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**Project: IROconnect - Modernization and Digital Transformation
for IROs in Higher Education Institutions**

THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION

Poltava University of Economics and Trade, Ukraine

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Institutional profile

- Name of the partner university: Poltava University of Economics and Trade
- Type of the university:
 - Private institution:

- Number and profile of faculties/ schools/ departments:

The structure of PUET consists of 3 educational and scientific institutes;

- Institute of Full-time Education
- Institute of Distance Learning
- Institute of International Education

There are 17 departments:

- Accounting and Auditing
 - Hotel, Restaurant and Resort Business
 - Business Foreign Language
 - Economic Cybernetics, Business Economics and Information Systems
 - Computer Science and Information Technology
 - Marketing
 - Management
 - International Economics and International Economic Relations
 - Pedagogy and Social Sciences
 - Law
 - Entrepreneurship, Trade and Stock Exchange Activities
 - Food Production and Restaurant Technologies
 - Commodity Science, Biotechnology, Expertise and Customs
 - Tourism and Hotel Business
 - Ukrainian, Foreign Languages and Translation
 - Human Resources Management, Labor Economics, and Economic Theory
 - Finance and Banking
- Number of students by level of study (for the last academic year):
 - Bachelor: 2140
 - Master: 634
 - Ph.D.: 152
 - Number of staff members (for the last academic year):
 - Academic staff: 125
 - Administrative staff: 192



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II. CURRENT STATE OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

2.1. Vision and Mission for Internationalization. Values.

- What is the university's overall vision for internationalization?

Vision: By 2027, PUET is a digitally enabled, internationally connected university recognized for student-centered mobility services, impactful partnerships, and internationalized teaching, learning, and research.

Mission: To embed international perspectives across all university functions—education, research, governance, and services—by broadening mobility (physical, blended, virtual), modernizing International Scientific Educational Center (ISEC) processes through digital transformation, and ensuring inclusivity, quality, and sustainability.

Values: Academic excellence; integrity and transparency; inclusiveness and equal access; intercultural competence and multilingualism; innovation and continuous improvement; student well-being and support.

- How does internationalization mission align with the university's broader mission and strategic goals?

Internationalization is directly supported by PUET's 2023–2027 development strategy through:

- quality improvement
- digitalization
- research/innovation growth
- international reputation
- student and staff support services.

It also operationalizes the 2023–2027 Internationalization Strategy by expanding partnerships, mobility, language capacity, and branding.

2.2. The university's current internationalization status and key achievements.

Poltava University of Economics and Trade (PUET) is a Ukrainian HEI with strong expertise in economics, management, trade, IT-related programs, and entrepreneurship. International cooperation is an essential driver of PUET's development, supported by a dedicated International Scientific-Educational Center and by university-wide governance decisions.



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PUET is the first among private institutions of higher education in Ukraine according to Webometrics Ranking of World's Universities January 2025.

PUET is one of the 3 universities that were first to implement strategic partnership projects within Erasmus + Programme in Ukraine.

It's also on the list of TOP 20 universities of Ukraine by Erasmus+ ICM projects, while having absolute superiority in the Poltava region.

Since 2009 PUET upholds and advances the Principles, Values and Responsibilities stated in Magna Charta Universitatum.

- Partnerships: Cooperation with 66 HEIs across 27 countries.
- Mobility & exchanges: 30 HEI-partners from 12 countries within Erasmus+ KA1 ICM; 20 staff/admin mobilities, 8 student mobilities (in 2024).
- Internships abroad for students: PUET has experience in organizing internships in Poland, Greece, Tunisia, China, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Egypt, Montenegro, Germany, Turkey, Italy and Bulgaria (about 90 internship bases abroad); 62 students undertook professional internships/practice abroad (in 2024).
- International projects: 15 active projects in 2024, including Erasmus+ IROconnect (101179099) and multiple international initiatives (DVV, USAID, GIZ/EU4Business, British Council, etc.).
- Annual participation in Erasmus+ Call for proposals: KA2 Cooperation Projects 6 in 2024; Jean Monnet 2 in 2024.
- Foreign experts involved into teaching: 7 experts from 6 countries (in 2024).
- International conferences: 15 conferences carried out in 2024.
- Recruitment of international students: Despite the war, admissions continued (current international cohort 33 students/trainees from 9 countries as of 24 Mar 2025).
- Digital outreach: 2024 traffic to international.puet.edu.ua (EN admissions page): 953 users, 9,323 page views.
- Impact of full-scale war: travel restrictions (especially for male students and staff), visa/consular barriers, safety/infrastructure challenges—leading to declines in several mobility indicators. Digitalization and stable partner ties enabled growth in project activity and cooperation proposals.



