



УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ  
ГОЦЕ ДЕЛЧЕВ

**STRATEGY FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION  
UNIVERSITY GOCE DELCEV, STIP**

**2023-2025**

## Introduction

This strategy outlines the intention of the Goce Delcev University, Stip to strengthen its international position and relations in the world, by becoming an institution able to address the needs of the youth and transform their knowledge and skills into highly profiled professionals ready to embrace the future and the new technological developments. As an international institution, Goce Delcev University is committed to promote intercultural understanding and exchange of ideas about values and perspectives of the global world, which we believe are essential for building international partnerships and cooperation in an increasingly interconnected world.

For us, international cooperation implies the development of a long-standing framework of international relations that will benefit both students and faculties, and the Academic staff, but also for the entire community and environment surrounding the University. As an investment in the future, Goce Delcev University fully respects and applies its principles in the University's daily work and activities, meaning it embraces transparency and equality, academic excellence, student-oriented approaches, open and responsible research, social inclusion, sustainable development, and above all culture of dialogue and cooperation among people, institutions, and countries. Therefore, strengthening the internationalization process means a contribution to the strengthening of Goce Delcev University to become modern, successful, recognizable, desired, and socially responsible, and to be the driver of social and economic development and change.

To this end, by setting the University's mission and vision in an era of globalization, digitalization, technological progress, and sustainable development, Goce Delcev University is determined to promote a strategic approach to internationalization by inaugurating an appropriate program, able to monitor socio-economic trends, technology, and technological developments both at the local and global level.

To be specific, the University's mission is to implement academic, specialist and lifelong participation, research, and development of highly developed staff for academic and professional profiles, through the development of modern studies and other programs, as well as through creating a favorable environment in which information, professional, creative and above all critical opinion will be developed. At the same time, the University vision is to monitor educational and research processes in order to achieve European standards in all the areas mentioned above and through each of them to contribute to the economy and society in North Macedonia and in the wider world in order to achieve sustainable human development.

To this end, the University has set strategic objectives to attain a higher education activity based on quality, accompanying work and student motivation, and forming flexible staff prepared for lifelong learning in accordance with the needs of the individual and the community.

## 1. Building regional and international partnerships and fostering institutional networks

Goce Delcev University has built partnerships all over the world. Considering its more than 400 inter-institutional agreements, it seeks to create an extensive network of international and regional partnership with other universities, companies, institutions, civil societies, and networks, providing international and national experience for students and staff, as well as possibilities for cooperation on projects and common study programs. In this sense, the University has become part of the transnational association of universities and research centers of the Adriatic-Ionian basin 'UniAdrion', which seeks to strengthen international cooperation and favors the progress of culture, science, training, and research among its members, focusing on blue growth, connecting the region, environmental quality, sustainable tourism and cultural heritage, societal challenges, and economic and policy analysis. Besides this, Goce Delcev University aims at becoming a member of the European University Alliance, in order to connect to like-minded institutions that promote high quality student mobility and encourage and support collaboration in the European Higher Education Area. Being situated at the crossroads between East and West and having a comparative advantage among others because of its openness to change, adaptability and digitalization, Goce Delcev University provides education for students and teachers from different countries, seeking to undertake a leading role in the region, in particular in the European integration process.

## 2. Engaging in common initiatives and developing partnership projects

In the past years, individuals and groups of researchers worked together with their colleagues abroad in bilateral or network research projects. These initiatives have proven to be highly productive and represent a good practice for the overall internationalization of the University. Goce Delcev University already participates in different Erasmus and Jean Monnet Actions under the Erasmus + program, Horizon Europe, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, NATO – Science for Peace and Security Program and others, which are being carried out with high devotion and mutual trust with partners. In order to enhance its role in research and innovation and to embrace an even more devoted approach for developing common projects, able to respond to the needs of the present but not forgetting the needs of future generations, Goce Delcev University is pursuing a dedicated policy intended to motivate, encourage and sustain academics, researchers, students and professionals to develop new pathways of collaboration, to build more systematic and open partnerships, to be internationally recognizable and competitive for their uniqueness and to expand and promote excellence in regional and global research networks.

