



Erasmus Policy Statement

ERASMUS ACTIVITIES INCLUDED IN THE EPS

Erasmus activities covered by the Erasmus Policy Statement

Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility:

- The mobility of higher education students and staff

Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organisations and institutions:

- Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices
- Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities
- Partnerships for Excellence - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees
- Partnerships for Innovation

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3):

- Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support to policy development and cooperation:

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS): THE STRATEGY

What UNIPA would like to achieve by participating in the Erasmus Programme and how the Erasmus Programme fits into UNIPA's institutional internationalisation and modernisation strategy

The participation of the University of Palermo (UNIPA) in the next Erasmus programme 2021-2027 is an integral part of its ongoing internationalization process and represents one of the University's priority objectives.

UNIPA is one of the largest universities in Southern Italy and guarantees public higher education in all scientific areas. The educational mission of the University is in close connection with the cultural and social frame of the region, focusing on the students' needs in order to guarantee the right to education, in a territory which has economic and employment problems, maintaining constant attention to innovation, research and relations with the labour market. The commitment for the development of internationalization activities is an integral part of the Strategic Plan of the University and is part of a broad process of integration of the Euro-



Mediterranean region and the development of transnational relations with the sub-Saharan, Asian and American area.

UNIPA internationalization and modernization strategy is based on the awareness of its role and its institutional responsibility in promoting teaching, research and innovation programs in order to give fair and sustainable answers to present needs, as well as challenges and weaknesses, building cooperative relationships between academic and cultural communities.

UNIPA internationalization strategy is built on the evaluation of the objectives' achievement included in its Strategic Plan and on the SWOT analysis of the activities envisaged by the Strategic Plans of the Departments. It aims to consolidate the ongoing programs and strengthen some internationalization sectors which still show room for improvement.

UNIPA's internationalization strategy today benefits from modernization and capacity building processes, conducted over the past six years, aimed at the reorganization and requalification of governance processes and departments. It guarantees a consolidated basis to develop the internationalization activities of the three key missions of the University, i.e. teaching, research and innovation, in close relationship with the labour market.

UNIPA participates in the application process for the Erasmus Charter 2021-2027 on the basis of its institutional skills, aiming to enhance the various actions of the Programme and their internal synergy.

UNIPA today enjoys a renewed system which has achieved a large part of the modernization objectives established in the previous period. These objectives aim to integrate and create synergies between the university's governing bodies and the departmental structures in conceiving, programming and promoting internationalization activities.

UNIPA's institution building process today guarantees the strengthening of internationalization activities thanks to a large and articulated governance, made of:

the governing bodies, assisted by the Rector's delegates for internationalization appointed on the basis of competence and experience in geopolitical areas and international programs;

the International Office, which is responsible for planning and managing the activities;

the International Relations Board and the International Mobility Board, whose members are selected among all scientific areas and Departments, which work in synergy with the International Departments Boards, with members from all Degree Courses.

The first level of our strategic plan for internationalization therefore aims to ensure the good governance of the University thanks to the full participation of teachers, students, administrative staff, governing bodies and departments in devising, promoting and supporting international cooperation. This is done on the basis of the accountability of financial and administrative procedures, credit recognition processes and international teaching activities.

From a geographical point of view, most of the cooperation agreements involve European and Mediterranean partners, among the others: Spain, Germany, France and Tunisia. Significant collaborations also recently started with Far Eastern countries, such as China and Vietnam, and Central America, especially El Salvador and Guatemala.

As concerns public funding, UNIPA will enhance the synergy for the integration of the different programmes. The most significant support certainly comes from European funding (mainly thanks to Erasmus and Horizon programmes), together with national public funding from the Ministry of University and Research and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International



Cooperation. The contribution of private financing is also relevant, through the third Mission actions of the Departments and their impact on international level.

The strategy of improvement and synergy between the different funding sources is based on the important function entrusted to the International Relations Board that supports student mobility for double degrees and integrated study programs, incoming and outgoing visiting professors, English-taught courses and international cooperation development programs in non-EU area.

