



Decision No. 32 of 15/03/2021
on the approval of the Babeş-Bolyai University
Internationalisation Strategy
for the 2021-2024 period

Considering the Administrative Council Decision no. 1506/15.02.2021,
Considering the positive recommendation of the Committee on
Multicultural Development and Internationalisation,
Pursuant to Article 18, point (f) of the Regulation on the Organisation and
Operation of the Senate,

the Babeş-Bolyai University Senate,
convened in the online meeting on 15 March 2021,
decides:

Art. 1. The Babeş-Bolyai University Internationalisation Strategy for the 2021-2024
period is hereby approved.

Art. 2. The strategy, which is appended hereto, constitutes an integral part of this
Decision.

President

Professor Florin Streteanu, PhD

Secretary

Anca Ghingheli



The Internationalisation Strategy of Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca 2021-2024

- approved by Senate Decision No. 32 of 15.03.2021 -

The UBB Internationalisation Strategy is a **reference framework for action and a guiding tool** for all members of our community. This five-year strategy **builds on** the 2015-2020 Strategy. Drawing on the experience of drafting and, more importantly, implementing the latter, we have developed the present strategy into a **concise document**, oriented towards the achievement of **general objectives**.

Over the last few years, **UBB's internationalisation process has been steadily gaining momentum**, and the main indicators confirming this are the number of **foreign students** enrolled in full degree programmes, which has reached **over 1400**, and the number of foreign students on various types of **mobility** at UBB, which has exceeded **850** at the beginning of 2020. This surge has led to significant changes in terms of **increased awareness towards the internationalisation process** in various structures and departments of UBB, from the teaching staff and dean's offices and faculty secretariats to the administrative staff in residence halls and libraries. However, much remains to be done to ensure that international students enjoy equal educational facilities to Romanian students, especially in terms of having access to **information** and the possibility to **communicate effectively** in a variety of administrative and social contexts in English and other international languages.

In the spring of 2020, the new UBB management reiterated the firm determination and commitment to **further and fast-track the internationalisation process**. To this end, a preliminary action was UBB's joining the European Research Intensive Universities Network, **the Guild**, a process that will provide an important **stimulus** for the internationalisation effort and increase the international competitiveness of our university. A major challenge has also emerged in spring 2020, the Covid-19 crisis, which curtailed regular international mobility, at least for the short term, and required most internationalisation activities to be carried out exclusively online.

(recruitment of foreign students, involvement in international association structures, training of internationalisation staff, etc.).

As things stand, the assessment of the current situation at UBB in terms of internationalisation is as follows:

Strengths

- The high number of European and international projects, as well as the involvement of UBB teaching and research staff in international teaching/research/administrative teams (as members or coordinators)
- Top ranking nationally in terms of attracting Erasmus funds
- Top ranking nationally in terms of total number of Erasmus recipients
- Erasmus international cooperation with more than 700 universities worldwide
- Special institutional and community ties with the Republic of Moldova, German-speaking countries and Hungary
- Institutional and cultural partnerships with French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Chinese and Japanese speaking countries
- Partnerships built around global denominational and inter-ecclesiastical networks
- International exposure for research in relevant fields
- Developed infrastructure for teaching and research activities
- The status of an entrepreneurial university committed to providing graduates the skills required for the development of the local and regional economy through transnational and international partnerships
- Important ties with multilingual business communities
- Research opportunities - technology transfer offers both research focus for international students and employment opportunities
- Interdisciplinary and multilingual feature
- One of the largest multilingual libraries in Romania - supporting international students
- Low tuition and accommodation fees in student residence halls
- A significant number of student associations are affiliated to international networks
- Geographically, but also in terms of its relevance, the University is located at the heart of Cluj-Napoca, an appealing city for the young, with a multicultural, dynamic, secure and reliable reputation.
- The University operates a network of 11 branch campuses and 3 centres in Transylvania and Banat region, thus accommodating and educating international students in conditions compatible with European standards.

