



STRATEGY OF INTERNATIONALIZATION UNIVERSITY OF MEDICAL – SOFIA (2019 – 2023)

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RECTOR'S WORD

"I would like to bring to your attention the Strategy of the Medical University - Sofia throughout the programming period 2019 – 2023. The current strategic document was prepared fully in line with the vision of the European Commission to build a European Education Area by 2025, in which leading European higher education institutions exchange good practices in order to strengthen international competitiveness, to promote mobility of students and lecturers, and to develop innovative research-based approaches in the field of teaching, research and dissemination of knowledge.

The Strategy is focused on developing of an academic and scientific environment, in which highly motivated, qualified and proactive young people seek to get knowledge and experience TODAY, and TOMORROW – to apply what they have learned to gain a competitive success in the labor market. Medical University – Sofia via the European financial instruments, Programme Erasmus+ Programme and Programme Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe Programme, makes strong efforts to open new possibilities to mobility, joint scientific projects, co-publications and effective dissemination of successful good practices."

LIST OF COMMONLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
HEA	Higher Education Act
MU – Sofia	Medical University - Sofia
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
HRDC	Human Resource Development Centre
EEA	European Economic Area
ERA	The European Research Area
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
COST	European Cooperation for Technology and Science
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
IIPF	Office of International integration and project funding

FIRST PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY – SOFIA'S STRATEGY OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

Mission Statement:

Medical University – Sofia prioritizes the process of an ever-expanding international exchange of academic and research human resources that will lead to the emergence of strong interdisciplinary educational and scientific partnerships in which framework the future professionals could successfully realize themselves in a global competitive environment.

Vision Statement:

Having a trained well-trained workforce in the medical field is possible through the implementation of modern innovative approaches for international exchange of knowledge and skills, while developing: a well-established teaching methodology, traditions in the in-depth research process, and further using of acquired academic knowledge in competitive market conditions. The Medical University - Sofia considers as its medium-term strategic toolkit the existing possibilities for project international funding in the context of European Higher Education Area.

Current state

This Strategy of Internationalization of the Medical University – Sofia, hereinafter referred to as the Strategy, has been prepared on the basis of systematic and analyzed current university indicators in the context of the legal framework of the Bulgarian and European legislation in force. Internationalization as a term in the field of higher education refers to different manifestations of the process of involving an institution in various partner formats / alliances / unions, preparation and implementation of common international projects and initiatives, exchanged mobility, bilateral training abroad, international scientific exchange, cultural dialogue, etc. The current globalization process is driven primarily by market forces, at regional and international level, which force educational systems to adapt themselves to changing conditions.

The Strategy sets out key milestones and identifies key goals for the MU – Sofia that shall be achieved over the next 4-year programming period. The Strategy of Internationalization involves the preparation of University's documents containing objectives, actions and key performance indicators (KPIs). The sought-after effect at the international level does not change the focus of the Strategy on its successfully implementation at local level: Department, Faculty or Academic Council of the Medical University - Sofia.

In order to respond adequately to the increasing demand to raise external funding, MU – Sofia shall invest in continuous enhancement and upgrading of the administrative staff's competences and capacities, using financial instruments as Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe, Programme Erasmus+, European Cooperation for

Technology and Science (COST), the Financial Mechanism of European Economic Area, etc. It is essential to develop and maintain contacts and partnerships at expert level with official representatives of the HRMD and coordinators of the Programme Horizon 2020/ Horizon Europe/ EEA.

