



APPROVED

Liepāja University Council meeting of 20
March 2023, minutes No. 4

LIEPAJA UNIVERSITY
STRATEGY
2023 - 2027

Liepāja
2023

INTRODUCTION

Liepaja University (hereinafter - Liepaja University) strategy for 2023-2027 (hereinafter - Strategy) is a medium-term planning and management document of Liepaja University based on the functions and tasks established in the Liepaja University Constitution, Law on Higher Education Institutions and other normative acts.

The aim of the strategy is the sustainable development of the university, supporting the necessary changes determined by the challenges in the Latvian and European higher education field.

The strategy promotes the involvement of LiepU employees, students and cooperation partners in the achievement of the set goals.

The Strategy states:

- mission, vision, values,
- strategic orientations and objectives
- key Performance Indicators and results to achieve

The strategy defines main directions, objectives, performance indicators and key targets. The strategic planning process is initiated by the LiepU management, involving LiepU employees and students at all levels.

The Strategy takes into account the objectives and priorities contained in the following **top-level strategic planning documents for Latvia's development:**

- Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia for 2030
- National Development Plan for 2021–2027
- Sustainable Development Strategy of Kurzeme Planning Region for 2015–2030
- Liepaja City Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030
- Education Development Guidelines for 2021-2027
- Science, Technology Development and Innovation Guidelines for 2021-2027
- Smart Specialisation Strategy
- National Industrial Policy Guidelines for 2021-2027
- Latvian Design Strategy 2022-2027
- Guidelines for National Language Policy for 2021-2027
- Digital Transformation Guidelines for 2021-2027

Development documents of the Liepaja University are subordinated to the Strategy:

- Liepaja University Action Plan for Strategy Implementation
- Liepaja University Human Resources Development Plan;
- Liepaja University Academic Staff Development Measures Plan;
- Liepaja University Real Estate Development Plan;
- Development Plan of Doctoral Study Programmes of the Liepaja University
- Liepaja University Teacher Education Development Plan;
- Schedule of licensing and accreditation of study programmes of the Liepaja University;
- Development plans of study directions of Liepaja University;
- Self-assessment reports of Liepaja University study fields;
- Liepaja University Internationalisation Plan;
- Liepaja University Digital Transformation Plan;
- Basic principles of Liepaja University gender equality and its implementation plan.

Strategic planning and implementation of the strategy are based on regular analysis of the operating environment and performance of LiepU. The strategic objectives are assessed annually before the budget planning process and as necessary.

The implementation of the objectives set out in the Strategy is determined by taking into account:

1. The results of the key indicators set out in the Strategy in comparison with the outcome to be achieved;
2. The results of the indicators set by LiepU in comparison with the target outcome;
3. Delivering the key objectives set out in the Strategy;
4. Action plan to implement the strategy;
5. Execution of annual plans for strategic directions.

During the process of strategic monitoring and evaluation of LiepU performance, the SWOT analysis of LiepU activity may be updated, the Action Plan for Strategy implementation may be developed, as well as proposals for further implementation of the Strategy may be developed.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

Liepaja University is the largest higher education institution in Kurzeme, where it is possible to study social sciences and entrepreneurship, humanities and arts, natural sciences, mathematics and information technologies, teacher education and educational sciences, and social welfare. In 2023, LiepU has a Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, Faculty of Humanities and Arts, Faculty of Pedagogy and Social Work, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Institute of Natural Sciences and Innovative Technologies, Institute of Educational Sciences, Kurzeme Humanities Institute, Institute of Management Sciences.

In 2019, in the international ranking of scientific institutions (2013-2018), LiepU overall rating is 2 (satisfactory), but the ratings of strategic directions vary. The main strengths of the Humanities and Arts (ranked 3) are a clearly differentiated research field, resulting in unique research themes while being integrated into research on global topics, collaboration with creative industries and new media communities at local, national and international level, engagement with urban cultural life and strong social impact, while the modernisation and digitisation of traditional research strands and the study of multiculturalism, while being integrated into the international debate, should be developed. The main strengths of Education Sciences (score - 2) are the potential for development in the areas of human capital, knowledge transfer, international competitiveness, modernisation of educational research and curriculum development, while the strategy for interdisciplinary research, quality of scientific publications and international contacts, involvement in networks, international research, projects need to be developed. Management Sciences (score - 2) positively evaluates the importance of research in the context of the regional economy and strong cooperation with partners in the region, but the quality of scientific publications and international contacts, participation in international research and projects, and involvement in networks to increase economic and social impact should be promoted. The scientific evaluation of the Engineering field (rating - 2) was carried out for the first time, and the experts recommend clarifying research areas, promoting publications with higher impact rates, developing new patents, and increasing involvement in international projects and consortia.

