

University of Zadar

Erasmus Policy statement (EPS)

Your Erasmus Policy Statement should reflect how you intended to implement Erasmus after the award of the ECHE. Should you wish to add additional activities in the future, you will need to amend your Erasmus Policy Statement and inform your Erasmus National Agency.

What would you like to achieve by participating in the Erasmus Programme? How does your participation in the Erasmus Programme fit into your institutional internationalisation and modernisation strategy?

(Please reflect on the objectives of your participation. Please explain how you expect the participation in Erasmus to contribute towards modernising your institution, as well as on the goal of building a European Education Area¹ and explain the policy objectives you intend to pursue).

The University of Zadar (UNIZD) is a research-oriented educational institution that connects scientific research and projects, artistic creativity, study and teaching, and in this way it develops research, expertise and arts, prepares students for professional work based on scientific cognition and methods, as well as on artistic values. The University of Zadar is entirely integrated university with 27 departments and study programmes in different scientific fields, all of which are involved in different forms of participation in projects. The University of Zadar successfully participated in the former LLP and Erasmus+ programme from 2010 and the mobility achieved in the framework of Erasmus+ KA1 is considered to be a significant element that contributes to the further internationalization of the University. In the last 5 years the number of faculty of the University of Zadar participating in project implementation has increased, especially in the Erasmus+ programme KA2 projects. Numerous collaborations with other universities and research institutions were realized, the partnerships with entrepreneurs were strengthened, all with the aim of increasing the competencies of all the participants in the projects and to contribute to the development of new and innovative forms of work and teaching in the field of education, training and youth. Besides having the opportunity to share and transfer best practices among all the participants in the international projects, the goal of implementing those projects is to offer new and innovative ways of teaching and research, learning acquisition and acquiring additional knowledge and competencies, which contribute to overall institutional development. In the Strategy of Development of the University of Zadar 2017-2022, the internationalization of the University of Zadar is defined as one of the four main strategic goals of the University of Zadar in this period, together with three other strategic goals: improvement of the working conditions of students and employees of the University, strengthening the personnel structure of the University and implementation of the innovative processes at the University. In the Strategy the University of Zadar defines itself as a modern international university which is the generator of the knowledge and the initiator of the innovative changes based on the needs of the society and on the principle of the equal opportunities, socially responsible behaviour and high ethical standards. Especially important are two horizontal goals that apply on all the developmental priorities and measures which are: improvement of the position of the University in the local, regional, national and international environment and insurance of the culture of quality, social responsibility and ethics.

¹ For more information on the priorities of the European Education Area, such as recognition, digital skills, common values and inclusive education, please consult the following website: https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en

Internationalization of the University of Zadar is not only the strategic goal, but also a significant tool for becoming the integral part of the European Education Area. Mobility realized within the Erasmus+ programme, as well as participation in Erasmus+ and other European projects are the prerequisites to achieve this goal. The internationalization of the University will be strengthened by putting the emphasis on the development of the joint study programmes with the partner universities from abroad, on greater participation in the international scientific projects and on increasing the number of study programmes offered in foreign language, primarily in English. From the academic year 2014/2015, i.e. the first year of the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme, the mobility of staff and student was increasing every year and particular attention was paid also on other segments of the mobility. That means that transparent mechanisms and procedures of signing the Erasmus+ inter-institutional agreements were introduced and the agreements were signed on the principle of compatibility of study programmes. The information package and the catalogue of courses held in foreign languages are published on the University website by 1 March every year for the following academic year and the course catalogue is updated regularly in order to give the adequate information to the incoming students in transparent and timely manner. The special attention is paid to the process of signing (Online) Learning Agreements, which together with the Transcript of Records form key tools in the process of recognition of the ECTS credits and grades after the mobility period spent abroad. Several joint study programmes were developed at the University of Zadar, like International Joint Master's Degree in Cultural Sociology and Joint Doctoral Programme in Sociology of Regional and Local Development. There is also an undergraduate study programme held in English at the Department of Linguistics: Language and Communication in a Multilingual Society and the graduate study programme also held in English at the Maritime Department called Maritime Management is currently being developed.

