



The EvH RWL internationalisation strategy

This internationalisation strategy describes and explains the international and intercultural orientation of the Protestant University of Applied Sciences Rhineland-Westphalia-Lippe (EvH RWL), and it is a presentation, internally and externally, of that strategy. Based on the University Guidelines (2011), it supplements the 2012-2016 and 2017-2021 University Development Plans. At the EvH RWL, internationalisation is understood as a mission that permeates all areas of the university and is actively shaped by all players in teaching, research and administration. The strategy is designed to serve as a direction indicator and as a binding reference framework for them and their internationally oriented activities.

I. Self-understanding of the EvH RWL

The EvH RWL qualifies students for professions in the social and healthcare sectors, church educational work and diaconia, and it is characterised by its clearly practical orientation. The EvH RWL is a place where people with different cultural and religious backgrounds and educational biographies learn, teach and do research. Plurality and interdisciplinary approaches to the production and dissemination of knowledge are characteristics of the university's self-understanding. As a Protestant university, the EvH RWL associates itself with a Christian view of humanity and with Christian and humanitarian values, and so it sees itself as commissioned with a special obligation to assume social responsibility.

The EvH RWL values and promotes international exchange between academics, and it regards foreign students, teachers and researchers as an asset for the university. International university contacts serve as a means not only of cultural exchange, but also of knowledge transfer. The EvH RWL regards dialogue on ethical, religious and intercultural issues, international exchanges and intercultural learning as important aspects of inward and outward internationalisation.

The EvH RWL sees itself as a venue of education for life in a globalised world. It seeks to make its own contribution towards dialogue and the peaceful and democratic coexistence of a diversity of people and groups. In pursuing its internationalisation strategy, the EvH RWL is thus not simply guided by the prospect of accessing the international research community and career prospects in a globalised world, but it also sees internationality and interculturality in general as essential dimensions of professional training and qualification in the social, healthcare and education sectors as well as in diaconia. This includes equipping people for intercultural communication and cooperation and facilitating a (self-)critical understanding of post-colonial power relations and Eurocentric attitudes. By anchoring global learning in its degree courses, the EvH RWL aims to equip its students to critically monitor globalisation and Europeanisation processes. As a university offering training for work in an increasingly multicultural and multireligious migration society, the EvH RWL also particularly addresses people with a migration history, for whom there is prospectively a need in the professions of the social and healthcare sectors.

The EvH RWL seeks to contribute towards international cooperation that is partnership-based, and it is eager to play its part in implementing goals for sustainable development that are rooted in human rights. Its understanding of development builds on the principles of human rights and on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations in September 2015. In light of the need for critical reflection on mission history and the resultant responsibility arising for it as a Protestant university, one particular focus of the EvH RWL is on church development cooperation and on working together on equal terms with partners in the global South. This accentuation is supplemented by a further emphasis on cooperation with Western and Eastern Europe. Given the increasing interconnectedness of the European social sphere, with increased internal migration and transnational family constellations on the one hand and growing authoritarian, populist and nationalistic tendencies in Europe on the other, great importance attaches to reinforcing a multilateral European perspective that is geared towards solidarity.

As regards appreciating “diversity” (such as disability, gender, age, ethnicity, language, religion, social background, etc.), the EvH RWL sees itself as a learning institution.

II. Status quo and overriding objectives

At the end of 2018, the EvH RWL maintained a total of 29 partnerships with universities and praxis institutions in 19 countries, consisting of 21 partnerships in Eastern and Western Europe and eight in non-European countries. It is involved in the ERASMUS+ programme and other exchange and support programmes, both via the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and via church partners. As far back as 2008, an internal EvH RWL fund was set up to promote and support study and research overseas, benefitting ca. 30-50 students annually. By way of promoting “internationalisation at home”, the EvH RWL has implemented an “intercultural and international social work” module in its Social Work course. Colleagues conduct international comparative studies and projects overseas with students, the results and findings of which have already fed into several cooperative publications. Thanks to collaboration with the aid agency “Brot für die Welt”, internships in development cooperation projects are possible. To date, three international conferences have been hosted by the EvH RWL. An International Study Programme has been offered during each summer semester since 2017, providing a study opportunity in English for EvH students as well as for teachers and students from foreign universities. Also dating from 2017, the EvH RWL offers advisory services as well as organisational, language and technical support for people with a background of flight and migration. In addition, the university runs an “intercultural knowledge centre” and offers seminars preparing for and reflecting on time spent abroad.

In view of the wealth of possible strategic objectives, the university has agreed on the following overriding goals, the pursuit of which should have priority:

- Promotion of international cooperation for student exchanges, research, teaching and further education
- Profiling internationality at the EvH RWL
- Development of the university as a migration education space and increasing the intercultural competence of all members of the university
- Inclusion of students, teachers and technical and administrative staff with migration experience and fostering the integration of people with refugee experience

III. Fields of activity, targets and actions to be taken

In order to achieve the overriding objectives for the internationalisation of the EvH RWL, it is possible to specify the following areas of activity, targets and actions to be taken.

