

Erasmus Policy Statementⁱ

Overall Strategy

Since its institution back in 1972, the University of Calabria has played a prominent role as a driver of social and cultural growth, prosperity and competitiveness for the relatively low average income in the Calabria region. A vision for a University with strong and perceivable international dimension was rooted from the launch of the Programme in 1987, when the first stones were laid for the development of International activities in the institution. Ever since it has actively participated and encouraged internationalization processes at all institutional levels by increasing the number and impact of projects funded by the Erasmus programme, the number of both European academic and non-academic partners in such projects and of involved students and staff. Quality in teaching and research has recently led the University to gain a recognized position in the panorama of prestigious higher education institutions in the EU and in extra-EU contexts, as witnessed by world rankings. The University facilities, featuring a unique “Campus” structure that offers a considerable number of on-site accommodation units, several canteens, a sports centre, a local bank, a post office, three University libraries, shops, etc. that are all at walking distance, and thus excellent places for attracting international students and scholars. Despite a huge potential, further ambitious return in terms of social and cultural growth is hampered by the decreasing trend of the number of students, mostly related to brain drain phenomena, and by the new challenges to be faced by institutions in times of global pandemics.

At European level, the University of Calabria’s policy for internationalization and modernization acknowledges that Universities play a decisive role by contributing to a resilient economy, to social cohesion, to active citizenship and common identity, and recognises the substantial contribution of mobility and participation in cooperation projects in favour of quality learning outcomes and in students’ educational experience. For the next years, still existing limitations to a true barrier-free, non-discriminating mobility for students and staff must be overcome, new challenges set out by technological revolution and globalization will have to be faced, and opportunities for social and cultural development and economic growth, such as digitization, automation, new working conditions and new job skills, social inclusion, media literacy, will have to be seized.

In this context, the University of Calabria’s strategic plans for its Internationalization in the next years is identified in the following two main objectives: *Improving international attractiveness of the University for students and scholars* and *Increasing opportunities for high quality student and staff mobility*. Performance and quality indicators for Italian universities in national exercises explicitly measure the extent and impact of international mobility and cooperation activities. Therefore, Erasmus+ projects in areas of student/staff mobility, inter-institutional cooperation and support to policy development are key elements of its institutional strategy and are an integral part of it.

In line with the institutional strategy described above, the main future goals to be pursued through active involvement in specific Key actions of the Erasmus+ Programme are summarised below, along with the activities planned to be achieved:

1) Expand and facilitate high quality mobility opportunities for students and staff (Key Action 1), by

- continuing to participate in Erasmus actions devoted to student mobility for study/traineeship and staff mobility for teaching and training, building on previously successful initiatives (KA103, KA107) and stimulating engagement in new ones
- expanding the dimension of KA103 projects traditionally funded by EU, also by injecting other national or proper resources, for each of the seven years' programme duration, by significantly increasing the number of students and staff involved
- increasing the number of strategic partners for additional mobility opportunities and other cooperation initiatives
- taking advantage of fully integrated digital mobility management platforms to grant easier access and seamless registration before, during and after mobility in particular for bettering existing recognition procedures tied to documental exchanges among EU universities by widely adopting innovative, secure, faster and transparent transmission means and participating in EU-level common efforts, such as the Erasmus Without Paper Network
- keeping internal regulations up-to-date and maintaining continuous communication across all institutional levels to ensure uniform and pervasive adherence to the ECHE principles and guidelines, including provisions for monitoring mechanisms and for forums where possible amendments are agreed in case of issues.

2) Foster and support international cooperation in education and research (Key Action 2), by

- improving cooperation with strategic partners, by promoting the development of courses, curricula and whole degrees with international character (e.g. with English as courses language)
- making use of existing and new partnerships opportunities to sign Memorandum of Understanding and agreements in the ambit of strategic partnerships for cooperation and exchange, for excellence and for innovation
- providing for continuous support and policies for recognition of results achieved by staff within Erasmus+ initiatives
- strengthening links among University, Research and Business for students and staff, pursuing new forms of two-way exchange of research and faculty staff from and to the non-academic sector abroad, thus bringing work life reality abroad closer to students at the University of Calabria.

3) Provide support for policy reform and Jean Monnet initiatives (Key Action 3 and Jean Monnet), by

- supporting initiatives in national and European policy innovation, monitoring and

- development of new policy tools
- supporting innovation in European integration studies, creation of networks of academics and other stakeholders and initiatives on knowledge exchange on EU themes and issues

In summary, by participating in the Erasmus+ programme, the University will pursue the objectives described above and aim at actively contributing to the development of a truly integrated European Education Area.