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III. SWOT ANALYSIS

- **Strengths:** (Internal factors contributing to successful internationalization)
 - Broad international network (66 HEIs / 27 countries); established Erasmus+ experience (KA1, KA2, Jean Monnet).
 - Growing portfolio of international/grant projects, strong ISEC coordination and leadership support (Academic Council decisions).
 - Educational programs and curriculums developed in accordance with international educational programs of recognized foreign universities.
 - Digital outreach infrastructure (EN site; online admissions; analytics) and readiness for hybrid/virtual activities.
- **Weaknesses:** (Internal factors hindering internationalization)
 - Variable English proficiency among students and staff across structural units; need to scale training and English-taught delivery.
 - Limited automation in mobility administration; fragmented processes and documentation.
 - Insufficient funding for international activities.
 - Resource constraints for branding and international recruitment; some outdated workflows.
- **Opportunities:** (External factors that could enhance internationalization)
 - EU capacity-building, virtual/blended mobility, ESN collaboration.
 - Diaspora and partner interest in supporting Ukraine; new funding calls for international projects (EU, USAID, GIZ, DVV, British Council, etc.).
 - Digital-first recruitment and joint/dual programs.
- **Threats:** (External factors that could impede internationalization)
 - Ongoing war and related border restrictions.
 - Economic and political uncertainty.
 - Outflow of youth and skilled workers abroad.
 - Heightened competition for students and projects internationally.
 - Regulatory changes; potential funding fluctuations.



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IV. TRAINING OF THE STAFF RELATED TO INTERNATIONALIZATION

4.1. The current state of staff training

Professional development occurs via project participation, staff mobilities, partner visits, conferences, information days, and regular consultations. A key institutional need is to strengthen English and foreign language proficiency and to systematize training in mobility administration, Erasmus+ rules, intercultural support, and digital tools.

4.2. Needs Assessment for Training

In the context of PUET's growing international engagement, staff development is a critical component of successful internationalization. The effectiveness of mobility programs, international partnerships, and project participation depends on the institutional capacity and individual competencies of academic and administrative personnel.

Key Skills and Competencies Required for Internationalization:

A. Academic Staff

- Foreign language proficiency (mainly English): for teaching, communication with international partners, and participation in international projects.
- Intercultural communication and teaching in multicultural classrooms.
- Design and delivery of English-taught courses (syllabus adaptation, teaching materials, assessment tools).
- Integration of international and comparative perspectives into curricula.
- Use of digital tools for international collaboration.
- Research internationalization: publishing in indexed journals, preparing international grant proposals, networking with global research communities.

B. Administrative and Management Staff

- Knowledge of Erasmus+ and other EU programs — application procedures, reporting, financial rules, and partner management.
- Project management skills (planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation).
- Communication and negotiation skills for maintaining international partnerships.
- Understanding international higher education systems and quality assurance standards.
- Marketing and international student recruitment competencies.
- Data management and use of digital tools for mobility administration.



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Challenges Identified:

Area	Challenges Observed
Language and communication	Limited confidence in using English for academic and administrative communication
Mobility and projects management	Insufficient experience with digital tools for projects coordination and reporting
Project participation	Uneven involvement of departments in Erasmus+ and international cooperation initiatives

To support the implementation of PUET's internationalization strategy, it is essential to:

- Establish a continuous professional development system for staff involved in internationalization.
- Develop internal training modules and peer-learning sessions.
- Engage PUET experts with Erasmus+ experience as trainers and mentors.
- Create incentives for staff participation in training (recognition, workload consideration, certification).