### 3. Increasing mobility and student exchange

The most effective tool for internationalization of universities has proven to be the method of mobility and student exchanges among countries that are part of the Erasmus Program operated by the European Union. Goce Delcev University, as a participating partner in the Extended Erasmus University Charter, strongly sustains and supports international mobility among academics, staff, and students, and it is qualified to apply for Erasmus funding for student mobility for studies and traineeships, as well as for transnational mobility activities for staff members, both academic and administrative. Besides this, the University can apply to participate in its own mobility projects funded under the Erasmus+ program. Goce Delcev University has more than 40 student mobilities each semester, and around 600 active foreign students who study at the different faculties of the University on Macedonian language, and more than 50 students who study in the English programs. International students are supported through different programs, cultural activities, and projects that make their stay at the University comfortable and successful, and of course, for students who decide to study on Macedonian language, study courses are being offered at the University.

### 4. Internationalization at home

While promoting international mobility and exchange of students abroad, internationalization at home is also one of the priorities of Goce Delcev University. In this direction, the University seeks to contribute to successful integration of international and intercultural dimensions which conflate into the formal and informal curriculum for all students and academics within the domestic learning environment. This entails integrating global perspectives and enriching the quality of study programs, supporting informal curriculum activities, making purposeful use of cultural diversity for inclusive learning, teaching, and assessment practices, creating ownership among students, staff, academics, and local community, involving virtual mobility through online working with partner institutions, sharing knowledge, practice, and experience by engaging with epistemic and entrepreneurial communities and working with peers from other institutions. Specifically, by building closer links between business and academia, we encourage the exchange and sharing of knowledge about skills, needs, long-term partnerships and opportunities, drive innovation, and creativity, and help graduates acquire the right skills and mindsets required for the labor market, as well as for their own personal development.

### 5. Investing in and creating social capital

Social capital is an intangible resource that emerges from social relations and social structure. Universities as higher educational institutions aim to generate learning output to students in order to qualify them for the labor market, but fundamentally they are social environments that construct, connect and contribute to many outcomes that build relationships between people and provide support for students for achieving long-term goals after graduating. Social capital is all about networks, associations, volunteering, solidarity,

norms, trust, reciprocity, cooperation, and relationship, that support the success and education of both students and academics and create cultural norms and values that motivate to achieve even higher goals. That is why we believe that by investing in social capital, we strongly shape the student's development and give the necessary support to understand the world of work, to build connections and to activate networks.

In the past years, students from the Goce Delcev University have taken part and have contributed to different student' organizations, alumni, and other associations run by professional bodies as well as by a team of volunteers. Our students have taken part in various international alumni such as Western Balkan Alumni Association, Erasmus Student Network, the Oceans Network of student and alumni international exchange programs, and a few more associations that prove the importance of these networks in achieving the long-term goals of each student after graduation. This is why Goce Delcev University is focused on nurturing these networks and associations, and creating strong legacies that aim to reflect dynamic realities.

## 6. Responsible research and open science

As part of its mission and vision as a higher education institution, Goce Delcev University performs research activities that impact directly upon the teaching and learning process. For that matter, the University encompasses practice of scientific investigation with integrity commonly known as responsible conduct of research. In this process, academics, staff, and students adopt professional norms and ethical principles in performance of all activities related to scientific research and adopt scientific inquiry, fostering a research environment that enables them to work collaboratively towards common goals, while promoting confidence in scientific knowledge and community progress. In doing so, the University endeavors to promote the concept of open science, used as reference for openness, perseverance, transparency, replicability, reproducibility, and accumulation of knowledge. These fundamental features permit access to scientific articles and research data that can be used to promote scientific inquiry and good science, to build public confidence in scientific knowledge and to generate progress for the public good. In this sense, Goce Delcev University has been promoting these values and principles in particular through its AMBICON laboratory for control of ambient air and pollution, and its UNILAB laboratory for control of quality of food and nutritional supplements, but also through its Legal Clinique in the field of Law and Legal sciences. Additionally, the University uses an electronic repository, making open access to research and science and bringing it even closer to the public.

