



## **Erasmus Policy Statement (EPS)**

By signing the European Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) for the period 2021-2027, the University of Enna Kore (henceforth, UKE) confirms that participation in the Erasmus+ Programme is an integral part of its modernization and internationalization strategy and that the Institution is committed to implementing the principles contained in the Charter, in order to guarantee the quality of all the activities of the Erasmus+ Programme and thus contribute to the quality of the educational and training system as a whole. More specifically, by participating in the Erasmus+ Programme the Institution aims at achieving the following strategic objectives:

- increase students professional, social and intercultural skills in order to widen their national and international career opportunities;
- develop new forms of trans-national cooperation; foster the exchange of knowledge and competences;
- enhance the link between education, research and business;
- gain international visibility.

Therefore, UKE renews its commitment to the successful implementation of the Programme by identifying the following actions to fulfill the ECHE principles.

**In order to respect, in full, the principles of non-discrimination, transparency and inclusion and ensure equal and equitable access to participants from all backgrounds, the Institution will:**

- continue ensuring the total transparency and equity of the selection procedures for mobility by adopting fair, inclusive and transparent procedures in the selection of candidates as well as in the management of all phases of the mobility process; such procedures will ensure that each individual (or group) is treated equally, without any kind of discrimination;
- dedicate special attention to the promotion and assistance of mobility opportunities for those who are in disadvantaged conditions, for economic, social, cultural and/or physical disability, ensuring them the support they need, while guaranteeing their privacy: the possibility of blended mobility may be considered in some cases.

**In order to continue ensuring the automatic recognition of all credits gained during mobility periods, including blending mobility, the Institution will:**

- comply to all the norms contained in the ECTS, guaranteeing the full recognition of all credits earned during the mobility;
- regularly update the Course Catalogue published on the University website, allowing enough time so as to guarantee incoming students the possibility of making informative choices regarding their educational or training activities;

- publish and regularly update information relating to the grading system in force in the Institution and the distribution tables of all programs;
- optimize procedures for virtual and blended mobility and publish guidelines on the University website.

**In order to ensure the quality of the mobility activities (before, during and after) and of the cooperation projects, the Institution will:**

- adhere to the quality standards identified in the ECHE for mobility and cooperation activities, guaranteeing maximum support and assistance both in the project preparation phase and in the implementation and follow-up phases;
- sustain the outgoing mobility of students, faculty and staff by increasing the number of existing inter-institutional agreements, so as to ensure that the mobility offer is more diverse and appealing. The newly activated mobilities for study or teaching will happen only within the framework of inter-institutional agreements, which sanction the role and responsibility of each of them and their adherence to shared quality criteria. Furthermore, UKE will continue ensuring that outgoing students are well prepared for the activities to be carried out abroad, eventually offering the opportunity to acquire adequate linguistic and intercultural skills;
- ensure that the incoming mobilities receive all the assistance they need (with e.g. housing, visa, insurance, free language courses in Italian) by identifying dedicated member(s) of staff from the International Relations Office (KIRO) to support their needs. KIRO staff will also ensure that incoming students receive equal academic treatment, as well as full access to the University services and that they are integrated within the University community. Upon completion of the mobility, incoming students will be encouraged to become ambassadors of the Erasmus+ programme and to share their mobility experience;
- evaluate the possibility of establishing a new Erasmus Tutor position to be filled in by a student, or a recent graduate. This position will offer a different type of support from the one already offered by Erasmus mentors, which are dedicated faculty members responsible for guiding the students in their academic life within each program. The Erasmus (student) Tutor will be able to address other issues such as social integration within the community;
- continue guaranteeing that fully accurate transcripts of records are transmitted in a timely manner;
- promote international cooperation projects and ensure that the activities of such cooperation contribute to the realization of institutional strategies;
- develop new joint degrees. The process for the program definition will be based on the concept of topic related cooperation, it will be addressed to the enforcement of already existent cooperation relations and it will involve a set of meetings with involved partners;
- periodically collect incoming and outgoing students' opinions about the quality of the mobility experience, services offered, social environment and integration within the university, systematically evaluate the feedback received through these reports, and take appropriate action whenever problems are reported.

