

STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES FOR 2022–2026

"SHAPING AND INTERPRETING THE FUTURE SOCIETY"

Structure of the strategic plan

Introduction

1. International national university: bridging the East and the West
2. A developing and innovative organisation
3. Modern and inspiring studies
4. Cooperative research that provides solutions
5. Serving society
6. Supporting regional development and presence in regional centres

Introduction

In the changing world, social scientists offer research-based solutions and interpret the opportunities and challenges facing society. The guiding idea of the strategic plan period is the realisation of social sciences as a collection of research disciplines that perceive the development trends, connect different parties, and offer comprehensive solutions in shaping the future society both in Estonia and internationally.

WE SHAPE AND INTERPRET THE FUTURE SOCIETY

The opportunities and tasks facing society and the overall complexity of the societal and economic challenges put social scientists in new roles and bring them to operate in new fields of research and activity. Social scientists are the initiators of development and processes, mediators of research areas, interest and social groups, shapers of solutions and leaders of change. Solving complex issues and bringing together different parties requires an entrepreneurial and open mindset, creativity and innovation along with risk-taking, with a particular focus on a research-based approach, long-term perspective and sustainable solutions. We contribute to the research-based analysis and impact assessment of economic and societal developments.

The University of Tartu Faculty of Social Sciences has an empowering role and responsibility in cultivating the university family's creativity, innovation capacity, and entrepreneurship, fostering problem-oriented multidisciplinary teaching, research and development, and experimenting with innovative ways of cooperation and management and events.

The strategic plan of the Faculty of Social Sciences is in line with the strategic plan of the University of Tartu for 2021–2025 and supports the achievement of its objectives in the faculty, university and society, taking into account the changing world. The document aims to set development directions and can be supplemented if necessary. The faculty also considers the UN Sustainable Development Goals when moving towards the goals set out in the strategic plan.

1. International national university: bridging the East and the West

Openness and internationality are the breeding ground for innovation and new ideas in both research and teaching. Participating in international research cooperation as a strong partner allows us to increase knowledge transfer to Estonian society and solve global challenges. It will also help bring additional resources to the faculty from international cooperation programmes and keep up with the times. In turn, the international student body increases the circulation of knowledge and experience across borders, cultures and markets. International students also help to increase the talent pool in Estonia and thereby accelerate the development of the Estonian economy and the growth of social well-being. The Faculty of Social Sciences sees itself as a bridge between its cooperation partners. We collaborate with the best foreign universities and programmes to evolve and adapt to changes together.

- 1.1. We maintain a **responsible balance of curricula and research both in Estonian as well as English** to ensure both the quality of teaching and research and the development of the Estonian scientific language and research communication.
- 1.2. We pay attention to the **integration of the university-related international community** with the local community.
- 1.3. In **teaching and research**, we engage in **more active and focussed cooperation with the world's top universities and foreign partners**, including the universities of the U4 and ENLIGHT networks.
- 1.4. We support and highlight **new initiatives that are internationally visible and stimulate cooperation**, introduce and implement **different models of cooperation** with other universities, and research and development centres.
- 1.5. We apply new and more **flexible forms of work and cooperation to involve international academic staff**.
- 1.6. We support the achievement of the strategic plan's objectives and the faculty's visibility **with marketing and communication activities**.
- 1.7. We increase the **motivation and capacity of the faculty's staff to obtain external funding**.
- 1.8. In cooperation with other faculties of the university, we develop **teaching and research related to Asia**.
- 1.9. We expand our existing **competence on Russia** and strengthen cooperation related to **eastern partnership**.

2. A developing and innovative organisation

The Faculty of Social Sciences is an open-minded organisation that inspires its members, partners and the society. We are innovative, fast and constructive in new ventures, but at the same time value our traditions and history. Our research-based approach and the skills and readiness for argumentation make us think critically, search for connections, strive for truth and solve problems. We promote an environment that fosters the development of and cooperation between employees. There is a strong sense of community and solidarity in the faculty. As an organisation, we are human-centred and value personal development while cooperating with academic disciplines, units and organisations as well as individuals.

Governance

- 2.1. We support the **development of management and leadership skills** and the spread of a creative, open and entrepreneurial mindset.
- 2.2. To facilitate a smooth transition of tasks and responsibilities when managers change, we support the **introduction of different management and rotation models** in the management of academic units, programmes and projects.
- 2.3. We develop **funding models** that support the achievement of performance targets and cooperation between academic units and research fields.
- 2.4. We acknowledge and give recognition to **positive role models** among both employees and students.
- 2.5. We focus more on **ensuring a new generation of academic staff** and move towards demand-based staff choices, which are guided by the needs of fields of study and research.
- 2.6. We ensure that the faculty's **spatial programme and technological readiness** support cooperation and that our premises and technical facilities could be in cross-usage between units.

