

# RUB INTERNATIONAL 2030

## INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY

Ruhr University Bochum | 2025 -2030

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# FOREWORD

Internationalization is one of the central strategic areas defined by the rectorate of Ruhr University Bochum. RUB's tradition as a university with an international outlook and a rising number of international students, scholars, and staff are the starting point for this strategy. The current economic, geopolitical, societal and financial challenges of a globalized world both present opportunities and threats for the international outlook of universities and, in particular, for their strategic focus on internationalization. Thus, RUB needs to reorientate and position itself in this context. Together with representatives of the RUB community – from the faculties, the student body, the administration, and the university committees – common guiding principles for internationalization at RUB have been developed. These principles are summarized in the Mission Statement *RUB International 2030* and serve as a frame for the university-wide internationalization strategy presented here.

Based on RUB's declared conviction that internationalization is a cross-sectional task that pervades all areas and involves all levels of the university, the internationalization strategy outlines our joint commitment to promoting cross-cultural exchange, expanding and deepening international academic partnerships, and nurturing a diverse and inclusive learning and teaching environment with a global outlook. It defines action fields and goals of internationalization and proposes a range of measures to put these into practice.

The internationalization strategy of RUB aims to

- define strategic goals and adequate framework conditions for internationalization,
- encourage faculties, central and administrative departments to set their own priorities and thus promote aims and measures that are fit for purpose within the design of the strategic framework,
- create synergies by coordinating all institutional measures with central support structures and
- provide incentives for achieving the university's development goals.

To this end, RUB concentrates on strengthening existing, well-functioning international activities and developing them further, without ignoring new opportunities or adapting as circumstances might change. It also aligns internationalization with other institutional strategies - linking the central and the faculty perspective - to strengthen RUB's profile and impact while taking the available resources into account. The internationalization strategy outlined on the following pages demonstrates the importance RUB attaches to internationalization and its commitment to enhance and consolidate it.

The successful implementation of this internationalization strategy requires collaboration of numerous stakeholders – university leadership, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and external partners. Regular communication, transparent decision-making processes, and dedicated resources will be essential to achieving the goals and maximizing the impact of our internationalization efforts.

RUB already is a university with a strong international outreach and we have set ourselves comprehensive and ambitious goals to further leverage our existing strengths and spur the engagement of the entire university community. The commitment shown so far in developing this strategy serves as an inspiring foundation for the work that lies ahead.

**Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Martin Paul**

Rector

**Prof. Dr. Kornelia Freitag**

Vice-Rector for Study and Teaching

# PREAMBLE

In today's strongly interconnected world, universities play a pivotal role in fostering global understanding, collaboration, and innovation. As Ruhr University Bochum, we see ourselves as a member of the global community of universities – institutions that pursue their goals regardless of national borders, ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds. Our aim is to increase and disseminate knowledge through research, teaching, and knowledge transfer to secure a better future for all people. As a signatory of the Magna Charta Universitatum, **RUB** is committed to the fundamental values and principles of universities worldwide.

Internationalization contributes to **RUB's** profile and competitiveness. It is a key element in achieving excellence in research, teaching, and transfer. By building and expanding a vibrant and inclusive international community at **RUB**, we prepare students to thrive in an interconnected world and researchers to engage in world-class research. Through strategic partnerships, innovative programs, and a confident commitment to diversity, talent development, and excellence, we broaden our academic social impact and contribute to positive global change.

In line with our mission “Built to Change,” **RUB** promotes interdisciplinary cooperation across the whole spectrum of disciplines and encourages the contribution and commitment of all university members in the quest for social and technological innovation. Recognizing the inherent conflict of internationalization in balancing mobility with sustainability and socio-economic means, we pursue a responsible, diversity and climate-sensitive approach to internationalization and design key internationalization activities in consideration of their social, environmental, and ethical impacts.