4.3.Actions regarding Training Programmes and Initiatives

Specific Training Modules	Delivery Methods	Target Audience	Timeline for Implementation	Responsible	Estimated Resources Required	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Training Effectiveness
English for staff	Blended courses; mentorship; certification	ISEC staff; administration ; faculty	Long-term	Language Department; ISEC	Budget for tutors, materials	Number of staff trained, staff certified; English level gains
Intercultural Pedagogy	Workshops; peer learning	Academic staff	Medium-term	Pedagogy and Social Sciences Department, Educational Scientific Institute for Quality Assurance in Higher	Trainers, materials	Student Feedback



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				Education, ISEC		
Grant Writing & Project Management	Bootcamps; mentoring	ISEC, faculty	Long-term	Educational Scientific Institute of Projects and Advanced Training, ISEC	Trainers, materials	Number of proposals; success rate
Digital tools for mobility and projects management	Workshops; trainings	ISEC, staff involved into project management	Long-term	ISEC, IT Department, NOMOS	Trainers, materials	Reduction in processing time; improved data accuracy; increase in users satisfaction
Student Support & ESN Collaboration	Joint workshops with ESN	Faculty, ISEC, Student Council, ESN section	Long-term	ISEC; ESN	Trainers, materials	Student Feedback

4.4. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism:

- How will the progress on the Training Programmes and Initiatives will be regularly monitored? (e.g., review meetings, who will be in charge of monitoring etc).

Semesterly coordination meetings (ISEC, Language Department, Educational Scientific Institute for Quality Assurance in Higher Education).

- What data will be collected and how often?

Attendance list, certification rates; pre test/post test; student/partner feedback.

Review and Adaptation:

- How often will the Training Programmes and Initiatives be formally reviewed and potentially adapted? (e.g., every 3 years).

Formal review annually.



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V. DIGITALIZATION FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION

5.1. The current state of digitalization supporting the university's internationalization

Poltava University of Economics and Trade has a Program for the Introduction of Innovative Technologies into the Educational Process, which encompasses not only the integration of innovative educational technologies and methods into the university's work, but also a high level of digitalization of all processes. Among the main areas of digitalization:

1. Operation of the Izeta automation system
2. Comprehensive coverage of wired and wireless networks with Internet access
3. Operation of the Educational and Scientific Center "STEAM-Hub", which consists of 7 laboratories: a robotics laboratory, an additive technologies laboratory, an immersive technologies laboratory, an aerial robotics educational center, a mobile robotics training center, a makerspace, and a laboratory of modern educational technologies.

Each of these laboratories aims to introduce cutting-edge technologies into the university, including 3D graphics and printing, virtual, mixed, and augmented reality technologies, etc.

As for the digitalization supporting the University's internationalization the main advantages are:

- functional EN admissions website and online admissions capability;
- use of web analytics for recruitment insights;
- hybrid/online information days and consultations.

5.2. Challenges, opportunities and benefits of digitalization in IROs

1. Challenges

- Fragmented digital systems: Lack of integration between Izeta automation system, student information systems, and Erasmus+ tools.
- Limited staff digital competencies: Need for continuous upskilling in new digital tools, data management etc.
- Resistance to change: Some administrative units maintain traditional paper-based workflows and are hesitant to adopt new systems.
- Resource constraints: Insufficient funding or technical support for upgrading software, licenses, or training.
- Cybersecurity and data protection risks: Managing sensitive personal and academic data requires strict adherence to data privacy and protection standards.
- Uneven digital readiness among partners: Cooperation is sometimes hindered by partners' differing technological capacities or incompatible platforms.