The University of Zadar and five other European partner universities formed the alliance called EU-CONEXUS (European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability), which was selected in 2019 to be financed in the framework of the European Universities initiative. This was a great acknowledgement to the University of Zadar, especially if we take into consideration that at the 2019 call only 17 alliances were financed. The partners in the EU-CONEXUS alliance are: University of Zadar (Croatia), University La Rochelle (France), Catholic University "San Vicente Mártir" of Valencia (Spain), Agricultural University of Athens (Greece), Klaipeda University (Lithuania) and Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest (Romania). The overall mission of the EU-CONEXUS alliance is to become in 2025 the only European transnational higher education and research institution that is able to cover in a comprehensive, interdisciplinary manner societal challenges facing urbanised coastal areas and sustainable development. In order to fulfil this mission, the following actions will be taken:

- Development of the new inter-disciplinary and international study programs among the members of the consortium;
- Strengthening the international scientific research;
- Creation of common digital libraries;
- Creation of a smart university campus;
- Strengthening of universities' competitiveness at national and international level;
- Introduction of the new models of mobility (not only physical, but also virtual and blended mobility);
- Education of the specialists, able to learn and research the sustainability of urbanised coastal areas, blue growth;
- Implementation of the new international academic activities using professional and innovative methods for the solution of global problems;

- Bringing together in close cooperation the universities, business enterprises, companies, and municipal authority institutions for joining forces to solve arising regional problems.

In the framework of the EU-CONEXUS alliance two minor programmes (Blue Economy and Growth and Coastal Development and Sustainable Maritime Tourism) are currently being developed and will be implemented at the undergraduate level starting from the academic year 2020/2021. Two joint masters' programmes and one joint doctoral programme are also in the process of development and they should be implemented from the academic year 2021/2022.

The University of Zadar considers the partnership in EU-CONEXUS alliance and the participation in the next Erasmus+ programme to be key elements of the internationalization of the University. This will enable the University to become an integral part of the European Education Area with the strong commitment to the EEA policy objectives, from the best education and training opportunities for all, creation of new jobs and economic growth, improved social cohesion and the development of the common European identity in all its diversity.

Please reflect on the Erasmus actions you would like to take part in and explain how they will be implemented in practice at your institution. Please explain how your institution's participation in these actions will contribute to achieving the objectives of your institutional strategy.

The University of Zadar is planning to participate in all three Erasmus+ Key Actions: KA1 Learning mobility with the Programme and Partner countries, KA2 Cooperation among organisations and institutions and KA3 Support to policy development and cooperation. The participation in these Erasmus+ actions is crucial to achieve the strategic goal of the internationalization of the University. It will increase the number of students and staff mobility, the number of courses offered in foreign languages, the number of study programmes in English and other languages and of the joint study programmes with the partner institutions and the number of joint international scientific and professional projects. From 2010, when the University of Zadar joined the Erasmus+ programme (LLP at that time), the change in the functioning of the University is visible. There are more students and staff in mobility and the mentality of the whole student population and staff at the University has been changing. The awareness of the importance of the mobility among students and staff has been increasing, creating thus many long-term benefits of the participation of the University in Erasmus+ programme. For students, the biggest benefits are the possibility of gaining experience of studying in different academic and social environment, acquiring different knowledge, skills and competences, which increase the students' employability. The benefits deriving from the Erasmus+ staff mobility are not limited to their personal and professional development, but they expand to the institution as a whole. It is noted that the experience of the mobility period abroad influences the teaching process, it increases the number of courses taught in foreign languages (mainly English) and the awareness of what the teaching in international classroom is. The benefits for the University consist in increased visibility and attractiveness of the institution at local, regional, national and international level.