Weaknesses

National legislation unfavourable to internationalisation, especially with regard to the fact that it is impossible to organise joint-degree and double specialisation programmes

- The downward demographic curve in Romania
- Inequitable competition in education, especially at national level
- Absence of a national strategy aimed at attracting international students, but also absence of policies to promote the quality of Romanian education by setting precise targets
- Insufficient budget allocated to higher education
- Problematic recognition of international qualifications
- The brain drain phenomenon
- Absence of appropriate tools for students to identify quality programmes and institutions
- Relatively few degree programmes available exclusively in international languages, compared to the diversity of programmes available in Romanian and despite the potentially appealing content of some degree programmes for international students.

Strategic objectives of internationalisation

The **International Cooperation Centre** has a key role to play in the implementation of internationalisation activities, under its Director and the Vice-Rector, and over the years it has become a veritable “Foreign Ministry” at UBB.

The **strategic objectives** of the internationalisation process are derived from the main areas of competence of the CCI and are listed and detailed below.

1 Increasing the number of international students enrolled or in mobility at UBB

This objective should be achieved bearing in mind the distinction between actions aimed at attracting foreign students enrolled in full degree programmes and those aimed at attracting students on mobility (Erasmus, Ceepus, etc.).

- a) In terms of attracting international full-time students, an important pillar in achieving this objective is the creation of new academic programmes in international languages, in particular English and French, both delivered traditionally and online.

The development of new undergraduate and master's programmes in French is called for as a result of the growing number of applicants from French-speaking areas. An additional step would be the introduction of an English language course, modelled on the Romanian language preparatory year, as well as English language refresher courses. Faculties without full degree programmes in international languages should also introduce at least one course per semester in an international language. For a higher visibility of the programmes, some of these should be internationally accredited.

With a view to enhancing visibility in already established target countries and identifying new regions in order to attract international students, we will launch **professional marketing campaigns**. Over the last three years, we have attended thirty recruitment fairs abroad, visited high schools abroad and created a database of contacts of potential applicants, all of which confirmed the imperative to continue this action. We therefore intend to strengthen our marketing by **attending international fairs** either face-to-face or using various online channels (virtual fairs, webinars, etc.), focusing on non-European countries. An additional aspect of the marketing strategy is the development of a **network of agencies** for recruiting candidates, foreign nationals, in particular from remote areas or areas with risk factors, without being limited to this. A standard operating procedure and a framework agreement will be drawn up and the terms of cooperation with agencies will be negotiated. Visits or online discussions will also be organised with a view to negotiating **partnerships with the authorities in the field of education** in order to organise joint promotional actions together.

In addition to traditional methods of outreach, we aim to develop **digital tools to promote** educational programmes and services (interactive maps, virtual tours, etc.), adapted to the needs of EU, CH and EEA applicants and third country applicants. Every year, in the light of the outcome, the University will analyse the effectiveness of the measures undertaken and decide whether they should be continued.

In order to help attract international students, we also aim to establish a **competitive tuition fee system** in relation to competing universities. To this end, we will analyse the tuition fees of competing universities, both in Romania and in other South-East European countries. New tuition fees for international students will be determined, if deemed necessary, within the limitations allowed by current legislation. Faculties will also discuss the possibility of granting financial incentives to international students either through scholarships or tuition fee discounts based on their own criteria.

Implementing an easy application system for international students is another important step. To this end, an online platform will be developed that will allow: applications for enrolment (for international candidates from third countries) and submission of applications for equivalence of studies (for candidates from EU, CH and EEA Member States). Effectiveness of this instrument will be assessed annually.

Given the educational and cultural diversity, further efforts are needed to improve the integration of international students. To this end, measures will be taken including: providing a “Welcome” pack containing the relevant materials and information for enrolment and integration process; appointing a person responsible for enrolment and communication with international students and an academic tutor in each faculty; organising orientation seminars at the beginning of each semester; making counselling on cultural integration more accessible in order to avoid culture shock; facilitating integration into student organisations (with the help of the UBB Student Council).

