



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
YOUTH AND SPORTS



STRATEGY FOR THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE PERIOD FROM 2021

Annex to the Strategic Plan of the Ministry for Higher Education for the period from 2021

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BACKGROUND TO THE INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY

The Internationalisation of Higher Education Strategy for the period from 2021 is a complementary document to the Ministry's Strategic Plan for Higher Education for the period from 2021 ("SZ2021+") and together they form the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports' (MEYS) basic conceptual document for the area of higher education and significantly contribute to the achievement of priorities in the field of international cooperation as set out in the Innovation Strategy of the Czech Republic to 2030.

The Internationalisation Strategy was created as a separate document, because within the context of the development of higher education, internationalisation represents a cross-cutting area with comprehensive coverage of a number of activities, procedures, processes and policies at both national and institutional levels, and even in the context of European and global developments.

The Internationalisation Strategy sets out the main priority and operational objectives in the field of internationalisation, presents the activities that the Ministry, in cooperation with the Czech National Agency for International Education (DZS) and other actors, plans to implement in order to achieve them, and names expected implementation measures at the level of individual universities.

Current trends in internationalisation focus on the internationalisation of the curriculum provided at home institutions for students in order to increase the quality of study programmes and equip all graduates with international and intercultural skills, often referred to as global competences. Support for international cooperation is also important at the level of university management. This is where priorities for the development of internationalisation and support for increasing the capacity of universities in the field of services for students and in the introduction of internationalisation of the curriculum are determined.

The Internationalisation Strategy provides an understanding of current trends in the world and the potential benefits of international cooperation for institutions, management, administration, academics, and students, and provides a framework for a comprehensive internationalisation strategy for universities and the creation of their individual institutional strategies.

Like SZ2021+, the Internationalisation Strategy follows European and global trends and builds on the principles of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area. The strategy reflects the recommendations and key priorities of the European Commission set out in the Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "European higher education in the world" (COM/2013/0499) focusing on efforts to attract talented individuals to improve the competitiveness and quality of study programmes, as well as to improve graduates' readiness for life in a globalised world, but also to expand opportunities to support strategic partnerships in research and innovation.

VISION FOR CZECH HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE AREA OF INTERNATIONALISATION

The foundation of the strategy is a central vision, i.e. the situation towards which the individual goals and their related activities are directed.

The vision for the national internationalisation strategy is as follows:

Due to the international dimension and the quality of education, research and the third role, Czech universities are preparing their graduates for a leading role in the global knowledge society, thereby contributing to the prosperity and sustainable development of communities at home and abroad.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and higher education institutions will work together to ensure that the Czech higher education system fulfils the following ideal in 2030:

- ▶ The topic of internationalisation is included in key national and institutional strategies. Universities have developed their own institutional strategy of internationalisation, which is a pillar of strategic management of internationalisation at the university level and which either forms a separate document or is part of the strategic plan of the university.
- ▶ Graduates and university staff are equipped with global competences. At least 20% of all full-time Bachelor's and Master's degree graduates have completed a study period or internship abroad of at least 14 days and 80% of full-time doctoral students have completed a study period or internship abroad of at least 30 days.
- ▶ Universities provide study programmes with substantial elements of internationalisation, such as part of the course given in a foreign language, development of intercultural skills, a study plan including foreign or combined placements, etc.
- ▶ Universities are involved in strategic international cooperation, partnerships, and international capacity building. They are active members of international organisations and consortia of universities from different countries and are involved in activities contributing to the development of European Higher Education Area and cooperation with countries both within and outside the EU.
- ▶ The Czech Republic is an attractive and friendly country, and its universities are attractive institutions for international students, graduates, and academic and research staff. International students make up at least 20% of students in study programmes.

I. DEVELOPING GLOBAL COMPETENCES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND STAFF

DEFINING THE OBJECTIVE:

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), global competences refer to the capacity to examine local, global, and intercultural issues, to understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others, to engage in open, appropriate, and effective interactions with people from different cultures, and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development. The acquisition of global competences is a necessary prerequisite for the involvement of university graduates in a global society and economy, including research and innovation. Global competences can be acquired both through international mobility and internationalisation at home, through the internationalisation of the curriculum, the introduction of digital education, including virtual forms of international cooperation, and the presence of international students and university staff. For university academics, this means that they must be able to prepare curricula with an international and intercultural dimension, including the inclusion of possible foreign experience, be able to teach a culturally, linguistically, and socially diversified class of students, to design and implement international projects, work in international teams, and actively develop meaningful foreign partnerships. An important principle is inclusion, i.e. setting up the system to ensure that students or university academics who for various reasons cannot travel to placements abroad, or whose access to mobility is problematic (e.g. because they have special needs), are also involved in the process of acquiring global competences.

1.A SUPPORT FOR LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL TRAINING OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND STAFF

Equipping university students and staff with language and intercultural competences is a basic prerequisite for the development of internationalisation. Language and intercultural competences play an important role in the development and administration of international mobility, the implementation of international projects, the development of international partnerships, the preparation and teaching of study programmes in English or other world-languages, and providing services and an internationally friendly environment for international (as well as Czech) students and university staff.

