



**INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NATIONAL AND WORLD
ECONOMY 2026 – 2030**

UNWE INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY 2026 – 2030

In the era of globalization, the economic, political and social processes are increasingly determined by supranational factors. Universities play a leading role in this context, which requires them to be not only sources of innovation, but also catalysts for intercultural dialogue and international understanding. Through targeted internationalization in teaching and research Universities prepare young people for the challenges of an interconnected world and strengthen the global knowledge society.

The higher education system in the Republic of Bulgaria faces a number of challenges – a demographic crisis (according to Eurostat data – the most severe in the European Union (EU) at a regional level), a decreasing number of students and the need for a stronger international profile. By 2026 at the beginning of the strategic period 52 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) operate in the country, offering a rich portfolio of programs. Hence, the Bulgarian education system remains attractive to international students, lecturers and researchers seeking academic and personal development.

The University of National and World Economy (UNWE), founded in 1920, is the oldest and largest HEI in Southeastern Europe in which economics and business are being taught. UNWE is also the leading institution in terms of securing employment of its graduates after getting a degree in the Professional field (PF) 3.8 “Economics” in Bulgaria. [Over 98% of all UNWE graduates successfully enter the labor market after completing their higher education.](#) The university graduates are highly sought after by employers both in the public and private sectors.

In January 2024, UNWE received the highest institutional rating in Bulgaria – [9.8 from the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency \(NEAA\), valid until December 2029.](#) In addition, our University is the first in Bulgaria to be certified according to the international information security standard ISO 27001:2022. This shows clear evidence of the institutional capacity and strategic sustainability of UNWE.

Throughout our 105-year history UNWE has produced prominent individuals - prime ministers, ministers, diplomats, economists, public figures and scientists who reached key positions both in Bulgaria and abroad.

This Strategy is based on the UNWE vision for becoming a model for applying highly innovative educational, research and employment practices. This is also an area of major development, put forward in [the Concept Note of our esteemed rector for his Mandate Program \(2023–2027\).](#)

The aim of this Internationalization Strategy for the period of 2026 to 2030) is to outline guidelines, priorities and specific measures that will contribute to the development of UNWE as an international leader in higher education and research in Southeastern Europe. The Strategy contributes to solving key issues of the higher education system in Bulgaria. Issues identified and discussed in the Bulgarian National [Higher Education Development Strategy \(2021–2030\)](#) low international prestige, limited participation in international scientific projects, low mobility and the need to expand foreign language programs.

Our Internationalization Strategy (2026–2030) is aimed not only at expanding the international presence of UNWE, but also at strengthening the synergy effect between the main areas of development - education, science, management and social engagement.

The document was created in accordance with the following regulatory and strategic documents: the Higher Education Act, the Development of Academic Staff Act, the Europe 2030 Strategy, national strategies for science, and lifelong learning, as well as international guidelines, such as the European University Strategy (2022), Recommendation C/2024/7282 of the Council of Europe, the Bologna Process and the European Strategy for Research and Innovation.

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In an era of globalization, economic, political, and social processes are increasingly shaped by supranational dynamics. Universities play a pivotal role in this environment, serving not only as centers of innovation but also as catalysts for intercultural dialogue and international understanding. Through targeted internationalization in education and research, universities equip young people with the skills required to thrive in an interconnected world and contribute to the advancement of the global knowledge society.

The higher education system in the Republic of Bulgaria faces significant challenges, including a pronounced demographic decline - identified by Eurostat as the most severe in the European Union at regional level: a decreasing student population, and the need to strengthen its international profile. At the beginning of the strategic period, 52 higher education institutions operate in the country, offering a diverse portfolio of academic programs. Despite these challenges, Bulgarian higher education remains attractive to international students, academics, and researchers seeking both academic excellence and personal development.

Founded in 1920, the University of National and World Economy (UNWE) is the oldest and largest higher education institution in Southeastern Europe specializing in economics and business education. UNWE is the leading institution in Bulgaria in terms of graduate employability in Professional Field 3.8 “Economics,” with over 98% of its graduates successfully entering the labor market. UNWE alumni are highly valued by employers across both the public and private sectors.

In January 2024, UNWE received the highest institutional evaluation score in Bulgaria (9.80) from the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, valid until December 2029. Furthermore, UNWE became the first university in Bulgaria to obtain certification under the international information security standard ISO 27001:2022, providing clear evidence of its institutional capacity and long-term strategic sustainability.

Over its 105-year history, UNWE has educated numerous distinguished alumni, including prime ministers, ministers, diplomats, economists, public leaders, and scientists who have held or do so at present prominent positions in Bulgaria and internationally.

This Strategy is grounded in UNWE’s vision to serve as a model institution for innovative education, research, and employment practices. These priorities are also emphasized in the Concept Note underpinning our esteemed Rector’s Mandate Program (2023–2027).

The objective of the Internationalization Strategy for the period 2026–2030 is to define strategic guidelines, priorities, and targeted measures aimed at establishing UNWE as a leading international center for higher education and research in Southeastern Europe. The Strategy contributes to addressing key challenges identified in the Bulgarian National Strategy for the Development of Higher Education (2021–2030), including limited international visibility, insufficient participation in international research projects, low academic mobility, and the need to expand foreign-language programs.

Beyond expanding UNWE’s international presence, the Internationalization Strategy (2026–2030) seeks to strengthen synergies among the University’s core areas of development - education, research, governance, and social engagement.

This document has been developed in compliance with the Higher Education Act, the Development of Academic Staff Act, the Europe 2030 Strategy, national strategies for science and lifelong learning, and key international frameworks, including the European Strategy for Universities (2022), Council of Europe Recommendation C/2024/7282, the Bologna Process, and the European Strategy for Research and Innovation.



1. ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

1.1. Review of the progress in implementing the Internationalization Strategy 2020-2025.

It is important to measure and analyze the internationalization results of UNWE during the period 2020-2025. One of the key criteria, laid down in Strategic Goals 1 and 2 of the Strategy 2020-2025, is the inclusion of university staff in new international educational and research projects. The activity under this indicator is presented in Figure 1, covering the period 2020-2024.

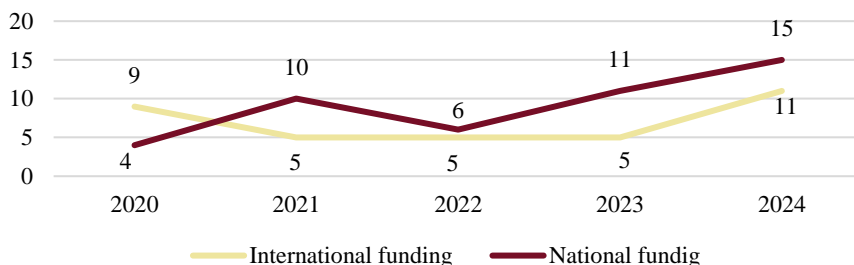


Figure 1. Number of contracts concluded for the implementation of educational and research projects with international or national funding per year for the period 2020-2024.

Figure 1 shows that UNWE has been very successful in developing educational and research projects. One of the strategic projects implemented during the period of the previous Strategy is BG05M2OP001-2.016-0004-C01 “Economic Education in Bulgaria 2030”, funded under the Operational Program “Science and Education for Smart Growth” (OP SESG). This project includes activities such as short-term specializations, outgoing and incoming mobility of students, lecturers and researchers, and modernization of the university infrastructure.

Another significant stage in the internationalization of UNWE’s involvement in the ENGAGE.EU alliance was further advanced through the implementation of Project No. 101035807 (2021–2024), funded by the Horizon 2020 Programme, and Project No. 101124357 under the Erasmus+ Programme. Additional contributions to this process come from Project No. 101131544 STUDIES-DIG (Horizon Europe) and Project No. 101069586 BOLSTER (Horizon 2020). In addition, Projects No. 101131544 STUDIES-DIG (Horizon Europe) and No. 101069586 BOLSTER (Horizon 2020) play an important role in this process.

Strategic Goal 1 of the 2020–2025 Strategy further focuses on enhancing the international visibility of bachelor’s and master’s programs to attract a greater number of international students. Data related to this indicator are presented in Figure 2.

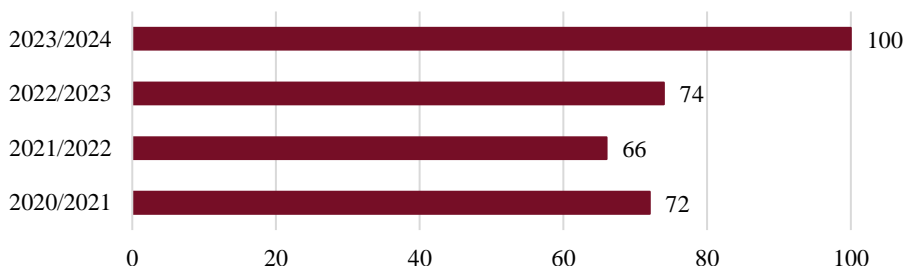


Figure 2. Number of admitted international students, citizens non-EU and non-EEA member countries for the period 2020/2021 – 2023/2024 academic year

A record number of international students hailing from non-member-states of the EU and the EEA were enrolled in the academic year 2023/2024 (Figure 2). A slight decrease was recorded in the period covering the academic years 2021-2023, probably due to the COVID-19 pandemic

and the imposed international travel restrictions. A similar trend is observed in incoming and outgoing student mobility under the Erasmus+ program (Figure 3).

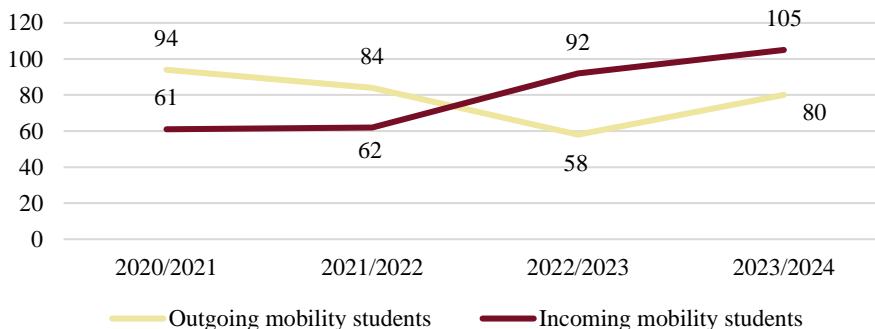


Figure 3. Number of students who participated in mobility lasting at least 1 month for the period 2020/2021 – 2023/2024 academic year

Despite the severe disruption of global travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNWE succeeded in sustaining a high level of international student mobility, in line with the objectives set out in Strategic Goal 1. Between the 2020/2021 and 2023/2024 academic years, 316 students took part in outgoing mobility, while 320 students participated in incoming mobility. Furthermore, the 2020–2025 Strategy, through Strategic Goals 1 and 3, places a strong emphasis on expanding the international mobility of academic and administrative staff. Data related to these activities are presented in Figure 4.

