

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS)

Strategy, objectives and impact

The Institute of Digital Sciences Austria, hereinafter referred to as Interdisciplinary Transformation University Austria (IT:U) was founded in 2022 as Austria's 23rd public university and is one of the first public universities in Europe exclusively dedicated to the digital transformation of science, business and society. It is not a traditional technical university structured according to disciplines but is intended to position itself as a mission-orientated university "sui generis" with an independent, distinctive profile. Its mission is to be interdisciplinary to open up new paths towards digital transformation in its connection with other societal transformation processes and through pioneering scientific approaches, leading to human-centred societal progress, a sustainable and resilient economy. It defines its identity through the following aspects:

- interdisciplinary basic research at the interfaces between computer science and other disciplines
- project-based teaching in small groups of interdisciplinary students with outstanding supervision ratio
- mission-oriented studies that deal with the challenges of digital transformation on the way to a sustainable future
- application and development of digital technologies to support project-based learning
- service-oriented, digital administration

This way, IT:U intends to

- transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries, permeability between disciplines and thus opening new approaches to problems as well as addressing persisting diversity-problems like gender-issues in different areas of science
- foster successful communication between different areas of expertise, like management and technicians, by training students in interdisciplinary projects
- bundle a wide range of specialist knowledge and expertise in a novel manner to prepare students to solve the problems of an increasingly complex world
- focus on research into cross-disciplinary approaches to develop innovative solutions
- equip students from a wide range of disciplines and nationalities with the digital skills required to tackle global challenges and hence become transformation architects answering societal challenges

To reach these goals, international exchange and cooperation are of utmost priority. Currently, the university has 11 founding professors, and 12 students enrolled in two PhD programmes ("Digital Transformation in learning", "Computational X") that started in October 2024. In the spring semester 2025, 18 PhD students will additionally enrol in the existing programmes and 10 more professors will be hired. Furthermore, the master programme "Interdisciplinary Computing" with four specializations to choose from (1. Designing Interactions 2. Digital Earth, Society and Networks 3. Digital Humanities, Health and Life Sciences 4. Future Industries) will start in fall 2025 with projected 40 students. In the upcoming years additional specializations are planned as well as new master programmes. Bachelor programmes will probably start in 2030. Both students and professors not only come from different disciplines but also different nationalities (Austria, Germany, Iran, Mongolia, Croatia, Turkey, Italy, China). The same applies to the academic as well as the non-academic staff. So,

internationalization is already a top priority at the university. The heterogenous composition of its human capital is an important basis to work on solutions for regional (European) and global challenges for both society and economy. At IT:U specialists are formed who address problems from different perspectives and this way they are trained to provide sustainable solutions. They are capable of working in international companies, thereby increasing European competitiveness and boosting economic growth in relevant sectors such as those addressed by IT:U. In addition to academic expertise, this also requires training in an international environment, language skills, interdisciplinary skills and intercultural skills. The teaching of digital skills and European values also play a central role here, which can be conveyed in particular through students' experience abroad. IT:U can only tackle global challenges and the socio-economic divide in society, as well as train the experts it needs, if it enters into partnerships with international higher education institutions. These partnerships ensure that IT:U exchanges ideas with other higher education institutions in education, research and innovation on an individual basis (student and staff exchange) or through joint projects within the framework of KA 2.

Participation in the Erasmus+ programme will have a positive impact on IT:U, as it not only contributes to achieving the planned objectives, but also provides intensive support for the implementation of the university's internationalization and modernization strategy.

With reference to the European Education Area IT:U is engaging in the following dimensions:

- Improving quality and equity in education and training

IT:U is committed to advancing quality and equity in education and training through interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches that address the challenges of digital transformation. By integrating artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies into learning environments with an exceptional supervision rate, IT:U emphasizes co-creation with students and professionals to ensure that technology serves inclusive, transparent, and equitable educational goals.

The IT:Us PhD programme "Digital Transformation in Learning" fosters innovative research and development in technology-enhanced learning, emphasizing active and project-based methods that empower learners to take ownership of their educational journey. This approach promotes equal access to high-quality learning opportunities, supporting both personal and professional development across diverse European contexts.

Through its partnership with leading universities and research institutions, IT:U contributes to the European Education Area by championing ethical and responsible technological innovation that addresses individual and societal needs. Its focus on interdisciplinary collaboration ensures the inclusion of diverse perspectives, promoting fairness and equal opportunities in the design and implementation of learning technologies and fostering educational environments that support lifelong learning for all.

- Digital education

IT:U is dedicated to advancing digital learning by integrating cutting-edge technologies into education. Through its Doctoral School for Digital Transformation in Learning, IT:U combines innovative interdisciplinary teaching approaches with digital competencies to enhance active and project-based learning.

By fostering an inclusive, project-based approach to technical education, IT:U equips students from diverse disciplines with the digital skills required to tackle global challenges, embodying its mission to drive digital transformation in science, business, and society.