# RUHR UNIVERSITY BOCHUM: INTERNATIONAL PROFILE

With a wide range of different measures and activities that started with its establishment in the 1960s, Ruhr University Bochum has created the conditions for successful international cooperation in research and teaching as well as global exchange. Today, it is home to more than 6.000 international students, researchers and staff from all over the world. More than 400 European and global partnerships provide students and teachers with opportunities for international experience and collaboration. Within this framework, we work with a number of selected university partners in privileged partnerships, either bilaterally or embedded in larger global networks. The increasing number of foreign language courses and joint degree programs with foreign university partners contribute to international academic collaboration and an intercultural environment at **RUB**.

With the advent of the 21st century, **RUB** entered a new phase of internationalization of research, teaching, administration, knowledge transfer and social engagement. To facilitate and foster collaboration with international partners in relevant regions and to strengthen international recruitment activities we have started to operate a liaison office in Ghana within the NRW-Ghana University Alliance and joint liaison offices for North America and Eastern Europe/Central Asia as well as a planned liaison office for Latin America within the University Alliance Ruhr (UAR). In recent years, **RUB** has continued to raise its international profile through active membership in multilateral networks. In 2016, **RUB** boosted its traditionally strong support for exiled/displaced and otherwise threatened scholars by joining the New York-based Scholars at Risk Network and becoming a founding member of its German section. In 2020, **RUB** joined a network of European universities to create and develop the European University Alliance UNIC (The European University of Cities in Post-Industrial Transition) funded by the European Union (EU). In 2022, **RUB** expanded its scope for international collaborative research by joining the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN), which promotes research collaborations with a focus on global sustainable development challenges. **RUB**'s commitment to internationalizing its activities is also evidenced by its success in systematically acquiring funding for international collaboration and research projects, for example from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German Research Foundation (DFG), the European Union (EU) and other national and international funding organizations. It confirms the university's strong international network and why internationalization is an important driving force in the university's areas of research excellence. As a third pillar alongside research and teaching, **RUB** has advanced to become one of the top 10 start-up universities in Germany, combining knowledge transfer and start-up activities with an international orientation at an early stage. The “**WORLDFACTORY** International” program, developed under the **WORLDFACTORY** brand, promotes international start-up and transfer activities at the university and uses global networks and partnerships to create space for start-ups without borders, thus raising the profile of **RUB** and the Ruhr region as an internationally attractive location for start-ups and transfer, creating economic as well as societal value.

# MISSION STATEMENT

Ruhr University Bochum's international orientation is anchored in its function as driving force of change in the post-industrial transition of the Ruhr region. Located in a central European metropolitan area in social and economic transformation, our university is an attractive place for intercultural exchange and collaboration. This attracts regional as well as international talents. The diversity of our students and staff is an opportunity to excel in talent development, innovation, and transfer. Internationalization forms an important element of all activities at **RUB**. It serves to promote excellent education, research, transfer, operations, and societal interaction. It also heightens the visibility and reputation of our university.

## Learning and Teaching

Internationalization ensures and increases the high quality of Learning and Teaching at **RUB**. It strengthens **RUB**'s attraction as a study and research location. It prepares our graduates to become responsible members of an increasingly interconnected global society and it helps them to shine in their future careers. We promote internationalization in Learning and Teaching on and off campus, in person and digitally, at home and abroad. We grant our students a wide range of courses and curricula in English and other languages. We offer a whole range of mobility opportunities to encourage our students, faculty, and staff to acquire intercultural competences and foreign language skills.

## Research and Transfer

Internationalization enables and propels exceptional research and transfer at **RUB**. It enhances the university's research profile and performance. **RUB** supports international collaborations to foster top-level research and to nurture prolific entrepreneurship and transfer. **RUB** recruits and promotes excellent young and senior researchers from all over the world. The collaboration with international scientists spurs cutting-edge research and innovation, which boosts the interdisciplinary study, research, and work environment at **RUB**.

