

University of East Sarajevo



**INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF EAST SARAJEVO 2026-2033**

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East Sarajevo, 2026

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I Work Group for Drafting the Internationalization Strategy of the University of East Sarajevo 2026–2033

The Internationalization Strategy of the University of East Sarajevo (2026–2033) was prepared by the Work Group for Drafting the Internationalization Strategy of the University of East Sarajevo 2026–2033, appointed by the Senate of the University of East Sarajevo by the Decision No. 01-S-92-100/26, dated March 26, 2026. The members of the Work Group for Drafting the Internationalization Strategy of the University of East Sarajevo for the period 2026–2033 were:

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The Internationalization Strategy of the University of East Sarajevo 2026–2033 was adopted by the Senate of the University of East Sarajevo by Decision No. _____ on _____ .

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary context of global socio-political transformations, internationalization plays a key role in the functioning of higher education. The primary objectives of internationalization are aimed at improving the quality of education through the exchange of knowledge, as well as fostering intercultural dialogue with the aim of achieving better mutual understanding. This, in turn, makes every higher education institution richer, more firmly grounded in terms of its values, and more deeply established within the international higher education landscape.

The University of East Sarajevo, as an integral part of the European Higher Education Area, follows the relevant development trends of this academic community. In accordance with the strategic documents pertaining to the European Higher Education Area, plans have been established at the global level to build, by 2030, an inclusive, innovative, and even more deeply interconnected education system.

Nevertheless, we are witnessing that current geopolitical instability, and disintegration processes may fundamentally alter the directions of international communication and academic mobility. In circumstances where traditional channels of cooperation are exposed to rapid changes, this Strategy must be adaptive so that we are prepared to respond to potential changes. While respecting European standards, we are also actively directing our activities towards the Eurasian higher education space. Among other things, such an orientation entails intensified cooperation with regions with which we share similar socio-cultural and value-based patterns, while seeking to adapt and harmonize the best European practices with national specificities.

Furthermore, we are witnessing a profound transformation of higher education under the influence of modern technologies. Universities are expected to educate, through innovative curricula, specialists capable of rapid adaptation and lifelong learning. In this context, the role of universities is to remain faithful to the fundamental values and core knowledge they transmit to new generations, while simultaneously providing opportunities for adaptation and the acquisition of new skills that build upon this foundation. Nevertheless, in addition to this technological role, universities are obliged to preserve fundamental values and civilizational achievements, which are essential for building a stable, just, and prosperous society.

In this dynamic process, internationalization assumes another important role as an ambassador of the cultural, national, and educational space of the Republic of Srpska. One of the objectives of this Strategy is to ensure educational sovereignty through a readiness to adapt to international changes, while contributing to the international reputation and recognition of our institution and our wider social community.

2. CURRENT STATE OF INTERNATIONALIZATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EAST SARAJEVO

2.1. Internationalization of Education

The University of East Sarajevo seeks to enhance the quality of education through international cooperation and projects that enable student and staff mobility, strengthen the institution's institutional and scientific capacities, align with international standards in higher education, and implement good practices in higher education through cooperation with partner institutions abroad.

The University of East Sarajevo pays particular attention to internationalization at home. Currently, the University offers eight study programs in foreign languages, as follows:

Study programs in English:

- Medicine – Faculty of Medicine Foča,
- Dentistry – Faculty of Medicine Foča,
- Nursing – Faculty of Medicine Foča,
- Automation and Electronics – Faculty of Electrical Engineering East Sarajevo,
- Power Engineering – Faculty of Electrical Engineering East Sarajevo,
- Computer Science and Informatics – Faculty of Electrical Engineering East Sarajevo,
- Chemical Engineering and Technology – Faculty of Technology Zvornik.

Study program in Russian:

- Vocal-Instrumental Study Program – Academy of Music East Sarajevo.

In the 2025/26 academic year, 722 international students from 32 countries around the world are studying at the University of East Sarajevo (Figure 1). The largest number of them attend the Faculty of Medicine in Foča, while smaller numbers study at the Academy of Music in East Sarajevo, the Faculty of Philosophy in Pale, and other University member institutions. This figure does not include students from Serbia (551) who, pursuant to the Agreement on Special Parallel Relations, have the same status as domestic students. In addition, 258 students from Montenegro are treated separately enjoying a special status and are therefore formally registered only as foreign nationals.

The University of East Sarajevo has recorded a continuous increase in the number of international students, with the largest proportion of foreign nationals enrolling at the Faculty of Medicine in Foča, primarily in the Medicine study program taught in English. In addition to Medicine, other study programs are gradually becoming involved in this internationalization process. The University is actively and continuously working to expand its portfolio of study programs offered in foreign languages in order to attract as many students as possible from around the world. A significant proportion of international students also consists of young people from countries in the region. The University's strategic commitment is to continuously increase the number of international students, both from the region and from other countries around the world.

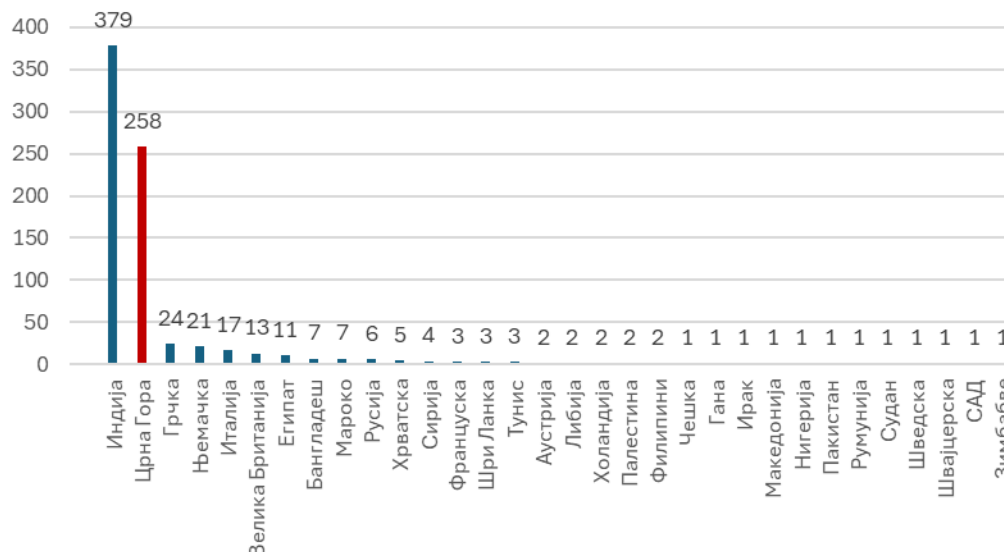


Chart 1. Number of foreign students at the University by country * Students from Montenegro are marked in red; they hold the same status as domestic students and fall into the foreign student category only conditionally

Internationalization at home also includes the systematic alignment of curricula with international standards, the implementation of relevant learning outcomes, and the acquisition of international accreditations. The Medicine study program at the Faculty of Medicine in Foča received international accreditation from the competent national higher education quality assurance body of Hungary – the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (MAB), confirming the high quality of the program and its alignment with international standards in the field of medical education (Figure 1).

In addition, internationalization at home at the University of East Sarajevo encompasses institutional support for international students throughout their studies, the engagement of visiting professors from abroad, as well as the implementation of joint courses and teaching activities with partner universities.

In addition to study programs delivered entirely in foreign languages, the number of courses that can be delivered in foreign languages for exchange students is also continuously increasing. Information on available courses is published on the University's website, and there are currently 176 such courses. These courses form part of the offer available to exchange students, thereby expanding the range of options and creating the necessary conditions for attracting a greater number of incoming mobility students.



Figure 1. Decision of the Board of the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (MAB), No. 2025/4/XIV, on the award of international accreditation to the Medicine Study Program at the Faculty of Medicine in Foča

2.2 International Mobility of Students and Staff

The University of East Sarajevo is actively working to increase the number of incoming and outgoing mobility opportunities for students, as well as for academic and administrative staff, creating conditions for more intensive international exchange of knowledge and academic and cultural experiences. Mobility is carried out through several international programs, the most important of which are:

Erasmus+ KA1 – a European Union program supporting the international mobility of students, academic and administrative staff, enabling study periods, professional placements, and the exchange of knowledge between universities in Europe and partner countries.

CEEPUS – an academic exchange program within the framework of the Central European Exchange Program for University Studies, which enables the mobility of students and academic staff between member universities through thematic networks and short-term or semester-long stays at partner institutions.