Another approach that can lead to attracting international students is to **improve labour market access** by creating partnerships with local companies. Currently, the network of partnerships with the business sector is more oriented towards the needs of Romanian students. Developing a component tailored to the needs of international students can bring several benefits, including: facilitating access to jobs, internships, offering scholarships funded by the private sector. Depending on the particular departments involved, efforts will be made to identify companies and negotiate partnerships/update existing agreements. In addition, the International Cooperation Centre will make sure that information is disseminated by developing a dedicated section on its website.

- b) The group of students in mobility at UBB is mostly formed by Erasmus students. Over the past few years, the number of Erasmus students has increased significantly, especially as a result of the continuous efforts of the dedicated CCI office staff.
- c) Development of an electronic mobility management system: the CMS platform is being adapted to support the integrated application for student mobility abroad (with Rector's Order), generating the Rector's Order, submitting documents and processing statistics. These efforts to integrate electronic mobility management tools were launched in April 2020 and will continue in a sustained way over the coming period.

Boosting the number of Erasmus beneficiaries is crucial for a better position in international rankings and is one of the top international priorities right now.

Strategic objectives to boost the number of beneficiaries remain a priority:

- increasing the number of outgoing students studying;
- increasing the number of outgoing students on work experience;
- increasing the number of incoming students;
- increasing the number of outgoing teaching mobility beneficiaries;
- increasing the number of beneficiaries of incoming teaching mobility;
- increasing the number of beneficiaries of outgoing staff training mobility;
- increasing the number of beneficiaries of incoming staff training mobility;
- full recognition of mobility, promoting and supporting student/staff mobility, especially for those with limited opportunities;
- assessing the importance and providing visibility for the achievements of staff members involved in individual mobilities;
- developing non-discriminatory policies at university level and improving international performance by analysing the impact of mobility implementation.

The high number of international Erasmus mobilities has prompted changes both in the way international mobilities are acknowledged academically and in the setting of new strategic objectives at European level. **Alignment with international standards** for the implementation of the Erasmus programme is particularly important, as this is a prerequisite for receiving funding.

The digitalisation of the Erasmus programme is the main objective for the new Erasmus programme, launched in 2021. With this in mind, we aim to align with international standards by meeting the following objectives:

- developing Erasmus blended mobility (mobility with a virtual component);
- launching new digital platforms for the implementation of the Erasmus programme;
- video tutorials to assist recipients and replacing the printed documentation by electronic documentation (in terms of: learning agreement, transcript of records, certificates, invitations, course catalogue, handouts, etc.).

Another important objective, both for full-time international students and Erasmus students, is to **improve the services available to international students**. The first measures to be implemented are: publishing on the University website a catalogue of all courses and programmes available in international languages; including Romanian as a foreign language in the curriculum of international students enrolled in degree programmes in languages other than Romanian; allocating a larger number of places in student residence halls; facilitating access to career development programmes; eligibility for a number of programmes that have so far been exclusively available to Romanian students (e.g. Academic Performance College, Face the Challenge, Student to Student Team); membership in student associations/organisations; translation of documents and the Academic Info page into English. An ongoing programme will be carried out in each faculty to identify the facilities students need.

2 Development of UBB projects and programmes in the field of international cooperation

Babeş-Bolyai University runs the most diverse portfolio of European and international projects. Projects that include at least one component for the development of the international relations of the university are managed or co-managed by the Centre for International Cooperation.

UBB looks to **capitalise on** the **international projects** available through academic associations, especially those supporting **priority programmes** in the university strategic plan and alignment with global developments in internationalisation.