Strategy and legal framework

This Strategy has been developed after reviewing and summarizing the key goals and priorities set out in the strategy documents, as follows:

- Europe 2020 Strategy;
- Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2020;
- The First Strategic Plan for Horizon Europe – the European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2021 – 2027;
- „A renewed European Agenda for Research and Innovation – Europe's chance to shape its future“;
- European Qualifications Framework (EQF) & European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS);
- Bologna Process 2020 – European Higher Education Area;
- Strategic Plan 2016-2020;
- National strategic documents of the Republic of Bulgaria: the National Reform Programme of the Bulgarian Republic in implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy (incl. EU Council Recommendations); National Development Programme Bulgaria 2020; National Research Development Strategy 2020; Innovation strategy for smart specialization of the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2020 (IS3) under the Operational Program "Science and education for smart growth 2014-2020" and Operational Programme "Innovation and competitiveness" 2014-2020;
- Erasmus+ Policy Statement of Medical University – Sofia.

Guiding Principles for the Development of the Strategy of MU – Sofia

- Flexibility;
- Transparency of actions;
- Reporting;
- Collaboration between departments
- Implementation, Evaluation & Control of the Strategy

SET OBJECTIVES AND IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THE STRATEGY OF MU – SOFIA AT THE FOUR LEVELS: NATIONAL, REGIONAL, EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL

At the National level

The National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria in its Strategy for Development of Higher Education for 2014-2020 outlines the key priorities for the Medical University - Sofia. In this sense, the present Strategy is in line with the Bulgarian and European documents for the development of higher education.

At the beginning of 2019, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria initiated a series of changes regarding higher education institutions, as place emphasis on medical sciences as a field of particular importance to society and the economy. A number of measures have been taken in areas with an expected shortage of specialists. In medical professional fields, student enrollment at the national level has increased over 70% in recent years, according to data from the Ministry of Education and Science. In line with this national policy, the Medical University - Sofia as the oldest and most prestigious medical institution offering professional directions of national importance, should feel the beneficial effect of the initiated changes.

According to the Bulgarian legislation, the universities not only train specialists of high qualifications, but also develop science, culture and innovation (Article 6, paragraph 1 of the Higher Education Act). The law clearly states that each university has the right to organize international cooperation, membership in international organizations, conclude joint study contracts and contracts for joint research, project and innovation activities and other forms of joint activity with foreign higher education institutions and organizations recognized under the law of the country concerned.

At the European level

The Medical University – Sofia, as the leader in Bulgaria in all five fields of medical education - medicine, dental medicine, pharmacy, health care and public health, bears responsibility for the representation of the Bulgarian higher education at European level.

At the European level

Medical University – Sofia has clearly defined Rules for the admission of foreign nationals from EU Member States, EEA countries and so-called "Third parties", approved by Decision of the Academic Council from 25.04.2017. The Faculties of

Medicine, Dental Medicine and Pharmacy carry out courses in English. About 3,500 international students study at the MU - Sofia, in other words over 1/3 of all students are foreign students, and this greatly enrich the university environment with different cultures, value systems, multilingual communications and a variety of good practices.

Main Goals of the Strategy of Internationalization of MU – Sofia:

- **1st Goal:** Integration of the Medical University – Sofia into the **European Education Area** by 2025;
- **2nd Goal:** Integration of the Medical University – Sofia into the **European Research Area** (ERA) by 2025;
- **3th Goal:** Increase the number of Inter-institutional agreements with higher education institutions from Programme and Partner countries under KA103 and KA107 in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme;
- **4th Goal:** Cumulatively increase of the international funding through participation in bilateral and multilateral projects and initiatives, emphasizing the importance of research process;
- **5th Goal:** Using the Erasmus+ Programme an essential tool for the sustainable development of the Institution and the achievement of the EU's strategic goals for the mobility and cooperation of young people with a European identity;
- **6th Goal:** MU – Sofia shall be represented in all important global and national rankings of higher educational institutions to get an international status;
- **7th Goal:** Using cutting-edge technology to accelerate learning and teaching processes, as well as the modernization of material equipment in order to attract and expand transfer of knowledge.

ACTION PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY OF MU – SOFIA

SWOT ANALYSIS OF MEDICAL UNIVERSITY – SOFIA

The Action Plan for internationalization (2019-2023) of MU – Sofia set out the strategic planning of internationalisation in terms of implementation periods, reports, performance evaluation indicators, risk management and process of dissemination.

