

**RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

VILNIUS, 2019

CONTENTS

1. PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS	2
2. CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS.....	4
3. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: FEATURES, SPECIFICS AND RELEVANCE.....	6
4. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE ABROAD	8
5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AT VILNIUS UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES.....	10
5.1. Department level.....	11
5.2. Faculty level.....	13
5.3. Institution level	15
6. GRAPHICAL SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS	17

1. PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Communication and cooperation are an important part of life of individuals, institutions, countries and continents in the modern world. We communicate with many about many things. The ability to communicate and cooperate is one of the most important competences of a modern man. However, when faced with great responsibility, even the most extrovert, who likes to interact with many people, chooses one or more people whom he trusts, whose abilities and personal qualities he knows, and expects to get the best result out of cooperation with him. In personal relationships, we call such people best friends.

... Giving a definition of a best friend would be difficult, wouldn't it? This is very personal - we all have our own criteria for choosing our best friends. Sometimes this happens unexpectedly, unplanned, making it hard to exactly tell why we enjoy working and spending time with these people.

And how about an organisation? A higher education institution? We often talk about strategic partnerships in our daily lives, but have we ever thought about what they are? At first glance, it does not seem to be a problematic concept. We understand that it is another institution, an organisation, perhaps an influential person in cooperation with whom we hope to achieve better performance results. However, we have faced a challenge when trying to distinguish our strategic partners in the review of our partner network at the departmental, faculty and institutional level – we do not know the criteria that make a partnership distinctive. Moreover, we do not know exactly why having strategic partners is necessary, and, if it is necessary, how many of them we should have.

These and many other issues suggest that a strategic partnership must be approached in a comprehensive manner. The working group that prepared these recommendations did not seek to provide prescriptions or rules on how to build strategic partnerships within an institution or department. The *aim was to look at the most important European higher education policy documents and the experience of some higher education institutions and to use these recommendations to encourage our institution to make internal agreements on what a strategic partnership is for us, what its objectives are, what characteristics an external institution should have to be considered a strategic partner, what procedures we should follow to formalise a strategic partnership, how to enable it, how to monitor it, how to evaluate it and when to continue or to end it.*

We would like these recommendations to be read and used not only by the management of the institution, deans of faculties and heads of departments, but also by every teacher, because the success of any partnership depends on the degree of involvement of each of us. That is why we no longer use the academic style. We have tried to write as clearly and simply as possible, as if we were talking to the reader. We believe that examples of good global practice will help us all to communicate.

The text of the recommendations has been divided into several chapters. The first is an introductory part. The second chapter deals with the definition of a partnership, explaining how this concept is interpreted in dictionaries and management literature. The third chapter deals with the features, specificities and importance of strategic partnerships in higher education. Chapter 4 presents examples of good practice in higher education institutions abroad, while Chapter 5 provides recommendations for strategic partnerships at departmental, faculty and institutional level.

Working group:

Dr. Nijolė Zinkevičienė, Vice Rector for Research and Partnerships, head of the working group;
Dr. Jūratė Graželytė, Associate Professor, Department of Biomedical Diagnostics and Dietetics,
Faculty of Health Care;
Vaiva Juškienė, Dean of the Faculty of Pedagogy;
Dr. Andrius Juškys, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies;
Dr. Rimantė Kondratienė, Head of the Department of Landscape and Agribusiness Technology,
Faculty of Agrotechnology;
Dr. Mindaugas Liogys, Dean of the Department of Software, Faculty of Electronics and
Informatics;
Dr. Aušra Liučvaitienė, Dean of the Faculty of Economics;
Nida Mačerauskienė, Dean of the Faculty of Business Management;
Jolanta Preidienė, Head of International Relations and Projects Department;
Aušra Simoniukštytė, Lecturer at the Faculty of Pedagogy, Project Manager;
Dr. Romanas Tumasonis, Dean of the Faculty of Electronics and Informatics;
Dr. Milda Žukauskienė, Head of the Department of Rehabilitation, Faculty of Health Care.

Please share your views on these recommendations with the Head of the working group by e-mail n.zinkeviciene@viko.lt. This will help us to update this document in the future, taking into account the changing higher education, national and international context.

2. CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

According to the dictionary of international words¹, a strategic partner could be a group of people (a participant in joint work, action, an accomplice, a companion),

1. strategy-related;
2. relevant to the general objectives of <...>;
3. essential for the achievement of the general objectives of <...>.

The Cambridge English Dictionary² defines a strategic partnership as an agreement between two companies or organisations to help each other, or to work together, in order to facilitate the achievement of each other's objectives. The concept of a strategic partnership could also be analysed and presented in terms of *resource dependency theory*, which focuses on the need for intellectual and material resources from different partners to achieve the organisation's objectives^{3,4,5}. According to this theory, a partnership is a space where partners exchange resources, sometimes even sacrificing a part of themselves and their autonomy in pursuit of a common goal and to jointly address emerging threats⁶. Partners must also agree on the purpose of the partnership (a policy, a service, an infrastructure, capacities or economic development), because common objectives, trust and relationship building, cooperation processes, cooperative decision-making, shared responsibilities and common results are only possible in a well-developed partnership. Such partnerships lead to function-based communication rather than hierarchical systems, and to greater productivity through the integration of activities⁷.