An important contribution to international exchange is also provided by national programs of individual countries, which finance short-term study visits, such as summer schools at partner institutions abroad. In recent years, the Russian Federation has been particularly prominent in this regard, as through the programs of the Ministry of Higher Education and Science of the Russian Federation, it enabled 20 short-term study visits for students of the University of East Sarajevo in 2025. Of great importance for international exchange are also the funds continuously offered by the People's Republic of China, which are utilized by the Department of Sinology at the University of East Sarajevo through the Embassy of the People's Republic of China. Through two main funds, the "Chinese Government Scholarship" and the "Scholarship Fund for Future Foreign Chinese Language Teachers", exchanges lasting one or two semesters were arranged with the People's Republic of China for 104 students of the University of East Sarajevo over the

past five years (some of the exchanges were conducted online due to the restrictive measures in place during the pandemic).

The mobility of students and academic staff at the University of East Sarajevo is also supported through the program of the Ministry for Scientific and Technological Development and Higher Education of the Republic of Srpska, implemented through a Public Call for Co-Financing International Academic Exchange. The program is most frequently used for cooperation with universities in countries that are not Erasmus+ Program Countries, but where there is a need for academic exchange. Although, unfortunately, the program is not announced every year, it represents significant support for the mobility of students and academic staff.

The SaMSIC program, intended for medical students, also stands out as a particularly promising form of academic mobility, enabling participation in international exchange programs, clinical placements, and professional development at healthcare institutions and medical faculties abroad.

The data indicate that, during the period under review, there has been an upward trend in mobility at the University of East Sarajevo, particularly with regard to the mobility of academic and administrative staff, which has remained at a relatively high level on a continuous basis (Charts 2–4). In terms of student mobility, a gradual increase can be observed compared to the initial years, which may be attributed to the expansion of the network of partner institutions and the increase in the number of inter-university cooperation agreements signed. Currently, the University of East Sarajevo has 95 active bilateral cooperation agreements with partner institutions abroad.

Nevertheless, despite the positive trend, the overall number of student mobility activities remains relatively low compared to the University's potential (the main reason for the lower level of mobility in 2020, 2021, and 2022 was COVID-19). Therefore, in the coming period, particular attention should be devoted to significantly increasing both outgoing and incoming student mobility. This is particularly important in the context of the internationalization of teaching and strengthening the presence of international students at the University.



Chart 2. Student mobility at the University for the period 2020/21–2024/25

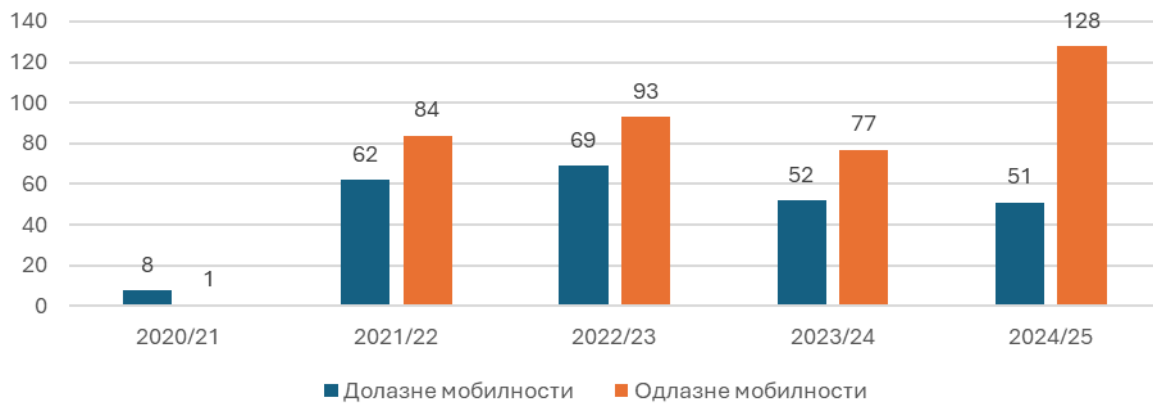


Chart 3. Academic Staff Mobility at the University for the period 2020/21–2024/25

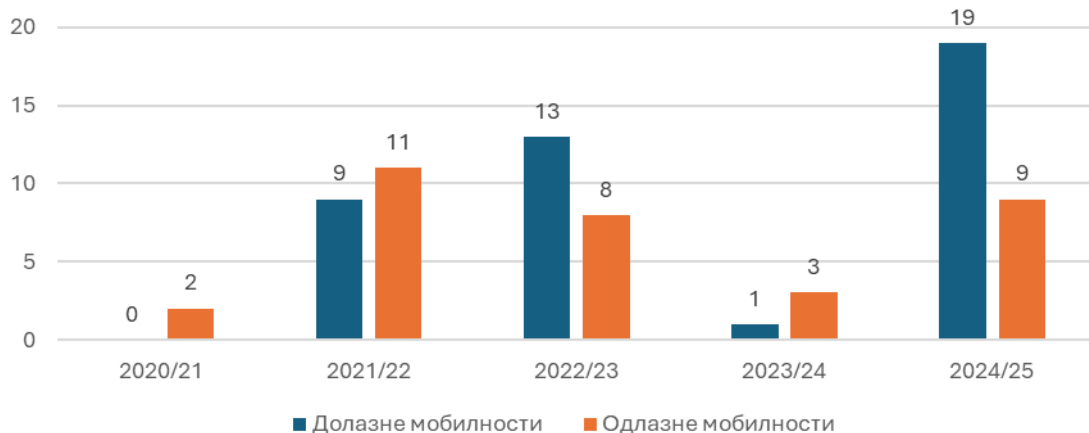


Chart 4. Mobility of non-academic staff at the University for the period 2020/21–2024/25

The Erasmus+ KA1 program is the dominant mobility channel, both in terms of the number of countries with which exchanges are carried out and in terms of the categories of exchanges. Together with bilateral exchange, this program is of key importance for mobility, particularly student mobility. Currently, the University of East Sarajevo has 58 active Erasmus+ KA1 agreements. A significant recovery and increase in the number of exchanges following the COVID-19 pandemic can be observed (Charts 5–7). In the case of academic staff, the figures are higher compared to student mobility, with 41 outgoing and 19 incoming mobility activities recorded in the most recent year under review (2024/25), indicating strong institutional links with European partners. This program is the only one that provides an institutional framework for the mobility and professional development of the University’s administrative staff. The University of East Sarajevo is continuously working to increase the number of incoming

mobility activities within the Erasmus+ KA1 programm. For the purpose of attracting international students and incoming mobility participants, a Register of Courses Taught in English has been developed. The Register currently contains 94 courses that are not part of the curricula of study programs already delivered entirely in English or other foreign languages.

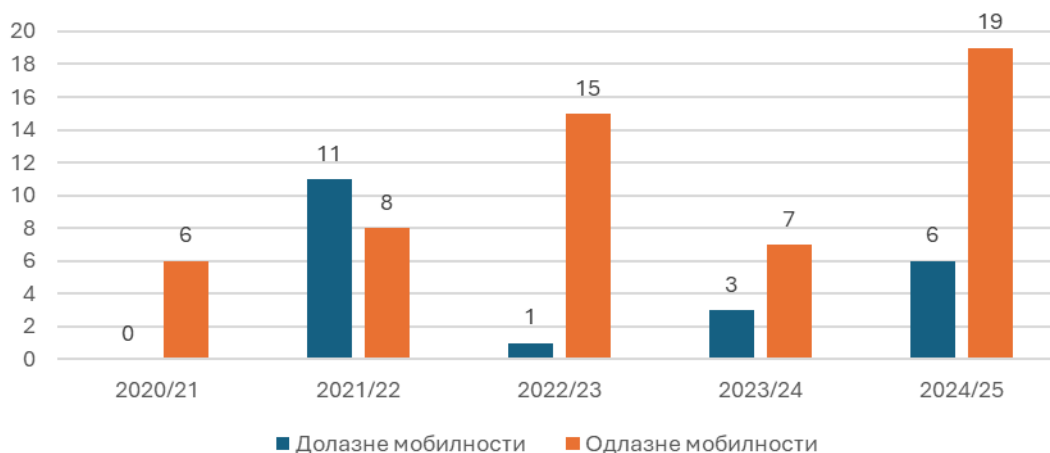


Chart 5. Student mobility at the University under the Erasmus+ KA1 program for the period 2020/21–2024/25



Chart 6. Academic staff mobility at the University under the Erasmus+ KA1 program for the period 2020/21–2024/25