Strategy for the organization and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) cooperation projects under the Erasmus+ Programme.

By participation in learning mobility projects for students and staff and international cooperation, the University intends to build on previous experience and further expand the **numerical** dimension of involved individuals, modernise tools and procedures with the aid of digital platforms **in order to better** ensure full adherence to the European quality framework.

The following activities will be conducted for implementing the Erasmus+ principles and objectives:

- Procedures will be adopted to ensure fair, transparent and equal selection of and mobility management in all stages; **calls for participation, selection and evaluation criteria and the use of official documents, will ensure non-discrimination treatment for candidates, whether students or staff; inclusive measures will be adopted in order to raising awareness of Erasmus mobility opportunities and better promote participation by individuals with fewer opportunities** for either economic, social, cultural, geographical, health reasons or for reasons such as disability or educational difficulties, always in respect of their privacy. Furthermore, **additional financial support for such beneficiaries will be assured by the University and, if necessary, appropriate support during mobility as providing extra- time for courses-exams and commitment to setting-up more flexible (e.g. blended) mobility options are foreseen** by previous agreements with hosting partner Universities;
- the University of Calabria starts from a well-established **integration of the Erasmus and ECTS rules and guidelines**, including 1-to-1 internal to ECTS credit system, **mobility occurs only in presence of Inter-institutional agreements, compliant with the official templates, previously signed between partners that actually guarantee a 100% coverage for outgoing and incoming students with a standard Learning Agreement and a 100% for staff with a Mobility Agreement validated and signed before departure by all parties**. Overall assessment of beneficiaries' satisfaction takes place through the compilation of questionnaires by students, among which the EU Survey. In line with the Council recommendations (2018/C 444/01) provisions will be laid down across the Campus so that outbound students, upon reception of the final Certificates (TOR and/or Traineeship

Certificates), issued to each student/graduate by the host University/SMEs at the end of the mobility period, get **automatic and full recognition in their curricula**, without any additional work or assessment of the student, both for studies and traineeships;

- **an on-line course catalogue**, according to the indications of the ECTS guideline, **will be accessible in Italian and English** through a uniform and easily reachable interface on the University portal. Updating of the above guides will occur before the start of each academic year upon formal approval of the degree programmes;
- **grade distribution tables for grade conversion will be available and updated regularly**, according to the ECTS guidelines, for all University degree programmes that also take in due account the indications and decisions provided by National Authorities (Ministry of Education, University and Research, National University Council, Conference of Italian University Rectors). The University will participate in the EGRACONS Network, to enable automatic grade conversions via the EGRACONS tool. In case of changes these will be promptly indicated in the Inter-institutional agreements, in the Transcript of Records and in the Diploma Supplement;
- **support will be ensured in completing Learning Agreement for studies and for traineeship and validating them for both incoming and outgoing students** by the central Erasmus office staff for all administrative and formal requirements, and by one faculty member appointed by each Degree programme or Department for treating Erasmus matters related to courses and modules. Exceptional changes to Learning Agreement will also be managed by the specified faculty member. The same procedures are applied for implementing teaching and staff mobility;
- **support activities will be provided to incoming and outgoing students during the three phases of mobility** on various aspects ranging from help in document preparation, giving information and support in relation to obtaining entry visas when necessary for travelling from or to some countries, on insurance aspects, orientation on linguistic preparation opportunities offered by the University, help in logistical issues such as access to on campus accommodation and to other available facilities in the University as libraries, canteens, café and shops, to guidance on other practical aspects when moving outside the university campus;
- **outgoing students will be duly informed and made aware of their rights and requirements as specified in the Erasmus student charter** either by providing the web link for downloading the document or a copy of it if requested;
- Incoming students will also be made aware of their rights and responsibilities as specified in the Charter and **adequate information/instructions for their safety including contacts in case of emergency will be provided**.
- Outgoing students will be invited to take advantage of language acquisition facilities such as the On-line Linguistic Support (OLS) and free of charge Italian language preparation courses offered by the University Language Centre;
- standard and fully filled **Transcripts of Records will be prepared, signed and transmitted to home Institutions**, also according to future on-line possibilities, **no later than five weeks after the end of mobility periods**;
- in times of quick changes and great opportunities associated to digital revolution, **particular attention will be dedicated to integrating all mobility management procedures and**

documents on a modern, flexible and efficient information system; this will follow the provisions and expected timeline and results of projects such as the Student Card Initiative, including the services of the Erasmus+ mobile App, and the European Without Paper network;