Principles for an effective strategic partnership⁸:

1. **Trust.** Trust is not only important for the sustainability of a partnership, but also for operating results⁹.
2. **Partnership objectives and evaluation.** It is important that all partners are clear not only on the strategic objectives of the company/organisation, but also on the objectives of the partnership itself, ensuring that each partner is committed to the partnership, has expertise in the field, communication principles, and cooperation¹⁰.
3. **Communication and coordination.** Effective collaborative planning and strategic coordination can help to avoid negative impacts on the effectiveness of a partnership.
4. **Intercultural sustainability.** Sustainability of strategic partnerships in an international context is affected by cultural factors, such as cultural differences and differences in

¹ Zodzi.ai - international dictionary. <http://www.zodzi.ai/>

² <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/>

³ Barney, J. B. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17, 99-120.

⁴ Iles, P. A., Yolles, M. (2003). International joint ventures, HRM and viable knowledge migration. *International Journal of HRM*, 13(14), 624-641.

⁵ Pfeffer, J., Salancik, G. R. (1978). *The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

⁶ Renard T. The Treachery Of Strategies: A Call for True EU Strategic Partnerships. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/5090188.pdf>

⁷ Treat T., Hartenstine M. B. (2013). Strategic Partnerships in International Development. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, no. 161, Spring; 71-83.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Robson, M. J., Katsikeas, C. S., Bello, D. C. (2008). Drivers and performance outcomes of trust in international strategic alliances: The role of organizational complexity. *Organization Science*, 19(4), 647-665.

¹⁰ Brinkerhoff, D., Brinkerhoff, J. M. (2011). Public-private partnerships: Perspectives on purposes, publicness, and good governance. *Public Administration and Development*, 31, 2-14.

management systems. Cultural congruence of values, expectations, communication and pre-existing objectives is particularly important here¹¹. Barkema and Vermeulen point to the negative impact of cultural distance on the sustainability of international partnerships, which can be “mitigated” by recurrent projects to maintain contact and reduce this distance¹².

Dubow¹³ states that when planning partnerships, assessing and selecting partners, it is important to:

- define the requirements for a partnership (partner) – a partnership should not only be a *win-win* for the parties involved, but it should also help your organisation to achieve important strategic advantages;
- define criteria for assessing potential partners;
- identify potential partners and carry out a preliminary screening and assessment of potential partners;
- carry out a thorough assessment and prioritise potential partners;
- assess structural feasibility, prepare a financial analysis <...>, negotiating and concluding a partnership transaction afterwards.

Since partnerships require deeper and more complex relationships, the number of partners is usually small, two or three at the most¹⁴.

Effective strategic partnerships are those that allow a balance between bilateral engagement and multilateral cooperation while strengthening both aspects^{15,16}.

Strategic partnerships are “less strategic” when they have the following characteristics for various reasons¹⁷:

- 1) partners are not equally important;
- 2) no cooperation with partners on truly strategic issues;
- 3) a strategic partnership has no structural or institutional impact on the relationship;
- 4) the organisation itself is in many cases simply not considered a strategic partner.

What are the differences between a partnership and a strategic partnership? The answer will definitely depend on the organisations’ mission and strategy.

In summary, a strategic partner can be defined as a ***partner who DEFINITELY helps to implement the vision and strategic objectives of an organisation, or otherwise contributes (intellectually, financially or with other resources) to the formulation and implementation of the organisation's objectives and to the resolution of the challenges posed by various threats. Cooperation between strategic partners is mutually beneficial and activities are planned, discussed and implemented using shared resources.***

¹¹ Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

¹² Barkema, H. G., Vermeulen, F. (1997). What differences in the cultural backgrounds of partners are detrimental for international joint ventures? *Journal of International Business Studies*, 28, 845-864.

¹³ *HealthLeaders Magazine*, By Dubow Mark, for *HealthLeaders News*, August 31, 2006. Available online: <https://www.entrepreneurship.org/articles/2006/12/evaluating-and-selecting-a-strategic-partner>

¹⁴ Schultz J. (2010) What to Examine in the Strategic Partnership. *Applied clinical trials supplement*; April.

¹⁵ Grevi G., de Vasconcelos A. (eds.) (2008). Partnerships for effective multilateralism. EU relations with Brazil, China, India and Russia, Chaillot Paper 109, *EU Institute for Security Studies*.

¹⁶ Grevi G. (2010). Making EU strategic partnerships effective, Working Paper 105, FRIDE.

¹⁷ Renard T. The Treachery of Strategies: A Call for True EU Strategic Partnerships.

3. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: FEATURES, SPECIFICS AND RELEVANCE

Over the last couple of decades, European higher education has placed a strong emphasis on partnerships between countries and their higher education institutions.