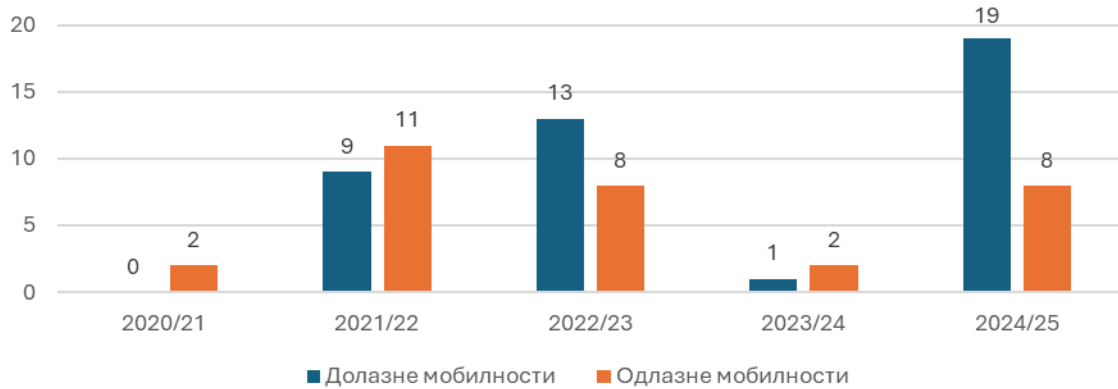


Chart 7. Non-academic staff mobility at the University under the Erasmus+ KA1 program for the period 2020/21–2024/25

The CEEPUS network has proven to be key to international exchanges of academic staff, with 87 outgoing and 32 incoming mobility activities in the 2024/25 academic year (Chart 8). Student mobility under this program also began to be implemented in the 2023/24 academic year (Chart 9). A key challenge in implementing mobility through CEEPUS networks stems from the fact that it is financed from the budget of the Republic of Srpska. However, an even greater problem, not only for the Republic of Srpska but also for Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole, is the highly bureaucratized system for disbursing scholarships. Such administrative delays directly jeopardize the stability of the networks' functioning, as well as the continuity of our participation in the program.

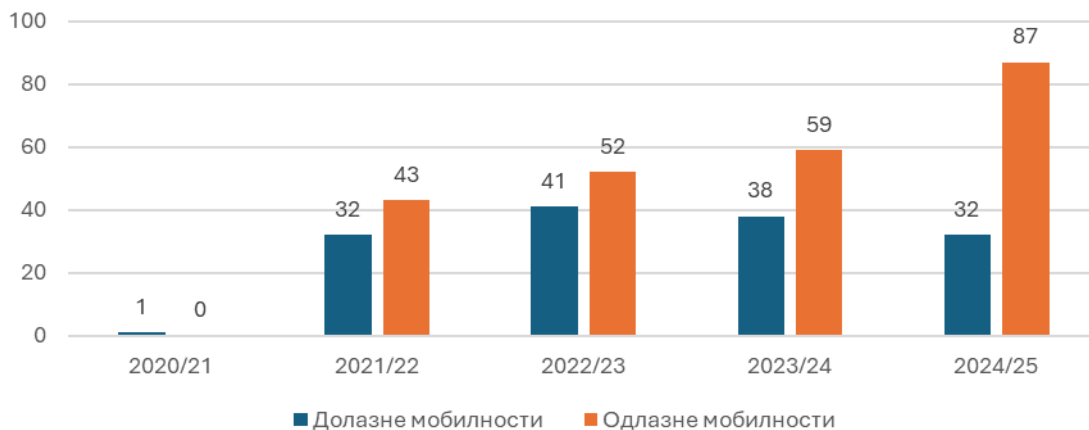


Chart 8. Academic staff mobility at the University under the CEEPUS program for the period 2020/21–2024/25



Chart 9. Student mobility at the University under the CEEPUS program for the period 2020/21–2024/25

Bilateral cooperation is of particular importance for student exchanges. This is also confirmed by the strong growth recorded in the 2024/25 academic year, when a total of 35 outgoing mobility activities were recorded, representing significant progress compared to the previous period (Charts 10 and 11). Bilateral cooperation programs account for almost the entire exchange with universities from the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China. These activities are financially supported by the Ministry for Scientific and Technological Development and Higher Education of the Republic of Srpska, as well as by the respective national programs of the aforementioned countries. Given the University’s strategic commitment to deeper cooperation with the Eurasian higher education space, these programs play a key role in achieving this objective. In recent years, the SaMSIC program has also become particularly prominent, opening up a broad geographical network for exchanges in the field of medical sciences.

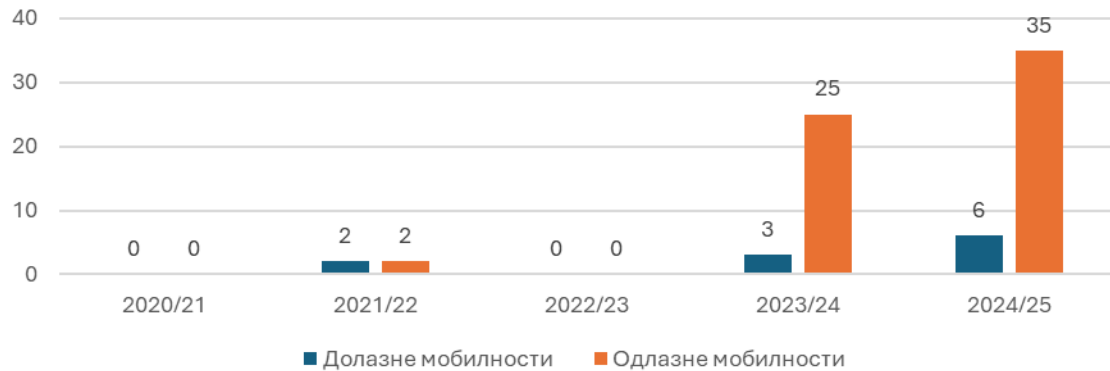


Chart 10. Student mobility at the University under bilateral cooperation programs for the period 2020/21–2024/25



Chart 11. Academic staff mobility at the University under bilateral cooperation programs for the period 2020/21–2024/25

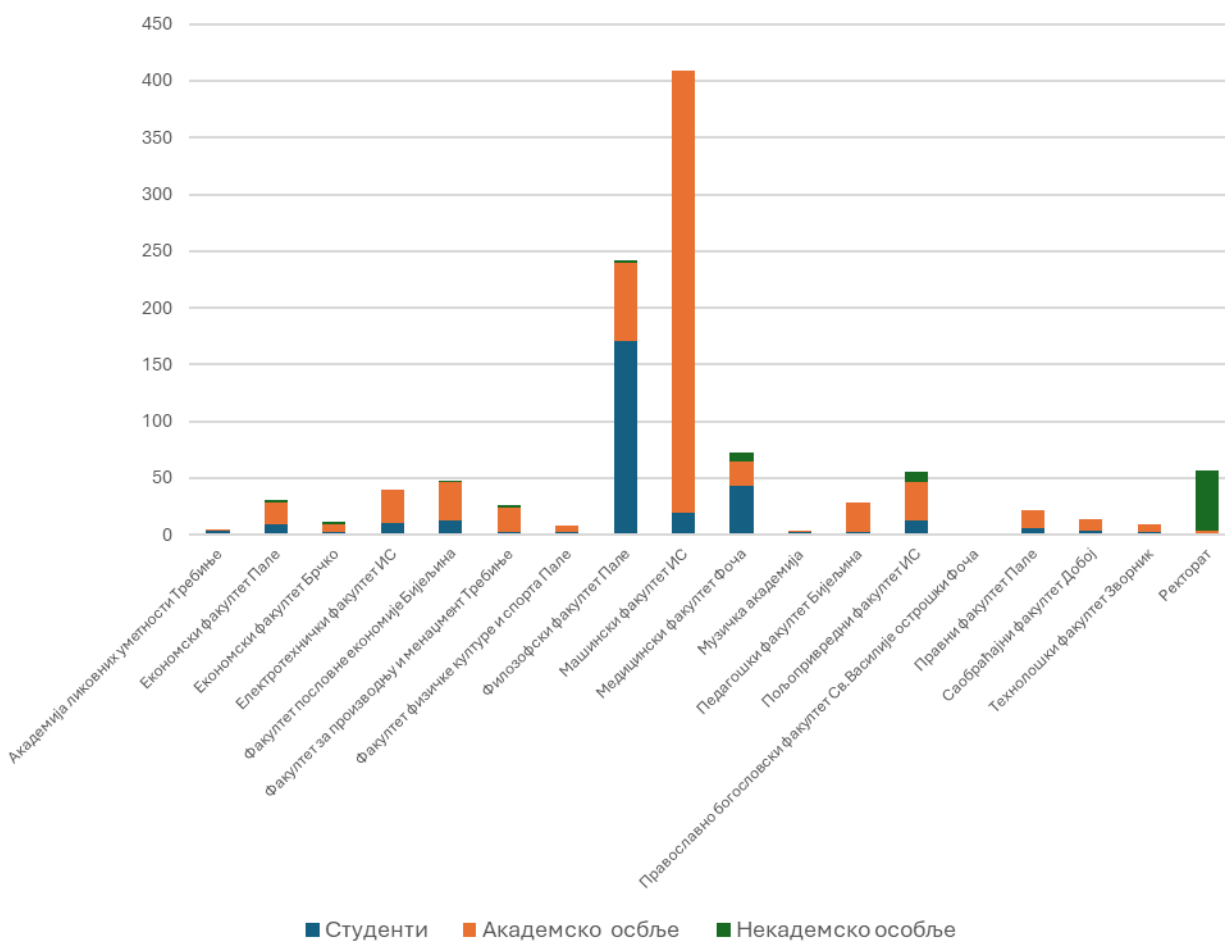


Chart 12. Mobility by faculties at the University for the period 2020/21–2024/25

An analysis of international exchange by University Members indicates an uneven distribution across faculties (Chart 12). On the other hand, the fact that all member institutions are active in the field of international cooperation is encouraging for the process of study program accreditation, given that one of the key standards relates specifically to this area. Nevertheless, the low volume of exchange at certain faculties requires a systematic approach and concrete measures to ensure that potential risks are addressed in a timely manner.