### **In order to implement the priorities of the Programme, the Institution will:**

- adhere to all the standards identified in the ECHE;
- implement digital mobility management in line with the standards of the European Student Card Initiative;
- actively promote and publicize the activities supported by the Erasmus+ Programme and their results through the University website and all other information channels, including social networks;
- promote environmentally friendly practices in all activities related to the Erasmus+ Programme;
- promote civic engagement, encouraging students and teachers to behave as active citizens before, during and after their participation in mobility or in a cooperation project.

In order to reach the results described in this section, the University will rely on the support of the International Relations Office (responsible for supervising most of the aforementioned E+ activities), the Placement Office (to stimulate the access of students to the foreign labour market) and the Communication Office (responsible for promotion of activities, as well as the information channels).

### **Achieving the objectives of the institutional strategy**

UKE renews its commitment to the Erasmus+ Programme by identifying the following actions to implement: Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility and Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organizations and institutions.

Considering that the objectives of the previous EPS have been achieved, UKE intends to pursue the implementation of Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) through the resources already in place, with some crucial changes aiming at achieving, within the next seven years, additional objectives by setting the following strategic priorities:

- increase and strengthen the ongoing partnerships, with the aim of guaranteeing maximum transnationality for the opportunities offered to students and teachers;
- intensify the campaign for the promotion of international mobility actions of students, faculty and administrative staff through the implementation of existing and new dedicated initiatives (es. Erasmus Day, information seminars right before a call, etc.) on all our information channels, including social media;
- further enhance the tutoring and assistance services for students, both incoming and outgoing, aiming at facilitating and improving participation in the mobility;
- foster academic relations aimed at the implementation of novel joint degree programs with particularly attractive Institutes.

Participation in the Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) and Key Action 2 (KA2) is an integral part of UKE modernization and internationalization strategy. More specifically, the participation in the Actions is motivated by the successful attainment of the following objectives:

- provide students with a unique educational experience that will increase their international career;

- create a vibrant environment for the development of transnational scientific activity and collaborations among faculty members, as well as providing the opportunity to acquire and exercise new teaching methods;
- offer training opportunities for staff members;
- gain international visibility;
- develop Sector Skills Alliances ensuring cooperation between education and employment in tackling skills gaps with regard to one or more occupational profiles in a specific sector;
- foster Knowledge Alliances in the form of cooperation between HEI and enterprises.

UKE internationalization and modernization strategies also target foreign Universities outside of Europe, aiming at developing joint research and education activities and promoting the exchange of students and staff. In this context, UKE is pleased to continue collaborating with the other Sicilian Universities in the INDIRE project "Study in Sicily". which deals with mobility from and to countries in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) area. The main objectives of the project are the following:

- increase the internationalization processes of Sicilian universities through collaboration with the universities of the southern shore of the Mediterranean;
- encourage the enrollment of students from the Mediterranean (non-European) in Sicilian universities in the medium to long term;
- increase ICM mobility grants to and from the Mediterranean to favor Credit Mobility of Sicilian students at the Universities of the South Shore of the Mediterranean.

We will welcome students from these countries, providing active support during their mobility, ensuring equal academic treatment and quality of services.

### **Envisaged impact**

The envisaged impact of our participation in the Erasmus+ Programme will be the following:

- provide students with a unique educational experience that will increase their career opportunities by positively affecting their professional, social and intercultural skills (our past outgoing Erasmus students report to have had non only the opportunity to live abroad and meet new people, but also an improvement in their soft skills, such as knowledge of other countries, their ability to interact and work with individuals from different countries, adaptability, foreign language proficiency and communication skills):
- create a vibrant environment for the development of transnational scientific activity and collaborations among faculty members, as well as providing the opportunity to acquire and exercise new teaching methods:
- offer training opportunities for staff members to increase knowledge of good practices and skills to the benefit of the Institution (the knowledge, competences and contacts acquired or developed during staff mobility led to improvements in a range of aspects, especially in student mobility management and the recognition of learning acquired abroad);
- increase the internationalization processes of the institution through new forms of cross-border cooperation;
- stronger identification with Europe;

- great benefits in terms of transversal and social development;
- enhance the link between the education, research and business for excellence and regional development: gain more international visibility;
- develop Sector Skills Alliances ensuring cooperation between education and employment in tackling skills gaps with regard to one or more occupational profiles in a specific sector;
- foster Knowledge Alliances in the form of cooperation between HEI and enterprises.