In terms of their financial relevance, **projects won under the Erasmus programme take centre stage**. The implementation of the Erasmus programme has generated a considerable surge in the number of applications submitted each year. The annual **approval** rate for Erasmus applications submitted every year is **70%**. Providing teachers and administrative staff with an ongoing annual training programme may generate a higher number of applications both submitted and approved at institutional level.

Given that a higher number of approved projects generates an increase in the external funding used for institutional development in various areas, implementation of the following objectives is essential:

- increasing the number of applications submitted at university level;
- increasing the number of projects implemented at UBB under the Erasmus programme;
- increasing the number of teaching staff (or/and administrative staff) who are involved in international consortia implementing projects;
- acknowledging the relevance and enhancing the visibility of UBB teaching and administrative staff involved in cooperation projects with strategic partners.

A strategic consolidation approach in the field of international development programmes consists in the **ongoing exploration of opportunities** to address European and international calls through projects, while maintaining and expanding the practices already established in our university. The **priority axes** will be:

- **Capacity-Building** programmes, funded by the European Commission, through which UBB supports its **own international development by sharing its experience** with beneficiary universities outside the European Union;

- **Jean Monnet** programmes (Chair, Centre and Network), also funded by the European Commission, which support the **regular renewal of course content and teaching practices**, as well as the development of European networks to encourage the **transfer of successful mechanisms** from partner universities in the European Union.

- programmes operated by other **international institutions and agencies** (such as AUF, DAAD, UNESCO, UNDP, etc.), aimed at developing structures and practices associated with internationalisation and international cooperation between universities. UBB already possesses experience in running such programmes, but membership in new alliances and consortia (such as the Guild) and stronger participation in existing ones will open up **new funding opportunities** for internationalisation activities at UBB).

3 Reinforcing the international status of UBB

a) Joining university alliances, associations and networks

Promoting in an innovative way the intercultural, plurilingual and multifaith character of UBB, in accordance with the UBB Charter and the Strategic Plan, can be achieved above all by consolidating the **fields of excellence** at UBB and promoting them on an international level, in line with the **assessment criteria put forward by international rankings**.

At institutional level, UBB is a member of several international associations: EUA, SGroup, AUF, ELC, DRC et al. UBB is already involved in each of these associations by nature of activities (i.e. involvement in the SGroup Think Tank for Asia, Africa or Latin America or the iCon programme for transcontinental mobility). UBB also adheres to the Magna Charta Observatory and supports the DAAD, OAD programmes. UBB's new membership in the Guild of European Research Intensive Universities Network, which includes universities such as Warwick, Université de Paris, Bologna, Jagiellonian University of Krakow and the University of Oslo, is an important stimulus for the internationalisation process and for increasing the international competitiveness of our university. The advisory and integrative solutions proposed by the Guild through the thematic working groups, the positive influence of the network represented professionally with European institutions, and the **standing** of partner universities will allow, on the long run, to improve the **quality** and **efficiency** of staff involved in the internationalisation process, both at the level of UBB faculties and at the level of the administrative departments of our university.

In addition to attending activities and events organised by international associations and promoting cooperation opportunities or scholarship programmes offered by these organisations, UBB aims to identify and join new relevant networks/associations - e.g. the Asia-Europe Foundation.

b) Establishing lasting contacts with UBB international graduates

One of the actions designed to increase UBB's international visibility is the development of an **international alumni network**. The experience of international alumni at UBB is a valuable resource that needs to be further harnessed. This objective will provide a solid marketing tool in the international context. The initial step involves setting up a team to coordinate relations with international alumni, with an active role also taken by the faculty teaching staff, in close contact with students. The next step is to build a **network of academic ambassadors** who will promote UBB's degree programmes and profile as genuinely as possible, drawing on their own experience. A database will be set up to recruit ambassadors for our University, listing alumni living in Romania and those living abroad. They will be invited to a meeting held

to present the project (recruitment strategy, admissions policy, degree programmes, etc.) and to establish mutually agreed principles and *modus operandi*. The University will **acknowledge the contribution of international alumni** in promotional materials, press releases or by granting special benefits. A Facebook page, managed by the UBB team in charge, will be created to boost the visibility of the network, to promote activities and to facilitate the communication process.