What is a strategic partnership in higher education? The analysis of the documents shows that there is an emphasis on cooperation between higher education institutions and relations with the world of business in national and international contexts, but a strategic partnership has not been defined, let alone regulated. ***It is a strategic stance and internal agreement of each HEI*** as to why strategic partnerships are important to it, what its objectives are and what criteria are used to select strategic partners.

The Bologna Process has been the driving force that has brought European higher education together and inspired its key strategic objectives. Meetings of ministries, which resulted in published communications, set out strategic guidelines for higher education. Cooperation between higher education institutions, relations with the world of business and the impact on the country and the region are key factors for their implementation. The Communication¹⁸ signed at the meeting of ministers held in Paris in May 2018 outlined the partnership's ambitions for the countries for the two upcoming years. One of the objectives of the *European Higher Education Area (EHEA)* countries is to create a common framework "Peer support", which would allow them to learn from experiences of other countries or to take on the role of a trainer.

The Erasmus+ international mobility programme is an important European tool not only for improving teaching and learning methods, new study programmes, developing students' professional and general competences, and staff competences, but also for fostering partnerships. The second action of the programme (KA2), cooperation for innovation and sharing of good practice, enables partnerships between education, training and youth institutions and between organisations and enterprises to be improved and developed. The third key action (KA3), supporting policy reforms, has been designed to promote new types of partnerships. Knowledge and skills alliances allow for synergies between education and enterprises, so that higher education institutions, training providers and enterprises can foster innovation, entrepreneurship, new curricula and skills development. In higher education, the Erasmus+ programme is particularly important because it brings higher education closer to the world of business.

Traditionally, academic literature focuses on strategic partnerships between business enterprises, but in recent years cooperation and strategic partnerships between business enterprises and higher education institutions have been gaining momentum¹⁹. The European networks of institutions for professional higher education focused on the practical training of graduates, EURASHE, UASnet, and the associated structures of universities of applied sciences (rectors' conferences) in certain countries, have come together to form the joint initiative UAS4EUROPE^{20,21}, which aims to bring HEIs into close contact with SMEs through the sharing of knowledge and experience, joint efforts in applied research and experimental development and the dissemination of results to the wider public.

¹⁸https://www.smm.lt/uploads/documents/Papildomas%20menu2/Bolonijos_procesas/EHEAParis2018-Communique-final.pdf

¹⁹ Saffu, K. and Mamman, A. (1999), "Mechanics, problems and contributions of tertiary strategic alliances: the case of 22 Australian universities", *International Journal of Education Management*, Vol. 13 No. 6, p. 281.

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnMo387ZLEM>

²¹ https://twitter.com/uasnet_eu/status/737569352816300032

In spring 2014, the European Association for International Education (EAIE) carried out a comprehensive survey of higher education professionals working in the field of internationalisation in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the results and analysis of which have been published in the *EAIE Barometer: Internationalisation in Europe*²². Practitioners were interviewed to find out their views on trends and developments in this area. According to the respondents, internationalisation activities have been characterised by an increase in the number of strategic partnerships in recent years. In addition, 79% of respondents said that international strategic partnerships have been included in their HEIs' internationalisation strategies, indicating that strategic partnerships receive significant attention and institutional commitment of HEIs.

The report concludes with valuable recommendations for higher education institutions:

Developing a strategic partnership policy:

- Analyse the existing partnerships, their performance and activity.
- Agree on what "strategic partnership" means in your institution.
- Decide which "non-strategic" partnerships contribute to your institution's objectives.
- Create a policy for actively developing existing partnerships and rejecting inactive ones.
- Select priority geographical regions for partnerships.
- Strengthen cooperation with potential strategic partners.
- Ensure that a strategic partnership is aligned with the institution's strategy.
- Ensure that the institution's strategy allows for the development of faculty interests and initiatives.
- Understand the mission of the institution and which partner institutions you need.

Managing strategic partnerships:

- Establish a process for validating institutional strategic partnerships.
- Assign responsibility for the development and implementation of strategic partnerships to the relevant staff/departments.
- Develop well-defined partnership descriptions that identify the mission, goals and objectives, competences of students, staff and faculty, educational services to be provided, operational policies and procedures of the partner HEIs, financial relationships and accounting policies.
- Ensure that the partnership is based on trust, effective communication and the ongoing demonstration of a relationship that is mutually beneficial, respectful and fair.
- Consider the cultural context at all stages of a partnership. The following must be discussed openly: the administrative culture (reporting structures, institutional leadership, decision-making, communication, negotiation practices, relationship and crisis management); the academic culture (teaching, learning and assessment, use of technology, the process of curriculum design, and the culture of scientific and applied research); and potential ethical dilemmas.
- Ensure regular monitoring of a strategic partnership to assess its relevance to the institution.
- Be aware that the priorities of partnerships and partners may change over time.

²² *The EAIE Barometer: Internationalization in Europe* (Engel et al 2015), <https://www.eaie.org/our-resources/barometer.html>

The American Council on Education (ACE)²³ provides advice on building strategic partnerships between higher education institutions:

1. Get to know the partner institution and its partnership culture well.
2. Appoint a responsible employee - dedicated and motivated.
3. Keep your institution's staff, administration and students informed about the progress of partnership activities.
4. Bring in the most active and committed staff.
5. Look for mutually beneficial partnerships.
6. Link the objectives of a strategic partnership to the strategic objectives of the institution.
7. Make multidimensional connections.
8. Let new opportunities unfold.