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
Disciplines taught in English: over 130	Lack of quantitative measures for monitoring and evaluation of the results obtained
A total of 308 students and 168 faculty sent for the last 3 years	A part of disciplines do not offer training in English
Over 30 Memorandums of understanding in force	Investment in employee training and participation in international seminars, training conferences
Raised project funding from the Erasmus+ Programme with Programme and Partner Countries: KA103 and KA107 for training and practice of students, lecturers and staff	Low representation of disadvantaged students
MU – Sofia is a leader with its Faculty of Medicine for realized financial benefits from international funding programmes	Remaining stereotypes among students that student mobility is connected with non-recognition of exams and credits
Successful implementation and usage of the EU platform – Erasmus+ Mobility Tool	There is no free Wi-Fi connection in the Rectorate, especially in the Office of International integration and Project Funding
Ongoing Student Scholarship Projects for students from Sweden, Turkey, India and Germany	Less realized mobility for administrative staff (experts at OIIPF, accounting, library and so on)
Programmes are offered at three levels – undergraduate, graduate and doctoral studies (bachelor, master and PhD studies)	An insufficient command of English at working level (except OIIPF)
Strategic Partnerships with Universities in Japan, Russia, Morocco, South Africa, Jordan	Need for additional high-tech equipment to enable participation in meetings via remote communications
Participation of nearly 980 students (1/10 of all students) in some form of international mobility for individuals	Undeveloped employee work profile for the leading social networks and non-

	installed office video and call communication applications
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Opportunities:	Threats:
Participation in the Initiative "European Universities" under Programme Erasmus+	Inter-institutional agreements and Memorandums for understanding could only be signed, without actually being implemented
Open calls for proposal related to research and innovation, prioritizing higher education and science at European level	As a matter of form membership in Organizations with no real benefits to the University, such as: EURAXESS network, The Association of Medical Universities and so on
Upgrading the content and opening new courses with up-to-date subjects as well as online lectures	The experience achieved abroad could impress students and after graduation they could move to other country looking for a better job ("leaking minds")
Increasing the competitiveness of MU - Sofia in the field of providing medical specialties	Complicated procedure for administration of 'Erasmus+' mobility in the higher education, which is subordinated to the EC
Exchange of visits between lecturers, administrative staff and organising networking events	Strong competition from other Bulgarian universities
Organizing summer schools for Incoming Erasmus+ students (cooperation with ESN (European student networking) & ICMS Youth Organization)	Not well-organized risk management and non effective goal setting
Raising the budget for advertising campaigns as part of communication strategy of MU – Sofia	The complicated organizational structure of MU – Sofia could be not flexible enough to the dynamic changing global environment
Strengthening of relations with already established partnerships on all Memorandums of Understanding	lacking of development in the core competencies of lecturers and staff (technology, know-how, etc. "soft skills")
Building multilingual learning environments (bilingual information	Lacking of a Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI)

plates and inscriptions on the territory of MU – Sofia)	in the MU - Sofia that could lead to a blurring of roles and responsibilities
Increased use of university' official profiles in social media to better dissemination of best practices	Dependence of the objectives of the Strategy with the management approach chosen

Priority guidelines and measures for accelerated modernization and internationalization of Medical University – Sofia

The MU – Sofia should take concrete measures in two directions: internal organizational and structural modernization and external dimension: involvement of the University in the global process.

Organizational and structural changes in the MU – Sofia in the medium term:

- Building of a new Rectorate and renovation of the building stock: modernized offices and laboratories, as well as modern equipped centers for practical training;
- Awareness campaign (participation with information booth and presentation materials twice in the academic year) in order to inform students about the opportunity to benefit from funded mobility under the Erasmus+ Programme;
- Promoting international mobility (outgoing and ingoing students), but with targeted prevention of leaking of minds;
- Upgrading curricula and seeking intersections with market needs, not only in providing adequate practical knowledge, but also in fostering professional skills;
- Continuing process of sustainable development, in which the University provides higher specialized education, but is also a major center for the development of science, based on new scientific knowledge and application of modern information technologies.

