

The University of Cassino and Southern Lazio (UNICAS) strategy for modernization and internationalization includes its own participation in Erasmus+.

UNICAS internationalization strategy has the following aims: (a) increasing the number of international students; (b) increasing the diversity of countries from which international students come from; (c) increasing the number of dual degree programs (currently, UNICAS has signed 5 dual degree agreements, both with European and non-EU academic partners); (d) increasing the number of visiting professors (both incoming and outgoing); (e) increasing the number of student mobilities (both incoming and outgoing, both for studies and for traineeship); (f) increasing the number of staff mobility for training; (g) lowering the number of printed documents needed to perform a mobility; (h) starting blended mobility experiences; (i) increasing cooperation activities with HE institutions outside EU and programme countries.

Consequently, this strategy acknowledges the key contribution of mobile staff and students, and of participation in European and international cooperation projects, to the quality of its higher education programmes and student experience.

UNICAS international strategy for the next years has been officially approved by the University Senate in December 2019 within the 2019–2022 University strategic plan. It is a university-wide plan which indicates the direction for institutional decisions that are made in the coming years. It is complemented and enhanced by strategic plans at departmental level. The university-wide plan forms a common starting point from which the departments develop more specific, detailed and tailored strategic programmes.

With respect to Erasmus+, the plan is based on a background study addressing three main issues: a) how the mobility of students, early stage researchers, and staff is currently measured at the institutional level; b) the data gaps (i.e. concerning the category of mobile person, the volume of mobility, as well as its direction, duration, etc.); c) how mobility is monitored in the light of the strategic interests of staff and students and how the monitoring might be improved. As a result, the strategic plan includes indicators for the mapping and profiling of the institution's international position and policy.

The plan also acknowledges the importance of dual and joint degree programs, the enhancement of Erasmus Mundus projects (currently UNICAS is involved in an Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree with the University of Bourgogne and the University of Girona), and the development of cooperation projects (currently UNICAS is leading a KA102 Capacity building project).

UNICAS has a large network of partner universities and institutions, both within and outside Programme countries, both within and outside the Erasmus network. Through the support of the Erasmus Programme, UNICAS aims at reinforcing its European network and at further extending the global network in North and South America, Central Asia (India, China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russia, Vietnam) and with some strategic African countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia). Decisions on international partnerships and networks will be reached through internal procedures carried out both at departmental and university level. The selection of international partners will be based largely on qualitative criteria. As far as partnerships outside the UE is concerned, priority will be given to institutions with a high and measurable research outcome.

UNICAS would like to take part in Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) and Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2).

Particularly, mobility of higher education students and staff will be implemented in line with the experience of the same action undertaken in the past years. Every year, UNICAS will open calls for student mobility for study (once a year), student mobility for traineeship (twice a year), staff mobility for teaching (once a year), staff mobility for training (once a year). In order to encourage participation, calls will be open for at least one month and will be promoted through (a) official communication University channels (including social media); (b) seminars and webinars, which will see the participation of Erasmus alumni and staff that already experienced mobility abroad and will act as Erasmus ambassadors. The selection of the eligible

applicants will be made by Selection Committees nominated by the University Rector. Selected students and staff will be requested to sign a mobility agreement before the mobility. At the host institutions, they will be encouraged by UNICAS to participate and integrate in the local community. Once back, their mobility experience will be recognized in their career (either in terms of credits, if a student, or in terms of professional recognition, if staff).

With respect to Partnership for Excellence, UNICAS will continue to sustain Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees. UNICAS had its first Erasmus Mundus Joint Master degree program funded in 2015, and it is currently running a program led by the University of Girona. The implementation of such programs must follow strict rules which are intended to favour students, staff, and institutions.

UNICAS intends to participate to the European Universities program as well. With that aim, UNICAS will exploit its Erasmus Mundus experience and the experience gained thanks to the many dual degree programs already implemented (with HE institutions in US, Russia, Spain, Albania).

Cooperation and exchanges of practices and Partnership for Innovation will also be of interest for UNICAS. Beyond the current leadership of a KA102 Capacity Building project with HE institutions from Russia, Kazakhstan and Mongolia (in partnership with EU universities in Poland and Spain), UNICAS currently spreads out innovation and cooperates with other institutions in Partner countries through many KA107 International Credit Mobility projects. All these projects will foster new innovation and cooperation activities in the years to come. The implementation of these partnerships will be in charge of UNICAS Erasmus office, which will exploit all the connections that are already available thanks to a continuous work towards excellence.

