, authorities, NGOs, etc.)

In this context the strategy for internationalisation and the activities linked to its implementation aim to achieve the following medium to long-term benefits in short:

For scientific and administrative staff:

- Increase visibility of Internationalisation within the university (e.g. the possibilities via MoU's and co-operation agreements), as well as visibility of international achievements of BOKU institutes
- Increase the motivation of staff members (e.g. by including the experiences upon returning from a staff training activity)

For students and alumni:

- Increase visibility of Internationalisation within the university and enhance the motivation of students to go abroad
- Increase the employability and foster the visibility of BOKU alumni at the international labour market

For external stakeholders:

- Increased acceptance in regional co-operation projects (e.g. with local communities)

- Facilitate research collaboration and develop new contacts

„Intangible effects“:

- Networking and making new contacts can facilitate joint projects later
- Long-lasting effects which are not measurable within a short period of time

In the following core-tasks and benefits of the internationalisation process at BOKU are explained in more detail:

2) Learning and Teaching

BOKU aims at a **comprehensive internationalisation of education**, i.e. the inclusion of international aspects in the formal, informal and hidden curricula¹.

Aims in this respect:

- Enable all university members (i.e., students and staff) to obtain international and intercultural competences
- Provide internationalisation@home, e.g. by introducing global topics in single courses / international and intercultural learning outcomes in each curriculum; by integrating guest lecturers in special “selected topics of....” courses; by welcoming student excursion groups and other incomings from partner universities, by attracting international students for full-degree programs etc.
- Include options for mobility [virtual (blended learning, OER) / real (mobility windows / modularization)] in each curriculum; e.g. by target-group orientated development of joint degree programs or by using the offers of networks (e.g. EPICUR European University, ELLS, CASEE, EBU...)
- Recognise the added value of staff mobility for integrating international aspects in BOKU’s study programs and administrative procedures

3) Research, Innovation and Development

Our core strategic goals focus on:

Young Scientists & Recruiting

- Attracting and recruiting international top scientists, excellent doctoral candidates and encouraging academic exchange to further develop a high-quality research profile
- Further development and implementation of internationally oriented doctoral study programs

Research for Development, Capacity Building

- Recognition of our social responsibility by conducting development research and education for developing countries in areas related to sustainable natural resource management

¹ According to LEASK (2015), Internationalisation of the Curricula (IoC) comprises: a) the formal curriculum (=the published curriculum with learning outcomes etc.) b) the informal curriculum (which includes all other services and support offered with respect to the study programs) and c) the hidden curriculum (which reflects the mind-set of the whole university, e.g. the inclusion of international examples and literature in each course, but also the multilingual offer of the website etc.)

- Contributing to capacity-building in research, innovation and education with special emphasis on the Danube Region and Non-OECD countries
- Strengthening the interdisciplinary collaboration in Global Development Research across departments and thematic areas.

International Cooperation & Visibility

- Active participation of BOKU researchers in international conferences and hosting an increasing number of international conferences at BOKU to further increase the international visibility and scientific profile of BOKU
- Encouraging the involvement of BOKU scientists in activities of the international scientific community
- Stimulating international cooperative research projects and programs by networking with European and international partners, e.g. in the framework of the European University EPICUR or within other networks (e.g. EBU, ICA, CASEE, ELLS, Africa-Uninet, GCUA...)

ERA – European Research Area

- Maintaining strategic contacts with ERA-Representatives
- Increasing visibility of BOKU's ERA-Activities
- Addressing European Research Funds (e.g. Horizon Europe)

4) Third Mission:

BOKU actively takes on responsibility to address global challenges and societal needs, both by transfer of academic knowledge to society as well as via Know-how and technology transfer to industry partners.

- Through its Smart Specialization Strategy BOKU – together with its international and European partner institutions and university networks - is contributing to capacity-building in research, innovation and higher education with special emphasis on geographic target regions, in particular the Danube Region and Non-OECD countries
- BOKU is committed to the principles of sustainability and continues to stimulate and carry out research supporting sustainable development

Strategic contacts with ERA representatives must be maintained and the acquisition of EU projects (H2020, EFSA, COST, ERASMUS+, etc.) with existing cooperation partnerships and networks should be promoted. The BOKU-typical fields of competence with the BOKU focal points are the basis for international cooperation and the positioning of the university in the Austrian higher education sector and in the international environment.