Statement concerning the Erasmus university policy - European Policy Statement (EPS)

I.

The internationalisation strategy of Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg (MLU) encompasses four main areas: promoting mobility among students and teaching staff, developing and enhancing new and existing teaching and research collaborations with foreign partners, helping university members gain international qualifications, and enhancing the range of services available to foreign and domestic university members interested in spending some time abroad or planning and executing projects with foreign partners.

There are currently some 2000 foreign students enrolled at MLU. This equates to around 9% of the overall student body and is expected to increase still further. The contingent of foreign doctoral students and academics at our institution is also set to increase. The ERASMUS programme currently covers 250 agreements with 188 partner universities in 26 countries, who provide around 671 exchange places across Europe for Halle students. MLU makes available around the same number of places for students from our partner universities within the framework of these agreements. Student mobility under the ERASMUS programme has increased significantly over the previous reporting period, with incoming numbers increasing by 18% and outgoing numbers increasing by 16%. It is already clear that the 2013/2014 academic year will see a similar increase.

In addition, there are currently 55 worldwide university partnerships and some 70 agreements at faculty level. MLU maintains proven and mature partnerships at university, faculty, and institution level. When it comes to choosing partners, MLU places particular emphasis on the researchers and teaching staff on both sides having common specialist interests, with faculty council resolutions being passed to this effect. It is important too that both institutions are similar in terms of their profile and size. MLU also uses the university’s own resources to maintain existing and develop new partnerships. At the heart of these partnerships is the exchange of students and teaching staff. Partnerships are entered into on the basis of time and personnel resources available at the time in question. There is an overall policy of bundling resources together with a view to enhancing existing active partnerships, while traditionally mature collaborations, like those in Eastern Europe, continue to be reinforced. All partnerships at university level are recorded in a database and assessed on a regular basis. Partnerships found not to be active may also be terminated where necessary. Our partnerships tend to favour the EU/EEA states on the one hand and on the other - for historical reasons - Eastern Europe, East and South-East Asia, and the Arab world. Our institution also maintains partnerships with universities from all around the world.

Officially, the top priority (the core aspect of internationalisation at MLU Halle-Wittenberg) is to increase student mobility in terms of both incoming and outgoing students. This applies across the board to BA, MA, and doctoral students. The ERASMUS programme is the main tool in this regard, as well as exchange agreements with partner universities and integrated periods of residence abroad involving international courses and dual-supervision doctoral studies (joint supervision of theses) involving our institution. MLU also places considerable emphasis on the international mobility of
teaching staff and university employees by promoting the mobility of lecturers and personnel. The International Office at MLU has developed an 'International Competence' certification programme specifically for university members, to help incentivise people to consider periods of residence abroad. Staff mobility opportunities at partner universities are offered to MLU administration employees on a targeted basis. Colleagues from partner universities take up staff mobility opportunities at our institution.

MLU is particularly concerned with the principle of equality: it is also particularly keen to promote and facilitate international mobility for those with children/family commitments and for people with disabilities. The same applies to foreign students or university members coming to MLU, who receive targeted support from the International Office and the Family Office. The provision of placements for students, graduates, and trainees is supported by the individual specialist departments, with these placements being sponsored by the Leonardo Office for Saxony-Anhalt as part of the Saxony-Anhalt placement consortium. There are currently four international double/joint degree programmes at BA and MA level run with European and non-European partners and a further sixteen are planned. MLU is also becoming increasingly involved in establishing dual-supervision doctoral studies (joint supervision of theses).

II.

Participation in international collaborative projects is a core component of the internationalisation strategy and internationalisation efforts of MLU Halle-Wittenberg and is based on a specific need-driven analysis.

Erasmus-sponsored mobility opportunities (for students and lecturers) are specifically targeted at developing and enhancing international double/joint degree programmes at BA and MA level - both with European partners and on a trilateral basis with non-European partners.

Erasmus mobility opportunities are also used to promote synergies with the German-language courses offered by MLU Halle-Wittenberg abroad.

A further use of Erasmus mobility opportunities is to develop and enhance international doctoral programmes, including dual-supervision doctoral studies. One of the aims of the internationalisation strategy of Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg is to enhance the provision of both double/joint degree courses and dual-supervision doctoral studies.

Partner universities (EU and non-EU) are used for collaboration projects as a matter of course, with funds being sought from third parties.

Furthermore, the mobility of personnel under Erasmus is mainly intended to foster internationalisation among university employees who have so far had little contact with the structures or members of foreign universities. The mobility of personnel is an integral element of an 'Intercultural Awareness' certification programme, and one of the aims of the internationalisation strategy of Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg is the internationalisation of our university employees.
III.

Thanks to the ever increasing internationalisation of domestic students, graduates, doctoral students, teaching staff, and trainees as a result of periods of residence abroad and the internationalisation of the home university (the growing number of international students, doctoral students, and academics), the new generation of academics is becoming better equipped to deal with issues at a European and international level.

Only international universities are in a position to meet the justified demands of their students and teaching staff, and only international universities are fit to face the future. The ongoing internationalisation of MLU will help us learn even more and make us better equipped to compete at an international level for the brightest and best.

The opportunity for lecturers to move abroad enriches the teaching offered at the host university. The reverse is also true: lecturers taking advantage of international mobility bring their new experiences back with them, which they can use and apply at MLU directly. As such, the exchange of lecturers has a direct impact on the quality of teaching at both their own and the host university, as well as, by implication, on the student body at both MLU and the host university. The students profit from international influences and ideas. Overall then, the international mobility of lecturers is invariably a source of enrichment for all concerned. Similarly, students completing a period of residence abroad bring their own impressions of the teaching at the host university back with them when they later return to MLU. International mobility helps give students and teaching staff an international and therefore broader view of their respective specialist disciplines.

Mobility for placement students, doctoral students, and lecturers may involve the world of commerce, with businesses also promoting mobility at universities. This means the new generation of academics and researchers can use ERASMUS as a means of establishing direct contact with businesses within the wider economy, thereby fostering close cooperation between academia and commerce.

MLU uses the various mobility channels to make MLU and the state of Saxony-Anhalt more attractive and draw more students to Halle and Saxony-Anhalt. This will give them the opportunity to discover our region and possibly stay for longer periods, thereby boosting regional development.