The implementation of the Erasmus+ KA1 with programme and partner countries at the University of Zadar is administrated by the International Relations Office at the central level, since the University of Zadar is an entirely integrated university. There is Erasmus+ coordinator at each of the 27 departments of the University of Zadar, whose role is to take care of the academic part of the incoming and outgoing students' mobility. The International Relations Office is responsible for the whole process regarding the implementation of the Erasmus+ KA1 projects, starting with the application of the University to the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes, the call for applications for students and staff, information days, selection of candidates, meetings with the selected candidates, nominations, financial agreements, updates in Mobility Tool+ to the final payments and reports to the Agency. The

Erasmus coordinators at the departments are responsible for setting up the Learning Agreements before the students' departure and for the recognition of the study period abroad, grades and ECTS credits upon students' return. Similarly, the IRO is responsible for the incoming students' and staff mobility, except for the academic issues that are the responsibility of the departments and departmental Erasmus+ coordinators. Selection procedure starts with the call for applications that is published on the University website and the procedure is transparent and documented. The students are also informed about the possibility of getting additional funds if they belong to different vulnerable groups. The selection of the candidates, both students and staff, is done by the committee at the University level and all the candidates have the possibility of appeal against the decision of the committee. Both students and staff sign the Learning Agreements or Mobility Agreements prior to the mobility period abroad. The recognition of the mobility period, grades and ECTS credits is done at departmental level according to the Regulations on the international mobility, implementing the principle of flexibility. Outgoing students are informed about their rights and obligations defined in the Erasmus Student Charter. All the information for the incoming mobility is published on the university website, the course catalogue is published and regularly updated, together with all the other relevant information regarding the admission procedure, accommodation, language requirements and other practical information. In order to achieve best preparation possible for the incoming students, the group Skype interviews are held with the incoming students before their arrival in Zadar, which give them the opportunity to get the answers about many issues, academic and other. The incoming students are treated as local students, they are exempt from paying tuition and other fees. The integration of the incoming students is encouraged and the role of the ESN section Zadar is very important in this process. Besides the ESN section, there is also the buddy-system and language tandems that facilitate the integration of the incoming students. The activities of the ESN sections (international dinners, film projections, excursions, etc.) are supported by the University of Zadar with the financial means from the Erasmus+ organizational support. The incoming students and staff get help in finding accommodation and with visa and insurance issues, especially within the KA107 projects. Both incoming and outgoing students and staff are encouraged to promote the Erasmus+ programme by sharing their experiences in direct contacts with their colleagues and on the International Relations Office's Facebook page and Instagram account. The University of Zadar is committed to implement the digital tools developed in the framework of the Erasmus Without Paper initiative and the Online Learning Agreement is obligatory for all the outgoing students and most of the incoming students. We are also preparing for the implementation of the Erasmus+ inter-institutional agreements manager and European Student Card. The Erasmus+ programme is promoted according to the promotional activities' action plan for 2020. In February 2020 we have started with publishing the IRO's Newsletter and organizing informal gatherings with students who are interested in mobility. Unfortunately, these activities were stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but we plan to continue with the promotional activities as soon as the situation permits it.

The Erasmus+ KA2 projects are implemented by the Office for Science and Transfer of Technology of the University of Zadar and currently there are three Erasmus+ KA2 projects that are being implemented: Translating Socio-Cultural Anthropology into Education (TRANSCA), European University for Smart urban coastal Sustainability (EU-CONEXUS) and Language guidance tool for improving language knowledge under the ERASMUS+ programme (LanGuide). Besides that, there are also three finished Erasmus+ KA2 projects: Rooms to VET – Upskilling and Professionalization of tourism accommodation through training, Vocational Training of the Inner Self (VOCIS) and Information Literacy Online – Developing Multilingual Open Educational Resources Reflecting Multicultural Aspects (ILO).