The recommendations of the international experts in the consolidated report¹ and in the reports of the individual directions are the basis for the planning of Liepaja University studies and research, as well as public engagement.

Recent developments in the higher education institutions (hereinafter - HEIs) community and beyond have contributed to a number of developments that directly affect LiepU. The development of closer cooperation between HEIs, even mergers, most often based on economic calculations, is not only taking place in Europe. Cooperation is based on sharing resources between HEIs and rational use of infrastructure maintenance and staff costs.

Digitalisation processes and economic benefits are increasingly important for studies and research. The limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed significantly to the development of digitisation to enable HEIs to provide uninterrupted distance learning. At the same time, the shift from face-to-face to remote processes in all walks of life, driven by the pandemic, has created new habits in the population, which are reflected in changes in demand from existing and potential students. There is a fragmented demand for distance learning, thus diversifying the opportunities to participate in the study process. LiepU technological support in 2022 has been developed not only for the current requirements of the remote study process, but also the capacity for further digitalization of LiepU management and study process has been provided.

Research-based studies are becoming increasingly important, which places additional demands on the competence of course lecturers and on the involvement of students in various research projects. The increasing demand for publications in highly cited scientific journals and the linking of publication content to courses of study are forcing a review of the employment and growth model for academic staff, as well as solutions to boost the motivation of lecturers and provide opportunities for publication.

In 2022, the sharp rise in inflation reduces students' ability to pay, creating the risk of higher drop-out rates than before. Although the Bank of Latvia's forecasts² point to a decline in inflation in 2023 and 2024, the decline in the purchasing capacity of the population in late 2022 and early 2023 is likely to have a negative impact on the ability to pay of current and potential students in the 2023/2024 academic year. The number of students is expected to decrease, especially in fee-paying positions. However, the new funding model for study places proposed by the Ministry of Education and Science in combination with high inflation may have very negative consequences on LiepU's financial flow.

¹ See: International Evaluation of Scientific Institutions Activity. Consolidated Report. Available from: <https://www.izm.gov.lv/lv/media/10721/download>

² <https://www.bank.lv/darbibas-jomas/monetaras-politikas-istenosana/prognozes>

Improving the quality of higher education and its relevance to the labour market is a priority for the Latvian government³. In order to improve the international competitiveness of Latvian higher education institutions and to implement the European Union's Recovery and Resilience Mechanism Plan, major higher education reforms have been initiated and implemented in recent years, such as the typology of higher education institutions, mergers of higher education institutions, changes in the governance system, implementation of a new academic career model, etc.

In 2021, according to the typology of higher education institutions established by the Law on Higher Education Institutions, LiepU is included in the group of universities of applied sciences, in 2022 LiepU Council is established, and in 2022 three initial directions of strategic specialization are established: engineering and technology (thematic areas of education - computer science and group of electronics and automation programmes); social sciences (thematic areas of education - teacher education and educational sciences, business and administration); humanities and arts.

In 2022, preparatory work for the reorganisation of LiepU into the ecosystem of science universities and the creation of an ecosystem of science universities in Kurzeme/Liepaja has started. Depending on the leading research university, which will be appointed by the Cabinet of Ministers on the recommendation of the Ministry of Education and Science, and its proposed cooperation model, a significant process of strategic direction and internal consolidation of LiepU will take place, which cannot be foreseen at the time of strategy development. It is not possible to determine the future legal status and form of governance of LiepU, as the existing normative base of HEIs does not currently include the "university within a university" integration model envisaged by the MoES.

³ OECD. (2020). *OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Latvia: Developing Latvia's Education Development Guidelines*. Paris: OECD Publishing. doi:10.1787/ebc98a53-en

Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the Liepaja University

Internal factors	
Strengths (+)	Weaknesses (-)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific institution status • A single institution able to react quickly to different changes in the external and internal environment • Experienced academic and general staff • Student-centred approach • Full-cycle studies in Liepaja University's strategic specialisations • Study programmes that are important for the development of the Latvian economy and the region • Professional study programmes • Active cooperation with the local community and employers • Experience in implementing local and international projects • Extensive opportunities and experience in international cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient number of matriculated students • Small student groups • Insufficient capacity for project preparation and implementation • Fragmented organisational structure • Insufficient attraction of students from other regions of Latvia • Small number of study programmes in English • Lifelong learning provision is not effective enough • Minimum wage • Small groups of scientists
External factors	
Opportunities (+)	Threats (-)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largest HEI in Kurzeme • Increasing resources and opportunities in the planned ecosystem of the research university • Extensive network with foreign HEIs: opportunities for attracting foreign students and academic staff • Increasing income from commercial activities • Increasing income from investors - local governments, industry, organisations, sponsors, etc. • Using digitalisation opportunities • Expanding e-learning, distance learning and continuing education • Systematic involvement of graduates and employers in the development of study programmes • Closer cooperation with Kurzeme municipalities • Cooperation between LiepU decision-makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of autonomy after reorganisation • Low public funding for higher education and science • Unstable, unpredictable research funding in the long term • The country's unfavourable demographic situation • Changes in legal/regulatory acts, especially those that negatively affect students in Latvian regions • Insufficient renewal of academic staff • Underperformance in centralised examinations and lack of interest, including in STEM • "Ageing" staff

STRATEGY CONCEPT

The **mission of the Liepaja University**: to be a promoter of education, science, innovation and cultural development in Liepaja and Kurzeme, providing competitive, necessary for the development of the region, nationally and internationally significant studies, lifelong learning and recognised research, contributing to the sustainable development of society and quality of life.

Vision of the Liepaja University

- Centre of science, education and culture in Kurzeme.
- Driving Kurzeme's development in science, education and lifelong learning.
- Belonging to the world family of universities, loyalty to the democratic traditions of Europe and the Republic of Latvia.

Values

- An educated, creative and socially responsible society.
- Academic freedom.
- Growth, excellence and cooperation.
- Latvia and the Latvian language.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND GOALS OF THE LIEPAJA UNIVERSITY

In accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia Order No. 449(Riga, 21 June 2022, Minutes of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia No. No. 33 31. §) "On Strategic Specialisation of State Universities"⁴, where according to the paragraph 73 of the Transitional Provisions of the Law on Higher Education⁵ the initial strategic specialisations of state-founded higher education institutions in specific scientific fields are defined, the **directions of the initial strategic specialisation of the Liepaja University** are as follows:

- humanities and arts.
- engineering and technology (subject areas of education - computer science and education programme group - electronics and automation);
- social sciences (subject areas of education - teacher education and educational sciences, commerce and administration);

The following **objectives** are set to implement these strategic specialisation areas:

- to provide quality studies, lifelong learning and talent development at all stages of the study process, which provides its graduates with competences with high added value;
- to ensure excellence in science in strategic directions, creative work and knowledge transfer for the advancement of society;
- to provide a high-quality and sustainable learning environment and modern infrastructure;
- to strengthen cooperation with strategic partners, businesses, educational institutions, local authorities, etc;
- to develop principles of good governance.

⁴ <https://www.vestnesis.lv/op/2022/121.22>

⁵ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/37967-augstskolu-likums>

1. Quality studies and lifelong learning (M1)

The strategic goal is focused on the development of professional study programmes in demand and necessary for the development and full functioning of the region, as well as on the provision of lifelong learning in the defined areas of strategic specialisation, with an emphasis on the development of personal competence and talent.

Action lines and objectives (AD)

RV1 Optimise, improve and modernise the study programme offer, maintaining the strengths of the existing programmes, based on labour market requirements and the direction of higher education development.

RV2 Expand regions of attraction for international students and academic staff, increase the number of international students.

RV3 Activate the involvement of LiepU graduates, cooperation partners, local governments and Kurzeme planning region in the study and research process, development of study programmes, quality assessment and assurance.

RV4 Targeted involvement of teaching staff in research and projects to maintain up-to-date study content.

RV5 Provide and develop a study process support system to improve the coherence of the study process stages and reduce student attrition.

RV6 Develop lifelong learning, e-learning and distance learning offer to increase the amount of funding attracted to LiepU, improve the content of the existing offer and promote positive image of LiepU.

RV7 Strengthen the leading role of the Latvian language in study and research.