Furthermore, UNIPA's participation in the recent Interuniversity Cooperation program among Sicilian Universities and the Universities of the Middle East and North Africa area is innovative and capable of further and interesting development. This cooperation is supported by an Agreement between the Sicilian Government and the Erasmus+ Italian Agency (INDIRE) through the European Social Fund 2019-2020. This program represents one of the best practices of integration and synergy between different European funding aimed at promoting development, social security and cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

The Erasmus+ financial tools will be useful to support the mobility of students, professors and staff, substantially contributing to the improvement of their training, professional skills, opening up new and diversified job opportunities, collaboration and development of international networks, which are strategic for economic, social and cultural growth, also guaranteeing the transfer of knowledge from and to different countries and, not least, for the benefit of vulnerable subjects, social groups and developing countries.

How Erasmus actions will be implemented in practice and how UNIPA's participation to Erasmus will contribute to achieving the UNIPA's strategy objectives

The increase and improvement of mobility, transnational cooperation and institutional communication, represent the three pillars of UNIPA's internationalization strategy for the period 2021-2017.

1. UNIPA wants to enhance the recent results with participation in KA1, giving further impetus to:

international study courses, integrated training courses with European and non-European partner universities, in double and joint degree programs;

exchange of visiting professors and visiting students, incoming and outgoing;

enhancement of mobility for curricular and post-graduate internships in Europe and outside Europe.

UNIPA will renew its commitment in particular on KA 103, with the strategic objective of improving its educational and administrative management, with constant attention to the diversification of destinations, and on KA107 (UNIPA has successfully applied since its beginning in 2015), which still has ample room for improvement for the dissemination of programs on 1st and 2nd level study courses and PhD courses.

The participation in the European Universities network from 2019, as partner of the "FORTHEM" project will contribute, in the next six years, to promoting the integration actions of the European and non-European area, the participation of students, teachers and staff to

exchange experiences, knowledge sharing, acquisition of new language skills, experimentation of good practices, training, educational and professional opportunities.

The increase in enrolled foreign student number coming from the Mediterranean Basin and from the Asian area, represents a further internationalization objective that will benefit from the Erasmus+ programme spreading the knowledge of our educational offer and the transnational relationships of our inter-university cooperation. It will represent a channel which amplifies and promotes the University's attractiveness in the extra-Europe area.

2. UNIPA will assign a strategic role to the improvement of the partnerships and international cooperation networks already started (both as proponent and as partner) in KA2. Projects will support cultural, technological and scientific innovation programs, capacity building actions with non-European partner countries, strategic partnerships for the strengthening of the third mission. Through that, UNIPA will strengthen its function of connection and placement with the labour market, which represents one of the milestones of its cultural, social and institutional responsibility.

3. Participation in the Erasmus+ Programme will facilitate the ongoing process for the improvement of institutional communication. Of the three pillars, this is what certainly deserves special attention and still has the largest margin of improvement. Thanks to the organization support guaranteed by the Erasmus KAs1, in synergy with the resources for communication within the KA2, the University funds and the professional collaborations in the communication sector, UNIPA will ensure clear and effective visibility for its international programs to further encourage student and staff exchange, international teaching programs, the creation of transnational inter-university cooperation networks in the European and non-European area.

The process has already started by a project of renewal of the “international students” website in order to get friendly access, both for foreign and Italian students, through an attractive user interface. All the contents are being remodelled in order to show all the opportunities and facilities offered to international students. Within this project, the procedure for non-EU students residing abroad who wish to enrol in a Master’s Degree will be soon fully digitalized. UNIPA intends to spread a positive storytelling of internationalization as a key dimension in a globalized society, where it must be paid due attention to the interdependence of high education systems by activating educational border crossing practices as a tool of social and cultural inclusion and promotion of the right to education on a global scale.

Envisaged impact of participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on our institution

The strengthening of internationalization has been one of UNIPA’s priority objectives for the past three years and the expected targets have been fully satisfied with excellent results, also marking some points of excellence. The National Agency for the Evaluation of the University System and Research (ANVUR) has recently published the annual monitoring report analysing the University's performance in the previous three years, with respect to the set objectives and the data from the Universities in the same region and nation. The document reports a continuous improvement trend in recent years which allowed UNIPA to align itself with the best national



realities and to far exceed those of Central and Southern Italy, thus exponentially increasing its competitiveness.