Strategic partnerships can only be effective when they are in the interests of the HEI and its strategic partner. Research shows that there are five main reasons why businesses engage with HEIs: short-term problem-solving needs, attracting and recruiting talent, long-term development of new technologies, interaction with start-ups, publicity and political influence²⁴.

Strategic partnerships in a HEI should include several key forms of academic activity. The difference between simple and strategic partnerships is that the former may be short-term and fragmented, while the latter is an integral part of the institution's development. The number of strategic partners investing in mutual relationship building and participating in the formulation and implementation of the HEI's long-term objectives in the context of planning of various resources may be very small – one or a few²⁵.

4. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE ABROAD

Maastricht University's participation in the Alliance for Europe's Future

Maastricht University (The Netherlands) coordinates the Young *Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE)* Alliance. This alliance of eight young universities has been created to bring about radical change in European higher education. YUFE aims to become a model for a young, student-centred, non-elite, open European university. YUFE's activities involve collaboration between higher education institutions, public and private sector companies and citizens across Europe.²⁶

Cooperation between Hamburg University of Applied Sciences and California State University

The partnership between Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW) in Germany and California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) in the USA started with a small joint workshop. Over more than twenty years, this partnership has grown into a strategic collaboration involving mutual semester student exchanges, short-term programmes, joint seminars and other faculty cooperation. The case of HAW and CSULB shows how a small-scale partnership between one faculty can grow into an

²³ <https://www.higheredtoday.org/2017/07/28/eight-tips-establishing-successful-international-higher-education-partnerships/>

²⁴ Developing Successful Strategic Partnerships with Universities. Interactive resource, online access: <http://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/developing-successful-strategic-partnerships-with-universities/>

²⁵ Von Rickenbach J. (2011). Strategic Partnerships Evolve. *Applied clinical trials supplement*.

²⁶ <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/um-world/international-partnerships-education-research>

institutional strategic collaboration. Cooperation between international relations departments, publicity programmes, planning for partnership funding and the involvement of the strongest individual faculty representatives have all contributed to the development of the partnership. The latter activity, investment in building academic relations between specific academic and non-academic staff, has particularly strengthened the partnership and allowed it to grow into a strategic partnership.²⁷

Marburg Phillips University's strategic partnership with China

Phillips University Marburg in Germany has been running a five-year project funded by the DAAD programme “Strategic Partnerships and Thematic Networks” entitled “Tradition - Trust – Future”, which aims to strengthen and develop strategic partnerships with Chinese higher education institutions. Partnerships with the elite Chinese universities involved in the project, Zhejiang Daxue (Hagzhou) and Tongji Daxue (Shanghai), were already in place prior to the start of the project. Joint activities during the project – in-house projects, network meetings, summer schools, bilateral PhD programmes and training of non-academic staff – helped to develop a strategic partnership. Systematic and reciprocal mobility of students and teachers is also a key activity of the cooperation.²⁸

Science achievement-based urban development and entrepreneurship

The City of Helsinki Municipality established the “City Academy” in cooperation with the University of Helsinki and Alto University. The platform aims to intensify cooperation between researchers in the city administration, to bridge the gap between academic research and practical urban development, and to initiate projects that have an impact on the society.²⁹

Disseminating King's College research

The NIHR Health & Social Care Workforce Research Unit (HSCWRU) at King's College, UK, is a research partnership between King's College and the Institute for Fiscal Studies. A partnership with the charity Revolving Doors Agency is one example of a wider collaboration of this research unit. This agency works with a number of organisations working with people in law enforcement and the homeless. The Revolving Doors Agency particularly values the theoretical insights into problem-solving that the HSCWRU provides in a way that is accessible to practitioners (non-academic audiences). Both organisations participate in joint conferences and publish joint articles in scientific journals.³⁰

²⁷https://www.haw-hamburg.de/fileadmin/user_upload/SZ/pdf/International_Office/NAFSA-International_Partnership_BestPractices.pdf

²⁸<https://www.uni-marburg.de/en/international/international-profile/projects/china>

²⁹<https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/en/administration/enterprises/competitive/university-collaboration/university-cooperation>

³⁰<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/scwru/about/partnerships>

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AT VILNIUS UAS

The working group has developed a matrix for the evaluation of partner institutions (Table 1), which identifies the types of partners of Vilnius UAS and the joint activities developed. This matrix can be used as a tool to identify strategic partners of a department, faculty and institution.

The working group sought to assess the types of partners and the activities carried out with them ("+" means that activities are carried out with a partner, "+/-" means that activities may be carried out depending on circumstances, "-" means that activities are not meaningful or difficult to implement).