When Serbia and Montenegro are excluded from the analysis of the volume of exchanges, the data clearly indicate that the key international partners of the University of East Sarajevo are Romania (approximately 12%) and China (approximately 11%), confirming the strategic orientation towards the Eurasian academic space (Chart 13). A significant proportion of mobility is also carried out with Western European countries, primarily France and Spain (6% each), as well as Hungary, Portugal, and Russia (approximately 5% each), while the remainder consists of countries such as Slovakia, Poland, and Bulgaria. This distribution demonstrates that, alongside traditional European networks, the University is increasingly utilizing bilateral funds and programs to strengthen its links with the East.

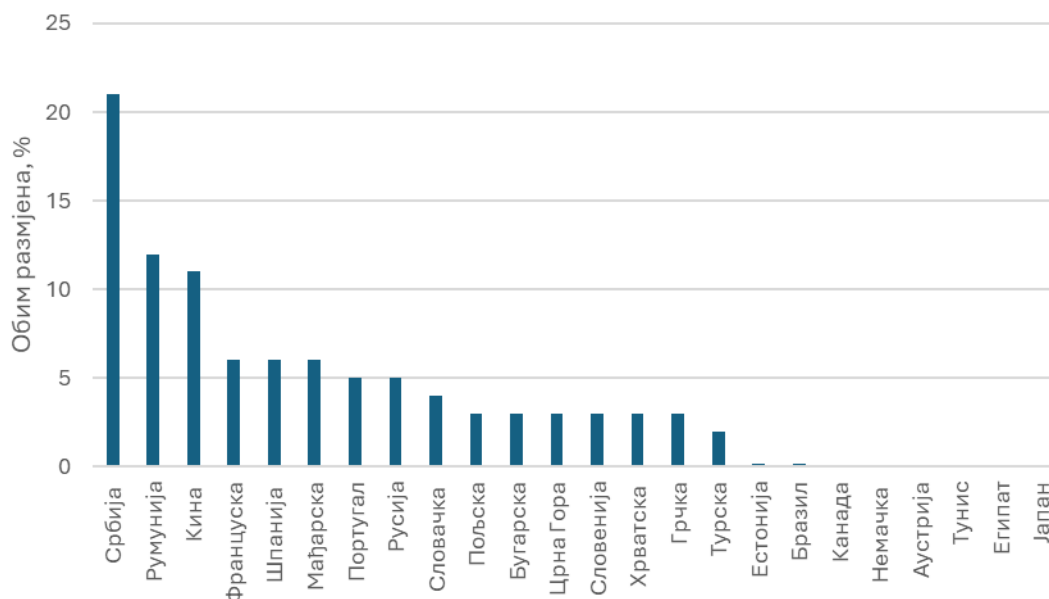


Chart 13. Mobility volume expressed as a percentage by country over a five-year period

2.3. Internationalization in the Field of International Projects

The University of East Sarajevo continuously participates in the implementation of international projects, which represent one of the important mechanisms for internationalization and the development of the research and education system. During the period under review, the University maintained continuous participation in international projects, with a gradual increase in their overall number, from 7 active projects in 2020 to 17 projects in 2025 (Chart 14).

International projects are implemented within various programs, primarily Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, and Interreg, as well as through other forms of international cooperation. Erasmus+ projects most commonly focus on capacity building in higher education, modernization of study programs, and enhancement of institutional capacities. Horizon Europe projects fall within the field of research and innovation and are aimed at developing scientific excellence and facilitating participation in international research consortia, while Interreg projects encompass territorial cooperation and addressing common regional challenges.

The presentation of the number of projects by year and their distribution by program shows that Erasmus+ projects have dominated the overall number of projects throughout the entire period under review. Their number increased from 4 projects in 2020 to 15 in 2024, followed by a slight decline to 13 in 2025. At the same time, Horizon Europe and Interreg projects, as well as projects under other programs, have been represented to a much lesser extent.

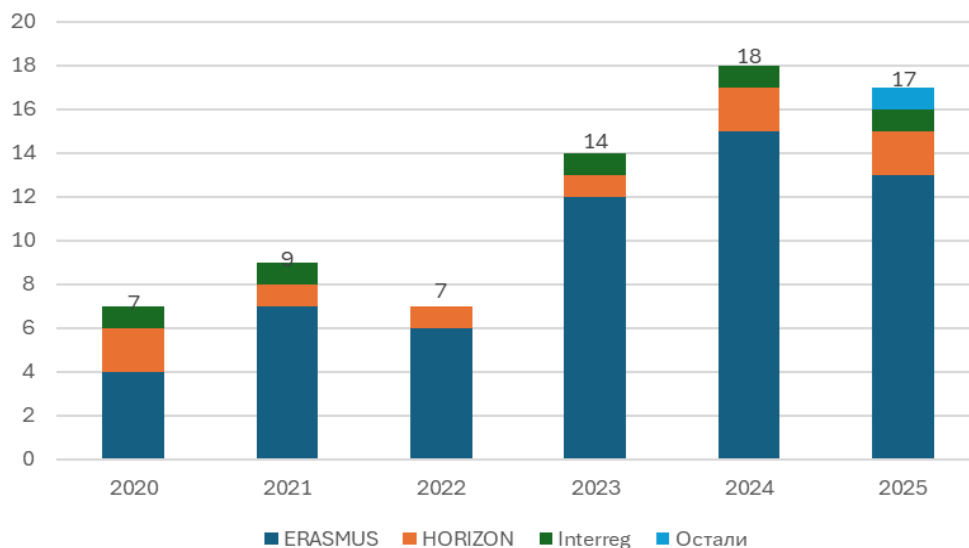


Chart 14. Number of active international projects at the University for the period 2020–2025

In addition to the aforementioned programs, the University also participates in COST Actions, which play a significant role in the development of scientific cooperation and the networking of researchers (Chart 15). Unlike conventional projects, COST Actions do not involve funding for research itself, but rather focus on connecting researchers and facilitating knowledge exchange at the European level. The number of approved COST Actions by year indicates variations in the University's participation in this program during the 2020–2025 period.

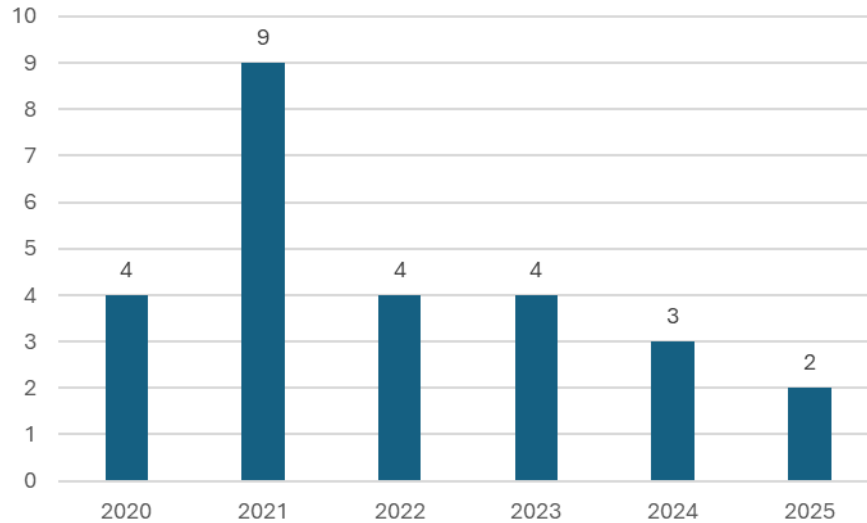


Chart 15. Number of active COST Actions at the University for the period 2020–2025

With regard to its role in projects, the University of East Sarajevo most often participates as a partner institution, while also having experience in coordinating international projects.