1. International students, teachers and researchers at the EvH RWL

Target

The EvH RWL sees itself as a cosmopolitan university and it is manifestly recognisable as such. It welcomes an increasing number of international (visiting) students, (visiting) teachers and (visiting) researchers and addresses foreign students and people with a migration background and history of flight. They feel accepted, recognised and supported at the university.

Actions to be taken

- Public image and communication: heightened visibility for the international offers on the homepage, upgraded English-language homepage, upgraded information for prospective students and students from abroad
- Consolidation and enhancement of the advisory and general services for international visiting students, teachers and researchers as well as for foreign students (regular degree students) and prospective students with a migration background and history of flight
- Consolidation and enhancement of the English teaching content and of the International Study Programme including the 4-week Summer School
- Development of an EvH RWL language policy: creation of forms, regulations, etc. in English, preparation of an EvH glossary of key terms in German/English, facilitation of examinations in English
- Support for cooperative doctoral projects with universities in other countries
- Networking and transfer with regional players in supporting and mentoring international students, teachers and researchers.

2. The “glocal” university as a migration education space

Target

The EvH RWL views migration as one of the many consequences of global modernisation processes that give rise to changes at the local level. The “migration education space” concept operates within this “glocal” frame of reference and aims at understanding the phenomenon of migration beyond limited personal perspectives and in a global context while at the same time identifying local changes and possible courses of action. The activities and offers in the topic area of migration and internationalisation are conducive to a critically reflecting on and overcoming (everyday) racist tendencies, narrowed national perspectives, feelings of superiority and prejudices towards people of different cultural orientations and religions.

Actions to be taken

- Embedding the mediation of intercultural competence and sensitivity in the curricula of all degree courses
- Further development of compulsory preparation and follow-up for time spent abroad by means of accompanying events, in the course of supervising internships and via the provision of material on the “Moodle” platform
- Reinforcement and consolidation of the non-professorial academic teaching staff in the areas of interculturalism and migration
- Realisation of thematic transfer projects such as scientific conferences, public lectures, etc.
- Breakdown of barriers that might hinder the inclusion of people with a migration background.

3. Internationalisation at home

Target

At the EvH RWL, international and intercultural correlations are of importance in all degree courses. All students, including those who are either unable to or do not wish to avail themselves of time spent abroad during their studies, can gain international experience, acquire intercultural competence and obtain a more international and comparative perspective in their studies.

Actions to be taken

- Consolidation of the range of courses taught in English (International Study Programme)
- Inclusion of international teaching content in the curricula of all degree courses
- Setting up video-based seminars (webinars) for cooperative courses with international partner universities
- Implementation of international events (International Week, international conferences)
- Support for EvH teachers and researchers in the implementation of teaching in English
- Development of more opportunities for encounter between members of the EvH and foreign students and teachers (e.g. Café International, tandem programme, etc.)

4. Mobility of members of the EvH

Target

Members of the EvH are significantly more mobile. Students, teachers, academic and administrative staff increasingly avail themselves of opportunities for spending time abroad and are supported in doing so.

Actions to be taken

- Intensified use of the Erasmus+ programme for international mobility: expanded counselling and information for students, teachers and administrative staff
- Regular information on DAAD funding and further education programmes
- Support in acquiring foreign language skills
- Continuation of the cooperation with external partners, e.g. Brot für die Welt, United Evangelical Mission (VEM)
- Designation of mobility windows in all degree programmes in order to increase the attractiveness of spending time abroad
- Continuation of the provision of international excursions as part of courses in order to intensify teaching content, to conduct training research and comparative international projects or to engage in intercultural encounter on equal terms

5. International networking

Target

As far as possible, the organisation of the international cooperation projects is equitable with respect to their facilitation with the various resources. Existing cooperation projects, whose effectiveness has been proven, are stabilised. The university is open for new avenues of cooperation.

Actions to be taken

- Systematic maintenance and evaluation of existing partnerships: Central focus on partnerships and/or partners with whom joint projects can be implemented.
- Expansion of the international cooperation network, with the focus primarily on universities training for the same vocational fields as are taught at the EvH RWL (applied sciences) and on other church universities. A further focus is on Europe – primarily for places of studies where it is possible to study in English or German.

6. Structures for the promotion of internationalisation

Target

The university has at its disposal structures that allow for an enduring implementation of internationalisation.

Actions to be taken

- Appointment of contact persons for cooperation partners
- Appointment of internationalisation representatives in all degree programmes
- Formation of a structurally integrated committee for internationalisation, of which the internationalisation representatives are ex officio members.
- Encouragement for staff in teaching, research and administration to spend time abroad as part of the personnel and organisational development of the university
- Consideration given to multilingualism, international experience and intercultural competence in selecting staff
- Exploitation of synergy effects with projects / programmes at the university
- Integration of multilingual staff
- Participation in bids and funding programmes for refinancing internationalisation duties and for financing individual projects and plans
- Backing for the International Office in accordance with the increasing scope of its duties
- Regular review of the strategy at four-year intervals by the committee for internationalisation

Following from the Internationality Working Group, this paper was drawn up by a steering group involving all university groups in a participatory process. It was adopted by the Senate of the EvH RWL on 15 January 2019.