- **Expected measures at the university level – financing [SR, ESIF]:** To take measures to introduce the use of foreign languages as an integral part of study and work at university. In particular, to ensure a sufficient range of foreign language courses on offer for students as well as academic and administrative staff, to increase the share of professional subjects taught in foreign languages, to ensure access to foreign language study materials and to enable final theses to be written in foreign languages.
- **Expected measures at the university level – financing [ESIF, Erasmus+ programmes]:** To introduce courses to develop intercultural competences with a view to understanding the culture of partner institutions' countries, particularly for students and staff preparing for foreign placements and teachers and other staff working with diversified groups of international students and staff.
- **Financing [ESIF]:** MEYS will provide financial support for university activities leading to the development of language, intercultural and pedagogical competences of academic staff within the framework of its grant budgetary titles.

1.B DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

Despite the emphasis on internationalisation at home, international mobility remains one of the main pillars of internationalisation. International mobility plays an irreplaceable role in the development of global competences of

students and staff. At present, students' interest in international mobility is declining, especially in Europe. Students are worried about whether they will be able to study abroad, whether their study results will be recognised upon their return, they often also work during their studies, or they take care of their family and are thus not interested in or able to participate in long-term placements. In response to this trend, the range of types and forms of international mobility must be expanded, having regard to the needs and possibilities of students, including virtual and blended mobility, and efforts must be made to remove obstacles to mobility. At the same time, the option of physical mobility or distance learning at foreign institutions must be integrated into the structure of study programmes. An important part of the mobility development process is the consistent application of the quality standards of the mobility organisation according to the Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) (automatic recognition, student care, digitisation, inclusion), including the principles and tools defined by the Bologna Process in order to improve mobility for all and to develop the European Higher Education Area by 2025.

Digitisation of foreign placements, including digitisation of administration and new types of virtual and combined (blended) mobility, inclusion of participants with limited opportunities, including students with special needs or from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, will be the challenges and opportunities for the upcoming period. The new Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme should enable international mobility for the widest possible group of students and university staff. In addition to current long-term mobility for the purpose of study or internship, it should also bring various forms of short-term mobility to students of all types and levels of study. Students will have the opportunity to participate in blended mobility, which consists of a shorter stay abroad (approximately 2 weeks) and a digital element (online education and cooperation with foreign students and teachers before and after the actual placement). The aim of digitisation will be not only to simplify the current administration associated with the organisation of mobility, but mainly to create new opportunities for students and staff who cannot or do not want to participate in physical mobility, because of their specific needs.

- **Expected measures at the university level – financing [Erasmus+ programmes]:** To create a targeted offer of international placements for students and staff. The targeted offer should follow on from the study programme and should take into account student needs. Following on from the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme, to introduce new types of placement, such as virtual, combined placements, short-term intensive placements, placements in non-European countries, traineeships, and placements for academic and non-academic staff. To focus on groups of students who are less likely, or unlikely, to travel for placements (e.g. on certain study programmes, etc.). To support and integrate volunteering as equal forms of student mobility (e.g. under the Erasmus+ Youth Exchanges and the European Solidarity Corps).
- **Expected measures at the university level – financing [SR, ESIF, Erasmus+ programmes]:** To support mobility for students with special needs and from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, through increased scholarships, information, etc.
- **Expected measures at the university level – financing [Erasmus+ programmes]:** To adopt measures to improve the quality of activities associated with the organisation of placements (physical and virtual/blended), particularly in the context of monitoring compliance with placement organisation standards, the digitisation of administrative processes, automatic recognition, language and intercultural preparation prior to departure and the availability of information for students.
- **Expected measures at the university level:** To adopt the necessary measures for the full implementation of tools enabling the electronic exchange of information on studies, electronic identification, and electronic recognition of credits from student placements. To implement the EC's initiatives Erasmus Without Paper, European Student Card/EMREX initiatives and actively use the Single Digital Gateway.
- **Financing [Erasmus+ programmes]:** MEYS, in collaboration with DZS, will continuously monitor the state of implementation of the Erasmus Without Paper and European Student Card initiatives at universities and provide financial support for universities for their implementation. DZS and MEYS will provide universities with information on European Commission activities in the area of implementing European Student Card and Erasmus Without Paper through online communications platforms.
- **Financing [SR]:** MEYS will provide the legislative and technological framework for the implementation of the Single Digital Gateway pursuant to Regulation 2018/1724 of the European Parliament and of the Council in the higher education environment. Part of the Single Digital Gateway will include the provision of online infor-

mation on study opportunities and conditions and a fully online procedure for scholarship applications, study applications and applications for academic recognition of diplomas (see Annexes I and II of the Regulation).

- **Financing [SR, ESIF]:** Within the Programme to Support Strategic Management of Higher Education Institutions and ESIF, MEYS will support activities of higher education institutions aimed at promoting the mobility of students and university staff, including organisational support and digitisation.
- MEYS will evaluate and subsequently, based on the results of this evaluation, propose modifications to the offer of scholarships to support study abroad, within the framework of bilateral and multilateral agreements with the ministry, which reflect the territorial priorities defined in the Strategy for the Development of International Relations at MEYS level.
- MEYS will provide systemic support for the outgoing mobility of students and academic staff within its scholarship programme.