Table 1. "Effective indicators for the action lines to achieve strategic objective 1"

Action lines and objectives	Effective Indicators	Achievable result						
		2021 fact	2022 fact	2023 plan	plan 2024	plan 2025	2026 plan	2027 plan
RV1 Optimise, improve and modernise the study programme offer, maintaining the strengths of the existing programmes, based on labour market requirements and the direction of higher education development	Number of students	1287	1300	1400	1500	1650	1800	2000
	Number of study programmes offered during admission	32	29	28	27	25	23	23
	Number of study programmes offered in English	12	12	12	12	13	14	15
RV2 Expand regions of attraction for international students and academic staff, increase the number of international students.	Foreign students as a share of total student population (%)	4.5	4.8	5	6	7	9	10
	Foreign guest lecturers as a percentage of academic staff (not Erasmus+ mobility) (%)	7.9	9.9	10	11	12	14	15
RV3 Activate the involvement of LiepU graduates, cooperation partners, local governments and Kurzeme planning region in the study and research process, development of study programmes, quality assessment and assurance.	Level of graduates' satisfaction with their chosen study programme (%)	73	80	81	82	84	86	88
	Employment of graduates according to study programme profile (%)	85	86	86	87	88	89	90
RV4 Involve teaching staff in research and projects, to keep the study content up-to-date, to ensure systematic development of academic staff competences.	Number of academic staff	101	101	103	101	99	97	95
	Proportion of non-research staff involved in projects and research programmes	No data	No data	65	70	75	80	90
RV5 Provide and develop a study process support system to improve the coherence of the study process stages and reduce student attrition.	Number of projects involving students	1	1	2	3	3	4	5
	Drop out rate (students withdrawn in a given year compared to the total number of students) (%)	23	25	23	22	22	21	20
RV6 Develop lifelong learning, e-learning and distance learning offer to increase the amount of funding attracted to LiepU, improve the content of the existing offer and promote positive image of LiepU.	Number of distance learning study programmes	0	0	0	0	2	2	4
	Number of participants in lifelong learning/re-training courses	807	400	550	700	850	950	1000
	Total annual value of funding raised by MIN (based on service contracts)	105898	66341	98764	113000	128000	143000	158000

2. Excellence in science, creative work and knowledge transfer (M2)

The strategic objective aims to ensure the international competitiveness of scientific and creative activity by improving the support system for research and the renewal of academic staff, ensuring the publication and commercialisation of scientific results.

Action lines and objectives

RV1 To move from quantity of scientific publications to quality indicators for internationally peer-reviewed publications.

RV2 To renew and develop the academic staff necessary for research and study directions at LiepU, ensuring cooperation between universities and research centres in Latvia and abroad, promoting participation of researchers in international cooperation programmes and scientific organisations, as well as purposefully attracting PhD students for research and study process.

RV3 To develop and implement a systematic process for the transfer and commercialisation of innovation, knowledge, research results and technology.

RV4 To increase the number of scientific publications with foreign co-authors.

RV5 To increase the share of elected academic staff with doctoral degrees in the total number of LiepU academic staff; develop professorships (tenure posts) in all strategic directions of LiepU.

Table 2. "Effective indicators for the action lines to achieve strategic objective 2"

Action lines and objectives	Effective Indicators	Achievable result						
		2021 fact	2022 fact	2023 plan	plan 2024	plan 2025	2026 plan	2027 plan
RV1 to move from quantity of scientific publications to quality indicators for internationally peer-reviewed publications.	Number of internationally cited publications in Web of Science and Scopus	40	40	40	50	60	70	80
RV2 To renew and develop the academic staff necessary for research and study directions at LiepU, ensuring cooperation between universities and research centres in Latvia and abroad, promoting participation of researchers in international cooperation programmes and scientific organisations, as well as purposefully attracting PhD students for research and study process.	Proportion of young researchers ⁶ (% of academic staff with PhD)	40	40	45	45	45	45-50	45-50
	Number of PhD degree holders in LiepU doctoral study programmes	2	5	8	4	4	8	8
RV3 To develop and implement a systematic process for the transfer and commercialisation of innovation, knowledge, research results and technology.	Process for transfer and commercialisation of innovation, knowledge, research results and technology developed and implemented	No procedure	No procedure	Developed by	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
RV4 To increase the number of scientific publications with foreign co-authors.	Scientific publications included in Open Access and digital libraries (% of total scientific publications)	WoS+ Scopus 85	WoS+ Scopus 85	60 (of all publications)	70 (of all publications)	80 (of all publications)	90 (of all publications)	90 (of all publications)

⁶ Young scientist - a doctor of science who has obtained his or her first scientific qualification within the last 10 years (Law on Scientific Activity, Section 5, Paragraph 4).