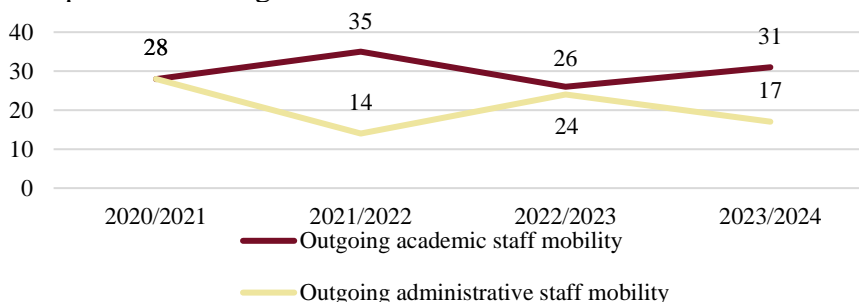


Figure 4. Number of academic and administrative staff who participated in outgoing mobility lasting from 1 week to 1 month, funded by the Erasmus+ program for the period 2020/2021 – 2023/2024 academic year

- Figure 4 illustrates the academic and administrative mobility activities carried out under the Erasmus+ Programme. In parallel, a substantial contribution to the internationalization of UNWE across all strategic goals of the 2020–2025 Strategy was made through Project BG05M2OP001-2.016-0004-C01, “Economic Education in Bulgaria 2030,” implemented between July 2021 and December 2023. Within the framework of this project, the following activities were carried out: 68 short-term teaching specializations (2 weeks – 2 months);
- 31 student and doctoral mobilities (3-5 months);
- 28 teaching research mobilities (3 – 5 months);
- 12 incoming mobilities from foreign partners (3 – 5 months).

The project also contributed to enhancing the qualifications of academic and administrative staff, as well as students, through a series of targeted training activities. Participation in these trainings included:

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- 39 lecturers in digital skills;
- 30 lecturers in foreign language skills;
- 20 lecturers in professional foreign language terminology;
- 129 students in entrepreneurial skills;
- 75 students in soft skills;
- 22 students in entrepreneurial and leadership skills.

The project has been upgraded with two follow-up projects, which received funding from the OP "Education 2021–2027":

- BG05SFPR001-3.004-0013 "Project Doctoral Studies 2030";
- BG05SFPR001-3.004-0011 "Innovative Training of Doctoral Students 2030" - with a focus on academic staff mobility abroad.

An additional contribution was made by the STUDIES-DIG project 101131544 (started on 01.01.2024), within which 5 outgoing and 6 incoming research mobilities (each lasting 1 month) were implemented in 2024. The exchanges planned in the project directly support the implementation of Strategic Objective 2.

An essential aspect of internationalization is the expansion of the partner network of UNWE (Strategic Goal 3). In this regard, sustained efforts were made to conclude new agreements, the annual development of which is illustrated in Figure 5.

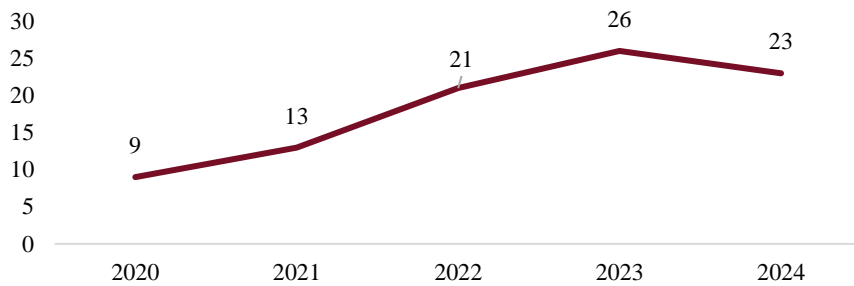


Figure 5. Number of signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with foreign HEIs, per year for the period 2020-2024.

In 2022 UNWE reported growth in international partnerships, despite the effects of COVID-19 and this trend continued in 2023–2024 academic year. This directly contributes to the implementation of Strategic Goal 3 of the Internationalization Strategy 2020–2025, related to expanding international cooperation. It is planned that the indicator will continue to be upgraded within the term of this Internationalization Strategy 2026–2030.

1.2. Analysis of strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities (SWOT)

The priorities for internationalization of UNWE, along with its strategic goals and the methods for achieving them were established based on a comprehensive analysis of the University’s operating environment and a careful assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. The consolidated results are presented in Tables 1 through 4.

Table 1. SWOT analysis regarding Strategic Objective 1

WITH REGARD TO STRATEGIC GOAL 1. INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONALIZATION	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNWE has a well-functioning International Affairs Directorate, which consists of three main divisions - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited foreign language proficiency among certain administrative staff.



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<p>"International Cooperation and Projects", "Mobilities" and "International students".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly qualified academic staff capable of teaching in foreign languages. • Excellent learning conditions, modern infrastructure and a high level of digitalization of processes - factors that support both academic and administrative staff as well as students. • A significant number of signed MOUs with foreign universities and other organizations, totalling 217 as of September 2025. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient foreign language skills among some students, restricting their participation in outgoing international mobility. • A number of international agreements with foreign universities and scientific organizations remain relatively inactive.
OPPORTUNITIES	POSSIBLE NEGATIVE TRENDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides opportunities to administrative staff to improve their foreign language skills. • Raise awareness among students, faculty and staff about available outbound international mobility opportunities. • Strengthen the synergy between UNWE's strategic directions through the implementation of the Internationalization Strategy, thereby improving efficiency and ensuring sustainable outcomes. • Explore ways to make more effective use of existing MOUs with foreign universities and research organizations. . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited practical engagement within established partnership frameworks. • Insufficient tangible outcomes from implemented mobility activities. • Challenges in attracting and retaining qualified and motivated staff. • Declining attractiveness of the academic profession

Table 2. SWOT analysis regarding Strategic Objective 2

REGARDING STRATEGIC GOAL 2. RESEARCH CAPACITY THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive experience in managing international scientific and educational projects. • High outgoing teaching and administrative mobility under the Erasmus+ Program. • Active participation in international conferences at home Bulgaria and abroad. • Reasonably high success rate of project proposals funded under national programs and competitions. • High degree of academic compatibility and recognition of curricula, facilitating credit transfer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low number of submitted project proposals under European funds compared to EU member states in Central and Western Europe. • Low level of implemented teaching mobility compared to other HEIs and the leading ones in Europe. • Publication activity in journals indexed in global databases, as well as citation levels remains insufficient compared to leading European universities. • Limited funding for research activities, outside the framework of scientific projects. • Lack of funds for competitive remuneration of lecturers and researchers.
OPPORTUNITIES	POSSIBLE NEGATIVE TRENDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve UNWE's performance in competitions for international research projects. • Expand institutional expertise in coordinating international research projects. • Leverage faculty mobility and participation in international forums to identify shared research interests and opportunities for joint projects. • Increase the total number of scientific publications indexed in globally recognized databases. • Increase the resources allocated to research activities at HEIs. • Attract prominent foreign professors and researchers. • Develop a greater number of high-quality proposals in response to international research grants calls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited growth in the number of scientific publications and citations. • Lack of funding for participation in international events and support for research activities. • Difficulties in attracting foreign professors and researchers.