Project funding and international cooperation mechanisms

Development of a separate detailed *Action Plan* as part of the Internationalization Strategy of the MU – Sofia

Objects:

1st Object: Integration of Medical University – Sofia into the European Education Area by 2025

№	Tasks & Activities	Responsible Department	Deadline	Sources of funding
1	To facilitate academic and credit recognition (facilitating	Dean's office	31.12.2023	MU–Sofia budget

	the transfer and recognition of the achievements of the mobile student)			
2	Enhanced awareness-raising campaign for participation in mobility	Education and Training Department + IIPF	31.12.2020	MU–Sofia budget
3	Increasing level of foreign language proficiency (including organizing a course for Incoming Erasmus + students in Bulgarian)	Education and Training Department	31.12.2023	MU–Sofia budget
4	Automatic mutual recognition of diplomas	Education and Training Department + IIPF	31.12.2023	MU–Sofia budget
5	Participation in cross-border initiatives such as the European Universities Network	IIPF + Education and Training Department	20.02.2020	20% by MU–Sofia budget + 80% by EC
6	Launching the new initiative European Student Card and Initiative without paper	Education and Training Department + IIPF	31.12.2023	MU–Sofia budget
7	Provision of free student Wi-Fi in the students' dormitories	The entire institution MU – Sofia	31.12.2023	MU–Sofia budget
8	Strengthening the sense of European Identity and awareness	The entire institution MU – Sofia	31.12.2023	MU–Sofia budget
9	Digitization of education in the context of the European strategy of „The digital education Action plan“	The entire institution MU – Sofia	31.12.2023	MU–Sofia budget + EC
10	Membership in different international formats / organizations / consortia (European University Association, etc.)	The entire institution MU – Sofia	31.12.2020	MU–Sofia budget + EC

2nd Object: Integration of Medical University – Sofia into the European Research Area by 2025

Nº	Tasks & Activities	Responsible Department	Deadline	Sources of funding
1	Access to transnational research infrastructures	IIPF + Department of Science	31.12.2023	MU–Sofia budget + EC
2	Gender equality in research careers	The entire institution MU – Sofia	31.12.2023	MU–Sofia budget
3	Transfer of scientific knowledge with open license	The entire institution MU – Sofia	31.12.2023	MU–Sofia budget
4	Participation in projects focused on funding of participants lagging behind other industrialised countries in relative R&D expenditure levels (Bulgaria is into this group), in the framework of the Horizon Europe	IIPF + Department of Science	31.12.2023	MU–Sofia budget + EC
5	EPA-NET Programme and Research Funding	IIPF + Department of Science	31.12.2023	MU–Sofia budget + EC
6	Creating and updating a Calendar of open main calls for international funding programme which includes the deadlines	IIPF + Department of Science	31.12.2023	MU–Sofia budget + EC
7	Monitoring mechanism for the implemented innovation and knowledge transfer in MU – Sofia	IIPF + Department of Science	31.12.2020	MU–Sofia budget + EC
8	Communication campaigns for using the EC platform EURAXESS > Jobs & Funding	IIPF + Department of Science	31.12.2020	MU–Sofia budget + EC
9	International mobility of scientists within the Programme „the Marie Skłodowska-Curie“	IIPF + Department of Science	31.12.2020	MU–Sofia budget + EC

3rd Object: Increasing the number of Memorandums for understanding with higher education institutions and research centers from EU and non-EU countries and developing partnerships with them on key activities under KA103 and KA107 of the Erasmus+ Programme