1.C DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES OF UNIVERSITY STAFF IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONALISATION

The main promoters of internationalisation at universities are their staff. The success of a university in the field of international cooperation is directly dependent on the level of their competences, experience, and knowledge in the field of internationalisation. It is therefore desirable to motivate employees to actively participate in activities in the field of internationalisation and at the same time to develop and strengthen their competences in this area. It is no less important to support their participation in professional conferences and networking activities, which bring opportunities to meet and negotiate with representatives of potential or existing partners and increases staff awareness of current trends in the area of internationalisation of higher education.

- **Expected measures at the university level – financing [ESIF]:** To introduce measures at university level leading to the systematic development of the competences of academic and non-academic university staff in the area of internationalisation at the university level.
- **Expected measures at the university level:** To motivate academic and non-academic staff to participate in mobility schemes and to remove obstacle that might prevent them from the mobility.
- MEYS, in collaboration with DZS, will support the development of competences of university staff in the area of internationalisation and related areas, especially the internationalisation of study programmes, digitisation, virtual and combined placements, and inclusion through different forms of training, in cooperation with domestic and international experts.
- **Financing [SR, Erasmus+ programmes]:** MEYS, in collaboration with DZS, will support the participation of Czech universities at international conferences and networking activities, in particular international events falling under the activity of Study in the Czech Republic, activities carried out in cooperation with ACA, EAIE etc.
- **Financing [SR]:** Within the framework of the Programme to Support Strategic Management of Universities and the ESIF, MEYS will support university activities leading to systemic support for the development of university staff competences necessary to ensure the quality development of internationalisation at universities.

II. THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF UNIVERSITY STUDY PROGRAMMES

FINING THE OBJECTIVE:

Internationalisation at the level of study programmes is a key part of the internationalisation of higher education and can take place through the introduction of study programmes in a foreign language, the development of joint study programmes such as “joint”, “double” or “multiple degree” and the creation of study plans that already provide a window for the student mobility.

Study programmes taught in foreign languages bring international students to Czech universities for longer periods of time than students coming on international mobility, thereby multiplying the benefits of internationalisation. International students who study here for the duration of the study programme can bring different perspectives and experiences to the subject, thereby enriching discussions and other activities within the subject. A longer stay also gives more room for better integration into the local student and academic community, and international students thus become an important means of developing internationalisation at home. Thanks to internationalisation at home, domestic students who, for various reasons, cannot take part in foreign mobility, will have the opportunity to receive an education with strong international elements at home. The direct benefit for universities is also the financial revenue from tuition fees that may be charged for programmes taught in a language other than Czech. Last but not least, the implementation of study programmes in a foreign language and joint study programmes in cooperation with foreign institutions significantly increase the competitiveness and prestige of universities on a global scale. One of the desirable outcomes of strategic international cooperation in the interests of the quality of internationalisation are joint, double, or multiple degree programmes, which are also important contributions to joint university projects, European University projects, and the long-term creation of a common European Higher Education Area. Procedures need to be established to simplify and speed up the creation of joint programmes as much as possible.

2.A INCREASING THE NUMBER AND QUALITY OF STUDY PROGRAMMES OFFERED IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND JOINT STUDY PROGRAMMES

A broad and high-quality offer of study programmes in foreign languages is the only way to attract a sufficiently large and diversified group of foreign students to Czech universities over the long term. These programmes must be based on the demand of international students and must be sufficiently attractive and competitive in terms of price and quality. Adequate linguistic and intercultural competence of the academics who create and teach these programmes must be ensured and a quality control system has to be established.

- **Expected measures at the university level:** To continuously monitor demand from international students for specific programmes and to provide a flexible response by identifying the appropriate offer within existing study programmes or tailoring it to the demand, with regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the current offer.
- **Expected measures at the university level – financing [ESIF]:** To adopt measures for the continuous monitoring of the quality of foreign language subjects and study programmes and to ensure that their level is comparable to programmes in the Czech language.
- MEYS, in collaboration with DZS, will support the development of the competences of university staff in the area of the creation and teaching of foreign language subjects and study programmes (including forms of distance education for the purposes of virtual and blended mobility), through training in cooperation with domestic and foreign experts.
- MEYS, in collaboration with DZS, will ensure regular monitoring of international students’ satisfaction with the offer and quality of studies in foreign language study programmes and together they will provide univer-

sities with support in monitoring data at the national level on the development of international students' demand for study in the Czech Republic, in particular at the level of individual countries and the area of study.

- The National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education (NAB) will focus on evaluating the quality of bachelor's and master's theses by graduates of foreign language study programmes.
- MEYS, in collaboration with DZS and NAB, will support the creation of a system of methodological support for the development of joint study programmes, in particular with regard to their definition, the establishment of evaluation and quality assurance standards, and the necessary legislative provisions.
- MEYS, in collaboration with NAB, will revise Government Regulation No. 274/2016 Coll., on standards for accreditation in higher education, and relevant methodological materials concerning the accreditation of joint study programmes such as joint degree programmes, double degrees and multiple degrees. They will jointly consider the possibility of implementing the principles of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.
- MEYS will consider the possibility of introducing a new indicator on the number of foreign language study programmes taught, as well as joint study programmes such as joint degree programmes, double degrees, and multiple degrees within the context of qualitative indicator K in the financing of public universities.