Table 3. SWOT analysis regarding Strategic Objective 3



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WITH REGARD TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3. INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant number of active Erasmus+ contracts, totaling 217 as of September 2025. • Availability of joint and double programs and programs as well as programs developed in cooperation with established partner universities. • Steady increase in incoming student mobility. • Bachelor's and Master's degree Programs offered entirely in a foreign language. • Well-developed educational, methodological and infrastructural capacity for digital learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visa restrictions affecting students and doctoral candidates from countries outside the EU and EEA. • Limited international prestige and visibility of Bulgarian higher education abroad. • Insufficient awareness of study opportunities at UNWE among prospective international students. • Low level of foreign language proficiency among most administrative staff and some lecturers. • Small number of foreign lecturers and researchers. • Limited number of Bachelor's and Master's programs offered entirely in a foreign language. • Limited number of Bachelor's and Master's programs offering foreign language study. • Low number of attracted foreign lecturers employed under full-time contract.
OPPORTUNITIES	POSSIBLE NEGATIVE TRENDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase outgoing mobility by enhancing student awareness, strengthening language preparation, and improving procedures for the transfer of study credits. <p>Create opportunities for new joint programs with foreign universities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the network of academic partners and strengthen participation in international alliances. • Facilitate visa application procedures, admission processes for foreign citizens, and recognition of prior education in cooperation with relevant state institutions. • Attract students from Asia and Africa. • Enhance educational infrastructure and increase its attractiveness, particularly for international students. • Expand the range of programs offered in foreign languages and provide foreign language training for international students. • Bring to market and promote UNWE study programs internationally. • Increase the number of foreign lecturers. • Develop a greater number of project proposals in response to calls for international educational projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low language skills of students. • Administrative obstacles to launching new joint educational programs with foreign universities. • Limited visibility and performance of UNWE in international ranking systems. • Ongoing visa-related barriers for international students and challenges in the recognition of prior education. • Obstacles to the recognition of higher education degrees obtained in Bulgaria in some neighboring countries.

Table 4. SWOT analysis regarding Strategic Objective 4

WITH REGARD TO STRATEGIC GOAL 4. PROMOTING INTERNATIONALIZATION AS A DRIVER FOR CREATING SUSTAINABLE BENEFITS FOR SOCIETY	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNWE's established reputation in economic education and business relations, which supports the development of international partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited administrative and financial resources for coordinating and sustainably implementing large-scale international initiatives.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in participating in European and international programs that can be expanded along the lines of sustainability and digitalization. • A well-developed academic network with potential for international collaborations and inclusion in global initiatives. • Availability of expertise in key areas of EU and UN strategic priorities. • A motivated student community with an interest in participating in international activities and projects with social impact. • Strong commitment from university management to the internationalization process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low recognition of the UNWE brand beyond the regional context, hindering the development of new international partnerships. • Uneven participation of departments and faculties in internationalization efforts. • Insufficient integration of internationalization into curricula and a lack of sustainable formats for international knowledge transfer with societal impact. • Limited use of foreign languages in public events and in the university’s external communications.
OPPORTUNITIES	POSSIBLE NEGATIVE TRENDS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand UNWE’s participation in international networks and platforms focused on sustainability and social responsibility, as well as strengthen ties with EU and UN institutions to establish the University as an active and recognized contributor to global sustainable development efforts. • Establish a coordination mechanism for internationalization to provide strategic guidance, foster synergy and facilitate the exchange of good practices across departments and units. • Leverage EU funding for green, digital and socially focused initiatives to promote international cooperation and knowledge transfer. • Build an international community of like-minded stakeholders (including alumni, partners, students) committed to causes of public importance. • Strengthen the digital presence and online visibility of UNWE, to enhance the international promotion of its scientific and educational achievements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intense global competition among universities for international partnerships, funding, and socially engaged students. • Political instability or changes in the priorities of EU funding programs, potentially limiting access to resources. • Low motivation among some academic staff to participate in international projects. • Risk of fragmented efforts if centralized coordination of internationalization activities is not ensured. • Challenges arising from limited cultural adaptability, language barriers and lack of systematic preparation for effective international communication.

2. VISION, GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION OF UNWE

The vision of UNWE is to become a benchmark for innovative practices in education, research and employability of its graduates and alumni. By implementing proactive policies and maintaining a strong presence in the international academic space, UNWE seeks to position itself as a leading University in the region, offering competitive programs and services within the global higher education and research landscape.

The primary goal of the Internationalization Strategy (2026–2030) is to establish UNWE as a premier international hub in economics, management, law and social sciences. The university strives to attract more and more international students, faculty and researchers by providing high-quality education, fostering interdisciplinary research and ensuring a stable and supportive academic environment. Internationalization will serve as a key tool for developing professional and leadership skills, and will contribute to the creation of sustainable and humane global society.