## 7. Diversity policy and inclusive culture

Implementing diversity policy and promoting inclusive culture is a core value of Goce Delcev University. As a global priority of UNESCO, the University seeks to eliminate gender disparities and to ensure equal access to education and vocational training, both for students and staff. Specifically, the University is committed to promote diversity in different aspects of research and innovation, to include gender balance in research

teams and decision making, to combat gender-based violence in the research environment, to promote a welcoming, diverse, and discrimination- and harassment-free workplace and other. By undertaking a holistic approach towards admission, teaching, mentorship and career support programs and development of students and employees, Goce Delcev University targets disadvantaged, vulnerable, and underrepresented groups and individuals, embracing their needs and seeking to provide academic and non-academic support for improving their access for completing higher education goals. Moreover, the University assists both domestic and international students in developing a multicultural European profile and transnational skills, maturity, self-organization, professionalism, respect, equality, and collaborative spirit, as well as in generating experience, promoting international friendship, and sharing good practices. All this has the purpose to create a friendly working environment without frontiers.

## 8. Internationalization through digitalization

The need of adaptation to the new Digital reality has been a 'milieu' goal of Goce Delcev University since its foundations and has proven to be a success story during times of COVID-19. As a higher education institution, the University is committed to reduce the digital divide and to avoid the potential negative effect of digital exclusion, and for that matter it has introduced many novelties in the education process such as developing digital platforms for staff and students, customizing lessons and introducing blended learning, promoting new digital applications and new educational technology, enabling digital transformation of learning spaces and lifelong learning, improving pedagogical skills, conducting research, working in real-time with other universities at different geographical distances, etc. All this helps students to accelerate their learning, to understand difficult concepts, to assure educational opportunities for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups or individuals, to help students connect with the labor market, and more.

## 9. Developing English study programs

In a world that is being increasingly globalized, the language of instruction at universities is of greater importance than ever before. English has become the predominant language of instruction in many countries, and as a world language, it has become of primary usage by most industries and companies around the world, representing a necessity for students and young people who wish to integrate in the global market. For that reason, Goce Delcev University is aiming at internationalization of its study programs, by promoting English-taught modules able to respond to increasing requests of national and foreign students to study their desired curriculums in English language. Specifically, the University already offers five study programs in English language. Those are first and second cycle study programs in Medical Science, first cycle programs in International Law and International Relations, different first cycle study programs at the Music Academy and Contemporary Dance Performance, the Film Academy and the Faculty of Computer Science. Other than these, most of the university courses offered to students from Erasmus partner countries can be followed in English language. This stimulates language acquisition on both sides and promotes integration in the new social environment.

## 10. A contribution to the UN Agenda 2030

Being a driver of social change and a promoter of knowledge diplomacy, universities contribute to the strengthening of relations among countries in addressing global issues that cannot be solved individually. By putting forward policies and practices that address sustainable development, Goce Delcev University is playing a key role in achieving the UN Agenda 2030. In this sense, the University is including sustainable development in its curricula and methodologies, developing courses aimed at teaching global awareness, promoting humanistic values, including online and lifelong learning opportunities, supporting research on topics that address the concept of sustainability, building capacities and science, establishing governance structures in line with the principles of sustainability, supporting and taking actions directed to green campuses, promoting campaigns on recycling, clean energy, water waste and clean air, promoting sustainable food and tourism, ensuring gender equality, sustaining innovation and innovative solutions, establishing meaningful partnership and promoting inter-stakeholder dialogues concerning sustainable development. Furthermore, in Sports and Culture, the University leans on the storytelling approach in nature as a tool for teaching through promoting a sense of community and belonging, enabling relationships, networking, helping develop empathy and self-confidence, facilitating learning and forming a sense of self-identity with the preface of sustainability. Finally, by performing the role of a higher education institution that promotes sustainability and sustainable development, the University promotes exchange of resources, knowledge and innovative ideas and experience, bridging the knowledge gap in society and moving towards a better and a more sustainable future.