People

- 2.7. We will develop a framework for employees' **individual development paths**. We encourage employees' participation in training and mentoring programmes at the university, in Estonia and abroad.
- 2.8. We improve the **motivation and satisfaction of employees** and strive for a better balance between workload and pay.
- 2.9. We see **employees' health** as a combination of mental, physical and social well-being and foster it in a comprehensive way.
- 2.10. We offer an **educational working environment** and introduce the **principle of an open auditorium**, where employees can participate in the courses and lectures of the faculty.
- 2.11. We develop the employees' **entrepreneurial mindset** and support **taking responsibility**,

accept calculated risks and making mistakes, and learn from failures.

2.12. We encourage employees to develop their **public speaking and debating skills and media literacy**.

2.13. In staff development, we proceed from the **principle of equal treatment**.

Cooperation

2.14. We increase and strengthen the **alumni network** both in Estonia and abroad by recognising and inspiring our alumni as ambassadors of the University of Tartu Faculty of Social Sciences.

2.15. We cooperate with **general education and vocational schools** to make the transition from upper secondary school to university smoother.

2.16. We develop **cooperation with partner communities, stakeholders and target groups of the faculty**, providing them with a development platform, cooperation opportunities, joint seminars, conferences and other events that develop and expand the network.

2.17. We support **industry sabbatical** in the university's career model by giving academic staff the opportunity to work in the public or private sector for a certain period and then return to the university.

2.18. We promote **social interaction** between units, for instance, by organising the faculty's winter days, anniversaries of units and the faculty, and celebrating the beginning of the new semester.

3. Modern and inspiring studies

The students of the Faculty of Social Sciences are motivated and have a diverse learning and cultural experience, they are socially active and want to make the world a better place. The central activity of the faculty is research-based, inspiring, inclusive, modern and life-long teaching. That is why we put an emphasis on teaching skills, methods and the educational process being fascinating, research-based, professional and of high quality. We offer the best learning experience and study counselling. We work to ensure that teaching is valued, and that studying social sciences has a good reputation among students as well as in the society. When developing teaching and studies, we consider future trends, which means that the proportion of individual learning paths and module-based curricula will increase, and digital forms of study will find their optimal share.

Quality of teaching

- 3.1. We ensure that all fields of responsibility of both bachelor's and master's studies have **viable, high-quality and attractive Estonian-language curricula**.
- 3.2. We use **modern learning methods**, including digital forms of study, and focus on providing students with the **best, inspiring and motivating mental and physical learning environment** that ensures their balanced development.
- 3.3. We encourage mutual learning and support the development of **learning communities** within and between units.
- 3.4. We maintain a dignified **balance between theoretical and practical training**, characteristic of a research university.
- 3.5. We value **traineeship as a part of learning**. The faculty has a wide network of partners and diverse and university-supported traineeship opportunities for students. We involve students in building the traineeship system and solutions.

Development of curricula

- 3.6. Our **curricula and training programmes are a worthy representation of both the faculty and the university**. The development of curricula and training programmes proceeds from internationally and nationally important development needs while being proactive, innovative and pioneering at the university.
- 3.7. We favour a **smaller number of curricula** while **increasing their flexibility and modularity**.
- 3.8. To ensure the quality of teaching and to **diversify learning opportunities, we increase the volume of student-funded studies**. We develop and market English-taught and part-time curricula, and we **pioneer the introduction of micro-credential programmes**.

Students and academic staff

- 3.9. We are **development partners for students** and offer them diverse and individual learning paths. The student's personal development path and the development of general skills through both studies and traineeship are central.
- 3.10. We encourage students to spend part of their **studies at a foreign university**. We develop partnerships that support learning mobility, including digital learning mobility, and support students in making choices in this regard.
- 3.11. We place great emphasis on the **integration of international students** in the academic units, faculty, university and Estonia.
- 3.12. We **develop the digital competence of students as well as academic and support staff** and provide the necessary support solutions.
- 3.13. We encourage teaching staff to further develop their **teaching competences**.
- 3.14. We support and encourage our **partners funding professorships attractive for them**.
- 3.15. We involve **practitioners** in our teaching.