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2. Opportunities

- Process automation and efficiency: Streamlined workflows for mobility management, reporting, and partner communication through digital tools.
- Enhanced transparency and accessibility: Real-time data sharing among departments, ensuring accurate tracking of mobility and partnerships.
- Expansion of virtual and blended mobility: Increased opportunities for students and staff to participate in international experiences without geographical or financial barriers.
- Improved communication and collaboration: Use of digital platforms (Teams, Zoom etc.) facilitates continuous interaction with international partners.
- Data-driven decision-making: Digital analytics support monitoring, evaluation, and evidence-based strategic planning.
- Inclusive internationalization: Digital tools promote participation of students with limited mobility opportunities, disabilities, or other constraints.
- Alignment with European trends: Adoption of Erasmus Without Paper (EWP), digital credentials, and European Student Card initiatives enhances PUET's integration into the European Education Area.

3. Benefits

Institutional Benefits

- Strengthened institutional capacity and visibility in international cooperation.
- Alignment with EU modernization and digital transformation priorities.
- Increased competitiveness and reputation of PUET in the European academic community.

Operational Benefits

- Reduction of administrative workload and paperwork.
- Faster processing of mobility applications and project documentation.
- Better coordination among departments and improved response time.

Strategic Benefits

- Enhanced sustainability through reduced resource use (paperless workflows, online meetings).
- Greater participation in Erasmus+ and international projects due to higher efficiency and compliance.
- Empowered staff who are confident and capable in managing internationalization digitally.

Digitalization in International Relations Offices is not merely a technical process but a strategic enabler of modernization and innovation in higher education.

For PUET, embracing digital transformation will mean greater inclusivity, efficiency, and global connectedness — turning administrative processes into catalysts for academic excellence and international cooperation.



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5.3.Actions regarding the future digitalization for internationalization

Specific Digital Projects	Technologies to be adopted	Target Audience	Timeline for Implementation	Responsible	Estimated Resources Required	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
ISEC Management Platform	IROconnect platform; integrations with Izeta	ISEC staff, faculties, students	medium-term	ISEC, IT Department, NOMOS	Licenses; training; IT support	Reduction in processing time; improved data accuracy; increase in users satisfaction

5.4.Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism:

- How will the progress on the digitalization supporting the university's internationalization will be regularly monitored? (e.g., review meetings, who will be in charge of monitoring etc).

Quarterly reviews by ISEC, IT Department, Educational Scientific Institute for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, quarterly dashboards to leadership.

- What data will be collected and how often?

Processing times, volume of digital cases, data accuracy checks, user satisfaction (semesterly).

Review and Adaptation:

- How often will the digitalization supporting the university's internationalization be formally reviewed and potentially adapted?

Annual formal review; recommendations updated every 6 months based on usage and feedback.



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VI. RELATIONSHIP WITH ESN (ERASMUS STUDENT NETWORK)

Objective: To strengthen collaboration with local ESN to improve student mobility experiences and support services

6.1.The current state of the collaboration with local / international ESN organization

Collaboration with ESN Ukraine is ongoing; the establishment of a local ESN section is now negotiated with ESN Ukraine.

6.2.Actions regarding the future collaboration with local / international ESN organization

Specific Projects	Target groups	Timeline for Implementation	Responsible	Estimated Resources Required	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
Founding local ESN section	University students	Medium-term	ISEC; ESN Ukraine	University budget	ESN section formed; membership
Signing Agreement between ISEC and ESN section and ESN Ukraine	University students	Long-term	ISEC; ESN Ukraine; ESN section	University budget	Agreement signed; partnership established; roles and obligations divided
Mentor System	University students	Long-term	ISEC; ESN section	Training	Quantity of the mobility participants; level of interest and satisfaction
Joint International Classes	University students	Long-term	ISEC; ESN section	Event budget	Attendance; feedback

6.3.Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism:

- How will the progress on actions regarding the collaboration with local / international ESN organization will be regularly monitored? (e.g., review meetings, who will be in charge of monitoring etc).



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Semesterly operational reviews (training, digitalization, ESN, mobility KPIs); annual public report.

- What data will be collected and how often?

Mobility numbers (students/staff), number of ESN activities, number of participants, rate of satisfaction, issues resolved.

Review and Adaptation:

- How often will the collaboration with local / international ESN organization be formally reviewed and potentially adapted?

Annual formal review; annual action plan update with ESN.