2.B INCLUSION OF AN INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION IN THE STRUCTURE OF STUDY PROGRAMMES, INCLUDING MOBILITY WINDOWS

The ability of academics to include an international dimension into the design of study programmes and study plans for individual subjects is a key aspect of the internationalisation of the domestic environment. If the required learning outcomes take into account the international dimension, it will also lead to improved recognition of learning outcomes from mobility and allow the creation of strategic international cooperation projects, e.g. between European Universities. The internationalisation of the curriculum is also a key condition for internationalisation at home. The competences of academic staff need to be purposefully developed in this direction through educational projects focusing on the internationalisation of teaching.

- **Expected measures at the university level – financing [ESIF]:** To incorporate student mobility (including virtual and blended forms) as an integral part of the curriculum of study programmes.
- **Expected measures at the university level – financing [ESIF]:** To introduce measures at the university level leading to the systemic development of competences of university staff in the field of internationalisation of the curriculum, for example through centres for the development of teaching skills.
- MEYS, in collaboration with DZS, will support the development of competences of university staff in the field of internationalisation of the curriculum, through training in cooperation with domestic and foreign experts.
- Under the Centralised Development Programme, MEYS will provide financial support for joint university projects to create a shared methodology for internationalising the curriculum, including good practices from abroad. The outputs from these projects should be recommendations and tools that can also be used by other universities. In accordance with priority objective 1 of SZ2021+, this support will focus on the availability of support services for academic staff involved in the creation of study programmes (in particular their guarantors) and the innovation of subjects that can provide them with professional know-how in the field of study programme creation.
- MEYS, in collaboration with NAB, will strive to ensure that the internationalisation of the curriculum, the area of mobility and the recognition of learning outcomes obtained abroad are an important part of NAB's assessment practice for accreditation, taking into account the nature of the study programme, and that sets of recommendations are developed for universities.

III. SIMPLIFYING THE PROCESS OF RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN EDUCATION CREDENTIALS

DEFINING THE OBJECTIVE:

At present, the process of recognising foreign education credentials is often associated with a relatively complicated process, in which applicants encounter administrative obstacles and demanding requirements. This is one of the main reasons why Czech universities are incapable of attracting sufficient numbers of international students. An element of simplification in the area of recognition of foreign education was brought about by the amendment to the Higher Education Act of 2016 authorising universities that obtain institutional accreditation to verify previous education obtained abroad by applicants for study at the university as part of their admission procedure

The process of recognition of foreign education from the countries of the European Union needs to be further simplified and streamlined, especially by introducing automatic recognition. Automatic recognition is one of the main priorities of the European Union and the Bologna Process, and its implementation at the higher education level is intended to be achieved by 2025 through the creation and implementation of the principles of the European Education Area. This objective of automatic recognition is based on the Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications, and the outcomes of learning periods abroad (2018/C 444/01).

Successful implementation of automatic recognition will require legislative change, methodological support, consultation and information service to universities, cooperation of foreign partners, quality assurance agencies, state and local government bodies, interest groups and the general public in the field of automatic recognition of foreign education and study results.

Important actors in the field of recognition in Europe are the ENIC-NARIC centres, formed by the European network of national information centres (ENIC) and national information centres for the equivalence of foreign certificates of education (NARIC). The functions and powers of the centres vary from state to state. In the Czech Republic, ENIC-NARIC centre operations are run by the Department of Universities of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and the Czech ENIC-NARIC has an information and advisory function.

In the field of international law, it is important to focus on the ratification and implementation of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education, which was approved by the 40th General Conference of UNESCO. The main objective of the Global Convention is to assess foreign qualifications in a fair, non-discriminatory, and transparent manner. Furthermore, the Convention establishes mechanisms for quality assurance and the sharing of information on higher education institutions and systems, study programmes and diplomas.

3.A IMPLEMENTATION OF AUTOMATIC RECOGNITION OF EDUCATION AND STUDY OUTCOMES ABROAD

The Czech Republic will ensure this objective is achieved through legislative entrenchment of automatic recognition in an amendment to the Higher Education Act, and the ENIC-NARIC centre will provide methodological support in the area of automatic recognition, having regard to the autonomy of higher education institutions and national specifics.

- **Expected measures at the university level:** Universities that have received institutional accreditation will fully implement the Higher Education Act in the area of recognition of foreign education.
- **Expected measures at the university level:** To ensure, at the university level, the implementation of automatic mutual recognition of results of study abroad and to introduce transparent recognition criteria that are applied uniformly throughout the higher education institution.