An analysis of the participation of the University's member institutions during the 2020–2025 period shows that engagement in international projects is unevenly distributed (Chart 16). Some member institutions are involved in a larger number of projects, while others are represented to a lesser extent.



Chart 16. Number of approved international projects by University Members for the period 2020–2025

In addition to projects funded through European Union programs, the University also participates in cross-border cooperation projects implemented with the support of national

institutions, which have an international component and contribute to strengthening regional cooperation, as well as in other programs.

2.4. Internationalization of Research

2.4.1. Publications in Reference Citation Databases

The internationalization of research represents one of the important development priorities of the University of East Sarajevo. In this context, the University systematically supports the participation of academic staff in international research activities, cooperation with foreign institutions, and the publication of papers in nationally and internationally relevant scientific journals. A particularly important step in this direction was the adoption of the Rulebook on the Procedure, Conditions and Method of Rewarding Academic Staff of the University of East Sarajevo for Outstanding Achievements in Scientific Research and Artistic Work, which further promotes the quality, visibility, and international recognition of research at the University.

This strategic commitment has been further strengthened by the new legislative and regulatory framework in the field of higher education. The new Law on Higher Education, as well as the Rulebook on the Requirements for Appointment to Scientific-Teaching, Artistic-Teaching, Teaching, and Associate Positions, more clearly define the criteria for academic advancement, with particular emphasis placed on the importance of publishing papers indexed in reference databases. At the same time, the University's Rulebook on Third-Cycle Studies further promotes scientific research and internationally relevant publications as an important element of doctoral education and academic excellence. In this way, the University of East Sarajevo is strengthening its institutional framework for developing a culture of scientific excellence, enhancing the international recognition of its researchers, and creating a supportive environment for stronger integration into the European and international academic space.

The University's scientific output is monitored through the number of publications indexed in relevant international databases, primarily Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus.

Data from the WoS database show not only an increase in the total number of publications during the period from 2020 to 2025, but also the structure of the scientific output (Chart 17). Of particular note is the increase in the number of publications included in the reference indexes (Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-E), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI)), which represent the most relevant indicators of the quality of scientific research.

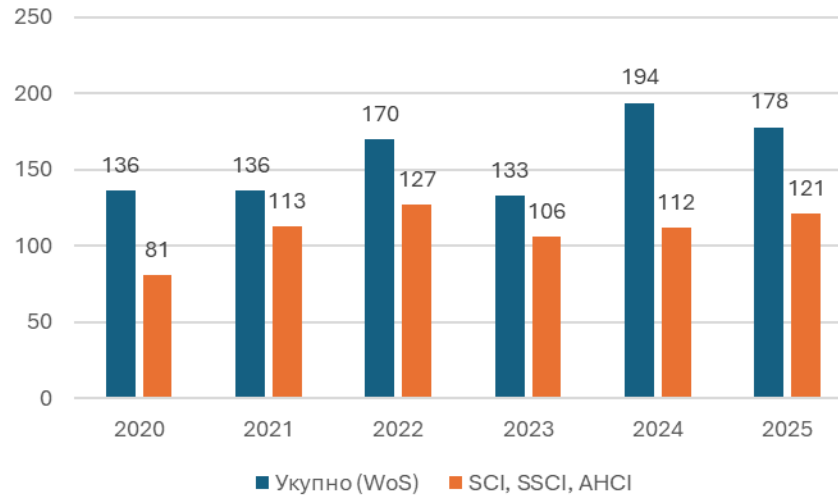


Chart 17. Trend of University publications indexed in Web of Science (WoS) and reference indices (SCI, SSCI, and AHCI) for the period 2020–2025

Data on publications indexed in the Scopus database show that scientific output increased during the period under review, confirming the strengthening of research activities and the increased visibility of scientific work (Chart 18).

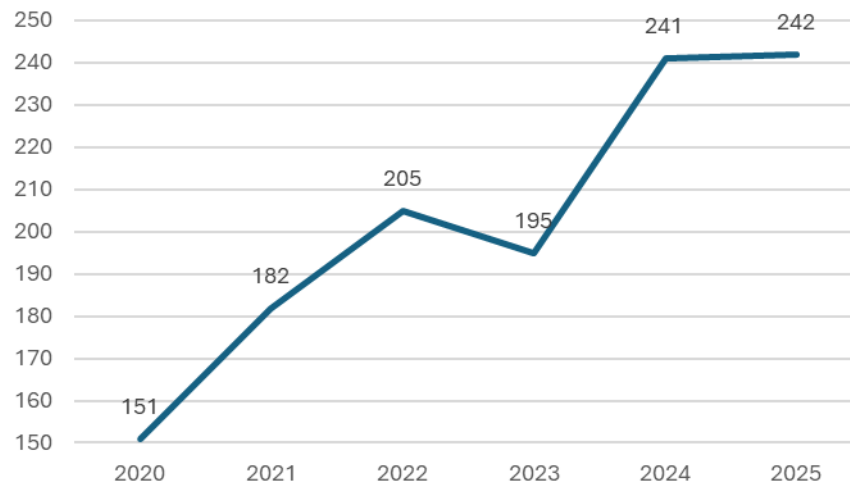


Chart 18. Trend of publications indexed in the University's Scopus database for the period 2020–2025

2.4.2. Internationalization of Researchers

The internationalization of doctoral studies at the University of East Sarajevo is reflected in regulatory provisions that enable greater academic openness and cooperation. The Rulebook on the Third-Cycle Studies provides for the possibility of appointing supervisors from other higher education institutions, as well as lecturers to deliver the teaching process. Amendments to

the Rulebook adopted in 2024 introduced the possibility of writing a doctoral dissertation in a foreign language even when the study program is not delivered in a foreign language, provided that the supervisor is proficient in the language in which the candidate writes the dissertation. Such provisions contribute to strengthening the international dimension of doctoral studies, fostering connections with the broader academic community, and increasing the international visibility of research work. In 2025, the first doctoral dissertation in English was defended.

In 2017, the University of East Sarajevo was awarded the prestigious “Human Resource Excellence in Research Award” logo (HR Excellence in Research logo). The HR logo is awarded to institutions that make progress in aligning their institutional procedures and policies with the 40 principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. In order to maintain the HR Excellence in Research logo, in January 2023 the University submitted to the European Commission a report on the implementation of the Action Plan of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers, covering the European Charter and Code for Researchers for the 2017–2022 period, as well as a new Action Plan for the 2023–2026 period. Following the visit of a delegation of external evaluators from the European Commission, namely EURAXESS, on 17 July 2023, the University received a positive assessment, and a new HRS4R process cycle for the University of East Sarajevo (2023–2026) was approved, meaning that the prestigious “HR” logo was retained.

A particularly important aspect of the internationalization of research and researchers at the University of East Sarajevo is the University’s involvement in the EURAXESS network. On 9 March 2020, the University became part of the EURAXESS network, established by the European Commission and bringing together hundreds of organizations from a large number of European countries. By joining this network, the University further strengthened its capacities to support researcher mobility, international networking, and access to information on research careers, projects, and cooperation opportunities. The University of East Sarajevo also publishes calls for the appointment of academic and associate staff in English through the EURAXESS portal. This ensures greater international visibility of job advertisements, broader access for potential candidates from abroad, and further enhances the transparency and openness of recruitment procedures.

2.5. University Rankings

University rankings represent an important indicator of an institution’s academic visibility, research productivity, and international recognition. Improving the University’s position in relevant international rankings contributes to strengthening the institution’s reputation, attracting high-quality students, academic staff, and researchers, as well as developing cooperation with other higher education and research institutions. The quality of scientific publications, citation impact, participation in international projects, and the visibility of research outputs in reference databases are of particular importance for achieving better rankings. Until 2020, the University was ranked only in the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities, whereas today it is included in a number of prestigious rankings.

2.5.1. QS World University Rankings: Europe

Since 2023, the University of East Sarajevo has been included among the best universities in Europe according to the QS World University Rankings: Europe.

The QS World University Rankings: Europe ranks universities according to 12 criteria, including academic reputation, the number and citation impact of scientific publications, employer reputation and employability, the student-to-faculty ratio, the proportion of international students and academic staff, and sustainability. The QS World University Rankings, of which the QS World University Rankings: Europe is a part, is one of the three most influential global university ranking systems, alongside the Academic Ranking of World Universities and the Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

2.5.2. SCImago Institutions Rankings

The SCImago Institutions Rankings is an international and reputable ranking system that evaluates research performance and the impact of universities and research institutions worldwide. The University of East Sarajevo was first included in the SCImago Institutions Rankings list of universities in 2020, and since 2022 it has held the highest position among all universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the latest ranking, published in 2025, the University ranks 6,722nd in the world, out of more than 9,756 ranked institutions (Figure 2). Institutions are ranked using a composite indicator that combines three different sets of indicators based on research performance (50%), innovation performance (30%), and societal impact (20%), measured by their visibility on the internet. The best-performing quartile is assigned to an institution in its country by comparing quartiles based on the values of the overall indicator, research factor, innovation factor, and societal factor. In the overall ranking, the University of East Sarajevo is included in the highest, first quartile (Q1).