## Strategic Partnerships

Internationalization strengthens **RUB**'s connections with local, regional, European, and global partners. **RUB** builds bridges from the Ruhr region to Europe and the world. We understand ourselves as part of an international knowledge community and foster international cooperations and membership in selected international networks. We deepen strategic institutional partnerships and support international network activities and exchange.

## Global Engagement

Internationalization at **RUB** encompasses our commitment to core values of inclusion, collaboration, tolerance, and academic freedom. We live up to our regional, European, and global responsibility to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda by promoting education for sustainable development and fostering responsible research, scientific integrity, and innovation to address global challenges. We strive to counteract existing global inequalities and to contribute to the peaceful and sustainable development in the world by forming resilient reciprocal partnerships and safeguarding academic freedom.

## Community

Internationalization enriches our university culture and enhances the quality of life on our campus, in our city and in our region. At **RUB**, appreciation of diversity and cultural variety is lived and supported by faculty, students, and administrators alike. **RUB** welcomes people from all over the world who study, research, teach and work collaboratively on our campus and contribute to the diversity of our university community. All members of our community help to make students, researchers, and staff from all over the world feel at home at **RUB**.

# INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGY

RUB's institution-wide internationalization strategy is structured along overarching fields of action. Many of them are interrelated, while each of them is defined by a specific set of internationalization goals and milestones that call for the development and implementation of key measures.

## Action Field 1: Learning and Teaching

Global competencies and intercultural experiences are important elements of modern higher education. RUB aims to equip all students and graduates - both German and international - with international experiences and intercultural dimensions as an integral part of their studies to prepare them for the increasingly globalized academic and professional labor markets. RUB currently offers 36 foreign language and bilingual degree programs (German-English, German-French) and a constantly increasing number of international joint, double and multiple degree programs. The interdisciplinary key competence program with elective course options ("Optionalbereich") offers RUB students a distinctive and flexible pathway to integrate language learning and the acquisition of international competences into their studies. The International Office (IO) and the Research School (RS) offer a wide range of information, advice and support services for international students and academics at RUB, as well as for domestic students, staff and faculty who are planning to work and study abroad. Language courses and trainings offered by the University Language Centre (ZFA) and the Landesspracheninstitut (LSI) at RUB provide students, faculty and staff with the opportunity to acquire and improve their foreign language skills, while international students, faculty and staff can make use of German as a second language courses. With the establishment of UNIC, Virtual Exchange seminars have been introduced at RUB and the RUB Centre for Teaching and Learning (ZfW) is instrumental in developing and promoting methods and training formats for Virtual Exchange offers at all RUB faculties.

### Goals

RUB will advance the use of its international partnerships, mobility schemes and grant opportunities so that more students can gain international study or work experience through study abroad, Virtual Exchange or blended mobility. RUB will also encourage more researchers and staff to enrich their personal and professional development through international mobility programs. RUB aims to significantly increase the number of international students and graduates in the Bachelor's and Master's programs, in particular by developing innovative models for undergraduate degree courses that help to attract particularly qualified international applicants and to enable them to integrate smoothly.

### Milestones to be achieved by 2030

- 1.1. The number of outgoing and incoming exchange students at RUB will have increased.
- 1.2. The international physical and virtual mobility of RUB students and doctoral candidates will have increased, taking into account the dimensions of social inclusion and environmental sustainability.
- 1.3. The percentage of faculty and staff that is actively involved in international teaching activities will have increased.
- 1.4. All faculties will offer Virtual Exchange courses as a regular part of their programs.
- 1.5. The percentage of international graduates who have successfully completed their studies at RUB will have continued to increase.
- 1.6. The number of double and joint degrees will have risen further.
- 1.7. In all study programs at RUB, the availability of courses and/or other offers in English will allow international exchange students to earn 30 credit points (CPs) and more.