- MEYS will develop and implement guidelines for higher education institutions in the field of automatic recognition, based on the Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of qualifications obtained in higher education and upper secondary education and training and learning outcomes from community programs to projects for ENIC-NARIC centres. National guidelines will support higher education institutions in developing and effectively implementing an automatic recognition policy. This will create transparent recognition criteria, which will be introduced within the framework of higher education institutions.
- MEYS will provide information and consulting support in the field of recognition of foreign education and foreign education systems. MEYS will organise seminars, workshops, webinars, online consultation platforms, and training for universities on the topic of foreign recognition, independently or in cooperation with other foreign ENIC-NARIC centres. Universities and individuals seeking recognition or mobility will have up-to-date information and documents, which will also be available through the Single Digital Gateway. As required, MEYS will ensure that staffing increases are implemented to support the activities of the ENIC-NARIC centre.
- MEYS will support the ratification and subsequent implementation of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education. MEYS will provide advisory services to universities during its implementation.
- If required, MEYS will prepare a draft amendment to the legal regulations under its remit, so as to enable the automatic recognition of foreign education at the university level.
- In the field of foreign education and recognition of foreign education, MEYS will establish an information platform, composed of representatives of government bodies, local government and higher education institutions, which will act as a single contact point for sharing information on foreign education and will provide methodological support in the field of recognition of secondary school and university education abroad.
- **Financing [SR]:** MEYS will ensure the implementation of the Single Digital Gateway in the higher education environment, where the requirement for fully online management of academic recognition of diplomas is part of Annex II to the relevant regulation.

3.B STRENGTHENING COOPERATION WITH FOREIGN ENIC-NARIC CENTRES

In order to achieve the objectives of the ENIC-NARIC centres, international cooperation with other centres must be reinforced. To this end, it is desirable for the ENIC-NARIC Centre to participate in joint projects funded by the European Commission in the field of recognition. Active participation in the management of ENIC and NARIC steering committees is important in order to promote the interests and priorities of the Czech Republic.

- MEYS will participate in projects funded by the European Commission to support ENIC-NARIC centres, both in the role of leader and in the role of partner for projects initiated by partner ENIC-NARIC centres.
- MEYS will strengthen bilateral cooperation between ENIC-NARIC centres, with particular emphasis on the V4 countries and other nearby neighbouring states (Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary, Germany, Austria and Ukraine) and will actively cooperate with other regional groupings, such as NORRIC, Benelux, and the Baltic Regional Group.
- MEYS will initiate the establishment of a joint consultation platform of ENIC-NARIC centres with which the Czech Republic has equivalence agreements, or another agreement on mutual recognition of education.

IV. CREATING AN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AT UNIVERSITIES AND PROMOTION ABROAD

DEFINING THE OBJECTIVE:

International students and university staff are an irreplaceable group in the internationalisation efforts of Czech universities, whether from the key point of view of developing global skills and internationalisation at home, increasing the quality of academic activity, impact on Czech and global society, and obtaining additional financial resources. For the successful fulfilment of the vision, it is therefore important that the number of international students continues to grow, but attention must also be paid to the structure and diversity of this group. Only a sufficiently large and heterogeneous group of international students will guarantee the cultural diversity necessary for a truly global education. However, this group has its specific needs, to which higher education institutions must adequately respond and purposefully create an appropriate range of programmes and applications, as well as an internationally friendly climate to ensure that international students and staff are full and equal members of the academic community. Only this way can universities acquire and retain foreign colleagues over the long term. An important role is played by high-quality, well-thought-out and clearly targeted international marketing, which is based on a well-founded and data-based analysis of the global talent market and its trends and also leads to diversification of the student community of international students at Czech universities.

Despite the efforts of individual institutions, the fulfilment of this vision cannot be achieved without the existence of a supportive environment at national level, whether it is increasing the attractiveness of the Czech Republic as a whole for a selected and sufficiently diversified target group of talented individuals from abroad or removing systemic barriers in recognition of education and qualifications, visas and residence permits, and opportunities to work, either during or after education. Processes that affect international students, university graduates, and academics should meet the requirements of transparency, comprehensibility, accessibility, and efficiency. It is also necessary to develop and improve the infrastructure for international students and staff, not only infrastructure related to educational, research and other creative activities, but also infrastructure for student support services such as leisure, accommodation, and catering. Only this type of environment will guarantee the success of the Czech Republic in the global competition between countries to attract talented people.

4.A SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL MARKETING OF UNIVERSITIES AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC

A high-quality range of programmes for international students cannot be offered without sufficient marketing support, both in terms of analysing the interests and needs of international students and the promotion itself, because it can only be effective if it is properly targeted. Data collection and analysis is therefore a necessary prerequisite. The Study in the Czech Republic initiative plays an irreplaceable role in supporting universities. The initiative is also complemented by individual or group promotional initiatives from the universities themselves. A unified approach increases the visibility and credibility of the entire Czech Republic and effectively supports the activities of individual institutions.

The Czech Republic is a medium-sized, open economy for which the development of cooperation in the field of education is essential with regard to strengthening the professional and language skills of its own citizens, attracting top international experts, strengthening economic ties between countries and opening the door to Czech exports abroad, as well as spreading the good name of the Czech Republic globally. Therefore, systematic efforts to strengthen the image of the Czech Republic abroad as a developed country with a strong university base and a wide scientific research potential are still required.

- **Expected measures at the university level – financing [ESIF, SR]:** To provide international applicants with comprehensive information services, not only concerning the range of study programmes, but also services

for students, the process of recognition of previous education obtained abroad and the process of obtaining visas and ensuring that these processes are maximally supported.