Definitely, one of the main achievements of the University is the selection of the European University Network CONEXUS as one of the first "European Universities" alliances. The activities within the alliance will enhance the quality and attractiveness of the European Education Area and strengthen the co-operation between universities, their students and teachers, student and staff mobility, thus fostering the quality, inclusiveness and competitiveness of every single partner university, but also of the network as a whole.

What is the envisaged impact of your participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on your institution?

Please reflect on targets, as well as qualitative and quantitative indicators in monitoring this impact (such as mobility targets for student/staff mobility, quality of the implementation, support for participants on mobility, increased involvement in cooperation projects (under the KA2 action), sustainability/long-term impact of projects etc.) You are encouraged to offer an indicative timeline for achieving the targets related to the Erasmus+ actions.

The envisaged impact of the participation of the University of Zadar in the Erasmus+ programme is further internationalization of the University, increased number of students' and staff mobility, increased visibility of the University at local, regional, national and international level through participation in international projects, digitalization of the working process and active participation of the University in the European Education Area. Taking part in the Erasmus+ programme will enable students and staff to gain skill and competences that will improve the employability of our future graduates and raise the level of teaching and research at the University. The strong impetus for achieving these goals represents the partnership of the University of Zadar in EU-CONEXUS alliance, promoting the "Blue Economy" and "Blue Growth". The future activities of the EU-CONEXUS alliance are:

- Development of a European Coastal Policy;
- Creation of cross-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary and cross-sectorial teaching and research programmes;
- Creation of an inter-university 'campus' based on an ever-closer academic and administrative integration;
- Establishment of common European degrees and common European diplomas;
- Opening of educational programmes to international students, teaching staff and researchers;
- Enhancing the scope of educational programmes in coastal issues, particularly addressing upcoming issues in marine biotechnology, aquaculture, coastal sustainability, marine hydrology, marine environment engineering, civil engineering and port constructions, green transport, energy efficiency, smart port city, etc;
- Increase in the interdisciplinary scope of educational programmes by extending collaboration with the members of Alliance;
- Enhancing international cooperation in joint research activities;
- Increasing the level of institutional internationalisation through physical and virtual mobility;
- Establishment of a Living Lab where students and young professionals all over Europe will meet, get joint education, exchange ideas and collaborate to produce innovative solutions for the industry.

In implementing the various activities in the framework of EU-CONEXUS alliance, academic and administrative staff as well as the students of the University of Zadar are actively participating. Besides, the alliance is focused on building firm and long-term cooperation with the industry and local and regional authorities. One of the main EU-CONEXUS goals is to increase mobility of all categories of students and staff (administrative, teaching and research staff). The expected numbers of intra-EU-CONEXUS participants to mobility actions are:

- Students: up to 50% including virtual mobility, among these 50% at least 10% will also experience physical mobility
- PhD students: 30% (virtual and/or physical mobility)
- Academic staff: 10% (virtual and/or physical mobility)
- Administrative staff: 5% (virtual and/or physical mobility)

Although the situation with the COVID-19 epidemic has affected the implementation of the students' and staff Erasmus+ mobility, it has also stimulated the online academic activities which will eventually lead to faster implementation of virtual and blended mobility and further digitalization at the University level.

International Relations Office regularly conducts surveys among outgoing and incoming students in which students respond to questions about the reasons for giving up (in the case of outgoing students) and the level of satisfaction with the administrative implementation of the project, but also about the academic aspect of their mobility period at the University of Zadar. Also, the participants' reports on mobility are analysed and assessed in order to improve the working processes and conditions of mobility for the incoming and outgoing participants. Besides, the International Relations Office is required to give report to the University Management on achieving the goals set up in the University Strategy and the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes and the European Commission also monitor regularly the implementation and the results of the Erasmus+ projects at the University of Zadar. For monitoring the compliance with ECHE we have also used the self-assessment tool ECHE: Make it work for you!