Table 1. Types of partners and joint activities with Vilnius UAS

Partner types Activities	Higher education institutions	Companies and organisations	Municipalities	Professional associations	Non-governmental organisations	Foundations and personalities
Student mobility (internships)	+	+	+/-	-	+/-	-
Staff mobility (traineeships)	+	+	+/-	-	+/-	-
Projects	+	+	+	+	+	+/-
Working as a guest lecturer	+/-	+	+	+	+	+
Outgoing lectures	+	+	+/-	-	+/-	-
Participation in study programme committees	+	+	+	+	+/-	+/-
Outsourced research	-	+	+	+	+	+/-
Social actions, volunteering	+	+	+	+	+	+/-
Financial support	-	+	+	+	-	+
Support for study content (cases, real situations, etc.)	+	+	+	+	+	+/-
Competence development (reciprocal)	+	+	+	+	+	-
Joint public events	+	+	+	+	+	+

5.1. Department level

RECOMMENDATION 1. Provide opportunities for the department's teaching staff members to participate in professional networks, associations, expert activities, and form thematic working groups of teachers for research, project or organisational activities, and identify and support teachers who have made significant contacts through these activities - the initiators and promoters of future strategic partnerships.

Strategic partnerships are usually initiated at departmental level, through the individual research, project or organisational experiences of teachers/researchers, personal acquaintances and contacts.

RECOMMENDATION 2. Select as strategic business partners public or private legal entities (public bodies, associations, joint stock companies, private limited companies, etc.) that are actively and effectively involved in one or more activities in line with the strategic objectives of the Faculty and Vilnius UAS and the needs of the programmes delivered by the Department: e.g. joint study programmes, project activities, applied research activities.

The Department's most important strategic partner is a company/organisation or association of companies/organisations. The synergistic effect of this partnership is usually achieved when the interests of a HEI and the company/organisation overlap or complement each other. It takes time and effort for a partnership between a HEI and a company/organisation to grow into a strategic one.

RECOMMENDATION 3. It is important for the Department to develop strategic partnerships with relevant departments of progressive, socially responsible, efficient and transparent higher education institutions in Lithuania and abroad.

In order to develop and expand study programmes and respective fields of study, it is important for the Department to establish, develop and maintain partnerships with departments of higher education institutions in Lithuania and abroad that are interested in cooperation, have the appropriate recognition and reputation, and offer respective study programmes.

RECOMMENDATION 4. Conduct a thorough analysis of partners, paying attention to the following criteria:

- the reputation of the organisation,*
- relevance to the Faculty's strategic objectives and the needs of the Department,*
- work culture,*
- legal aspects of operations, such as intellectual property protection, employee rights, etc.*

Whatever the type of a partner institution and whatever joint activities are planned with it, it is essential to collect key information on its characteristics to ensure the moral, legal and ethical dimensions and appropriateness of a future partnership.

RECOMMENDATION 5. Approve strategic partners of the Department at the departmental meeting, validate the minutes of the meeting and submit them to the faculty's administration.

Most cooperation agreements with social partners at Vilnius are signed at institutional level. In certain cases, where the content of the agreement is specific and relevant to one study programme, field of study, etc., the agreement may be signed at the faculty level. If an agreement with a social partner is implemented successfully at the Department, achieves significant results and has a long-term perspective, it is the basis for a strategic partnership.

RECOMMENDATION 6. Mobilise staff for strategic partnership activities. Involve the most active and experienced teaching staff members in the Department to maintain regular contacts with experts in their field in partner institutions. Provide the necessary financial resources.

Strategic partnerships are effective when they create a strong relation between experts in their field. It is important to maintain regular contact and to involve students in collaborative activities.

RECOMMENDATION 7. Ensure regular monitoring of the implementation and effectiveness of strategic partnerships, collect feedback from stakeholders and identify measures to address bottlenecks in cooperation. Evaluate the effectiveness of a strategic partnership in the Department's annual self-evaluation. If for any reason activities of a strategic partnership do not work, it is appropriate to discontinue them. Continuously seek new strategically useful contacts.

The strategic partnership should aim for continuity. It should be fostered and grown. Having successfully achieved one objective, others should be envisaged.

In order to ensure the sustainability and longevity of the strategic relationships being developed, Departments must set long-term (up to 5 years) and short-term (one academic year) strategic objectives in line with the Faculty's objectives and plans for strategic cooperation activities that are relevant to the needs of the Department's study programmes. Departments should appoint strategic partnership supervisors (teaching staff members/ researchers), provide additional measures to support the viability of strategic partnerships (involving the strategic partner in the preparation of theses - suggesting relevant thesis topics, involving the strategic partner in the thesis defence process, providing opportunities for the strategic partner's representatives to teach in the department's programmes, involving the strategic partner in the department's networking events, etc.).

Key criteria for evaluating strategic partnerships could include:

- Indicators of the number of students admitted to an internship, employed by the organisation (if the partner is an employer) or international students admitted (if the partner is a higher education institution) as a result of the partnership;
- Indicators of international mobility of students and teachers taking place/ planned in the partnership;
- Level of the qualification of the teaching staff in the partnership;
- Rate of applied scientific output, patents registered, products commercialised through partnerships;
- Financial and/or social benefits.

RECOMMENDATION 8. Create and foster a warm and friendly culture of communication with your strategic partner through various means. Ensure that the partnership is not only mutually beneficial, but also respectful and fair.