The strategy is structured around four main strategic objectives and their corresponding priorities, described in Table 5:

Table 5. Strategic goals and priorities

STRATEGIC GOALS			
PRIORITIES	Strengthen institutional commitment to internationalization	Enhance research capacity through international cooperation	Enhance internationalization of the educational process
			Promote internationalization as a



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			catalyst for sustainable societal development
<p>Priority 1.1: Enhance and modernize IT and physical infrastructure</p> <p>Priority 1.2: Foster sustainable institutional culture of internationalization</p> <p>Priority 1.3: Strengthen the international competencies of academic and administrative staff</p> <p>Priority 1.4: Expand and prioritize UNWE’s presence and positioning in international rankings</p> <p>Priority 1.5: Build and promote UNWE as a well-recognized international brand</p>	<p>Priority 2.1: Strengthen participation in international research projects and networks</p> <p>Priority 2.2: Expand strategic partnerships with foreign scientific and academic institutions</p> <p>Priority 2.3: Stimulate international scientific mobility and the exchange of researchers</p> <p>Priority 2.4: Establish internal incentives and support structures for international scientific activities</p>	<p>Priority 3.1: Increase outgoing mobility of students and academic staff</p> <p>Priority 3.2: Increase incoming mobility of students and academic staff</p> <p>Priority 3.3: Engage proactively in international academic networks and educational projects</p> <p>Priority 3.4: Enhance the international profile of Bachelor's and Master's degree programs</p> <p>Priority 3.5: Improve the attractiveness of UNWE for international students</p>	<p>Priority 4.1: Enhance international public engagement with high added value for society</p> <p>Priority 4.2: Facilitate international transfer of knowledge, innovation and socially relevant practices</p>

3. MEASURES TO ACHIEVE THE IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES

The successful implementation of the defined priority areas will be ensured through a set of clearly articulated and targeted measures. For each measure relevant indicators have been developed to enable systematic monitoring and assessment of the implementation progress and outcomes.

Table 6. Priorities for the internationalization of UNWE for the period 2026-2030 and measures to achieve them

STRATEGIC GOAL 1. STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONALIZATION	
<p><i>Priority 1.1: Enhance and modernize IT and physical infrastructure</i></p>	<p>Measure 1.1.1. Improve and regular update of the English version of UNWE website.</p> <p>Measure 1.1.2. Enhance the material and technical infrastructure of UNWE, to better support international students, doctoral students, lecturers, researchers and administrative staff.</p> <p>Measure 1.1.3. Digitalize the application and admission processes for international students.</p> <p>Measure 1.1.4. Adapt the physical infrastructure and improve access for people with special needs.</p> <p>Measure 1.1.4. Gradually replace monolingual signs at UNWE with bilingual ones (in Bulgarian and English)</p>
<p><i>Priority 1.2. Foster sustainable institutional culture of internationalization</i></p>	<p>Measure 1.2.1. Encourage the active participation of students, doctoral students, academic staff, researchers and administrative staff in initiatives supporting the internationalization process.</p> <p>Measure 1.2.2. Ensure prioritization of internationalization by UNWE’s management with targeted dissemination of information among the academic community about its importance.</p> <p>Measure 1.2.3. Translate all key regulations and strategic documents related to the internationalization of the university into English to facilitate access and enhance transparency for international partners, students and faculty.</p>
<p><i>Priority 1.3. Strengthen international competencies of the academic and administrative staff</i></p>	<p>Measure 1.3.1. Encourage participation of administrative staff involved in the internationalization process of UNWE in courses and training programs to improve their qualifications and strengthen institutional capacity.</p> <p>Measure 1.3.2. Improve coordination among units directly or indirectly involved in the internationalization of UNWE.</p> <p>Measure 1.3.3. Promote outgoing mobility of academic and administrative staff to exchange good practices and fully integrate European and global values and standards.</p> <p>Measure 1.3.4. Introduce material incentives for administrative staff involved in internationalization activities, based on performance and results.</p>



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	Measure 1.3.5. Stimulate the academic development faculty members actively participating in UNWE’s internationalization initiatives.
<i>Priority 1.4. Expand and prioritize UNWE’s presence and positioning in international rankings</i>	Measure 1.4.1. Identify international rankings that are relevant and suitable for the profile of UNWE. Measure 1.4.2. Improve mechanisms and processes UNWE’s inclusion UNWE in leading international rankings. Measure 1.4.3. Integrate key indicators from leading international rankings into the University's Quality Management System. Measure 1.4.4. Establish systematic monitoring, control and correction if necessary.
<i>Priority 1.5. Build and promote UNWE as a well-recognized international brand</i>	Measure 1.5.1. Improve UNWE’s communication, marketing, and digital presence to enhance international recognition and attractiveness for international students and partners Measure 1.5.2. Encourage participation of UNWE’s academic community in international forums and programs to safeguard and promote institutional prestige Measure 1.5.3. Maintain a comprehensive and up-to-date English-language version of UNWE website. Measure 1.5.4. Strengthen collaboration with Bulgarian embassies, consular services and diplomatic missions to promote UNWE as a leading institution in Bulgarian higher education. Measure 1.5.5. Actively pursue inclusion in international university rankings and obtain institutional and program accreditations.
STRATEGIC GOAL 2. ENHANCE RESEARCH CAPACITY THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	
<i>Priority 2.1. Strengthen participation in international research projects and networks</i>	Measure 2.1.1. Raise awareness among the academic community about opportunities to participate in international research networks and projects Measure 2.1.2. Promote active inclusion of lecturers and researchers in international scientific networks and research projects Measure 2.1.3. Adjust the teaching workload for participating lecturer within limits established by the Academic Council. Measure 2.1.4. Provide active support to lecturer and researcher teams in developing project proposals for European and international research funding programs.
<i>Priority 2.2. Expand strategic partnerships with foreign scientific and academic institutions</i>	Measure 2.2.1. Conclude new cooperation agreements with leading universities and research centers. Measure 2.2.2. Develop new international dual-degree and joint training programs with foreign universities. Measure 2.2.3. Organize international scientific forums, conferences and events.
<i>Priority 2.3. Stimulate international scientific mobility and the exchange of researchers</i>	Measure 2.3.1. Improve methods for sharing information on opportunities for scientific exchange. Measure 2.3.2. Stimulating participation in, and development of project proposals supporting research exchange. Measure 2.3.3. Include foreign doctoral students and researchers in scientific teams of national or international projects led by UNWE, including its network of research centers and institutes. . Measure 2.3.4. Develop and implement a mechanism to attract foreign researchers and lecturers for temporary or permanent positions at UNWE, emphasizing external funding and sustainable expansion of the University’s international academic presence. Measure 2.3.5. Expand access to international mobility through inclusive and hybrid formats that encourage participation of researchers from socially vulnerable groups - including persons with disabilities, non-traditional educational backgrounds or limited financial resources, and through the development of virtual and hybrid mobility as a sustainable alternative to physical mobility.
<i>Priority 2.4. Establish internal incentives and support structures for internationalized scientific activities</i>	Measure 2.4.1. Improve the methodology for targeted financial incentives for publications in international scientific journals, refereed and indexed in global databases. Measure 2.4.2. Develop an internal grant scheme for launching joint scientific projects with foreign partners. Measure 2.4.3. Integrate international scientific activity as a criterion in academic promotion and attestation processes. Brand 2.4.4. Develop international scientific platforms and organize events led by UNWE.
STRATEGIC GOAL 3. ENHANCE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS	
<i>Priority 3.1. Increase outgoing mobility of students and academic staff</i>	Measure 3.1.1. Intensify information campaigns among students and academic staff regarding mobility opportunities under the Erasmus+ program and other international exchange programs Measure 3.1.2. Expand the network of partner universities, research institutes and scientific organizations to increase the geographical scope and opportunities for outgoing mobility.



