

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS)

For many years now, the University of Pisa has included the modernization and internationalization of teaching, research and third mission as macro-objectives of its multi-year strategic plans. As one of the oldest and most prestigious European universities, the University of Pisa is aware that its long-term role of creating and transferring knowledge with a high level of excellence can no longer be limited to a national context but is increasingly propelled into a highly dynamic international dimension. This requires continuing on the path undertaken, in which the University of Pisa, as a member of the ECTS pilot project, has played a key role in the promotion of European mobility since the early years of the Erasmus programme, and in more recent years has continued to engage assiduously in all program actions, often coordinating important international projects.

The renewal of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education will allow us to continue on this path with an ever-growing commitment to all the key actions of the Erasmus+ Programme. Through our involvement as project coordinator or as partner in the construction of cooperation networks, seizing the various opportunities the program offers for study, learning and teaching in an international context, the University of Pisa will consolidate and increase the already high quality of its offer, developing innovative learning and teaching modalities: it will further contribute to the development of the European Higher Education Area through the piloting and exchange of best practices and improvement of competence levels. For the University of Pisa, the primary purpose in taking part in the Erasmus+ Programme is to be a member of a large community which shares values and priorities and wishes to work synergically for European cultural, civil and economic progress in a sustainable development context, that can become such only if it is both inclusive and innovative.

Strengthening its internationalization and modernization policy is one of the cornerstones of the University of Pisa's 2018-22 Strategic Plan. In particular, the Plan sets out as relevant objectives in this context:

- 1) to guarantee as far as possible inclusive access to mobility and its recognition for all members of the university community, also through short and/or blended mobility, regardless of socio-economic conditions, the possible presence of physical or learning disabilities, cultural differences, or any other obstacle deriving from geographical origin, thus increasing the number and quality of student and staff mobilities;
- 2) to boost the international attractiveness of the university, through incentives aimed at increasing the number of study programmes entirely or partially held in other languages, the number of joint or double degrees, the number of lectures held by international teachers in order to increase the presence of mobile or fully enrolled international students and visiting professors/researchers;
- 3) to encourage cooperation with other higher education institutions, fostering the participation in project proposals to build alliances, to exchange knowledge, experiences and good practices, and to support policy reform;

4) to further integrate the pillars of the Knowledge Triangle, supporting collaboration with enterprises to promote innovation, entrepreneurship, and sharing of experiences and knowledge, in order to create new curricula having an innovative, interdisciplinary and international character;

5) to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), encouraging the inclusion of specific teaching modules in all degree programmes and promoting virtuous behaviour. In its vision of a dynamic, modern, and international Higher Education Institution, the University of Pisa considers the achievement of these objectives fundamental. To this end, full participation in the Erasmus+ programme is essential.

The University of Pisa intends to stimulate the participation of its community in all the Erasmus programme actions. To this end, the University has equipped itself with an institutional and organizational structure including various professional profiles with different but complementary skills and expertise, coordinated by the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Relations. At the central administration level, the Internationalization Area can now count on 28 employees assigned to four Units dedicated, respectively, to mobility, cooperation, promotion, and international programs.