- **Expected measures at the university level – financing [ESIF, SR]:** To introduce institutional scholarship programmes for international students using funds to support internationalisation newly included in the Programme to Support Strategic Management of Universities. Scholarships are among the most successful tools for universities to reach and attract students from groups that they are interested in, whether it is geographical and cultural representation, student quality or fields of study.
- **Expected measures at the university level:** To make full use of a unified presentation abroad within the Study in the Czech Republic initiative, including presentation and regular updating of study programmes offered in the Study in the Czech Republic portal, participation in international fairs, as well as promotional activities offered online (virtual fairs, webinars, social media campaigns), active participation in the contact network, and mediation of student ambassadors, and the use of the Study in the Czech Republic brand when presenting several universities abroad.
- **Financing [ESIF, SR]:** MEYS, in cooperation with DZS, will strengthen the Study in the Czech Republic initiative, especially its methodological, coordinating, and organisational role at the national level. The activities of the initiative will be developed on the basis of a branding strategy and marketing analysis, which will identify priority areas and destinations for promotion and define effective forms and tools of promotion and define effective forms and tools of promotion in selected destinations.
- MEYS, in cooperation with DZS, will ensure the continuity of activities in relation to the priorities of the Innovation Strategy of the Czech Republic for 2019-2030 and the Concept of the Unified International Presentation of the Czech Republic. MEYS and DZS will participate in the systematic building of the Czech Republic brand: The Country for the Future and inter-departmental coordination of activities within the Commission for the Presentation of the Czech Republic abroad and its working groups.
- DZS will support the cooperation of universities with recruitment agencies through a comprehensive presentation of Czech universities to agencies mediating applicants and will support universities in working with agents.
- DZS will negotiate the lending of a unified Study in the Czech Republic brand to universities, embassies, Czech Centres, and other institutions and government agencies that present or could in the future present Czech higher education abroad.
- MEYS will continue to cooperate with universities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and the Ministry of Interior (MI) in developing and expanding the Student Mode programme by increasing quotas for current countries and expanding to new ones. MEYS will cooperate with the aforementioned entities on streamlining visa processes practice for academic staff and university staff and other activities to strengthen the international character of universities.
- MEYS will, in cooperation with the MFA, MI and other stakeholders, continue to use the Fast-Track Process for Granting Residence Permits for Foreign Nationals – International Students from Third Countries, which allows selected groups of applicants to negotiate granting residence permits for the Czech Republic in a shortened timeframe.
- **Financing [SR]:** MEYS will financially support the digitisation of processes related to the Student Mode, in particular the creation of an online interface for submitting nominations for the Student Mode, their evaluation and handover to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- MEYS will continue to cooperate with the MFA in implementing the Strategy of Czech Development Cooperation, which provides scholarships to foreigners for the standard period of study in accredited university courses carried out at public universities.
- **Financing [SR]:** MEYS will provide systematic support for the further development of its scholarship programme, which enables the admission of international students and academic staff in accordance with the Strategy for the Development of International Relations at the level of MEYS. The scholarship programme

supports cooperation with countries that represent territorial priorities, has the potential to diversify stays offered in terms of their length and type, and, last but not least, contributes to spreading knowledge of the Czech language and Czech national and historic facts among international university-educated experts. It also strengthens the creation of interpersonal ties between universities in the Czech Republic and abroad.

- **Financing [SR]:** MEYS will continue to support the scholarship programme for Czech language courses within the Summer School of Slavonic Studies, which supports maintaining knowledge of the Czech language in the world and the positive image of the Czech Republic as a country with a rich cultural tradition.

4.B DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES OFFERED TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND STAFF

The internal environment of universities must also be fully prepared for the needs of international students, academic staff, and post-doctoral students, from information systems through administration to accommodation and other services. This requirement should be taken into account in the evaluation of the quality of the university's activities and its achievement is facilitated by methodological support. With regard to the involvement of higher education institutions in the Erasmus+ programme, the conditions of the Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) must be complied with, including care for students in academic and non-academic activities and helping them to secure accommodation.

- **Expected measures at university level – financing [SR, ESIF]:** To develop and innovate infrastructure, information and counselling services, and facilities for foreign students and staff, thereby creating an attractive environment for them. Universities should create Welcome Centres, which would provide international applicants, students and staff with a wide range of support services to facilitate their time in the Czech Republic, including support in the visa process, the process of recognition of foreign education credentials and qualifications, study counselling, assistance in obtaining accommodation, etc. For this purpose, universities should cooperate with the EURAXESS Czech Republic centre.
- **Expected measures at university level:** To cooperate with international student clubs and support their activities, develop integration activities for international students and staff.
- **Financing [ESIF]:** MEYS will financially support the improvement of infrastructure and the development of services (e.g. Welcome Centres, student clubs, student buddy systems, etc.) for international students and academic and research staff at universities. The support will also be intended for the development of language and intercultural competences of non-academic university staff.
- DZS will regularly evaluate the level of satisfaction for international students with the availability and offer of services using a questionnaire survey in cooperation with universities.