It's not just about the outcome, but also about the process. It must be motivating and ethical. Time must be set aside for meetings, briefings, joint celebrations and events that allow the strategic partners to get to know each other better and to discuss in an informal setting.

5.2. Faculty level

RECOMMENDATION 9. Attend prestigious conferences and other events aimed at developing corporate relations.

The Faculty must be represented at major professional events where insights into the global professional outlook, best professional practices and success stories are shared.

RECOMMENDATION 10. Select as strategic partners of the Faculty public or private legal entities (public bodies, associations, joint stock companies, private limited companies, etc.), professional associations, Lithuanian and foreign higher education institutions that are most actively and effectively involved in several activities in line with the Faculty's strategic objectives and the needs of the Faculty's fields of study: e.g. teaching and learning, applied research, impact on the country and the region.

While a strategic partnership at the departmental level focuses on the development and expansion of study programmes and relevant fields of study through relations with companies/organisations, a Faculty is a bigger player in this field. The Faculty's strategic objectives include not only studies, but also applied research and experimental development, practical training of students, internationalisation, career development of students and teachers, etc. Therefore, the Faculty's strategic partners should be the various professional associations working on relevant development issues in the field. Professional organisations provide a platform for introducing professionals to innovations in a particular field. They promote the exchange of best practices and allow the identification of strengths and challenges in cooperation.

RECOMMENDATION 11. Focus on effective and influential international professional associations (e.g. COST, CDIO, SPACE, etc.). These can provide reliable and strategically important relations. Appoint staff of Vilnius UAS to regular activities in these networks and seek leadership.

International professional associations and networks bring together advanced higher education and other educational institutions with similar profiles. Participation in associations and networks allows to learn about innovations in your field, establish and maintain social contacts, exchange best practices and develop a wide range of activities that contribute to improving the quality of education.

RECOMMENDATION 12. Define the activities of a strategic partnership at the Faculty level in a clear, coherent and justified way.

Cooperation between strategic partners is based on:

- formulation of a common objective, the options and the instruments for achieving it;
- identification of common interests and expectations;
- assessment of changes in partners' power and strategic interests;
- long-term cooperation based on a formal mutual commitment;
- assessment of potential shared benefits and costs;
- identification of areas for more intense cooperation;
- initiatives in applied research, experimental development, art activities and studies.

RECOMMENDATION 13. Approve the Faculty's strategic partners annually at the Dean's meeting, validate the minutes of the meeting and submit them to Vilnius UAS administration.

In certain cases, where the content of a partnership is specific and relevant to one study programme, study field, etc. of the faculty, but is of particular importance, a cooperation agreement may be signed at the faculty level rather than at the institution level. All strategic partners of the Faculty are also strategic partners of departments, but not all strategic partners of departments are also strategic partners of the Faculty.

RECOMMENDATION 14. Mobilise staff for strategic partnership activities. Appoint a motivated employee as a responsible staff member. Involve the most active and experienced teaching and other staff members in the activities. Create conditions for dissemination of information within the Faculty. Plan the necessary financial resources.

Strategic partnerships are effective when they have the support of the Faculty community. This must be important for the administration, every teacher and student. The academic community of the Faculty must be informed periodically, through various channels, of the activities with strategic partners that are being carried out, where and when they are carried out, and of the results achieved.

RECOMMENDATION 15. Periodically monitor quality and effectiveness of a strategic partnership. Evaluate the effectiveness of a strategic partnership during the Faculty's annual self-evaluation. Abandon ineffective and unsustainable strategic partnerships. Continuously seek new strategically useful contacts.

The effectiveness and efficiency of a strategic partnership is measured by the implementation of the short- and long-term plans established. Both quantitative and qualitative performance indicators, as well as an ongoing analysis of partnerships are important.

RECOMMENDATION 16. Ensure a mutually acceptable, friendly and respectful culture of communication with your strategic partner. Ensure that a partnership is not only mutually beneficial but also respectful and fair.

Cooperation must be motivating and ethical. It is important to create conditions for strategic partners to maintain regular contact, communication and cooperation in both formal and informal settings.

5.3. Institution level

RECOMMENDATION 17. Participate in prestigious national and international conferences and other events aimed at developing institutional relations.

Representing the institution at major academic and public events, where insights on regional, national and global trends in higher education and general developments are shared, is important for assuring both the quality and visibility of the institution.

RECOMMENDATION 18. Focus on effective and influential associations and organisations, e.g. the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, the Lithuanian Employers' Confederation, the Lithuanian Business Employers' Confederation, and employers' associations of economic sectors. These are important consortia where strategically important relations can be established.

The prestige and influence of Vilnius UAS depend largely on how effectively it works with strategic partners and how engaged its representatives are in joint activities to make a significant impact on the country and the region.

RECOMMENDATION 19. Focus on effective and influential international networks of higher education institutions such as EURASHE, UASnet, UAS4EUROPE, ENQA, EAIE, etc. These can provide reliable and strategically important relations. Appoint staff of Vilnius UAS to regular activities in these networks and seek leadership.

