

Erasmus+ Policy Statement for 2021-2027

ISLA - Instituto Politécnico de Gestão e Tecnologia (Polytechnic Institute of Management and Technology) in Gaia (ISLA-IPGT) was founded in 1989 by the first private Higher Education Institution in Portugal. More recently, in 2011, ISLA-IPGT became part of the largest Portuguese Group of Private Higher Education, building up its status as a modern and solid institution. Since then, we have been even more able to respond to the demands of the academic community and the entire society.

ISLA-IPGT has made a firm commitment to innovation and quality, both in the delivery of its degrees and in advancing its infrastructure, resulting in increased academic teaching and research. Moreover, and in accordance with ISLA-IPGT's strategic plan, it is committed to imprinting an increased international dimension across all our activities.

Our current organizational structure has two educational schools - Management and Technology - fully invested in providing the best quality in current human and technical resources, but always looking into the future.

In addition to educational activities, we run several scientific research projects and organize international scientific and industry conferences. We are directly involved in injecting life into the surrounding region, and we do this by marrying up education with business.

For over 30 years of activity, many thousands of people have studied here, both from Portugal and abroad. We are proud that ISLA-GAIA is increasingly willing to accept young and not so young people from all around the world, and that they choose our institution to kickstart their path to a successful career.

Our greatest asset is the ability to adapt staff, resources, and curricula to the needs of students and a changing socio-economic environment in the world. We educate with an emphasis on practice, and we prepare people from any part of the world for their future. Our staff is open to continuous cooperation with students and lecturers from many countries. Every idea and initiative are very important to us. Cultural diversity is not just a thought, it is our priority. We have been educating students for many years, and our doors are always open for all. Our strength is also demonstrated by the achievements of our graduates, who make valued staff in many Portuguese and international companies.

Internationalization is integral to ISLA-IPGT. We are on a mission to, slowly but surely, achieve international excellence in education and research. Implementation of the high-quality Erasmus+ programme has been part of our strategy since the day we joined the initiative. In the past years, our focus has been Key Action 1: mobility of individuals. This allowed for many mobilities, incoming and outgoing, which resulted in further cooperation, but we are not satisfied, and want more.

Not only do we promote the initiative of the Erasmus+ programme, but we also promote the idea of a European society. We do our best to advertise Portugal and our region as an innovative and full of possibilities destination. We create opportunities for our students to enable their best possible future. It is important to underline that the majority of ISLA-IPGT students who participate in the programme come from outside the EU and they have a vast understanding of the significance of diversity and multiculturalism.

Our current international strategy is to further participate in Erasmus+ and to include more activities. Thanks to the actions implemented so far, we are building a strong network of partners, which can only be extended further in the next Erasmus initiative. We hope to establish more strategic partnerships, start joint / dual degree programmes, develop new curricula, organise networking events, such as staff international weeks - to create as many opportunities for students and staff as possible.

At ISLA-IPGT we do our best to promote all cultures and educate all students about the importance of tolerance and non-discrimination. We aim to encourage more students to participate in the programme. We will put more focus on Portuguese students, who are not typically as eager or bold to do mobilities and need more encouragement, because we believe that this is a way to teach them about the world and to wake their sense of a European Identity. This will allow them to obtain many useful skills, such as developing their linguistic and communicative skills, thinking more autonomously, and becoming more accustomed with the rapid digital changes that are happening right now. This knowledge, as well as the ability to feel at home anywhere in the world, will better prepare them for both domestic and international labour market. We have many partnerships with companies offering internships and job positions, but finding a placement abroad is nowadays much more beneficial.

Participation in Key Action 1 is still our crucial objective, because everything else comes from those important steps. The implementation of Key Action 1 has been successful so far, and we intend to continue and develop this good practice with a few improvements. We will carry on promoting the programme among our students, as well as the concept of the EU and the idea of a European Identity. We aim to increase the number of both outgoing and incoming mobilities, and to sign more agreements with foreign universities and companies under the scope of the programme. ISLA-IPGT students and staff will get all the support they need while considering and then applying for mobility.

Students leaving for a semester abroad shall be carefully guided throughout the process by the International and Erasmus Coordinators to ensure the best outcome. Mobility will be fully recognized and supplemented in the diplomas. It is our practice to organise meetings with students before they go and when they come back from mobilities, as well as with incoming students, so that they can share their experience. We also publish their Erasmus stories on social media and our website to promote the programme and its benefits. For even better results, we put students who have already participated in the



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programme in contact with those who are considering it. This has proven to be an effective solution, as students who have completed their mobility have the best knowledge of what to expect. Students doing SMP mobilities get the necessary guidance as well, complemented with a reinforcement of their independence, to improve their chances on the labour market. We also suggest that they contact employers on their own, but support them in all the steps, as well as preparing all application documents.

Regarding incoming students, we make sure that they feel part of our academic community from the moment they arrive. A few years ago, we implemented the “Buddy Programme” which, with a few adjustments, will prove to be an ever more vital part of the whole experience. “Buddies” are usually students who plan to study abroad in the following semester / year. It is their responsibility to contact incoming students at a very early stage, right after the nomination period and befriend them. They learn about travel arrangements and answer all questions and eventually meet them upon their arrival and assist them with practicalities like their accommodation. The next step is to help them out with finding their way around the city and the institution. All buddies and incoming students participate in the “Erasmus Welcome Days” when we handle all formalities and give tours. Students also meet their coordinators, as well as representatives of the institution. The event allows incoming students to feel at home and get well acquainted with ISLA-IPGT and its community, as well as dispel any doubts and fears.

As Action 1 Mobility programmes and institutional partnerships under other Erasmus Actions have always been the cornerstone of ISLA-IPGT’s internationalization strategy, we would like to continue this approach to:

- expand our curricula with new teaching programmes and courses developed with European and international partners;
- develop innovative tools for our students and teachers (as we do now in several partnership projects);
- strengthen our links with local communities and decision-makers to help to build effective educational systems and approaches able to respond to the emerging needs of societies and labour markets;
- share our experience and projects ideas developed and implemented locally in cooperation with businesses and public administration at international level;
- further increase the level of international recognition of ISLA-IPGT through cooperation with other European universities and institutions.

The Erasmus+ Programme has had a great impact on ISLA-IPGT, throughout the years. It allowed us to increase our international network of students and partnerships. In the future, we will continue this path, having in mind that our region needs to be educated about internationalism and that it is our goal to create a safe and open environment for everybody.