In each of the twenty Departments of the University of Pisa, a professor is appointed as Area Coordinator for Internationalization (ACI), supported by at least one unit of administrative staff. The ACI is the reference person for the internationalization policy and activities of the department and, in particular, for the Erasmus mobility of its students, professors, and technical/administrative staff. The full collaboration between the Departments and the Internationalization Area, between the different Units of the Internationalization Area, and between these last and other units (such as the Services for the Integration of Students with Disabilities unit and the Career Service unit), generates positive synergies and avoids duplication of activities. The Mobility Unit of the Internationalization Area, in cooperation with the ACIs, works on the preparation and management of student mobility in the framework of the KA103 action, including the updating of the mobility management web portal; mobility outside of the Programme countries is the responsibility of the International Programs Unit (from proposal submission to a dedicated website on the KA107 action, to the many other aspects related to promotion, monitoring and quality). The Unit also gives technical support to faculty members wanting to submit KA2 and KA3 projects, and it manages some KA2 projects directly. The International Promotion Unit supports the reception and guidance of incoming students, while the International Cooperation Unit manages double and joint degrees and KA103 mobility for faculty members and technical/administrative staff. The whole mobility management process is supervised by the Internationalization Committee, composed of the AICs and chaired by the Vice-Rector for International Cooperation and Relations. The Committee analyzes the annual mobility trend and deals with emergencies in a coordinated manner (e.g., the present COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences). Participation in the several program actions will contribute to the achievement of many objectives stated in the multiyear strategic plan. The Partnerships for Excellence - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, for instance, are suitable for promoting collaborations with universities in other countries for awarding joint and/or double Master degrees and at the same time for boosting the attractiveness for international students.

A consistent increase in the numbers of outgoing students and PhD candidates is also among our objectives; to this end, the strategic plan provides for communication and awareness-raising initiatives and an institutional co-financing to supplement the EU contribution for Erasmus grants. Other actions, such as the implementation of specific support, tutoring and orientation services for first and second cycle and doctoral students, the establishment of programmes entirely or partially held in a foreign language, specific bilateral agreements, are aimed at overcoming the barriers that can obstruct the path towards the full deployment of the internationalization potential of the University of Pisa, specifically concerning the overall outgoing and incoming mobility. In recent years, our University has defined a range of initiatives aimed at supporting internationalization, with a significant financial commitment, including: calls for funding visiting professors\researchers, support to faculty members in the preparatory phase of the project proposals focused in the building up of cooperation and knowledge transfer networks in the Erasmus+ Programme as well as for the establishment of new joint/double degrees; scholarships for the development of theses abroad and for the acquisition of credits abroad; the launching of courses and preparatory learning paths held in English and performed both in presence and in online mode in order to permit the compensation of possible gaps in their secondary education, especially for students coming from disadvantaged countries, and to ensure genuinely fair access to university education. The University of Pisa intends to confirm these initiatives in the coming years and possibly strengthen them.

In addition, to enhance the mobility actions, the University of Pisa has joined the "Mobility Consortium for traineeship", that is the "ILO: Increasing Learning Opportunities in the job market" Consortium. The Consortium is coordinated by the University of Padua, with the participation of the IUAV University, the University of Ca' Foscari (both in Venice), the University of Catania and the University of Trieste. With the purpose of broadening collaboration within the Mobility Consortia, an agreement has also been signed for a further traineeship partnership in the framework of the project "Universities for EU Projects' Culture" coordinated by the SEND organization and including 15 Italian universities, the garagERASMUS Foundation and the ARCA Consortium. As for development cooperation, the University of Pisa is a member of the "Coordinamento Universitario per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo – CUCS (University Coordination for Development Cooperation) and the Union of Mediterranean Universities - UNIMED. The methodology for the selection of new partners, projects, and initiatives, will continue to be a combination of topdown and bottom-up approaches, in order to enhance our departments' strengths, the quality of their activities and relationships, while focusing on complementarity and efficiency. Finally, we must not forget our University's continuing engagement in supporting policy reforms, namely promoting and participating in the project actions aimed at enhancing the quality of learning and teaching in European and world university systems, using the "Tuning" methodology. During the past two decades Tuning has offered a positive approach for the implementation of the Bologna Process at higher education institution level and in numerous academic subject areas, both in Europe and in non-EU countries. This approach aims to design, review, develop, activate and evaluate study programmes for each of the Bologna Process cycles and has been tested and validated in a global context, with the involvement of universities from all over the world, from Europe to Africa, from Latin America to USA. In this framework, the University of Pisa