## Action Field 2: Research

Collaborative interdisciplinary research, state-of-the-art research infrastructure, the university-wide RUB Research School for early career researcher development, and the applied concept of Research-based Learning highlight our distinctive institutional research profile. Researchers at all career levels at RUB are frequently involved in international collaborations and exchanges, which act as catalysts for academic programs and research initiatives, thus stimulating academic excellence. Due to its interdisciplinary orientation, the high

number of international research partnerships and structured research profile areas, **RUB** has achieved considerable international visibility in individual research areas such as in our Clusters of Excellence, CASA (Cyber Security in the Age of Large-Scale Adversaries) and RESOLV (Ruhr Explores Solvation).

### Goals

We aim to raise the international profile and visibility of our university as a whole through world-leading positions in various fields of research with a long-lasting effect. To achieve this, we aim to optimize the framework conditions for internationally oriented research at all levels in order to increase collaboration, visibility, and the number of research grants. The recruitment and retention of outstanding early career researchers and professorial staff from abroad is another key objective for the internationalization of academic research at **RUB** and its international competitiveness.

### Milestones to be achieved by 2030

- 2.1 Acquired third-party funding for international research activities and high impact funding programs such as European Research Council (ERC) grants will have increased.
- 2.2 The number of high-profile international co-publications will have increased.
- 2.3 Research-based Learning at **RUB** will include opportunities for international collaboration and study experience.
- 2.4 Attractive and internationally competitive conditions for the recruitment and retention of international professors and early career researchers will have been created.
- 2.5 **RUB**'s concept for new career paths targeting high-potential early career researchers will include internationalization measures.
- 2.6 International mobility, networking, and cooperation of **RUB** researchers, in particular of early career researchers, will be established and supported as an integral part of academic career development and research experience at **RUB**.
- 2.7 **RUB** will be established as an active member of the international Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) and will have developed an institutional action plan for the reform of research assessment.

## Action Field 3: Knowledge and Technology Transfer with Societal Impact

In addition to the internationalization of teaching and research, the third mission of universities is the transfer of knowledge and technology which goes beyond the regional and national level and reaches out to Europe and the world. The creation of international networks for start-ups and entrepreneurship is vital for **RUB** as it drives innovation, creates new opportunities for students and researchers, and contributes to the university's role as a visible catalyst for economic and societal growth. **RUB**'s members use their experience in a global community of scholarship, social and technological innovation, and entrepreneurship, to actively engage with civil society and contribute their expertise to the realms of society, politics, and the economy. Together with partners from business and civil society, **RUB** thus contributes not only to sustainable economic development but also to social innovation and societal cooperation on a global scale.

### Goals

Orientated to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and by integrating international partners and perspectives, **RUB** aims to further internationalize its transfer activities. **RUB** will make targeted use of its global partnerships to foster entrepreneurship and social innovation in the Ruhr region and beyond. **RUB** aims to promote the engagement of international students and researchers in the knowledge exchange with and for society, and to enhance lifelong learning with international perspectives.

### Milestones to be achieved by 2030

- 3.1 **WORLDFACTORY** International will be established as one of the Excellence Start-up Centers in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) and will have been constituted as major international component of **RUB**'s transfer and entrepreneurship ecosystem building on international transfer and entrepreneurship partnerships in key regions of interest such as in North America, Europe, and Asia.



- 3.2 Engaged research will be embedded through **RUB**'s international networks, international university-community partnerships, and a framework for research policies and systems involving citizens, civil society, and public/cities on a transnational scale.
- 3.3 In cooperation with UAR partners and Düsseldorf University of Applied Sciences, **RUB** will have established the EUREF-Talent Campus Düsseldorf where it will offer English-language degree programs on the topics of energy, mobility, and sustainability.

## Action Field 4: Strategic International Partnerships and Networks

Individual academics are encouraged to pursue and maintain partnerships with universities and research organizations worldwide as an essential part of their international engagement at **RUB**. At the same time, **RUB** is building an institutional portfolio of strategic international partnerships and networks. In doing so, **RUB**, on its own and together with the UAR, paves the way for a whole range of internationalization options such as the mutual expansion of exchange and study programs, training opportunities for lecturers and administrative staff, as well as the chance to participate in international projects and research collaborations.