- Green education

Green education emphasizes the integration of environmental sustainability into teaching and learning processes, aiming to cultivate ecological awareness and responsibility among learners. This approach aligns with IT:U's interdisciplinary research initiatives, particularly research groups "Machine Learning in Earth Science", "Geosocial Artificial Intelligence", "Complex Systems and Network Science".

Through these interdisciplinary efforts, IT:U contributes to green education by integrating advanced computational research with environmental studies, preparing learners to address ecological challenges with innovative solutions.

- EEA in the world

IT:U already attracts the best talents from around the world, reflected in its internationally composed student body and staff. Moreover, the future Erasmus+ projects not only target cooperations and mobilities within Europe. They will also have a strong focus on cooperations beyond Europe (the Americas and Asia specifically). This way IT:U contributes to expand the EEA beyond Europe.

Participation in Erasmus+

IT:U intends to participate in KA 1 and KA 2. Focus will be on mobilities, including student mobilities for studies as well as traineeships and staff mobilities for teaching and training. Taken into consideration that up to the end of the current Erasmus+ programme period there will only be PhD students and master students, specific focus will be on staff mobilities, short term mobilities, BIPs, summer schools and internships. In the future (probably starting in 2030) bachelor programmes will be offered as well.

Mobilities in the context of KA 131 and KA 171 create opportunities to learn from each other in an international setting. These mobilities can serve as the basis for sustainable partnerships resulting in cooperations as contemplated in KA 2. IT:U aims at establishing strong partnerships with European and non-European universities taking into consideration Partnerships for Cooperation, Partnerships for Innovation, Alliances for Innovation and Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Programmes. Although IT:U is a very new university (founded in 2022 and started its academic programmes in October 2024 with two PhD programmes), it has already managed to be an associated partner of the European University UNINOVIS. IT:U intends to become integrated in the UNINOVIS alliance more profoundly as soon as the ECHE is approved.

In January the International Office (IO) was established. It is integrated into the department "Study Portfolio and Student Affairs" to guarantee the close cooperation with the extracurricular support infrastructure. The IO will be in charge of preparing proposals for KA 1 (KA 131, KA 171), keeping track of the mobilities, reporting and coordinating all activities associated with these mobilities. Furthermore, the IO will support incoming and outgoing students before, during and after their mobilities. With reference to KA 2 projects the IO will work closely with the person in charge of the Third Party Funding with regard to providing information and administrative assistance. It is intended to have an event once a year to inform all interested staff and students about Erasmus+ Programmes. This way the Erasmus+ programmes are made more visible. Regular evaluation in coordination with the Higher Education Quality Assurance Office is planned to ensure usability and accessibility of procedures, quality of the programs and effectiveness as well as need for support-measures.

In addition, a support center to assist students with various challenges will be established. One key component of this support center will be a welcome service, which includes pre-arrival

support, a Welcome Week, and social activities. All students will be welcomed through activities organized during Welcome Week. During this program, participants will gain insight into campus life, university facilities, and living in Linz. They will also become familiar with the university's unique educational approach, including project-based learning, through dedicated workshops. Additionally, Welcome Week will feature sessions on intercultural communication, hands-on lab activities, and various social events.

Indicators

1. Initiation and increase of mobilities in Erasmus+ program and partner countries

Student and staff mobilities in the Erasmus+ program countries (under KA131) and partner countries (under KA 171) are expected to start in summer 2026 and increase in the coming years. Quantitative indicators in both cases are the mobility figures based on the grant agreements concluded compared to the mobility actually completed according to the reports to be prepared. The smooth running of the mobility is a qualitative indicator that the implementation is working. Erasmus Without Paper will also play a central role here. The intention is to ensure rapid processing, easy access to documents for participants and unrestricted access to all necessary information. The IO will implement and monitor the Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) initiatives.

2. Expansion of other Erasmus+ projects

Another goal is to expand Erasmus+ projects - particularly under KA 2 - at the university. Currently, IT:U is associated partner of the European University Alliance UNINOVIS. The number of projects submitted by the university is to be continuously increased. The quantity depends on which calls for projects are published in the respective years and which project ideas are submitted by the professors and/or research groups at IT:U. A qualitative indicator is the smooth process of project initiation, project design and submission as well as functioning project management and monitoring. Personal feedback from professors and project partners is important here. An increase in projects under Erasmus+ will therefore also lead to greater visibility within the university and internationally.

3. Expansion of strategic cooperation with universities / research institutes / industry partners

Strategic cooperation with a wide range of partners is to be expanded. On the one hand, IT:U delegations will expand their visits of partners and potential partners in Europe and worldwide. On the other hand, starting in 2025 the head of the IO will participate in international conferences (APAI, NAFSA, EAIE) in order to establish partnerships with higher education institutions worldwide. Quantitative indicators for this are the number of different partners involved in funded projects, the increase in Erasmus+ projects and the number of existing Inter-Institutional Agreements (IIAs). Qualitative indicators include the smooth completion of IIAs and other agreements (in connection with EWP) as well as positive personal feedback.