In the twenty-first century, internationalisation is becoming a horizontal priority in the European Higher Education Area and a prerequisite for quality assurance. Participation in meetings of the most important international associations and networks allows to get acquainted with the current trends in European and global education and general development, to establish and maintain strategic contacts, to exchange good practices, to develop multifaceted activities that help to enhance the quality and prestige of the institution.

RECOMMENDATION 20. Identify which partners could be strategic and in which regions, and analyse where and with whom synergies can be created.

Identifying, developing and managing strategic partnerships is a time-consuming process. It is important that both partner institutions see each other as strategic partners. Internal and external communication and a positive attitude are crucial. Continuous evaluation of the outcome of success (“What? When? How?”) is essential. It has been observed that effective and successful strategic partnerships open up an increasing number of new opportunities.

All of the institution’s strategic partners are also strategic partners of the Faculty and departments, but not all of the strategic partners of departments and faculties are also strategic partners of the institution.

RECOMMENDATION 21. Sign official strategic partnership agreements.

The most important cooperation agreements at Vilnius UAS are signed at the institutional level.

RECOMMENDATION 22. Allocate the necessary financial resources.

Provide for the resources needed to develop strategic partnerships in the institution's annual budget.

RECOMMENDATION 23. Continuously monitor the quality and performance of the strategic partnership. Establish action plans, appoint responsible employees, monitor performance and address bottlenecks in a timely manner. Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of a strategic partnership in the annual performance self-evaluation.

The effectiveness and efficiency of a strategic partnership is measured by the indicators of the implementation of the developed short-term and long-term plans. Both quantitative and qualitative performance indicators, as well as an ongoing analysis of partnerships and an impact on the region are important.

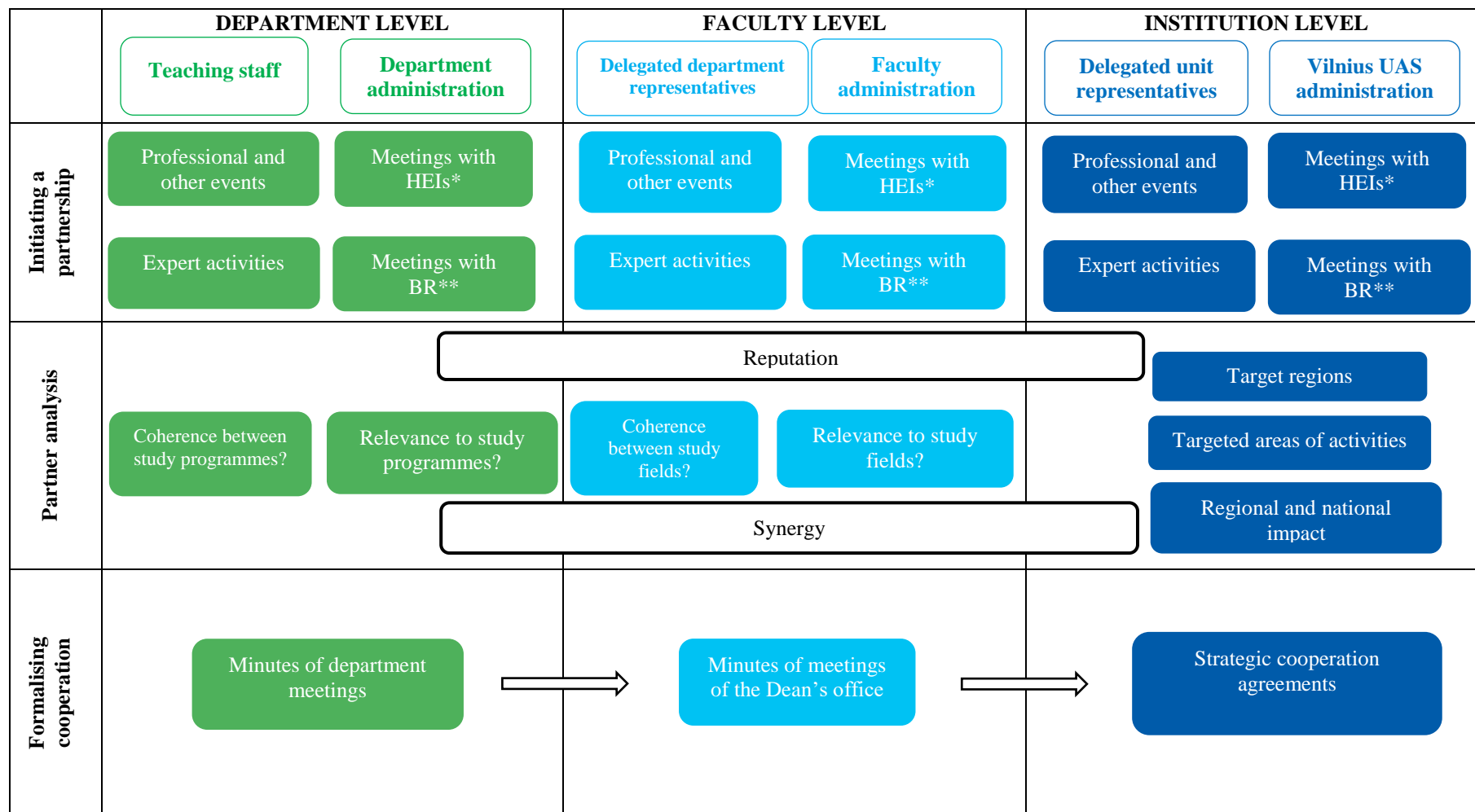
RECOMMENDATION 24. Foster a culture of strategic cooperation and use it to raise the awareness of Vilnius UAS, influence important decision-making in higher education, and create conditions for Vilnius UAS to become a university of applied sciences.