Nº	Tasks & Activities	Responsible Department	Deadline	Sources of funding
1	Erasmus+ KA107, Region 1 Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina)	IIPF	30.09.2022	HRDC
2	Erasmus+ KA107, Region 2 (Belarus, Georgia, Territory of Ukraine as recognised by international law)	IIPF	30.09.2022	HRDC
3	Erasmus+ KA107, Region 3 (Algeria, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia)	IIPF	30.09.2022	HRDC
4	Erasmus+ KA107, Region 4 (Territory of Russia as recognised by international law)	IIPF	30.09.2022	HRDC
5	Erasmus+ KA107, Region 6 (China, Vietnam)	IIPF	30.09.2022	HRDC
6	Erasmus+ KA107, Region 10 (South Africa)	IIPF	30.09.2022	HRDC
7	Erasmus+ KA107, Region 8 (Latin America – Argentina)	IIPF	30.09.2022	HRDC
8	Erasmus+ KA107, Region 13 (Hong Kong, Japan, Canada)	IIPF	30.09.2022	HRDC
9	Bigger number of Erasmus+ mobilities under KA103	IIPF	30.09.2022	HRDC

4th Object: Providing international funding through participation in bilateral and multilateral projects and initiatives, emphasizing the importance of research

Nº	Tasks & Activities	Responsible Department	Deadline	Sources of funding
1	EC's grants	The entire institution MU – Sofia	30.09.2023	EC

2	Grants of Horizon Europe	The entire institution MU – Sofia	30.09.2023	EC
3	Scholarships from Embassies of foreign countries	The entire institution MU – Sofia	30.09.2023	Others
4	Study grants for students	The entire institution MU – Sofia	30.09.2023	Others
5	Attracting Funds From International Donors	The entire institution MU – Sofia	30.09.2023	Others
6	Partnerships with foundations	The entire institution MU – Sofia	30.09.2023	Others
7	Provision of sufficient budget to funding the implementation of the pre-project activity of the IIMF experts (for workshops, seminars, conferences, workshops)	IIPF	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
8	Continued participation in The Francophone university agency (AUF) as an associated member	The entire institution MU – Sofia	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
9	Setting goals within the budget of Horizon Europe 2021-2027	IIPF + Department of Science	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
10	Development of the „scientific excellence” in the framework of the European Research Council	IIPF + Department of Science	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
11	Adherence to the accepted goals in the European Research and Innovation Programme	IIPF + Department of Science	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
12	Communicating new funding opportunities through the European Innovation Council (EIC)	IIPF + Department of Science	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget

13	Applying for projects prioritizing countries like Bulgaria, lagging behind R&D investments	IIPF + Department of Science	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
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5th Object: Turning Erasmus+ an essential tool for sustainable development of the Institution and achieve the EU's objectives for mobility and cooperation of young people with a European identity.

Nº	Tasks & Activities	Responsible Department	Deadline	Sources of funding
1	New Erasmus+ projects under KA103 / KA107	IIPF	30.09.2023	EC
2	Creating a multilingual environment and language training for travel abroad	Education and Training Department + IIPF	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
3	Development and distribution of presentation-informative printed materials in order to increase motivation for inclusion	IIPF	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
4	Involvement of disadvantaged students in mobility abroad	IIPF	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
5	Provide information and assistance to students and staff participate in mobility abroad	IIPF	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
6	Development of more attractive programs for inclusion in mobility	IIPF + Dean's office	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
7	Supporting and improving of recognition of acquired credits and skills	IIPF + Dean's office	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
8	Development of a software application to systemize inbound information	IIPF + IT office	30.09.2020	MU–Sofia budget

6th Object: Active inclusion of MU – Sofia in world, regional and European rating rankings for the purpose of international image

Nº	Tasks & Activities	Responsible Department	Deadline	Sources of funding
1	Purposeful rise of the h-index in the prestigious databases as Scopus and Web of Science	The entire institution MU – Sofia	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
2	Using of the University’s newspaper „The Journal Acta Medica Bulgarica“	The entire institution MU – Sofia	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
3	An active and motivating Erasmus+ official Facebook page	IIPF	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
4	An active and motivating Erasmus+ official LinkedIn profile	PR expert and IT office	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget
5	Participation of the MU - Sofia in the U-Multirank: 2019-2020 World University Rankings	IIPF	30.09.2020	MU–Sofia budget
6	Participation in the top three leading international rating systems for higher education	IIPF	30.09.2020	MU–Sofia budget
7	Institutional commitment to the International environmental policy and implementation of the idea for "green universities"	The entire institution MU – Sofia	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget

7th Object: Implementation and use of new technologies in the process of training, as well as the modernization of material equipment in order to attract and expand the transfer of knowledge.

