

## Erasmus Policy Statement: Our Strategy

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?

By participating in the Erasmus+ Programme, the University of Western Macedonia (UOWM) would like to achieve a number of objectives which will contribute to its internationalisation and modernisation in accordance with the priorities of the European Education Area. In order to successfully carry out the process of internationalisation, UOWM has formulated a specific strategy designed to meet national, European and international key policy objectives. The first priority of the institution is the constant pursuit of excellence and the attempt to reach high quality standards. Similarly, UOWM aims at maintaining and developing the existing collaboration with institutions in Europe and all over the world as well as participating in networks, thus providing its staff and students access to strong academic environments.

Staff and student mobility is at the core of institution's strategy. Thus, UOWM has clearly established a number of objectives which will affectively support this mobility, build a European Education Area and help students to be successful in a complex and interconnected world that faces rapid technological, cultural and economic change.

Hence, UOWM intends to pursue the following objectives:

- a) build new strategic partnerships and develop the existing ones in EU and non-EU countries in order to extend and strengthen its international position
- b) enhance and facilitate cross-border cooperation and exchanges
- c) promote and support student and staff mobility
- d) attract international students and researchers
- e) build mobility into the curricula whenever possible
- f) develop students' international and intercultural competences
- g) promote innovative, inclusive and multilingual teaching methods
- h) develop integrated, transnational teaching activities such as joint courses and double, multiple or joint degrees
- i) implement the European Student Card Initiative which will facilitate the exchange of student information and increase competitiveness, quality and excellence in teaching, research and innovation
- j) promote the use of the Erasmus+ mobile app to ensure that students can benefit from increased efficiency in administrative processes
- k) strengthen social cohesion by fighting xenophobia, radicalisation and divisive nationalism
- l) promote common values and foster more inclusive education
- m) encourage students to participate in civic and democratic life
- n) promote environmentally friendly practices
- o) work towards quality assurance through constant evaluation of course components and academic units
- p) support the use of European mobility and quality assurance tools, such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement
- q) implement digital technology into the educational process in order to enrich teaching and improve the learning experience
- r) help students and graduates get the practical knowledge for the workplace and obtain more and better quality placements
- s) seek partnership and cooperation with businesses
- t) create links between the institution, research centres and businesses
- u) participate in clusters for the dissemination and exploitation of the generated knowledge
- v) create new opportunities for developing knowledge in an attractive academic environment.

In conclusion, the participation in the Erasmus programme will help UOWM to pursue the above objectives and will contribute to the development of internationally oriented teaching and learning, collaborative research and knowledge transfer.

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**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 Western Macedonia (UOWM) would like to take part in all the Erasmus actions (KA1, KA2 and KA3) during the entire duration of the programme. The organisation and implementation of these actions is integrated in our institution's modernisation and internationalisation strategy. This way, new opportunities will be created for the participants to learn from one another across national borders and to work together on joint projects to develop good learning and teaching, undertake excellent research and promote innovation. Additionally, a fertile foundation for discussion will be established, regarding a variety of topics ranging from local practices to international strategy. Apart from the spreading of ideas, the actual acquisition of skills is important too.

In the coming years, our institution will focus on developing new Master's degree programmes in collaboration with international higher education institutions. Therefore, the University of Western Macedonia will endeavour to support closer international collaboration and joint degree programmes.

Participation in these actions will take into consideration the geographical as well as the subject area of the prospective partnerships. UOWM is taking firm steps towards the creation of optimum conditions for the implementation of actions and will provide adequate support in order to develop innovative knowledge in collaboration with international partners. To this end, administrative staff are being evaluated and relocated to positions according to their potential so as to cover the increasing needs of the institution's agenda. The institution will implement the results of the actions in teaching and training. It will also ensure the visibility of action activities and outcomes through the website and dissemination seminars in order to maximize their impact on individuals and partner institutions. Participation in the Erasmus actions is seen by our institution not only as an important aspect of modernisation, but also as a way to promote international knowledge transfer. Special attention will be paid so that cooperation leads to sustainable and balanced outcomes for all participants and that they reflect the objectives set in the internationalisation strategy.

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

The participation of our institution in the Erasmus+ Programme is expected to have a great impact on its modernisation according to the priorities of the European Education Area. The objectives that have been established by UOWM to promote and support mobility and internationalisation connect to the aforementioned priorities and will hopefully lead to the expected outcomes. The offer of high quality studies, the implementation of innovative teaching and learning methods, and the development of practical skills and knowledge will attract more students to our institution which will result in increasing attainment levels as defined by the European Commission.

The implementation of mobility into the curricula, the commitment to quality, the constant evaluation of course components and academic units, the use of digital technology, the development of students' international and intercultural competences as well as the support of the European Student Card Initiative will increase quality and excellence in teaching, research and innovation.

The development of new strategic partnerships, the advancement and facilitation of cross-border cooperation and exchange, the experience gained from student and staff mobility as well as the interaction with international students and researchers will further enhance quality. Moreover, excellence and regional development will be promoted through cooperation with research centres and enterprises as well as through participation in clusters and international projects.

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All mobility projects under Erasmus+ will help participants to acquire skills, to support their professional development and deepen their understanding of other cultures. They will also increase the capacities, attractiveness and international dimension of our institution.

Through increased involvement in Erasmus+ projects under the KA2 action, UOWM will support international exchanges for students, academic staff and researchers, as well as structured cooperation between higher education institutions and public authorities in different countries. Participation in European and international projects is seen as a central aspect of the institution's internationalisation and modernisation strategy. Particular attention is paid so that the results of any participation in cooperation projects are sustainable and balanced and therefore lead to the future development of the institution's international involvement.

UOWM strives constantly to develop the programme qualitatively and quantitatively. The priority for the current period is in line with the strategic plan to strengthen the internationalisation of UOWM in the areas of education, research, university life, international projects and strategic partnerships, and create conditions for starting the Joint Degree, Double Degree and Multiple Degree programmes. Another goal is to increase the competitiveness of our students in the labour market, improve language skills of mobility participants, and create awareness of the UOWM as a quality and reliable partner for all activities within the programme.

The long-term benefit of participation in the Erasmus+ programme is a higher degree of internationalisation of the entire university life. Positive qualitative impact could be seen in many areas, particularly in the sphere of education, student and employee mobility in the field of science, research and projects, and other related activities of international cooperation. Another long-term benefit of this programme is the fact that international mobility enhances competitiveness and employability of our graduates. We would like to be perceived as an institution that could offer to students and employees an inspiring environment for their creative, educational and leisure activities. We also would like to leave in the incoming students, teachers and staff a positive view of the University of Western Macedonia as an honest and reliable partner who can provide quality facilities and infrastructure.

In three years from now, UOWM aspires to meet high mobility targets and improve the quality not only of the programme implementation but also of the support offered to all participants in the Erasmus+ actions. Additionally, our institution will take measures to promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. At the same time, it will aim to ensure sustainability of projects and comparability in the standards and quality of higher-education qualifications, thus emerging European Education Area.