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	<p>Measure 3.1.3. Enhance opportunities for outgoing mobility of students and academic staff through the inclusive and hybrid formats, that encourage the participation of socially vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, non-traditional educational backgrounds or limited financial resources, and through the development of virtual and hybrid mobility as a sustainable alternative to physical mobility.</p>
<p><i>Priority 3.2. Increase incoming mobility of students and academic staff</i></p>	<p>Measure 3.2.1. Intensify information campaigns among partner universities to promote incoming mobility opportunities for international students under the Erasmus+ program, other international programs, and bilateral exchange agreements</p> <p>Measure 3.2.2. Attract lecturers from leading foreign universities to participate in incoming lecturer mobility.</p> <p>Measure 3.2.3. Organize international educational forums at UNWE, such as summer schools, seminars and workshops in collaboration with foreign partners.</p> <p>Measure 3.2.4. Expand opportunities for incoming mobility of students and academic staff through inclusive and hybrid forms that encourage the participation of socially vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, non-traditional educational profiles or limited financial resources, as well as through the development of virtual and hybrid mobility as a sustainable alternative to physical mobility.</p>
<p><i>Priority 3.3. Engage proactively in international academic networks and educational projects</i></p>	<p>Measure 3.3.1. Continue targeted efforts to develop established cooperation within the framework of the ENGAGE.EU alliance.</p> <p>Measure 3.3.2. Promoting inclusion and participation of lecturers and students in international academic networks and educational projects.</p> <p>Measure 3.3.3. Support lecturer teams in developing project proposals under national and international calls for educational projects.</p>
<p><i>Priority 3.4. Enhance the international profile of Bachelor's and Master's degree programs</i></p>	<p>Measure 3.4.1. Continuously improve the quality of teaching in existing programs offered in a foreign language.</p> <p>Measure 3.4.2. Stimulating lecturers who teach lectures and seminars in programs offered in a foreign language.</p> <p>Measure 3.4.3. Encourage academic units to develop new joint Bachelor's and Master's programs with reputable foreign universities.</p> <p>Measure 3.4.4. Support departments in obtaining international accreditation programs for their programs.</p> <p>Measure 3.4.5. Enhance the profile of Bachelor's and Master's degree programs by offering courses in foreign languages.</p> <p>Measure 3.4.6. Expand the portfolio of Bachelor's and Master's degrees programs through distance learning and programs offered in a foreign language.</p> <p>Measure 3.4.7. Conduct targeted information campaigns to attract international students.</p> <p>Measure 3.4.8. Integrate practitioners from foreign partner companies, into the learning process through lectures, seminars and practical exercises to strengthen the university-business relationship.</p>
<p><i>Priority 3.5. Improve the attractiveness of UNWE for international students</i></p>	<p>Measure 3.5.1. Enhance communication tools through the development of modern promotional materials in foreign languages, presenting study opportunities at UNWE, and through regular updates of the “International Students” webpage</p> <p>Measure 3.5.2. Strengthen cooperation with Bulgarian embassies and consular services and with foreign diplomatic missions accredited in the Republic of Bulgaria, to promote UNWE internationally.</p> <p>Measure 3.5.3. Deepen cooperation with Bulgarian schools abroad to promote UNWE.</p> <p>Measure 3.5.4. Participate in international educational fairs- independently or jointly with other Bulgarian universities (based on cost-benefit analyses).</p> <p>Measure 3.5.5. Utilize the services of specialized organizations for the recruitment of international students (based on specific cost-benefit analyses).</p> <p>Measure 3.5.6. Establish cooperation with organizations providing scholarships international students pursuing studies in Bulgaria</p> <p>Measure 3.5.7. Actively promote Master's degree programs taught in a foreign language among international students participating in mobility at UNWE.</p>
<p>STRATEGIC GOAL 4.</p> <p>PROMOTE INTERNATIONALIZATION AS A CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT</p>	
<p><i>Priority 4.1. Enhance international public engagement with high added value for society</i></p>	<p>Measure 4.1.1. Actively integrate UNWE into international initiatives, programs, and networks addressing global societal challenges and supporting the strategic priorities of the EU and the UN (e.g. sustainable development, digital transition, social justice), including through monitoring the integration of foreign graduates, developing alumni networks, and providing international career service.</p> <p>Measure 4.1.2. Strengthen the institutional, educational, research and policy capacities of SDSN Bulgaria to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change through knowledge exchange and global partnerships.</p>