The growth of internationalization and of graduates who have gained experience abroad during their studies is particularly relevant, thanks to increased double degrees and the numerous opportunities for international mobility offered by the Erasmus+ programme, in terms of acquired credits, cooperation activities and establishment of new international networks. The data analysis, referred to the last three Academic Years, highlights, among UNIPA strengths, the increase of over 6% in the percentage of current graduates who have acquired at least 12 credits.

The strategy for the coming period is based on the evaluation of the results and on the SWOT analysis in order to consolidate the current actions and programs and incentivize some sectors that still show room for improvement. In the next period, UNIPA's strategy will enhance the quality of the educational offer, defining the internationalization over the three cycles of study as the primary objective.

This objective can be achieved through an increase in joint study programmes; feasibility studies for activating projects on the Erasmus+ KA1; increase in English-taught courses in the educational offer. The Indicator will be the increase rate and the targets will be UNIPA Students, the Educational Offer and the number of foreign and non-resident students.

The strengthening of internationalization and student/staff mobility will concern the increase of the Double Degree Programmes and the Erasmus+ KA103 EU, together with the KA107 extra-EU, mobility Agreements. The indicators will be: increase rate of foreign and non-resident students enrolled in UNIPA; number of students and staff participating in the Erasmus+ KA1 Programs; number of credits acquired by incoming and outgoing students; number of students participating in the Double Degree Programs; number of incoming and outgoing visiting professors; feasibility studies for the activation of Erasmus+ KA 2 projects (Capacity Building, Strategic Partnerships, Jean Monnet and European Universities). The targets will be UNIPA students; foreign and non-resident students; high school students; students from foreign partner Universities; UNIPA and partner Universities staff.

Following the SWOT analysis of the last three years activities, the goal of internationalization of governance processes was also established, in order to identify weaknesses and strengths that depend on the governance ability in consolidating and strengthening the internationalization activities.

The identified strengths are certainly the best performances in the internationalization sector carried out by some teachers and in some Degree programmes. Sharing good practices, contacts and international collaborations, and even mere information and advice among teachers, have created a multiplier effect by facilitating the start of further internationalization actions. This process, spontaneously carried out in recent times, must now be adopted system-wide to transform a random effect into a dynamic factor in the development of internationalization activities.

The International Relations and International Mobility boards (composed by delegates from the Departments and the Rector's Delegates for Internationalization) shall guarantee the governance of the actions for the internationalization goals included in the UNIPA Three-Year Strategic Plan, through periodic meetings, also open to external members. It will also be necessary to

identify specific internal or external professionals, experts in the development of international project proposals and management of projects.

The indicators will be: number and composition of the Boards' meetings; evaluation of the expected results of the Three-Year Strategic Plan; number of feasibility studies for international projects carried out in the three-year period; number of international projects submitted for evaluation, approved and activated, closed and reported in the three-year period. The targets will be the Delegates of the Departments, the University Delegates for Internationalization, the University and Department International Relations Offices.

There is also the need to improve UNIPA's governance capabilities in the sector of project proposal and management of international programs. The current weaknesses can be identified in a limited commitment and support to international planning by the governance and the offices; some issues in financial and administrative management of international programs with delays in payments for incoming and outgoing participants; some delays in credit recognition for late registration in Students' Careers; issues in the status of visiting professors whose teaching activity does not find adequate recognition, producing discouraging effects; issues in aligning deadlines and procedures in the Erasmus Calls between UNIPA and the Partner Universities; issues in increasing the number of English-taught courses due to the lack of adequate forms of incentives for teachers' commitment.

The indicators for this goal will concern the improvement of the University's performance in the administrative and financial management of international programs as: reduced times for payments and for credit recognition procedures; the improvement of the performance in credit recognition procedures acquired abroad and participation in joint qualification programs in order to assess the final score for the graduation exam and to issue the Diploma Supplement; alignment of times and procedures for selecting within Erasmus Calls between UNIPA and Partner Universities; recognition to teachers who teach in English in terms of economic incentives on salary and/or research funds.

The Targets will be University governing bodies, Delegates, Administrative Offices, Students, Teachers and Staff.

These goals will be supported by the improvement on the digitalization of the administrative process that will facilitate and reduce the pending procedures.