4.C WORKING WITH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND ALUMNI

It is essential to work actively and systematically with a growing group of international alumni of Czech universities. International students and alumni have great potential to promote Czech universities and establishing cooperation at different levels (economic, cultural, political, etc.). Successful international alumni increase the prestige and attractiveness of universities and thus help attract potential applicants. They can also take part in a direct support of the recruitment of international students, for example as active university ambassadors or volunteers at events for applicants in their home countries. Alumni can also mentor current students, provide information about internships or job offers and thus connect universities with the labour market. Through involvement in various personal and professional networks, alumni can be a rich source of contacts and cooperation with universities and can contribute to the fulfilment of their institutional and international goals. The existence of an alumni network increases the attractiveness of the university even for applicants with a vision of easier acquisition of job contracts and employment after graduation. International students should be actively linked-up with alumni programmes already during their studies in order to build a sufficiently strong relationship with the institution.

- **Expected measures at the university level – financing [ESIF]:** To establish a personal cooperation system with international students and alumni, develop its own alumni programme (organising events for current international students, use of students to promote studies in the Czech Republic through a student blog and an active group of ambassadors, surveys among international students) and to involve international students and alumni in the promotion of the university.
- DZS, in cooperation with universities, embassies, ministries and other institutions, will develop systematic cooperation with current international students in the Czech Republic through the organisation of events for students and the involvement of these students in the promotion of study in the Czech Republic.
- DZS will increase cooperation with international alumni of Czech universities in the form of a national alumni programme, create a new web platform and a central database of international alumni with the option of sharing contacts with embassies and Czech centres, or other relevant entities (inclusion in the database will be subject to the student's consent), support the organisation of joint events for alumni abroad and offer international alumni other services leading to maintaining relationships and contact with them.
- DZS will establish systematic cooperation with the Czexpats in Science organisation, involve members of the Czexpats in Science community in promotional activities within the development of the ambassador/alumni programme and help to raise universities' awareness of the activities of this organisation.

V. STRENGTHENING THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONALISATION

DEFINING THE OBJECTIVE:

Successful comprehensive, systemic internationalisation of higher education is only possible through the assumption of a strategic and coordinated approach by all stakeholders whose activities directly affect the internationalisation of higher education, i.e. in addition to the universities themselves and their units, also MEYS, DZS, and NAB. It is also necessary to set up functioning cooperation with other ministries whose activities have an impact on achieving the achievement of the strategic vision (e.g. MFA, MA, MIT, and others). Equally important are international strategic partnerships, including the newly formed alliances of European Universities, and membership in international networks and organisations operating under the auspices of the Council of Europe, the European Commission, UNESCO or ACA.

5.A SUPPORT FOR COMPREHENSIVE INTERNATIONALISATION AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

Support for comprehensive internationalisation aims to strengthen the strategic approach to international cooperation and capacity building to create/develop internationalisation strategies at the institutional level. The desired state is to set the requirements within the accreditation and quality assessment and the rules for financing universities so as to help promote the objectives of the strategy at the institutional level. However, methodological support is also needed in the form of professional training, monitoring of internationalisation or analytical support, e.g. in the form of data collection and analysis, and studies focused on the state of internationalisation. With regard to international cooperation in the Erasmus+ programme, the institutions involved must comply with the terms of the Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education (ECHE), including automatic recognition of study results abroad, ensuring the digitisation of mobility administration, environmental sustainability, inclusion and non-discrimination.

- **Expected measures at the university level – financing [SR, ESIF]:** To apply, within the framework of strategic management, a comprehensive approach to internationalisation as a cross-sectional activity affecting all university operations with measures for effective coordination of internationalisation activities across institutions, setting objectives, processes, resources, support, responsibilities for their implementation, monitoring and regular evaluation, including quality assessment. Universities will develop institutional strategies for internationalisation, which can be either a separate document or part of the university's strategic intent. The strategy of the university will be devised in full compliance with the university's mission and all relevant parties will be involved in its creation.
- **Expected measures at the university level:** To use international agencies and organisations (e.g. EUA, accreditation agencies registered in EQAR etc.) to evaluate university's educational, research and other creative activities.
- **Financing [SR]:** MEYS will support strategic management of internationalisation at universities in accordance with priority objective 5 Strengthening the Strategic Management of Universities SZ2021+, in particular through financial support under the Programme to Support Strategic Management of Universities and the Centralised Development Programme.
- MEYS, in cooperation with DZS, will support strategic management of internationalisation at universities through methodological support, especially through various forms of training, regular monitoring of the state of internationalisation through annual reports, thematic studies and surveys among students and graduates, and last but not least through external evaluations of internationalisation at universities (MICHE) and monitoring compliance with the terms of ECHE.

- MEYS will, in cooperation with DZS, continue in the organisation and development of new and existing national platforms and working groups, including CZEDUCON, working groups with university representatives, Study in the Czech Republic contact groups, and others.
- MEYS, in cooperation with DZS, will coordinate international activities with other ministries, especially the MFA, the MI, and the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MIT), and develop an information base in the field of internationalisation by publishing analytical documents, thematic articles and statistics, and creating space for sharing experiences and good practices of universities and other institutions.