- **environmentally friendly policies will be widespread across all mobility related activities;** sustainable travel options will be promoted by making reference to the opportunities to support sustainable means (e.g. trains); incoming mobile students and staff will be encouraged to use electric bicycles and electric shuttles already available on-Campus; whenever possible paper- less communication will be used campus-wide for management in general of university activities among which Erasmus+, also making use of the available official, legally valid and electronically signed documents;

- **civic engagement is a crucial aspect for the university of Calabria to which it highly contributes by adopting innovative and integrated approaches in all structures,** offices and departments, as to share and widespread common values of equality, inclusion, diversity and non-discrimination for a full integration of mobile students and staff from different cultures and backgrounds in the University campus and even beyond, by offering them various opportunities also to actively participate in democratic and social life outside the campus;

ECHE quality standards will be adhered to in mobility activities and cooperation projects by providing support across the preparation, implementation and follow-up stages; the feedback from evaluation questionnaires and reports will be duly considered during institutional forums and corrective actions will be promptly put in place in case of problems;

- **the University commits to adopt a policy for recognition and visibility of results** achieved by staff members engaged in individual mobility or in cooperation projects with strategic partners, by counting them in evaluation exercises and performance indicators;
- **implementation of the ECHE principles and objectives will be accompanied by systematic dissemination of the ECHE across the institutional levels and prominent visibility of ECHE and EPS on the University portal.** The ECHE principles and objectives related to credit accumulation and transfer, student and staff mobility, will be incorporated into the University institutional strategic and regulatory framework.

Full implementation of the ECHE principles will be monitored by making systematic use of the ECHE guidelines and ECHE self-assessment tools at the end of each year, when the National Agency evaluation report is received. The institutional bodies responsible for the implementation will be duly informed.

Impact of our participation in the Programme on the modernization of the University of Calabria and possible objectives to be achieved.

As stated in the recently updated “Strategic Development Plan” of the University, which is also reflected in the University’s performance plan and financial plan for research and international relations, the University of Calabria recognizes the internationalization for its own development and as a critical value for high quality education. In this perspective, Erasmus+ will remain the

main international mobility program for our institution in the next few years. The university will continue its commitment for the expansion of Erasmus+ related activities and exploit such activities as a trigger to boost the quality of the curricula, the effectiveness of the teaching methods and the mind-set of the community.

Targets (qualitative and quantitative indicators)

For the next seven years the University of Calabria has planned several initiatives which will reinforce its involvement in the Erasmus+ activities. Some of the identified targets are:

- increasing the mobility targets for student/staff mobility;
- strengthening and broadening the impact of the staff and student mobility through a deeper involvement of all the academic community and through specific outreach activities;
- increasing the support for participants on mobility;
- increasing the involvement in cooperation projects;
- structuring sustainable and long-term cooperation projects.

The achievement of the aforementioned targets will involve the implementation of specific actions including:

- Yearly renovating participation to Key Action 1 projects with the intent to empower the mobility of individuals for study, training, teaching and research. Emphasis will be devoted to the involvement of partners from countries participating in Erasmus+ (KA103) and also Institutions whose contribution can be classified within KA107 activities;
- development of new cooperative projects in the framework of Key Action 1 including structured mobility in the context of joint courses/curricula, dual or multiple degrees, joint Master's Degrees in Erasmus Mundus;

In the most recent version of the University strategic plan (2020) specific attention was given to the need to involve more actively the University of Calabria in structured cooperative networks which will be implemented through cooperative projects within the framework of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2; participation to *Jean Monnet activities*.

The planned activities are expected to consolidate the quantitative indicators of international mobility. In particular, the number of students involved in international Erasmus+ programs are expected to increase from the current level (below 2%) to at least 4% of all students, with a minimum of 0.2% increase for year. The number of staff involved is planned to increase from the actual level (about 2.5%) to 5% of all the staff, with an increase of 0.5-0.7% for each year.

Expected figures across the seven-year duration of the Charter:

KA103: (in/out) students 3.500 for study, 1.400 for traineeship, teaching staff 280, training staff 70; KA107: students 210, teaching staff 140.