	Scientific publications with foreign co-authors (% of publications)	WoS+ Scopus 25	WoS+ Scopus 25	WoS+ Scopus 25	WoS+ Scopus 30	25-30 (of all publications)	25-30 (of all publications)	30 (of all publications)
RV5 To increase the share of elected academic staff with doctoral degrees in the total number of LiepU academic staff; develop professorships (tenure posts) in all strategic directions of LiepU.	Academic staff with PhD (% of all academic staff)	66	68	65	60-65	60-65	60-65	No less than 65
	Number of professorships (professors, associate professors), of which tenure positions	29/0	29/0	29/0	29/1	29/3-4	29/3-4	29/3-4

3. Quality and sustainable study and research environment and modern infrastructure (M3)

The strategic objective is focused on the sustainability and qualitative development of a modern, up-to-date study and research infrastructure.

Action lines and objectives (AD)

RV1 Implement the principles of the Green and Smart University.

RV2 Ensure an accessible, inclusive and equality-enhancing learning and working environment, develop solutions for accessibility of the environment and services, including ergonomics.

RV3 Ensure regular updating of technological solutions, improving and enhancing digital literacy in the study and working environment among students, teaching and support staff and in the administration of all processes.

RV4 Strengthen the information facilities (including the library) for study, research and creative work.

Table 3. "Effective indicators for the action lines to achieve strategic objective 3"

Action lines and objectives	Effective Indicators	Achievable result						
		2021 fact	2022 fact	2023 plan	plan 2024	plan 2025	2026 plan	2027 plan
RV1 Implement the principles of the Green and Smart University.	UI GreenMetric World University Rankings	450	450	450	450	430	420	400
RV2 Ensure an accessible, inclusive and equality-enhancing learning and working environment, develop solutions for accessibility of the environment and services, including ergonomics.	Ministry of Welfare environmental accessibility coefficient (The coefficient is determined on a scale from 1-10 and is presented in the section of the result to be achieved according to the addresses of the RE - 14 Lielā Street/13 Kūrmājas prospekts / 4 Kr. Valdemara Street / 20 Kursu Street)	8/6/-/-	8/6/-/-	8/6/-/-	8/6/-/-/	8/8/-/-/	8/8/-/-/	8/8/8/-/
RV3 Ensure regular updating of technological solutions, improving and enhancing digital literacy in the study and working environment among students, teaching and support staff and in the administration of all processes.	Renewal of technological solutions (% compared to previous year)	-	-	-	3%	3%	4%	3%
	Digital literacy (staff capacity building) (% of total)	60%	65%	65%	75%	80%	85%	85%
RV4 Strengthen the information facilities (including the library) for study, research and creative work.	Increase in library visits (number of attendance, number of remote sessions)	170000	155000	160000	165000	170000	175000	180000
	Increase in library collection turnover (circulation)	17800	16000	16600	17200	17800	18400	19000

4. Sustainable management (M4)

The strategic objective focuses on improving the University's overall governance processes, strengthening the quality of services, increasing revenues and reducing costs - through digitisation, integration and implementation of accessibility and diversity policies.

Action lines and objectives (AD)

RV1 Improve the efficiency of management and operation of LiepU departments by introducing a modern organisational structure and digital solutions.

RV2 Ensure an accessible, inclusive and equitable learning and working environment.

RV3 Develop and implement a mechanism to support staff with disabilities and students with additional learning needs.

RV4 Continue to implement digitisation measures in the management and study process, including electronic document management and financial planning and control systems.

Table 4. "Effective indicators for the action lines to achieve strategic objective 4"

Action lines and objectives	Effective Indicators	Achievable result						
		2021 fact	2022 fact	2023 plan	plan 2024	plan 2025	2026 plan	2027 plan
RV1 Improve the efficiency of management and operation of LiepU departments by introducing a modern organisational structure and digital solutions.	Information technology and digital solutions support (% user rating).	-	-	80%	80%	85%	90%	90%
RV2 Ensure an accessible, inclusive and equitable learning and working environment.	LiepU staff satisfaction with employer and working environment conditions %.	-	-	75%	75%	80%	85%	85%
RV3 Develop and implement a mechanism to support staff with disabilities and students with additional learning needs.	Framework to support environmental accessibility developed and implemented (no mechanism, partially implemented, implemented)	-	-	-	partially implemented	implemented	implemented	implemented
	A system/support programme for students with additional learning needs has been developed and implemented (no system, partially implemented, implemented)	-	-	partially implemented	partially implemented	implemented	implemented	implemented
RV4 Continue to implement digitisation measures in the management and study process, including electronic document management and financial planning and control systems.	Increase in revenue from paid services %.)	-	-	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%