### Goals

To profit from synergies and to use resources wisely with the aim of raising its international profile, **RUB** will focus strategically on selected international partners, regions, and networks. It pursues these strategic partnerships on the basis of pre-existing connections, in line with long-term strategic considerations, common institutional objectives, shared values, future potential, and mutual benefits. **RUB** will maintain a regional focus on Europe, North America, and Asia and will establish new forms of cooperation to strengthen its international partnerships in strategically relevant regions of the Global South in Asia, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

### Milestones to be achieved by 2030

- 4.1 Comprehensive criteria and processes for strategic partnerships and various models of cooperation with international institutions will have been developed and implemented.
- 4.2 Cooperation guidelines for international partnerships will have been developed based on **RUB**'s scientific, ethical and legal standards and values, observing good research practice, risk/chance-analysis and compliance policy.
- 4.3 A reporting system for international cooperation at university and faculty level will have been installed.
- 4.4 A consolidation review and reassessment of **RUB**'s existing partnerships will have been performed.

## Action Field 5: Global Engagement

**RUB** assumes global social responsibility: It strongly promotes a free, socially responsible as well as inclusive and equitable system of global higher education, science and research that is based on core academic values and the international human rights of students, scholars, and researchers, which are also referenced in **RUB**'s Codex of Freedom and Diversity and its Inclusion Plan. It actively contributes to sustainable development, as detailed in **RUB**'s Sustainability Strategy. To this end, we engage in a range of related initiatives for knowledge and science diplomacy, global knowledge valorization, and global public policy, as well as in equitable and long-term international collaborations for sustainable development with partners from the Global South.

### Goals

In alignment with **RUB**'s core engagement for sustainability and diversity, we will consider the SDGs as a guiding framework for our internationalization activities and the management of international cooperation. **RUB** will strengthen its international engagement and recognition as a key player in supporting at-risk students and scholars. It will promote the fundamental academic values of academic freedom, academic solidarity, and academic responsibility, as highlighted in the *Magna Charta Universitatum*. It will support key knowledge/science diplomacy and global public policy initiatives that work towards an open, equitable, sustainable and inclusive global higher education, science, and research system. In addition to this, **RUB** will increase the number of equitable and sustainable scientific, capacity building, and knowledge valorization cooperations with partners from the Global South that address pressing global challenges and/or advance knowledge in key areas of the SDGs.

### Milestones to be achieved by 2030

- 5.1 A **RUB** global engagement policy and an effective central support and infrastructure for organizing and facilitating the full range of **RUB**'s global engagement activities will have been established.
- 5.2 Major university-wide **RUB** sustainability and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives and programs will have been successfully internationalized in cooperation with our partners from our European and global university networks, including partners from the Global South.
- 5.3 Key internationalization activities (e.g. international mobility schemes) will have been designed/ revised to take sustainability and DEI issues into account.
- 5.4 **RUB** will have organized and established various key international scientific, training, and advocacy initiatives to enhance the support for at-risk students and scholars, and to promote core academic values together with the Scholars at Risk (SAR) Network, the New University in Exile Consortium (NUIEC), the Utrecht Network, and the Philipp Schwartz Initiative.
- 5.5 **RUB** will be involved in a range of critical knowledge diplomacy, science diplomacy, and global public policy initiatives that promote an open, equitable, inclusive, and socially responsible global higher education and research system.

## Action Field 6: Community

Our campus is embedded in the working and living environment in Bochum and the Ruhr area. This region is characterized by a history of international migration, cosmopolitanism, and diversity, which also defines the nature of **RUB**'s academic community. International students and academics are proof of **RUB**'s international orientation and should be able to integrate well into our academic ecosystem. Interaction and cooperation projects on campus facilitate intercultural dialogue and exchange between local and international students, researchers and staff, and the wider Bochum community. To create a sense of belonging requires open-mindedness and awareness of the specific needs of international members of the **RUB** community and the promotion of a welcoming culture and community engagement.