4. Cooperative research that provides solutions

In the Faculty of Social Sciences, we stand for a research- and evidence-based worldview, value researchers and high-level research, and foster the development of a new generation of academic staff. In research and development, we focus on quality and important societal and economic challenges, combining different academic disciplines to solve them, and actively involving partners, resources and foreign funding to finance research. The guiding idea of the strategic plan period is the realisation of social sciences as a collection of research disciplines that perceive the development trends, connect different parties, and offer research-based solutions in the modern world, Estonian society, and the university.

Valuing research and research quality

- 4.1. We value and prioritise the **high quality of research** at the faculty.
- 4.2. We move in the direction that the **researcher has more time for research**.
- 4.3. We encourage all **academic staff members of the faculty to participate in the activities of a research group**.

Doctoral studies

- 4.4. We engage in **interdisciplinary cooperation** to further **develop doctoral studies**, increase their effectiveness and improve the quality of the supervision of doctoral students' research.
- 4.5. We strengthen the **links between doctoral studies and the public and private sectors through knowledge transfer doctorate**.
- 4.6. We prioritise and develop **postdoctoral studies**.

Cooperation and partnership

- 4.7. We increase the **(added) value of social sciences in other research fields** and raise the proportion of high-level cross-faculty multidisciplinary and practical research cooperation in Estonian and English.
- 4.8. We support **high-level cooperation between research disciplines**. We develop **innovative solutions** to better define and manage the topics of this cooperation.
- 4.9. We consider the **development of narrower research disciplines as important as the development of broader cooperation topics**. This concerns the availability of a sufficient number of researchers, including doctoral students, who will be the next generation of researchers, as well as the emergence and development of internationally recognised research groups and schools.
- 4.10. We **promote research partnerships** in the faculty, university, Estonia and the rest of the

world. We consider it important to develop the **cores of internationally recognised expert networks** in selected areas of cooperation in the faculty.

- 4.11. We cooperate with **companies** on projects funded by the European Union and on applied research.
- 4.12. We cooperate with **ministries and other stakeholders to develop national research and development programmes and** look for ways to increase the volume and number of public research grants, including basic research funding.

5. Serving the society

Social scientists interpret the issues, disadvantages and tasks facing society and the economy, help to tackle challenges and take advantage of development opportunities both locally and globally. Our priority is to support the development of the Estonian state and society.

- 5.1. We design, guide, drive and hold a **social debate in our areas of competence**. We are proactive in discussing societal processes.
- 5.2. We maintain the **good reputation of the faculty** and participate in **social decision-making** and the development of important organisations and areas, train public sector employees and develop state advisory activities.
- 5.3. We support and promote the **concept of a smart state**, where advisers, developers and managers are experts with a research degree.
- 5.4. We help shape **evidence-based politics and practices** and address local and global challenges in the public, private and third sectors using a research-based approach.
- 5.5. We develop teacher training to ensure a new generation of teachers and support specialists in Estonian schools and kindergartens.
- 5.6. To support the development of the Estonian state and society, we develop **interdisciplinary cooperation topics** and teams at the faculty to deal with major societal challenges of Estonia and the rest of the world.
- 5.7. We focus on **popularising and valuing social sciences** in the society and different target groups. We make research popularisation an integral part of the research career by teaching and supporting the dissemination of research results in a generally understood form.

6. Supporting regional development, and presence in regional centres

In order to use the university's research potential, develop partnerships, and attract more non-university funding, the Faculty of Social Sciences is active in Narva, Pärnu and Tallinn in addition to the university's hometown Tartu.

- 6.1. We participate in the **preparation and implementation of the development plans of local governments** through the faculty's institutes, the university's colleges, and the university's presence in Tallinn.
- 6.2. We are an **active partner for the city of Tartu** in the development of Tartu as an international, open and modern university city.
- 6.3. We increase the **influence of regional colleges** in engaging in the local, national and international arena in their areas of competence.
- 6.4. We make Pärnu and Narva Colleges **centres of regional cooperation**, where the needs and interests of communities, local governments, companies and international partners meet.
- 6.5. We support the **activities of Pärnu and Narva Colleges in creating regional competence centres and** include the colleges' areas of competence in the faculty's curricula and applied research.
- 6.6. We value the **strategic presence of the faculty and the university as a whole in Tallinn**, considering different models, cooperation relationships and alternative spatial programmes to achieve the desired goals.
- 6.7. We are working to ensure that the **creation of professorships in colleges** becomes standard practice and, in the longer term, lead to the **opening of doctoral student places**.