Nº	Tasks & Activities	Responsible Department	Deadline	Sources of funding
1	Encouraged use by students of the European	Education and Training	30.09.2023	MU–Sofia budget

	Platform for documents: https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en (for CVs, European Skills Passport, Language Passport, Europass Mobility and so on)	Department + IIPF		
2	Communicative strategy for using of Youthpass's platform for recognizing non-formal learning https://www.youthpass.eu/en/about-youthpass/about/	Education and Training Department + IIPF	30.09.2023	MU-Sofia budget
3	Set up a new Erasmus + Impact Section at www.mu-sofia.bg , as well as periodically uploading open access materials	Education and Training Department + IIPF	30.09.2023	MU-Sofia budget
4	Using the Erasmus+ Facebook page to search partners for mutual projects	Education and Training Department + IIPF	30.09.2023	MU-Sofia budget

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF MU – SOFIA

List of indicators for measuring the achievement of the objectives and the lack of measures set out in the Strategy of internationalization at the Medical University - Sofia

Expected results

Indicators	Unit of measure	Target for 2019	Target for 2023
Number participated in mobility: students	Number	150	190
Number participated in mobility: lecturers	Number	107	130
Number participated in mobility: staff	Number	10	13
Percentage of subjects taught in English	%	75%	90%

relative to the total number of subjects			
Share of programs from the total number of graduates with double degree diplomas	%	1%	5%
Number of participation in international scientific forums	Number	100	150
Number of research projects with international participation	Number	10	15
Number of publications in foreign publications authored by MU	Number	300	400
Completed tasks from Department "Science"	Department	1	39
Completed tasks from Education and Training Department	Department	1	3
Completed tasks from IIPF	Department	1	20
Completed tasks from IT office	Department	1	2
Completed tasks from Dean's office	Dean's office	1	3
Completed tasks from the entire institution MU – Sofia	MU – Sofia	1	16

Monitoring and updating of the Strategy of internationalization of the MU - Sofia

- The depth of the internationalization process of the MU – Sofia should be measured with the depth of association with it and the intensity of its implementation;
- The quality of the offered services and the undertaken activities of the Medical University – Sofia as a leading institution should be above the achievements at a

national level, equal to the regional average parameters and to the targeted goals at the European level;

- Level of use of innovation in training.

Risk Management

The Risk Management implies the Strategy of Internationalization in the context of the Organizational Strategy of MU – Sofia. Seven factors to consider:

- Reliable forecasting and effective targeting;
- An effective methodology for tracking costs while meeting the goals of internationalization;
- Developed an internal procedure for monitoring and update of the Strategy;
- Level of decentralization;
- Direction and depth of knowledge transfer;
- Leadership and organizational culture, as well as level of engagement of the participating countries
- Outcomes of the Risk management and implementation of the Strategy.

Dissemination of good practices

Development within 2 years of Erasmus+ Project Results Platform of MU – Sofia.

Sections:

- Projects overview;
- Projects results;
- Frequently asked questions;
- Feedback (the requirement for feedback and sharing in text and photo material of Erasmus+ success stories, the so-called "Erasmus + Impact")

Development of database management system of information about those involved in international activities (mobility, conferences, joint publications, international awards) in order to manage important empirical information. The accumulation of this type of information base will be the basis for subsequent medium-term strategic documents with sub-objects for the respective departments at the MU - Sofia.