5.B SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS AND ORGANISATIONS

International strategic partnerships of universities, such as joint projects with an impact on curricula or research, joint programmes such as joint, double or multiple degree, or complex university alliances such as European Universities based on strategically managed multi-level cooperation within the organisation, both in teaching and in research or other activities, are a basic prerequisite for achieving high quality in science, research and innovation as well as for solving urgent global problems crossing national borders. The quality and impact of international strategic cooperation is also enhanced by the membership of universities in international university networks. For DZS as the national agency of the Erasmus+ programme and other international programmes, such as CEEPUS or Aktion, involvement in international networks and working groups dealing with the internationalisation of higher education is essential, either within these programmes or within the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA).

At the level of MEYS, active involvement in the Bologna Process, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and associated networks (e.g. OECD, The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education) is the key. This international cooperation enables MEYS to participate in the creation of tools to support internationalisation and shape the future direction of European cooperation in the field of higher education.

- **Expected actions at university level:** To actively engage in international networks appropriate to the profile, preferences, and long-term objectives of the university, including university alliances within calls for the European Universities, and create internal conditions within the institution to function successfully in these strategic partnerships.
- **Financing [SR]:** MEYS will financially support universities that are members of consortia of European Universities that succeed in calls from the European Commission.
- **Expected actions at university level – financing [SR, Erasmus+, Horizon 2020]:** To actively use the possibilities of synergistic funding of European University projects from European community programmes to support education and science and research.
- **Financing [SR, Erasmus+, Horizon 2020]:** Within the Programme to Support Strategic Management of Universities, MEYS will provide financial support for university activities focused on the development of international networks/organisations, including the preparation of projects for consortia of European Universities.
- MEYS will continue to participate regularly in meetings of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), OECD, and other networks established within the EHEA and will play an active role in formulating positions and priorities and promoting them. With regard to its own priorities, MEYS will be involved in advisory and working groups set up by the BFUG and other organizations in connection with current needs and trends. Within these BFUG groups, standards and guidelines and other documents are developed, which, although not binding, are voluntarily committed to by states through a communiqué, which is usually signed once every three years by the education ministers of the member states. Membership in advisory and working groups of MEYS will enable them to directly participate in the creation and formulation of measures for the development of national higher education systems in the area of increasing quality and improving transparency.

- MEYS will strive to increase the involvement of universities and their representatives, especially in the role of experts, in activities within the Bologna Process and other international organisations (e.g. OECD). MEYS will regularly consult with representatives of universities on its positions and priorities. MEYS will involve university representatives in the projects in which it participates, especially in the role of experts who can offer examples of good practice, and transfer similar examples abroad to the Czech higher education system with the help of MEYS.
- DZS will support strategic international cooperation through its active membership in ACA (Academic Cooperation Association) and EAIE (European Association for International Education), within the network of Erasmus+ national agencies and other international working groups.
- MEYS will use the activities within the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2022 to develop internationalisation and promote higher education in the Czech Republic and will organise an international conference on current higher education topics.

VI. INTERNATIONALISATION ACTIVITIES OF THE NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BUREAU

DEFINING THE OBJECTIVE:

Internationalisation of higher education should also be reflected in ensuring its quality at the national level. A key aspect of internationalisation is the application of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) in the work of NAB, which requires full integration into European accreditation agency structures and international recognition of the national higher education evaluation and quality assurance system. It is also necessary to integrate elements of internationalisation into the structure and activities of NAB so that it can act in the international environment as a sought-after partner and develop effective contacts and forms of bilateral or multilateral cooperation. Possible tools for internationalisation include the involvement of foreign experts in the activities of national accreditation agencies and quality assessment processes, which is common in the EHEA and helps to transfer good practice, new perspectives and impulses from abroad.

6.A INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF THE NATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

One of the objectives of the Bologna Process is to ensure the quality of higher education through an independent, internationally recognised accreditation agency. For full international recognition of the national quality assurance system of higher education, it is necessary to meet the ESG standards and successfully pass the external evaluation of compliance with these standards by an international panel of experts. In order to gain international renown, strengthen the quality of its activities, and develop international cooperation, NAB will:

- seek integration into the European networks of accreditation agencies, take concrete steps by 2021 to apply for full membership to ENQA and to register in the EQAR register,
- participate, as much as possible, in ENQA projects and working groups, develop cooperation and strengthen its position within CEENQA,
- enter accreditation data into the Database of External Quality Assurance Reports (DEQAR).

6.B STRENGTHENING THE ELEMENTS OF INTERNATIONALISATION IN THE STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES OF NAB

Increasing the degree of internationalisation in NAB's activities is a prerequisite for successful involvement in European structures, and operation in the international environment. It is also important to establish and maintain international contacts and take advantage of opportunities to engage in international activities within higher education quality assurance.

- NAB, in cooperation with MEYS, will strive to strengthen the representation of foreign experts in NAB bodies and enable the involvement of foreign evaluators, and will support the participation of Czech evaluators in accreditations abroad,
- NAB will develop bilateral cooperation with foreign accreditation agencies, maintain and develop contacts, exchange of information, and exchange internships for accreditation agency employees,
- NAB will be involved in relevant international projects through MEYS.