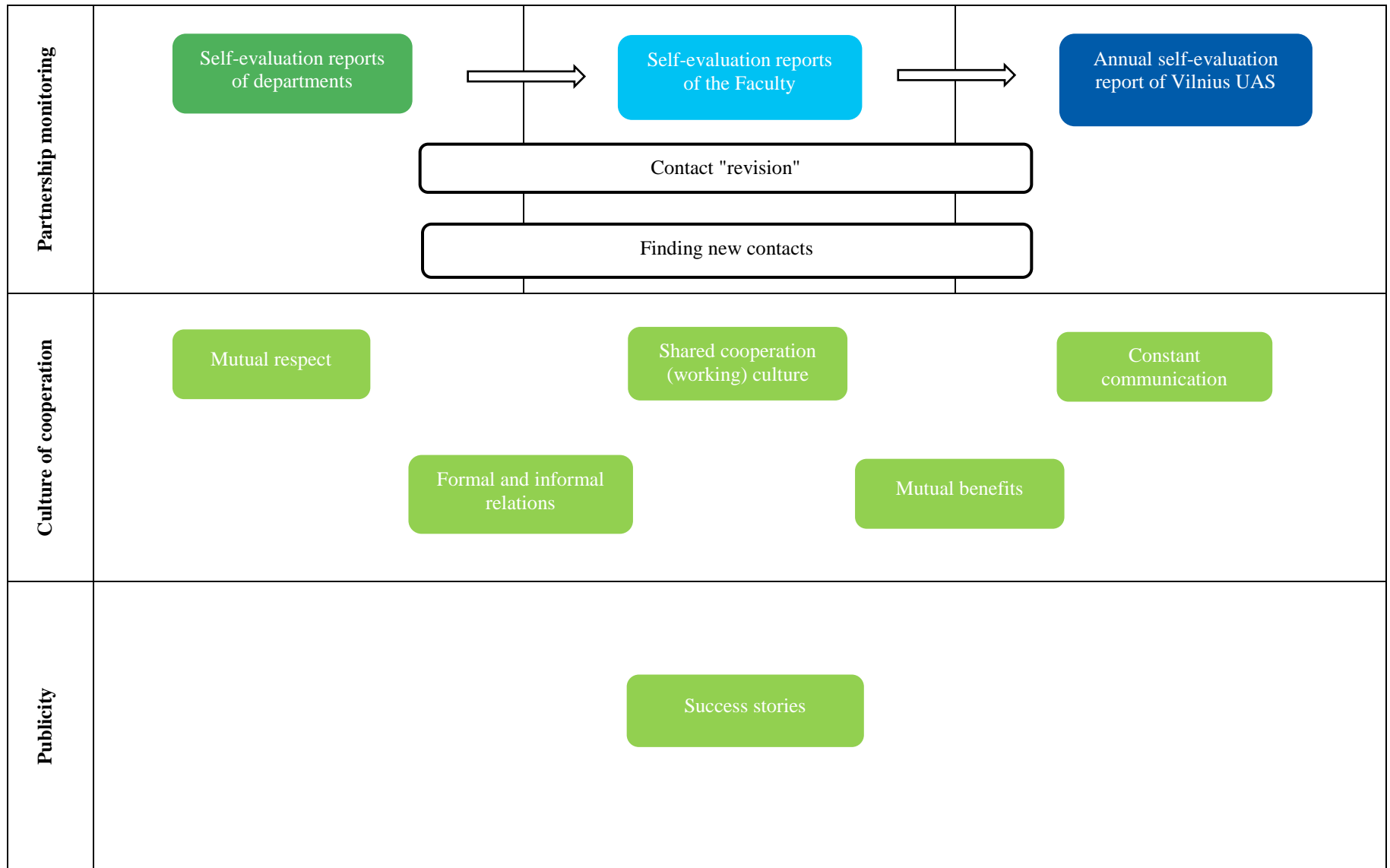
Strategic partnerships strengthen the quality of the institution's performance and its positioning – aspects that have a major impact on the institution's future development prospects.

RECOMMENDATION 25: When publicising your activities with strategic partners, emphasise the results of successful partnerships and the commitment of Vilnius UAS to expanding synergistic cooperation.

It is important to share good practice on strategic partnership activities and their results at all levels of the institution, using internal and external communication channels.

6. GRAPHICAL COMPILATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS





*HEI - higher education institutions

**BR - representatives of business world