coordinated and participated in several projects such as «TuCAHEA» aimed at creating an area of higher education in Central Asia consistent with the European area; «CALOHEE» intended to measure and compare the results of learning outcomes in higher education in Europe by evaluating five subject areas representing significant academic sectors. Furthermore, two of its academic staff acted as Bologna process experts in the «CHEER» projects, supported by the European Commission and aimed at providing support to Italian higher education institutions, developing specific guidelines for facilitating and simplifying the implementation of European and national reforms. The University of Pisa is currently involved in the Key Action 3 «CALOHE2» project. Our University, therefore, intends to continue this fruitful participatory path in the opportunities given by European funding for the modernization of university systems on a macro-regional scale.

The participation of the University of Pisa in the Erasmus+ Programme will impact on five main objectives, measurable through the following indicators with reference to the academic year 2019-2020.

OBJECTIVE 1- Ensure the opportunity to access international experiences for all components of the University

- Increased number of student mobilities including those in blended mode (+4% by the end of the first three years, +8% by the end of the period)
- Increased number of students belonging to disadvantaged groups experiencing international mobility (+4% by the end of the first three years, +8% by the end of the period)
- Increased number of faculty members experiencing international mobility (+5% by the end of the first three years, +10% by the end of the period)
- Increased number of administrative staff experiencing international mobility including those in blended mode (+4% by the end of the first three years, +8% by the end of the period)
- Increased number of Doctoral students experiencing mobility including those in blended mode (+4% by the end of the first three years, +8% by the end of the period)
- Higher percentage of graduates (BA, MA, SCMA) who have achieved at least 12 ECTS abroad within the standard programme duration (+2% by the end of the first three years, +4% by the end of the period)
- Positive feedback from the reports and the evaluation questionnaires of participants in the incoming and outgoing mobility (overall evaluation from high to very high: 60% of the participants in the first three years, 70% of the participants in the following four years)

OBJECTIVE 2 - Increase the international attractiveness of the university

- Increased number of study programmes (first, second and third cycle) entirely or partially held in a foreign language (currently 20, to become at least 25 by the end of the reference period)
- Increased number of lectures and other educational activities held in a foreign language (+3% in the first 3 years, +8% by the end of the reference period)
- Increased number of joint or double degrees, including joint Erasmus Mundus master's degrees (currently 29, to become at least 33 by the end of the period)
- Higher percentage of students enrolled in the first year BA, MA, SCMA, who have obtained their qualifications abroad (+3% by the end of the first 3 years, +8% by the end of the period)

- Increased number of incoming mobility students (+3% by the end of the first three years, +8% by the end of the period)
- Higher percentage of enrolled PhD students who have obtained their previous qualifications in universities in other countries (+3% by the end of the period)
- Increased number of lectures held by foreign experts (+8% by the end of the period)

OBJECTIVE 3 - Boost collaboration with other higher education institutions

- Increased number of international agreements signed (currently 250, to become 300 by the end of the seven-year period)
- Increased number of capacity building projects, where the University of Pisa is a partner or coordinator, which support the cooperation with partner countries and the modernization of their higher education institutions (+4% by the end of the first 3 years, +8% by the end of the period)
- Creation of at least one alliance with other higher education institutions

OBJECTIVE 4 - Further integrate the pillars of the Knowledge Triangle

- Creation of new innovative and interdisciplinary international curricula with the stakeholder's involvement, in response to the emerging challenges and the needs of the world of work (at least 3 from 2021 to 2027)
- Increased number of cooperative projects with enterprises, in which the University of Pisa participates, to promote innovation, entrepreneurship, exchange of experiences and knowledge, and employability (+3% by the end of the first 3 years, +6% by the end of the period)

OBJECTIVE 5 Contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Specific course units related to SDGs in all disciplinary areas
- Emphasis on SDGs topics in all courses
- Increased number of final thesis works linked with achieving the SDGs
- Actions for promoting virtuous and sustainable behavior among students, staff, and stakeholders.