Figure 2. The University's position in the SCImago Institutions Rankings

2.5.3. Webometrics

The University's position in the Webometrics ranking represents one of the key indicators of its online visibility and international recognition. During the period under review, significant progress was recorded, with the University advancing from 5,953rd place in January 2020 to 2,699th place in June 2025, representing a continuous improvement in its position and placing it among the top 10% of universities worldwide (Chart 19).

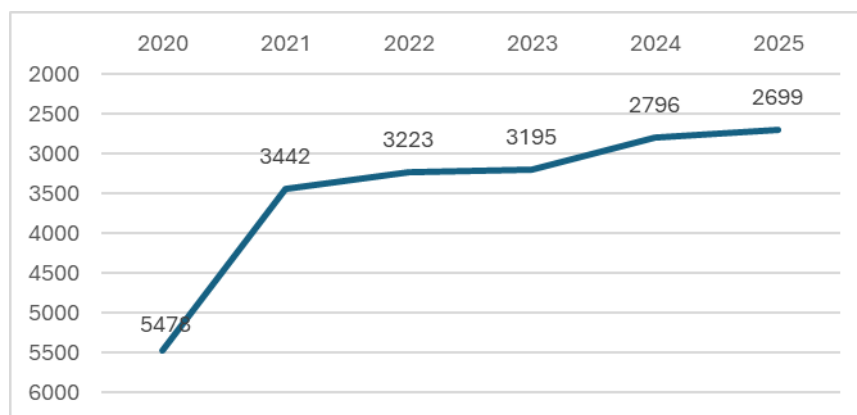


Chart 19. Trend of the University's position on the Webometrics ranking list for the period 2020–2025

2.5.4. Other University Rankings

During the previous period, the University also achieved a presence in other relevant international university rankings. The University was included in the U-Multirank ranking, as well as in the RankPro World University Rankings, where it was positioned among the top 1,000 universities in the world. In 2023, the University was included in the Round University Ranking (RUR) for the first time, and subsequently recorded changes in its position in this ranking.

2.6. International Networks and Associations

University networks and associations bring together multiple higher education institutions in order to pursue common academic, research, and strategic objectives. They are essential for universities because they enable the joint use of research resources, access to larger international funding opportunities, and the direct enhancement of a university's global reputation and ranking.

The University of East Sarajevo is a member of the European University Association – EUA (European University Association), the Danube Rectors' Conference, the Alps-Adriatic Rectors' Conference, and the Rectors' Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska (Figure 3). In recent years, the University has expanded its participation in prestigious university networks and associations:

Eurasian Association of Universities, Rectors' Forum of Southeast Europe and Western Balkans, UniAdrion – University Network of the Adriatic-Ionian Basin.



Figure 3. Networks and associations of which the University is a member

3. SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Leading position in rankings in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The University ranks first in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the SCImago ranking and has recorded steady progress in the Webometrics ranking, entering the top 10% of universities worldwide. • Successful start of the “internationalization at home” process: Currently, 8 study programs are offered or being implemented in English and Russian, with more than 700 international students from 32 countries. • International accreditation: The Medicine study program holds a prestigious international accreditation from the Hungarian national accreditation committee (MAB). • Research reputation: Holding the “Human Resource Excellence in Research Award” logo and playing an active role in the EURAXESS network. • Growth in project activities: An increase in the number of active international projects from 7 in 2020 to 17 in 2025.	• Low level of student mobility: The overall number of student exchanges remains relatively low compared to the University’s full potential. • Uneven activity among member institutions: Engagement in international projects and mobility is highly concentrated in several faculties, while other member institutions are significantly less represented. • Lack of a Centre for International Student Reception. • Unclear motivation regarding the reasons for student and staff mobility. • Lack of training for developing transcultural competences among international students. • Lack of double-degree programs: The University currently does not implement any joint study program with international partner institutions. • Language barriers: There is a need for additional staff training and strengthening competencies in English and other foreign languages. • Absence of an effective preparatory study program in the Serbian language for international students, which would contribute to increasing the number of international students at the University.
Opportunities	Threats
• Eurasian academic space: Expanding cooperation with China and Russia through existing and new funding programs within the ministries responsible for higher education and science in these countries. • Development of new programs: Plans to launch at least three new study	• Geopolitical instability: Current disintegration processes in the world may fundamentally alter the directions of academic mobility. • Unstable funding: Funding for international activities is declining significantly (Erasmus, Horizon). National exchange funding programs

programs in foreign languages and two joint programs by 2032.

- Attracting international students: Introducing preparatory Serbian language courses for international students will open opportunities for a greater influx of students from distant countries.
- Internationalization at home – virtual mobility programs.
- Institutional networking: Establishing an Erasmus Student Network (ESN) by 2027 to provide better support to incoming students.

are not announced every year, creating uncertainty in mobility planning, while the bureaucratic procedures for scholarship disbursement have a demotivating effect on program participants.

- Insufficient number of highly qualified academic staff to deliver teaching in English.
- Resistance to the internationalization process.
- Insufficient accommodation capacity.
- Rapid technological changes: The need for continuous and costly innovation and curriculum adaptation in order to respond to labor market needs.
- Regional competition: The need to continuously demonstrate quality in order to retain international students, who have a wide choice of universities across Europe.
- Unfavorable visa and immigration framework for incoming mobility of international students and academic staff.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the data clearly indicates that the University has managed to overcome the stagnation caused by the global pandemic and establish a system that does not rely solely on traditional mobility channels, but is actively expanding towards new geographical horizons.

The key pillar of this success is the concept of “internationalization at home.” The introduction of study programs in English, particularly at the Faculty of Medicine, has resulted in the presence of more than 700 international students from over 32 countries worldwide. The international accreditation of the Medicine study program by the national accreditation body of Hungary represents evidence of its quality and compatibility with European standards, which directly enhances the reputation of the institution as a whole.

Nevertheless, the Strategy recognizes that the overall level of student mobility remains relatively low compared to the University’s full potential. While academic staff make extensive use of Erasmus+ and CEEPUS networks for knowledge exchange, additional efforts are needed to motivate the student population. One of the main objectives in the coming period will therefore be to increase student mobility, while, within the concept of “internationalization at home,” the introduction of preparatory Serbian language courses for international students will be aimed at increasing the potential for international students to study at the University of East Sarajevo.

The University seeks to position itself as a bridge between European standards and Eurasian opportunities. Strong cooperation with China and the Russian Federation, combined with continued progress in global rankings such as SCImago, makes the University a competitive actor in the international academic space. In the next strategic cycle, a focus on digital transformation, joint study programs, and strengthening research excellence will be crucial in enabling the University to become not merely an observer, but an active participant in global education.

Ultimately, internationalization at the University is not merely a technical matter of student exchange, but a strategic mission aimed at safeguarding educational sovereignty while enhancing the international recognition of the Republic of Srpska. Consistent implementation of this Strategy will enable the University to remain a value-driven and deeply rooted institution that provides its students and professors with global opportunities within a local context.**5.**

INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EAST SARAJEVO 2026–2033

5.1. Internationalization Mission of the University of East Sarajevo

The mission of internationalization of the University of East Sarajevo is to enhance the quality of higher education, research, and the University’s institutional recognition through the development of international academic cooperation, mobility, and joint study and research activities.

Internationalization is based on openness towards the European and broader international higher education area, while preserving the academic, cultural, and national identity of Republic of Srpska. The University seeks to provide students, academic staff, associates, researchers, and administrative staff with opportunities to gain international experience, exchange knowledge, develop intercultural competences, and actively participate in the global academic community.

5.2. Vision of the Internationalization of the University of East Sarajevo

The University's vision is to become, by 2033, an internationally recognized, open, and competitive university, actively engaged in the European, regional, and Eurasian academic space, recognized for the quality of its education, research excellence, international partnerships, and the promotion of knowledge, culture, and academic values.

5.3. Internationalization Objectives of the University of East Sarajevo with an Action Plan

The internationalization objectives of the University of East Sarajevo are aimed at strengthening the University's international visibility, competitiveness, and academic recognition, while simultaneously preserving its educational, scientific, cultural, and national identity. Based on its existing capacities, achievements to date, and development needs, the following strategic objectives have been defined for the 2026–2033 period:

Strategic Objective 1 – Internationalization of Teaching and Study Programs;

Strategic Objective 2 – International Mobility of Students and Staff;

Strategic Objective 3 – Strategic Partnerships and International Positioning.