4 Internationalisation at home (I@H)

In a global society, **international exposure** is a key formative experience, and its importance is globally recognised through its listing as an indicator in international academic rankings.

One of the fundamental building blocks of internationalisation at home is the **diversity of courses offered in foreign languages**, especially English. Currently, the foreign language courses on offer are still underdeveloped.

This requires: creating **dual degree** programmes modelled on those already carried out in partnership with German and French universities, inviting prominent teachers from abroad, finding and applying for relevant funding projects, creating new networks within existing programmes (i.e. CEEPUS), promoting study opportunities intensively and organising summer courses for our students (in Cluj and/or abroad).

Sustainable internationalisation is one of the main objectives pursued by higher education institutions. Its importance rests not only in the co-curricular component, but also in other I@H activities, for example as proposed by European projects, or by international structures supporting the integration of new forms of skills acquisition and recognition, such as alternative credentials.

In order to consolidate and modernise internationalisation activities at home, UBB will continue to expand:

(i) providing access to **international experiences** for students outside traditional international activities;

(ii) organising training/courses/modules/summer schools on internationalisation, inclusion and intercultural communication for **academic and administrative staff**, through both traditional and non-traditional education. To this end, we will continue to organise **refresher courses** for the staff working with students/teaching staff, foreign nationals, in particular language courses and international project writing. Our most successful activity to date, the **bi-annual internationalisation courses for administrative staff**, run by the Centre for International Cooperation through its Inter-University Agreements Office, will be further fine-tuned in both form and content and **rolled out to other target groups**. Efforts will also be made to

develop other such courses in order to equip non-teaching staff with the necessary skills for the future.

Equally, there is a growing need to develop the third dimension of universities, underscoring the strategic link between research and education by fostering entrepreneurial awareness, collaboration openness and networking with stakeholders from multiple fields. UBB will (1) build stronger connections with local authorities, (2) increase cooperation with NGOs on common issues, (3) develop collaborations with local/regional economic partners. An active involvement in the co-creation of the community engagement concept and the implementation of the proposed activities under the umbrella of the InclusU alliance (inclusion component) and the Guild network (on the competitiveness component) will contribute to this. Conversely, UBB will leverage existing partnership relationships to expand collaboration with local/regional and national authorities to raise awareness on inclusion and develop SMART specialisations in the range of degree programmes across the three lines of study.

5 Internationalisation by recruiting international academics and researchers at UBB

The internationalisation of the academic sector involves both students and teachers and researchers. Our university boasts an impressive portfolio of international academics and researchers. Every year, several hundred teachers/researchers engage in the academic activities at UBB, thus exceeding easily the 5% internationalisation threshold even at FTE level, while in some years more than 10% of teachers/researchers are international. Changing some administrative practices is one of the prerequisites for internationalisation:

- availability of all forms required for teaching/ research/ administrative activities in the official UBB and international languages;
- automated mechanisms whereby international teachers/researchers recruited by UBB receive institutional email addresses and credentials to access our databases (including

Annelis), access to the Eduroam network, while they are not required to submit an application, according to the following data workflow: faculties/research units → human resources department → DTIC → faculties/research units;

- sending out an information kit in English/German/Hungarian to international teachers/researchers listing the facilities offered by UBB to its employees: free access to museums, parks, discounted swimming pool prices, access to academic infrastructure (free access to buildings, cafeterias, coffee shops, Pyramid restaurant), access to databases, institutional address, free internet access, consultancy/grant assistance, etc.
- a dedicated website in English/German/Hungarian for information on internationalisation;

- a flexible database connected to the JRC, DRU and DTIC for a centralised registration of international teachers/researchers.