It has to be finally mentioned that all these activities will benefit from UNICAS attitude to warmly welcome incoming students and staff. Students associations and trainees from the Foreign Language department serve as buddy in helping people to settle in our place (Cassino, FR) either for a day, for a week or for a year.

The expected impact of our participation in the Erasmus+ Programme can be shared across each of the mobile groups of involved people: a) staff (administrative people, researchers, and teachers); b) doctoral candidates or “early stage researchers” and students in the levels 5, 6 and 7 of the European Qualifications Framework.

The following objectives have been identified for all the mobile groups: a) staff mobility will be oriented to institutions within or outside EU to deliver academic or training courses within the framework of previously established agreements aiming at evaluating the efficacy of the agreement and at testing or implementing double/multiple/joint degree study programmes at the Master and Doctoral levels; b) doctorates’ and students’ mobilities for study or traineeship are settled as credit mobilities so that the credits earned by the candidates during their mobility period can be easily and automatically transferred in the study programme at the home institution.

As for the impact on students, it will be an opportunity to deal with an international educational environment. Beyond the learning outcomes, mobility will represent an opportunity to increase their soft skills and at the same time to better integrate the challenges presented by a globalized world. The project would create an opportunity for the professional growth of the staff. Dealing with institutions and students with different educational and cultural backgrounds would enrich their ability to manage and tackle the so many issues which requires a global thinking perspective.

UNICAS furthermore plans to implement the instruments of the Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) network to exchange mobility data with the Institutions involved. UNICAS will start its work in respect of the timeline of the project starting from the online management of Erasmus Inter Institutional Agreements. The

implementation of this procedure will be central at the early stages of the new programme with the digitalization of all the agreement renewals. This plan will have an impact on the ability of our University to manage digital documents in a proper way, at all the university levels.

In the same period UNICAS will foster the Erasmus + mobile App for all the students, incoming and outgoing. Students will use this App to live their Erasmus experience and to benefit the increased efficiency of the administrative processes. The mobile App will support students before, during and after their mobilities: UNICAS students will receive the necessary information to join the App and to be part of the Erasmus + network. This project will be of great help especially for those involved in the virtual or blended mobility. A large impact on the digital skills of the people involved (students, teachers, administrative staff) can be foreseen.

Finally, UNICAS includes within its target the European Student Card Initiative. It will allow students, through the Mobile App, to join educational and cultural activities in all the European Education Area. As a matter of fact, this Card will have a positive impact on people's attitude towards multicultural awareness and a stronger sense of European identity.

Qualitative and quantitative indicators to monitor such impacts will be derived from the survey which each person will be required to fill in at the end of his/her mobility experience. Indicators will involve the percentage of mobility people which will exploit the Erasmus Without Paper plan, the Erasmus+ mobile App, the European Student Card Initiative. An additional indicator will be the number of new dual/joint degree agreements signed within the Erasmus network of UNICAS.

Timeline of the project (with target values for some indicators):

- 2021 - 2023: Implementation of blended and virtual mobility, Erasmus Without Paper, Erasmus + mobile App, new dual degree agreements, in-line evaluation of the project;
- 2024 - 2025: Implementation of the European Student Card;
- 2026 - 2027: Final evaluation of the project, implementation of new actions.

Target values for some indicators

- 2021 - 2023: At least 20 blended or virtual mobility by the end of 2023, at least 75% of Erasmus Without Paper mobility, at least 80% uses the Erasmus + mobile App, +10% new dual degree agreements;
- 2024 - 2025: At least 50% of mobile students uses the European Student Card, at least 30 blended or virtual mobility by the end of 2025, at least 85% of Erasmus Without Paper mobility, at least 90% uses the Erasmus + mobile App, +10% new dual degree agreements
- 2026 - 2027: At least 70% of mobile students uses the European Student Card, at least 40 blended or virtual mobility by the end of 2027, at least 95% of Erasmus Without Paper mobility, at least 98% uses the Erasmus + mobile App