5.3.1. Strategic Objective 1 – Internationalization of Teaching and Study Programs

The internationalization of teaching and study programs represents one of the key prerequisites for improving the quality of higher education and increasing the University's openness to the international academic space. Modern universities are increasingly developing study programs, courses, and teaching content that enable students to acquire knowledge, skills, and competences in an international context. This strengthens academic competitiveness, increases the University's attractiveness to international students, and creates conditions for better integration of domestic and international students into a shared educational environment.

Launching study programs in foreign languages is important because it enables the University to expand its educational offer and become more accessible to students from other countries. Programs delivered in foreign languages increase the University's international visibility, strengthen its competitiveness both regionally and beyond, and create conditions for a greater influx of international students. This activity will be implemented through the launch of

new study programs in foreign languages, in accordance with the capacities of faculties and academies, the needs of the education market, and quality standards in higher education.

Strengthening the academic offer of courses in foreign languages is particularly important for students participating in mobility programs, as it enables them to select courses that are linguistically accessible and academically relevant during their stay at the University. A broader range of courses offered in foreign languages contributes to increasing incoming mobility, facilitates the preparation of Learning Agreements, and strengthens internationalization at home. This activity will be implemented by increasing the number of courses available in foreign languages within student mobility programs.

The development of joint study programs with other universities represents a higher level of international academic cooperation. Joint programs enable the exchange of academic staff, harmonization of curricula, joint use of academic resources, and greater recognition of degrees and qualifications. This activity will be implemented through the establishment of joint study programs with other universities.

The introduction of preparatory Serbian language courses for international students represents one of the key prerequisites for their academic and social integration. Preparatory Serbian language instruction can significantly expand the pool of potential international students, particularly those wishing to study in programs delivered in Serbian. This activity will be implemented through the organization of preparatory Serbian language courses as an institutional form of support for international students before and during their studies.

Organizing intercultural exchange activities, such as “Taste the World,” is important because internationalization is not only a matter of curricula and mobility, but also of building an academic community in which different cultures meet, understand one another, and connect. Such activities contribute to the better integration of international students, greater visibility of their cultures, and strengthening the University’s openness. Implementation will involve organizing events that promote intercultural dialogue, the participation of domestic and international students, and the promotion of diverse academic and cultural experiences.

5.3.2. Strategic Objective 2 – International Mobility of Students and Staff

International mobility of students, academic staff, and administrative staff is of particular importance for the development of the University, as it enables the exchange of knowledge, experience, teaching practices, and research approaches with partner institutions abroad. Mobility contributes to the development of intercultural dialogue, the strengthening of professional and academic capacities, greater visibility of the University, and more active participation in European, regional, and broader international higher education processes. At the same time, incoming mobility enriches the University’s academic environment, while outgoing mobility enables students and staff to gain experience that can be applied in teaching, research, and institutional development.

Regular promotion of mobility programs is important because students and staff are often not sufficiently familiar with the opportunities available, application requirements, and the

benefits that mobility provides. Continuous promotion contributes to greater awareness, increased motivation, and more balanced participation of the University's member institutions in mobility programs. This activity will be implemented through the organization of mobility promotion days at the University and its member institutions.

The organization of foreign language courses is one of the basic prerequisites for participation in international mobility programs, teaching in foreign languages, international projects, and academic communication. Strengthening foreign language skills increases the readiness of academic and non-academic staff to actively participate in internationalization processes. This activity will be implemented by organizing at least one foreign language course per year for academic and non-academic staff.

The development of support programs for incoming students, such as the "Buddy" program and mentoring support, is aimed at incoming students who, in addition to their academic obligations, require practical, administrative, and social support. Well-organized support facilitates their adjustment, increases satisfaction with their stay, and contributes to a positive image of the University in the international environment. This activity will be implemented by involving students, as well as other individuals, in the support system for incoming students.

The development of virtual mobility enables international cooperation and knowledge exchange in situations where physical mobility is not possible or is not sufficiently accessible. Virtual mobility broadens access to international teaching content, lectures, and joint activities with partner institutions. This activity will be implemented through the development of online and hybrid forms of cooperation, guest lecturer activities, joint courses, and other digital formats of international exchange.

A website containing content in English represents one of the primary sources of information for international students, partner institutions, and mobility participants. Accessible, accurate, and up-to-date information in English contributes to greater transparency, improved communication, and increased international visibility of the University. This activity will be implemented through the regular updating and improvement of the English-language version of the University's website.

Increasing the number of cooperation agreements with other higher education institutions in the field of mobility provides a formal basis for implementing student and staff exchanges. A broader network of partner institutions enables a greater choice of destinations, academic fields, and mobility programs. This activity will be implemented through the signing of new mobility agreements and the strengthening of cooperation with existing partners.

Increasing the number of outgoing and incoming student mobility opportunities leads to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and experience that contribute to students' academic and personal development. This activity will be implemented through the promotion of programs, improved access to information, greater support throughout the application process, and monitoring of the number of completed mobility activities.

Increasing the number of outgoing and incoming mobility activities for academic and non-academic staff is important because, through international experience, employees enhance their teaching, research, administrative, and organizational competences. Staff mobility contributes to improving teaching, strengthening international contacts, and transferring good practices to the University's operations. This activity will be implemented by increasing the number of completed mobility activities of academic and non-academic staff and through the more active involvement of all stakeholders.

Improving internal regulations related to mobility enables more effective planning, recognition, and recording of mobility activities. A well-defined regulatory framework reduces administrative barriers, increases the legal certainty of participants, and contributes to more balanced implementation of mobility across all member institutions of the University. This activity will be implemented through amendments and/or additions to regulations and other internal documents governing mobility.

Establishing an Erasmus Student Network (ESN), in cooperation with the Student Parliament, plays an important role in supporting incoming students, promoting mobility, and building an international student community. ESN can become an important mechanism for practical support, social integration, and promoting the University among international students. This activity will be implemented through the establishment of the ESN network, the appointment of student coordinators, and the implementation of support activities for incoming students.

5.3.3. Strategic Objective 3 – Strategic Partnerships and International Positioning

Strategic partnerships and international positioning are of key importance for the long-term development of the University, as they enable stable and substantive cooperation with foreign higher education and research institutions, international networks, academic associations, and other partners. Through such cooperation, the University strengthens its scientific, educational, and institutional visibility, increases opportunities for participation in international projects, develops joint programs and research activities, and contributes to the promotion of the educational, scientific, cultural, and social space of the Republic of Srpska. Of particular importance is the development of partnerships with complementary universities and institutions from the European, regional, and Eurasian spaces, as well as activities that contribute to improving the University's position in international rankings.

Increasing the number of bilateral agreements with higher education institutions, with an emphasis on Eurasian institutions, is important because bilateral agreements provide the basis for developing mobility, joint projects, teaching cooperation, and research networking. Particular emphasis on the Eurasian space enables the University to develop cooperation with institutions with which it shares common academic, cultural, and development interests. This activity will be implemented through the signing of new and renewal of existing bilateral agreements, with particular monitoring of the number of agreements with institutions from the Eurasian space.

The development of long-term strategic partnerships with complementary foreign universities is important because it enables cooperation to move from a formal level to concrete, measurable, and sustainable activities. Such partnerships may include joint study programs, double-degree programs, joint research activities, publications, projects, and participation in academic networks. This activity will be implemented through the establishment of double-degree programs and participation in at least one alliance or network.

Increasing participation in projects financed through international funds is important because international projects contribute to the development of the University's teaching, research, infrastructure, and administrative capacities. They provide access to additional sources of funding, strengthen research teams, facilitate networking with partners, and enable the transfer of good practices. This activity will be implemented through increasing the number of submitted, approved, and active international projects, as well as through participation in new funding programs.

The development of public and academic diplomacy at the University is important because the University is not only an educational and scientific institution, but also a representative of the academic, cultural, and social space of the Republic of Srpska. Through public and academic diplomacy, the University strengthens its reputation, develops relations with partners, embassies, cultural centers, and international organizations, and promotes its educational and scientific potential. This activity will be implemented through promotional, cultural, social, and academic events with foreign partners.

Benchmarking against foreign study programs and institutions is important because it enables the University to compare its own programs, procedures, and results with relevant international practices. This makes it easier to identify areas that need improvement, as well as models that can be adapted to the domestic context. This activity will be implemented through the analysis of comparable foreign study programs, institutional practices, and international standards, with the aim of improving the quality of teaching, management, and international cooperation.

The development of partnerships that contribute to the promotion of the cultural heritage and natural resources of the local community is important because internationalization should not be separated from the local context. On the contrary, it can serve as a strong mechanism for presenting the cultural, historical, natural, and social potential of the environment in which the University operates. This activity will be implemented through cooperation with local institutions, partner universities, and international organizations on activities that connect academic cooperation with the promotion of the local community.