Envisaged impact

The University of Calabria involvement in Erasmus+ activities in the next seven-years will be pursued with renewed energy and enthusiasm capitalizing on the valuable experience of the past decades into new ideas and a long-term vision, as outlined in previous sections. The outcomes of the proposed activities will have a manifold impact entailing:

- enrichment of the student skills;
- broad understanding of practices, policies and systems in education and training across Europe;
- increase of capacity to trigger changes in terms of modernisation and international opening within educational organisations both in Europe and in the World;
- greater understanding of interconnections between Academic Education and non-formal education also with respect to training in business Organizations;
- quality increase in daily work and activities in favour of students, graduates, teachers, researchers and staff;
- better understanding and responsiveness to social, linguistic and cultural diversity;
- increase of ability to address the needs of the disadvantaged;
- increase of support for and promotion of project activities inside and outside the campus;
- increase of opportunities for professional and career development;
- improve of foreign language competences;
- increase of motivation and satisfaction in daily work and all institutional levels;
- increase the capacity to operate at EU/international level: improve management skills and internationalisation strategies; reinforce cooperation with partners from other countries; increase allocation of financial resources (other than EU funds) to organise EU/international projects; increase quality in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and follow up of EU/international projects;
- innovate and improve ways of operating towards target groups, by providing for example: more attractive programmes for students, graduates trainees in line with their needs and expectations; improve qualifications of teaching and training staff; improve processes of recognition and validation of competence gained during learning/training periods abroad; more effective activities

- for the benefit of local communities, improve work methods and practices to actively involve individuals and/or to address disadvantaged groups, etc.
- create more modern, dynamic, committed and professional environment inside the University: ready to integrate good practices and new methods into daily activities; open to synergies with organisations active in different social, educational and employment fields; planning strategically the professional development of students/staff in relation to individual needs and organisational objectives; if relevant, capable of attracting excellent students and academic staff from all over the world.

More specifically, UNICAL's involvement in Erasmus+ will contribute to:

- i) expanding the graduates and researchers' horizon with respect to societal needs in Europe. Students and researchers will be able to better tailor their activities to the rapidly evolving societal needs and this will contribute to the integration of applied research results into the educational offer in response not only to the labour market but also to society-driven needs;
- ii) the improvement of the relevance and of the quality of training and education activities. Students will thus find into an international dimension inspiration and resources to customise their curricula exploiting the opportunities of Erasmus+ as a steppingstone for their future professional life;
- iii) the international dimension structured following the Erasmus+ baseline will foster the creation of new links with other academic institutions exchanging good practices and finding a common ground for a wide range of long-term cooperation initiatives;
- iv) the creation of a fertile environment for the development of entrepreneurial initiatives which will natively tackle the international dimension for their growth.

Monitoring actions

The University of Calabria is actively implementing specific monitoring actions to quantitatively assess its international scope. These monitoring activities, as specified into the “Strategic Development Plan”, include two sets of parameters used to measure both the incoming and the outgoing mobility, including the mobility generated within the Erasmus+ project. Specific monitoring actions will be also implemented to assess the impact of the different Erasmus+ projects. Besides, the experience of incoming and outgoing Erasmus+ students, staff and researchers will be monitored and exploited as key inputs for emancipatory goals of the University of Calabria. Monitoring actions will be implemented by a dedicated office which will also be supported by other university bodies in line with the quality assurance policies of the University of Calabria.

Indicative timeline

Key Action	Type of Activity	When
KA103	Mobility of students/graduates, staff to HEIs in programme countries	2021-2027
KA103	Mobility of students/graduates, for traineeships in Consortium to HEIs and SMEs in programme countries	2021-2027
KA107	Mobility of students/graduates, staff to HEIs in world partnercountries	2021-2027
KA1	Erasmus Mundus Joint master’s degrees (EMJMD)	2021-2027
KA2	European Universities	2021-2023
KA2	Strategic partnerships in the field of education, training and Youth	2021-2022
KA2	Capacity building in HEIs- Joint projects with HEIs in world partnercountries	2021-2023
KA3	Initiatives to support policy reforms	2021-2027
Jean Monnet	Initiatives to support European integration studies, themes and issues	2021-2027

Sustainability

The effectiveness of the proposed actions will be sustained by an adequate internal organisation. The University of Calabria supports its internationalisation policy through its “International Relations Division” which employ 12 administrative staff. The operational capacity is enriched by the involvement of dedicated administrative staff on each of the 14 departments. Besides, each department appoints a coordinator for Erasmus+ and international policies among its teaching staff. The work of the administrative and teaching staff is supported and coordinated by different Rector’s delegates which specifically cover Erasmus+ actions.

The University central and peripheral management structure will be reorganized by further

reinforcing the international division in each Department and establishing a direct link between them and the central Office. The International Relations Commission will also act as a strategic planning unit and it will monitor projects' progress and analyse student and staff feedbacks on organizational and teaching issues tied to international mobility. The Commission will also meet every semester with the University quality assurance office to discuss the quality issues related to international activities. The resulting improved support for mobility and cooperation will set a sound basis for sustainability and long-term impact for quality projects' development and success.



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ⁱ section of the application for the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, call 2020, approved.