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	<p>Measure 4.1.3. Organize international forums, public discussions and student initiatives focused on the socio-economic effects of internationalization and the role of the University in addressing societal needs.</p>
<p><i>Priority 4.2. Facilitate international transfer of knowledge, innovation and socially relevant practices</i></p>	<p>Measure 4.2.1. Organize cycles of public lectures, thematic courses, and workshops with international participation to stimulate the exchange of knowledge and the implementation of innovative solutions for the benefit of society.</p> <p>Measure 4.2.2. Promote UNWE’s scientific and educational achievements internationally with an emphasis on their contribution to sustainable development, corporate responsibility and public welfare.</p> <p>Measure 4.2.3. Promote academic projects and research with international participation aimed at solving specific social, economic and environmental challenges at the national and regional level.</p>

4. INDICATORS FOR MEASURING PROGRESS IN STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

To ensure effective monitoring and reporting of the results achieved in implementing the priorities and corresponding measures outlined in the Strategy 2026–2030, a set of clearly defined and measurable indicators has been established. It is presented in Table 7.

The Vice-Rector of International Affairs together with the International Affairs Directorate, shall be responsible for the annual preparation and publication of an Internationalization Report by December of each year. This report will serve as a key instrument for internal accountability, evidence-based management, and external communication with international partners.

Table 7. Indicators for measuring progress in Strategy implementing

STRATEGIC GOAL 1. STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONALIZATION		
Priority	Indicator	Responsible
<p><i>Priority 1.1 Enhance and modernize IT and physical infrastructure</i></p>	<p>Indicator 1.1.1. Number of renovated student dormitories.</p>	<p>Student Canteens and Dormitories Unit and Vice-Rector for Institutional and Business Cooperation and Student Policies</p>
	<p>Indicator 1.1.2. Number of renovated classrooms.</p>	<p>Vice-Rector for Institutional and Business Cooperation and Student Policies and Assistant Rector</p>
	<p>Indicator 1.1.3. Online registration system for international students introduced.</p>	<p>Information Technologies Directorate and International Students Division</p>
	<p>Indicator 1.1.4. Online handbooks for international students developed and distributed.</p>	<p>International Affairs Directorate</p>
	<p>Indicator 1.1.5. Number of monolingual signs at UNWE replaced with bilingual ones (in Bulgarian and English)</p>	<p>Assistant Rector</p>
<p><i>Priority 1.2. Foster sustainable institutional culture of internationalization</i></p>	<p>Indicator 1.2.1. Number of students, doctoral students, lecturers, researchers and staff who participated in mobility programs.</p>	<p>International Affairs Directorate</p>
	<p>Indicator 1.2.2. Number of materials distributed and awareness-raising campaigns conducted among academic and administrative staff on the activities and importance of internationalization.</p>	<p>International Affairs Directorate</p>

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	Indicator 1.2.3. Number of key regulations and strategic documents related to the internationalization of the University translated into English to facilitate transparency for international partners, students and faculty.	Vice-rectors, within whose remit the respective document falls
<i>Priority 1.3. Strengthen international competencies of the academic and administrative staff</i>	Indicator 1.3.1. Number of administrative staff who speak at least one foreign language.	Human Resources Directorate
	Indicator 1.3.2. Number of administrative staff participating in mobility programs.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 1.3.3. Number of administrative staff receiving additional financial incentives for proficiency in at least 1 foreign language.	Human Resources Directorate
	Indicator 1.3.4. Number of cooperation agreements concluded with foreign HEIs and business organizations, coordinated by a member of the academic community.	International Affairs Directorate
<i>Priority 1.4. Expand and prioritize UNWE's presence and positioning in international rankings</i>	Indicator 1.4.1. Number of international rankings to which UNWE applies.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 1.4.2. Number of indicators from leading international rankings integrated in the University's Quality Management System.	Vice-Rector for Educational Activity
	Indicator 1.4.3. Number of international rankings in which UNWE participates.	International Affairs Directorate
<i>Priority 1.5. Build and promote UNWE as a well-recognized international brand</i>	Indicator 1.5.1. A complete and up-to-date English version of UNWE website has been created.	Information Technologies Directorate
	Indicator 1.5.2. Number of academic and administrative staff participating in international forums and events, with documented contributions, such as a concluded agreements, delivered reports or other type of activities demonstrating their role in strengthening the UNWE brand.	Heads of departments, deans of faculties, directors of directorates
	Indicator 1.5.3. Number of partnership agreements concluded with Bulgarian embassies, consular services and diplomatic missions.	Vice-Rector for Institutional and Business Cooperation and Student Policies
STRATEGIC GOAL 2.		
ENHANCE RESEARCH CAPACITY THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION		
<i>Priority 2.1. Strengthen participation in international research projects and networks</i>	Indicator 2.1.1. Number of newsletters distributed and meetings held to inform academic staff about opportunities for participation in international research networks and projects.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 2.1.2. Number of lecturers/researchers participating in international scientific networks and research projects.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 2.1.3. Number of research projects developed under European and international programs.	International Affairs Directorate
<i>Priority 2.2. Expand strategic partnerships with foreign scientific and academic institutions</i>	Indicator 2.2.1. Number of cooperation agreements concluded with leading universities and research centers.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 2.2.2. Number of joint educational programs with foreign universities.	International Affairs Directorate