As having international teaching staff involved in the UBB teaching process requires separate administrative solutions from having researchers involved in research activities, these two academic activities should be treated differently in terms of internationalisation.

a) Teachers

UBB employs a variety of legal solutions for funding and attracting international teaching staff. Having the possibility to hire external lecturers on an hourly pay basis for a significant number of courses/hours contributes greatly to our internationalisation. Equally, the UBB human resources strategy also contains flexible tools for hiring them. Also, the smooth running of the Hungarian and German lines, which have established connections with many universities in Hungary, Austria and Germany, enables us to access the academic human resources of these countries, and this natural and unique advantage in Romania is valuable and should be leveraged to sustain and enhance the internationalisation of UBB.

i) Short- to medium-term visiting teaching staff

Disciplines not covered by tenured UBB staff should be outsourced by inviting teachers from abroad to teach these subjects on a contract basis. Consequently:

- at faculty level, international teachers should be encouraged to join the teaching programme on a contract basis for a minimum of one semester, either for one or several subjects;
- the Hungarian and German lines play a key part in bringing in foreign teachers from Hungary, Austria and Germany and should be supported in attracting international teachers, i.e. they may also support the internationalisation of the Romanian line or specialisations in other languages;
- the UBB cultural centres should be encouraged to support UBB in the internationalisation process with academic contacts, academic tenders, and they should act as an interface between UBB and the countries they represent;
- to recruit international teaching staff for open courses through the CFCIDFR;
- online teaching is a strong advantage in terms of internationalisation, because it does not incur accommodation and travel costs, so we really need to use this to our advantage.

ii) Visiting professors

Our many collaborations are reflected in the increased number of teachers who visit UBB to teach in various disciplines. These collaborations should be exploited to the full by faculty management:

- Erasmus, CEEPUS and other programmes should support the invitation of

international teachers;

- summer/winter schools with international guests need to be encouraged;
- inviting teachers to online courses/seminars should be encouraged, especially at masters and doctoral level;
- promoting the organisation of joint seminars/practical workshops with universities abroad, involving teachers and students from both partner institutions;
- we need to support our partner universities in organising summer schools at our training centres (Arcaia, Baru Mare, Beliș, Coronini, Grădiște), and to promote these centres by providing dedicated websites in the university languages and in English. This latter measure will implicitly boost our reputation abroad, as well as strengthen collaborations with other universities abroad.

b) Researchers

UBB owns many research facilities which are available to international researchers, but these facilities are neither known nor adequately advertised. We therefore have to identify those facilities (rUBB equipment, collections, training centres, etc.) that are of potential international interest and advertise them as such. In order to further internationalise researchers, the following actions are needed:

- engaging international researchers as PI (Principal Investigator) in UEFISCDI grants by targeted advertising in English focusing on grant calls via Twitter and other communication channels;
- fostering external collaborations for articles and projects (co-authorship);
- the scientific councils of museums must mandate two to three renowned international specialists, validated as such also by the CS-UBB;
- the scientific collections of UBB need to be tapped into by inviting specialists to study the collections and providing accommodation for the duration of the visit;
- inclusion of external specialists in the scientific committees of research units should be encouraged;
- an express recommendation that each RU should include a minimum of 2-5 international research collaborators;
- the involvement of foreign researchers in UBB research grants has to be supported;
- launching/promoting postdoctoral programmes of excellence for EU and non-EU nationals;
- promoting the Cluj University Press and UBB journals within the international community.

The guidelines set out above are intended to **guide and provide a framework for internationalisation activities**. While the main catalyst for internationalisation is the

Centre for International Cooperation (CCI), the success of this strategy relies on the **cooperation** of the CCI with the UBB executive board, the faculties and the other entities and departments of the university. In the current setting, an ongoing **alignment** of activities to ensure successful achievement of the strategic objectives outlined above should be, more than ever, a constant priority for our academic community.