

# Activity plan for internationalisation 2025–2026

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NOTE: This is a translation of the Swedish version (Aktivitetsplan för internationalisering 2025–2026). In the event of any discrepancy between the versions, the Swedish version constitutes the official decision, and the Swedish wording will prevail.



**Karolinska  
Institutet**



## Activity plan for internationalisation 2025–2026

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## Background

Internationalisation is of strategic, operational and financial importance for Karolinska Institutet's (KI) research and education, and its importance is constantly growing.

According to chapter 5 of the Higher Education Act (1992:1434), the overall international activities at each higher education institution must enhance the quality of the university's education and research. Through their international activities, each higher education institution must contribute nationally and globally to promoting sustainable development, which according to the Higher Education Act means that present and future generations are ensured a healthy and sound environment, economic and social welfare and justice.

KI's Strategy 2030 states that one of KI's strategic choices is to be a global university.<sup>1</sup> Since the strategy was adopted, several assignments and projects have already been carried out that involve strengthening KI as a global university.

The present activity plan has, on behalf of the president, been developed by the Internationalisation Board. The development of the plan has been preceded by a process to identify areas for development with the aim of further strengthening the university's internationalisation work. The areas are based on Strategy 2030 and complement the work already done.

The activity plan does not claim to cover all ongoing activities in the area of internationalisation but is based on four priority areas in need of further efforts. The activity plan does not exclude the possibility of initiating new activities in addition to what is mentioned in the plan.

The Internationalisation Board is a body under the president. According to the president's decision-making procedures and delegation rules the task is to be an advisory, preparatory and, in certain matters, decision-making body regarding internationalisation issues. One of the board's tasks is to support the development of internationalisation at KI in accordance with current goals and strategies.

## Definition of (integrated) internationalisation

The activities of a university are international by nature. Research, education and collaboration are borderless and multilingual. However, internationalisation encompasses more than geographical areas and

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<sup>1</sup> Strategy 2030, p. 16

language. The Internationalisation Board advocates internationalisation as integrated, which means:

Comprehensive internationalization is a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility. Comprehensive internationalization influences all of campus life as well as the institution's external frames of reference, partnerships, and relations. The global reconfiguration of economies, systems of trade, research, and communication, and the impact of global forces on local life, dramatically expand the need for comprehensive internationalization and the motivations and purposes driving it.<sup>2</sup>

## Priority areas and activities

The Internationalisation Board has identified four priority areas for further development of the university's internationalisation work with associated proposals for activities for the period 2025–2026. These areas are: 1) responsible internationalisation, 2) KI as a global actor, 3) international visibility, and 4) internationalisation at home. The internationalisation efforts at KI shall be responsible, global, visible and integrated.

### 1. Responsible internationalisation

The concept means mutual value creation, academic freedom, transparency and integrity with room for reflection about ethics, cultural, political and legal contexts. Since 2020, KI has been actively working with responsible internationalisation. A national approach is now also being taken to this issue. In 2023, the Government commissioned the Swedish Council for Higher Education, Vinnova and the Swedish Research Council to jointly develop national guidelines and proposals for a national support structure to promote responsible internationalisation. The assignment was finalized in December 2024.

The interim report, published in April 2024, states that the work on responsible internationalisation is dependent on a long-term approach, where experience and expertise are built over time. In order to make difficult deliberations, a responsible culture needs to be built on several levels within higher education institutions. The work to increase KI's overall ability to

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<sup>2</sup> En strategisk agenda för internationalisering SOU 2018:3, p. 68. The quote is from J.K. Hudzik's *Comprehensive internationalization: Institutional pathways to success* (2015).

identify and manage risks associated with international collaboration in a professional and structured manner is supported by a large number of activities.

Activities:

- ➔ Initiatives for KI's employees to increase knowledge and awareness of responsible internationalisation.
- ➔ Further develop processes and support for a risk assessment for international cooperation.
- ➔ Further develop the preparatory support for students and staff for international mobility.

## 2. KI as a global actor

KI's activities in education, research and collaboration are dependent on international cooperation. It is important that KI collaborates with relevant actors in both excellence-driven initiatives and for capacity-building purposes. Within this priority area, activities are identified that in various ways aim to strengthening KI as a global actor.

KI has been participating in the European University NeurotechEU since 2021, and phase 2 funding (2024–2027) is underway. The European Universities Initiative was launched to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education. Participating in a European University is a major commitment, and KI's participation in NeurotechEU will shape the coming years.

The 2030 Strategy highlights the importance of engagement and participation in the European research arena in order to be able to influence priorities and increase KI's funding. Another area of KI's strategy is that KI should strive to be a leader in the work to achieve the sustainable development goal that relates to health and well-being.<sup>3</sup>

North America (USA and Canada) is one of KI's priority regions for international collaborations. The conditions for American higher education institutions, organisations and research funders appear to be undergoing radical changes following a series of recent presidential decisions. This affects both education and research worldwide. KI needs to monitor this development closely in order to increase its readiness to act when the effects of the president's decision become clearer.