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	Indicator 2.2.3. Number of organized international scientific forums and events.	Heads of departments and deans of faculties.
<i>Priority 2.3. Stimulate international scientific mobility and the exchange of researchers</i>	Indicator 2.3.1. Number of shared opportunities for scientific exchange.	Project coordinators in which such activities are envisaged.
	Indicator 2.3.2. Number of project proposals developed supporting research exchange.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 2.3.3. Number of foreign doctoral students and researchers included in scientific teams of national or international projects led by UNWE, including its network of research centers and institutes.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 2.3.4. Number of foreign members of the academic community recruited on permanent employment contracts at UNWE.	Human Resources Directorate
	Indicator 2.3.4. Number of participants in virtual/hybrid mobility programs.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 2.3.4. Number of foreign postdoctoral researchers conducting scientific activities at UNWE with support of external funding sources.	Project coordinators
<i>Priority 2.4. Establish internal incentives and support structures for internationalized scientific activities</i>	Indicator 2.4.1. Number of lecturers/researchers receiving financial incentives for publications in international peer-reviewed scientific journals indexed in global databases.	Vice-Rector for Research and Science Directorate
	Indicator 2.4.2. Number of university-funded projects involving professors and researchers from abroad.	Vice-Rector for Research and Science Directorate
	Indicator 2.4.3. Number of international scientific forums and events organized by UNWE.	Heads of departments and deans of faculties
STRATEGIC GOAL 3.		
ENHANCE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS		
<i>Priority 3.1. Increase outgoing mobility of students and academic staff</i>	Indicator 3.1.1. Number of lecturers and students who participated in outgoing mobility under the Erasmus+ program or other programs supporting international exchange.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 3.1.2. Number of partners attracted within the framework of the Erasmus+ program.	International Affairs Directorate
<i>Priority 3.2. Increase incoming mobility of students and academic staff</i>	Indicator 3.2.1. Number of foreign lecturers and students who conducted incoming mobility at UNWE.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 3.2.2. Number of international educational forums held jointly with foreign partners.	International Affairs Directorate
<i>Priority 3.3. Engage proactively in international academic networks and educational projects</i>	Indicator 3.3.1. Number of lecturers and students participating in international academic networks and educational projects involving UNWE.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 3.3.2. Number of educational projects submitted and funded under national and international programs and calls for proposals.	International Affairs Directorate
<i>Priority 3.4. Enhance the international profile of Bachelor's and Master's degree programs</i>	Indicator 3.4.1. Number of academic staff engaged in specialties in a foreign language.	Educational Activity Directorate

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	Indicator 3.4.2. Number of newly established joint Bachelor's and Master's degree programs with foreign universities.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 3.4.3. Number of programs accredited by internationally recognized organizations.	Secretary General for Accreditation
	Indicator 3.4.4. Number of foreign language courses.	Vice-Rector for Educational Activity
	Indicator 3.4.5. Number of international students and number of countries they represent.	Vice-Rector for Educational Activity
	Indicator 3.4.6. Ratio of international students to the total student population.	Vice-Rector for Educational Activity
	Indicator 3.4.7. Number of programs offered in a distance learning format.	Vice-Rector for Educational Activity
	Indicator 3.4.8. Number of Bachelor's and Master's degree programs offered in a foreign language.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 3.4.9. Proportion of students who have completed an international module or training relative to the total student population.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 3.4.10. Number of courses or seminars with participation of international business experts.	International Affairs Directorate
	<i>Priority 3.5. Engage proactively in international academic networks and educational projects</i>	Indicator 3.5.1. Number of promotional materials in foreign languages presenting educational opportunities for international students.
Indicator 3.5.2. Number of cooperation agreements concluded with Bulgarian embassies, consular services and diplomatic missions.		Vice-Rector for Institutional and Business Cooperation and Student Policies
Indicator 3.5.3. Number of cooperation agreements concluded with Bulgarian schools abroad.		Vice-Rector for Institutional and Business Cooperation and Student Policies
Indicator 3.5.4. Number of UNWE participations in international educational fairs.		Rector's Office Directorate
Indicator 3.5.5. Number of cooperation agreements with specialized organizations for the recruitment of international students.		International Affairs Directorate
Indicator 3.5.6. Number of cooperation agreements with organizations offering scholarships for studying in Bulgaria.		International Affairs Directorate

STRATEGIC GOAL 4.

PROMOTE INTERNATIONALIZATION AS A CATALYST SUSTAINABLE SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT



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<i>Priority 4.1. Enhance international public engagement with high added value for society</i>	Indicator 4.1.1. Number of international initiatives, programs and networks in which UNWE actively participates on globally significant topics (e.g., sustainable development, digital transition, social justice), including activities such as alumni networks development, international career services and monitoring of foreign graduates.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 4.1.2. Number of events and initiatives organized jointly with EU institutions, diplomatic missions and civil society organizations.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 4.1.3. Number of international forums, public discussions and campaigns addressing UNWE’s role in responding to global challenges.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 4.1.4. Number of initiatives, projects and partnerships implemented within SDSN Bulgaria that contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).	International Affairs Directorate
<i>Priority 4.2. Facilitate international transfer of knowledge, innovation and socially relevant practices</i>	Indicator 4.2.1. Number of events for international knowledge transfer (public lectures, workshops, courses, seminars, etc.).	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 4.2.2. Number of foreign experts, lecturers and partners involved in joint educational and scientific activities.	International Affairs Directorate
	Indicator 4.2.3. Number of international publications, scientific contributions and outreach activities showcasing UNWE’s impact to sustainable development and social responsibility.	Vice-Rector for Research and Science Directorate
	Indicator 4.2.4. Number of international academic and research projects addressing socio-economic and environmental challenges.	International Affairs Directorate

5. ORGANIZATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

The Internationalization Strategy of UNWE for the period 2026-2030 was adopted by the Academic Council 5/10.12.2025, with the relevant Vice-Rector designated as responsible for its overall implementation and coordination. On 24 June 2024, the International Affairs Directorate was established to provide methodological, technical and administrative support to prospective students, enrolled students, doctoral students, lecturers and administrative staff - foreign citizens, as well as to manage the University's mobilities and project activities. Internationalization at UNWE encompasses educational and research activities aimed at enhancing the institutional ecosystem and creating added value for society. Its successful implementation involves multiple units and experts across the University, and relies on the active commitment of all administrative staff and key academic structures. Monitoring and oversight carried out by the Rectorate through periodic reporting.

As a key strategic priority, internationalization supported by a robust organizational structure and strong institutional commitment at all levels, ensuring sustainable development, the continuous enhancement of international partnerships, and the strengthening of UNWE’s global reputation.