### Goals

We strive towards establishing a bilingual campus that offers essential information in both German and English, based on a comprehensive language policy that includes multilingualism. We aim to equip the administrative staff that caters to the needs of international students and researchers with adequate intercultural and language skills by offering them appropriate training opportunities. To facilitate the integration of new international students, staff, and researchers at **RUB**, internal and external stakeholders of **RUB** cooperate to expand the welcoming and onboarding structures for internationals. To show that **RUB** is a welcoming research and study hub in Germany, we strive for collaborations in our region, e.g. with the City of Bochum and alliances such as UniverCity and the UAR.

### Milestones to be achieved by 2030

- 6.1 An institutional policy framework and recommendations for the use of foreign languages in teaching, research, and administration at **RUB** and for the promotion of linguistic diversity on campus will have been developed and implemented.
- 6.2 **RUB** will have concluded bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements with local and regional stakeholders on internationalization issues of mutual interest.
- 6.3 **RUB** has developed and implemented activities and formats that promote the acquisition of global competencies, foster an international campus culture, and support social interaction between international and domestic students, faculty, and staff.

## Action Field 7: Operational Excellence in Internationalization

Excellence in relevant operational practices serves as a foundation for achieving **RUB**'s strategic internationalization goals. It fosters the continuous improvement of our university's operational and strategic decision-making processes and promotes an organizational culture in which university members are invested and empowered to contribute to the internationalization at **RUB**. This includes the appropriate integration and assessment of internationalization key data in our central internal information and data management system (IMS).

It also refers to the targeted expansion of internal communication, reporting and participation structures as well as to organizational and staff development in line with internationalization goals.

### **Goals**

We will commit to transparency and accountability in accordance with national and international standards. We will promote internal and external knowledge-exchange of best practices in internationalization. We aim for integrated operations, optimized workflows, and lean governance structures that support and enhance our internationalization processes and allow for successful top-down and bottom-up approaches and initiatives involving key stakeholders of internationalization at **RUB**.

### **Milestones to be achieved by 2030**

- 7.1 Target agreements in the internal perspective planning (“Perspektivgespräche”) at **RUB** will include comprehensive internationalization objectives and targets.
- 7.2 The central quality management and data information systems at **RUB** will enable the collection, processing, and monitoring of relevant internationalization data.
- 7.3 An internal stakeholder dialogue and a regular knowledge exchange on internationalization at **RUB** will have been established, e.g. with the internationalization officers of the faculties and the central research institutions (ZWE).
- 7.4 Central internationalization processes, workflows and services will be embedded in the digitalization of administrative processes at **RUB**.

## **Action Field 8: International Marketing and Recruitment**

The promotion of **RUB**’s status as a hub for cutting-edge interdisciplinary research, innovation, diversity, and talent development in line with our motto “Built to Change”, enhances the visibility of our university. The attraction of diverse and talented international students, staff, and faculty and their retainment at **RUB** will become ever more important as demographics and globalization intensify competition for the brightest minds.

### **Goals**

We aim to enhance **RUB**’s international reputation as an attractive study and research location in the Ruhr region by communicating the research and teaching achievements of our faculty, staff, and students, by advertising the career opportunities we offer, and by pursuing an active recruitment of excellently qualified students and academics. We will support our networking and marketing activities by expanding and nurturing our international alumni and partner relations.

### **Milestones to be achieved by 2030:**

- 8.1 A position of international marketing and PR manager will have been introduced and filled.
- 8.2 An international marketing strategy will have been developed and implemented.
- 8.3 The **RUB** website, online and print media will be enhanced to be fit for international marketing and recruitment purposes.
- 8.4 The most promising regions for successful international student recruitment will have been identified and a stable network of strategic recruitment partners in these regions will have been established.
- 8.5 An international alumni strategy will have been developed and implemented.
- 8.6 The percentage of international students enrolled at **RUB** will have increased.
- 8.7 The number of international staff and faculty will have increased.

# IMPRINT

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