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<sup>3</sup> Strategy 2030, pp. 26–27

## *EU*

Since the autumn of 2020, the Stockholm Trio (KI, KTH and SU) share a representation in Brussels. The overarching aim is to assist strengthening the participation of the three universities in various EU-funded research, education and innovation programmes. The shared representation has highlighted that there are many opportunities to influence the EU agenda, in different ways. Work is underway to review the organisation so that the three universities' ability to manage information about opportunities for policy influence and input in Stockholm can be enhanced. KI is also expected to be able to increase opportunities for policy influence through participation in the European University Hospital Alliance.

In terms of research funding opportunities, it is considered to be of interest to KI to develop contacts with universities in countries outside of the EU that have received or are about to receive association agreements for participation in Horizon Europe.<sup>4</sup>

### Activities:

- ➔ Strengthening KI's opportunities for policy influence, including through active participation in the European University Hospital Alliance, the Stockholm Trio and the European University NeurotechEU.
- ➔ Develop contacts with non-EU countries that have received or are in the process of receiving association agreements for participation in Horizon Europe.
- ➔ Strengthen the internationalisation of higher education and enrich the learning and research experiences of students, teachers and staff by promoting cooperation and capacity building within and beyond Europe through, e.g. ERASMUS+ and other external funding.

## *African continent*

KI has a long-standing and strong profile when it comes to global health and has developed collaborations in low- and middle-income countries. These collaborations are a part of KI's goal to be a leader in the work to achieve the sustainable development goals related to good health and well-being, quality education, reduced inequalities and no poverty.

The African continent is KI's geographical focus when it comes to collaborations in low- and middle-income countries. The collaboration with Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences in Tanzania and the collaboration with Makerere University in Uganda are examples of collaborations that have been ongoing for several decades. The

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<sup>4</sup> United Kingdom, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, South Korea (250220)

establishment of the Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Health (CESH) has strengthened the collaboration with Makerere University. In addition to Uganda and Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa and Ethiopia are countries where KI has collaborations on a KI-wide level.

The funding and policy landscapes for global health are undergoing far-reaching changes. Since the recent inauguration of the president in the USA, several decisions have been made that have both immediate and long-term consequences for global health. In Sweden, the recent cutbacks in funding for development research have affected KI's collaborations in education and research in low- and middle-income countries, as well as KI's ability to conduct research in global health.

Activity:

- ➔ Identify sustainable forms of cooperation and alternative funding opportunities for strategically important international collaborations in low- and middle-income countries.

#### *Strategic collaboration*

International collaboration in education and research can be effective tools for addressing societal challenges locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Solutions to these challenges rarely lie exclusively within academia, which is why KI needs to collaborate with actors outside of the university to broaden perspectives and to identify future areas for the development of internationalisation efforts. Through collaboration, KI's opportunities to work more strategically with internationalisation are strengthened.

Activity:

- ➔ Establish a reference group with representation from actors outside academia in order to develop a more strategic perspective on internationalisation.

### **3. International visibility**

KI's international visibility is increasing, and several initiatives that have directly or indirectly contributed to increased visibility have been implemented in recent years. It is important that KI builds and nurtures the international networks in which KI operates and communicates strategically as a higher education institution internationally. Tips and information about how employees at KI can contribute to increasing KI's international exposure are available on the Staff Portal. However, continued efforts are needed. According to Strategy 2030, the work to improve international impact and

visibility is important to consolidate and develop the image of KI as a world-leading university.<sup>5</sup>

Activities:

- ➔ Promote cross-cultural exchange and future career paths through international alumni work.
- ➔ Ensure that information on KI's website is available in Swedish and English.
- ➔ Contribute to strengthening the competence of KI's researchers to digitally position their research for increased international impact.

## 4. Internationalisation at home

This concept is primarily used in relation to educational environments and is focused on all students being able to take part in international and intercultural perspectives during their education. To support the work with this process in educational environments, work is underway at KI to make existing resources visible on the Staff Portal.

In this activity plan, however, the concept of internationalisation at home is used in a broader sense, namely how KI as a higher education institution and workplace can strengthen the welcoming and inclusion of international students and employees, which is something that is highlighted in Strategy 2030<sup>6</sup>. KI shall be characterised by a good working environment free from discrimination and with equal opportunities for all, where internationalisation is integrated into all activities.

Activities:

- ➔ Offer Swedish courses for both basic skills and for skills development purposes for foreign-born non-Swedish -speaking employees and students at KI.
- ➔ Create opportunities for the exchange of experiences between departments/departmental groups/educational programmes regarding how the welcoming and inclusion of international students and researchers can be further strengthened.
- ➔ Offer courses/seminars in intercultural competence for students and staff.

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<sup>5</sup> Strategy 2030, p. 26

<sup>6</sup> Strategy 2030, p. 26

- ➔ Review calls for collaboration funding to clarify what the funds can be used for. For example, internationalising curricula by including an international perspective and promoting understanding of the connection between local and global contexts; or the use of digital tools or systems to create joint courses, research projects, seminars, book/journal clubs, etc. for students.