Supporting the development of mechanisms for improving the University's position in world university rankings is important because international rankings influence the visibility, recognition, and academic reputation of universities. Although rankings are not the only indicator of quality, they can contribute to attracting students, academic staff, researchers, and partners. This activity will be implemented through the systematic monitoring of indicators relevant to international rankings, increasing the University's visibility, citation impact, research output, and institutional recognition.

5.4. Action Plan of the Internationalization Strategy of the University of East Sarajevo 2026–2033

1 Strategic Objective 1 – Internationalization of Teaching and Study Programs

Key Activities	Performance Indicators	Target Value	Responsible Bodies/Persons	Timeline
Launching study programs in foreign languages	Number of study programs launched in foreign languages	At least three new study programs launched in foreign languages	Rector Senate University Members Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance Vice-Rector for Teaching and Student Affairs Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance	By 2031
Strengthening the academic offering of courses in foreign languages	Number of courses available in foreign languages within student mobility programs	A 20% increase in the number of courses available in foreign languages within student mobility programs	Rector Senate University Members Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance Vice-Rector for Teaching and Student Affairs Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance	Continuously

Development of Joint Study Programs with other universities	Number of Joint Study Programs launched	At least two joint study programs with other universities	Rector Senate University Members Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance Vice-Rector for Teaching and Student Affairs Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance	By 2032
Launching preparatory Serbian language courses for international students	Established and implemented preparatory Serbian language program for international students	At least one preparatory course cycle per year	Rector Senate University Members Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance Vice-Rector for Teaching and Student Affairs Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance	By 2027
Organization of “Taste the World” events	Organizing the event at least once a year, with the presentation of the cultures and traditions of the countries represented by international and domestic students at faculties/academies	Event organized at least once a year	Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance University Members Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and QA International Cooperation Contact Persons	Continuously

2 Strategic Objective 2 – International Mobility of Students and Staff

Key Activities	Performance Indicators	Target Value	Responsible Bodies/Persons	Timeline
Regular promotion of Mobility Programs	Organization of Mobility Promotion Days at the University and its Members in cooperation with the Student Parliament	At least two mobility promotion days organized annually at the University and its Members, in cooperation with the Student Parliament	Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance University Members Student Parliament Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance International Cooperation Contact Persons	Continuously
Increase motivation for internationalization, “Buddy” and Mentoring Programs	Number of sessions and students involved in the “Buddy” and mentoring programs	At least one session per University Member every two years; students from at least five University members involved in the “Buddy” program; and more than five academic staff members from at least five University members involved in the mentoring program	Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance University Members Student Parliament Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance International Cooperation Contact Persons	Continuously
Improve the availability and exchange of information on internationalization	Number of different printed/electronic formats and media communication channels for promotional	At least three different types of promotional materials, with media channels secured for their	Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance University Members	Continuously

	materials	promotion and distribution	Student Parliament Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance International Cooperation Contact Persons	
Virtual Mobility using Interactive Classrooms	Number of different lectures at University Members involving multiple partners jointly	At least three University Members organize one joint lecture annually for multiple centers simultaneously	Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance University Members	Continuously
Organization of Foreign Language Courses	Number of free foreign language courses organized for academic and non-academic staff	At least one foreign language course per year	Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance University Members Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance International Cooperation Contact Persons	Continuously
Improve the accessibility and transparency of internationalization information through the redesign and modernization of the University and its Member Websites	Bilingual Website	Optimized, user-friendly and attractive English-language website with integrated multimedia content	Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance University Computing Centre International Cooperation Contact Persons	By 2027

Increasing the number of cooperation agreements with higher education institutions in the area of mobility	Number of new mobility agreements signed	At least a 10% increase in new cooperation agreements	Rector Senate Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance University Members Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance International Cooperation Contact Persons	By 2033
Increase in the number of outgoing and incoming student mobilities	Number of completed outgoing and incoming student mobilities	Increase in the number of outgoing and incoming student mobilities by at least 20%	Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance University Members Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance International Cooperation Contact Persons	By 2033
Increase in the number of outgoing and incoming academic and non-academic staff mobilities	Number of completed outgoing and incoming academic and non-academic staff mobilities	Increase in the number of outgoing and incoming academic and non-academic staff mobilities by at least 5%	Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance University Members Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance International Cooperation Contact Persons	By 2033
Improvement of internal	Adopted Amendments and	At least one regulation	Rector	By 2030

regulations governing mobility	Supplements to Regulations and/or other documents related to mobility	and/or other relevant internal act adopted, amended, or supplemented	Senate Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance University Members Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance	
Establishment of the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) in cooperation with the Student Parliament	ESN Established	Appointed Student Coordinators; at least four support activities for incoming students implemented	Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance Student Parliament	By 2031

3 Strategic Objective 3 – Strategic Partnerships and International Positioning

Key Activities	Performance Indicators	Target Value	Responsible Bodies/Persons	Timeline
Increase in the number of bilateral agreements with higher education institutions, with a focus on Eurasian institutions	Number of signed Bilateral Cooperation Agreements/Number of Renewed Agreements	At least 20 new bilateral cooperation agreements signed, including at least 10 with higher education institutions from the Eurasian region	Rector Senate University Members Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance	By 2033
Development of long-term strategic partnerships with complementary international universities	Number of Joint Study Programs launched, Participation in Joint Networks and Alliances	Establishment of at least 2 double-degree programs; Participation in at least 1 alliance/network	Rector Senate University Members	By 2029
Increasing participation in projects funded by international funds	Number of project applications; number of approved international projects; number of active projects	Increase in the number of submitted and approved projects by 10%; participation in at least 2 new funding programs	Rector University Members Vice-Rector for Scientific Research and Artistic Work Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance Office of the Vice-Rector for Scientific Research and Artistic Work	By 2033

Development of Public and Academic Diplomacy of the University	Number of promotional, artistic, cultural, social, and academic events held with international partners	At least 20 public and academic diplomacy activities of the University implemented	Rector Senate University Members	By 2033
Benchmarking against international study programs and institutions	Number of benchmarking analyses of international study programs and institutions conducted	Benchmarking conducted for at least three study programs and one international institution	Rector Senate University Members	By 2032
Developing partnerships with local institutions, organizations, and associations engaged in the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage and natural resources of the community	Number of activities and events implemented to promote the cultural heritage and natural resources of the local community	One specific event organized annually	Rector Senate University Members	By 2032
Support for the development of mechanisms to improve the University's position in Global University Rankings	Established system for monitoring indicators relevant to international rankings and implemented activities aimed at increasing visibility, citation impact, research output, and institutional recognition	Improved the University's position in at least one relevant global university ranking, while advancing or maintaining its position at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Rector Vice-Rector for Scientific Research and Artistic Work Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance Office of the Vice-Rector for Scientific Research and Artistic Work	Continuously

6. MONITORING AND REPORTING PLAN

Monitoring the implementation of the Internationalization Strategy of the University of East Sarajevo 2026–2033 represents a continuous process of monitoring the implementation of the defined strategic objectives, activities, performance indicators, and target values. The purpose of monitoring is to ensure systematic monitoring of progress, timely identification of challenges in the implementation of activities, in order to ensure the efficient implementation of the Strategy.

Monitoring is carried out on the basis of the Strategy Action Plan, which includes key activities in the areas of internationalization of teaching and study programs, international mobility of students and staff, strategic partnerships, and the international positioning of the University.

6.1. Monitoring Bodies

The Rector and the Vice-Rectors for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance and for Scientific Research and Artistic Work are responsible for coordinating the monitoring process, in cooperation with the Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation, the Office of the Vice-Rector for Scientific Research and Artistic Work, including the University Members and other competent bodies specified in the Action Plan.

The University Members are required to regularly provide data on the implementation of activities within their respective areas of responsibility, including data on mobility, study programs and courses in foreign languages, international projects, bilateral agreements, joint activities with partner institutions, University promotion activities, and other relevant indicators.

6.2. Reporting Frequency

Monitoring is carried out continuously, while formal reporting is conducted at least once a year.

The Office of the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Quality Assurance, in cooperation with the relevant University Members, prepares the Annual Report on the Implementation of the Internationalization Strategy. The report is submitted to the University management.

In addition to the annual report, thematic reports may be prepared as needed, particularly in the areas of mobility, international projects, support for foreign students, development of programs in foreign languages, and the international positioning of the University.

If it is determined that certain activities have become infeasible due to changes in the external environment, including changes in international funding programs, geopolitical circumstances, administrative constraints, or other objective reasons, an amendment or supplement to the Action Plan may be proposed.

