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Erasmus policy statement 2021 - 2027

University of Zagreb international (EU and non-EU) strategy

The University of Zagreb, founded in 1669, is the oldest and biggest higher education institution in Croatia consisting of 31 faculties and 3 art academies. It offers a wide range of academic degree courses leading to Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees. Zagreb University develops further as a comprehensive university with a wide spectrum of research and study programmes in accordance with the needs of our society. We are committed to acting in the public interest and contributing as a source of innovative technological development, economic growth and social cohesion in Croatia. Our strategic direction and priorities for international projects are based on our *Internationalization Strategy (2014-2025)*, http://www.unizg.hr/fileadmin/rektorat/english/Documents/International_strategy.pdf and supported by our *Strategy of Quality Assurance*, *Strategy for research, transfer of technology and innovation*, and our *Strategy for studies and study programmes*. Our Internationalization Strategy sets forth internationalization as an integral part of our mission, especially for new research activities and mobility programmes. The University's Strategy for studies and study programmes recognizes mobility as a vital experience and part of a successful study outcome for students (all mobility programmes, with emphasis on Erasmus). We envision an impact in Erasmus+ projects that facilitates the change from initiatives to innovation, increases our ability to accomplish a sustainable transformation by providing equal opportunities and access for all to excel in studies, teaching, work and as members of our society.

Partners

In the past 10 years, the University strengthened its international cooperation in education and research. Since we are a comprehensive university and an extraordinarily large institution, we have more than a 1000 inter-institutional Erasmus+ agreements and over 100 university bilateral agreements with more than 800 higher education institutions in Europe, North and South America, Asia and Australia. Within the new programme period, we focus on strong current partnerships, while establishing new agreements will be selective and based on benefits for both institutions. Partners are chosen on two levels: university-wide partners reflecting strategic priorities of the university as a whole, and constituent unit's partners (faculty/academy) reflecting degree-specific partner selection criteria for a particular faculty/academy. In support of our partnerships, we use our distinctive strengths and implement them in new EU projects as well as use them to broaden cooperation to the business and research sector.

University of Zagreb is an active member in a variety of university networks such as: EUA, DRC, AARC, UNICA, AUF etc., and a number of field specific expert alliances. These collaborations help us improve communication and recognize each other's strengths, capabilities and motivations which is essential for partnership and project sustainability.

Geographical areas

Our Internationalization Strategy outlines geographical areas targeted to help intensify international cooperation which are: immediate neighbouring countries (without language barriers), the Mediterranean, European Union, Eastern Europe and other continents. For International credit mobility activities with Partner Countries, areas of cooperation are defined more closely (detailed list on our homepage [here](#)). In addition, the University actively supports national and regional cooperation; a specific example is the University of Mostar. We contribute in modernization of higher education systems in partner countries (Western Balkans and Asia) through transfer of knowledge and good practices, capacity building and by introducing globally relevant subjects and different models of delivering education within their curricula (some examples include: strategic cooperation projects SDI – Spatial Data Infrastructure, e-learning/blended learning, Riskman - Educational Capacity Strengthening for Risk Management of Non-native Aquatic Species in Western Balkans). Our goal is to achieve a geographical dispersion that strengthens our academic community and enhances academic productivity.

Objectives and target groups

In recent years, following an increase in research activity, the University of Zagreb gained more recognition and a better position and visibility in the academic community which improved our cooperation and participation in European projects. In the new Erasmus+ programme period, we will continue innovating in our study programmes and strengthening the quality of research and academic productivity by offering a variety of mobility possibilities (physical or virtual) to domestic students and staff and by attracting best-qualified teaching staff and students from abroad. Internally and externally, we aim to internationalize our university on a higher level.

A focal point in modernizing our study programmes is steering towards complementary development of a wide spectrum of skills and competences for students ensuring equal opportunities for all. In the next programme period, we wish to introduce the multidisciplinary approach to more study programmes, enhance digital skills, stimulate creativity in the curriculum and work on improving student's innovation and business skills which will lead to better employability and career prospects. To achieve this, our academic experts and research groups will work closely with relevant study programmes, professors, lecturers, students, and experts from the professional field. We will also work on integrating internships to all study curriculums to strengthen students' professional competences. The University made progress in the last programme period and now offers internship and career guidance at constituent units' career centres.

We want to educate, but more than that, we also want to focus on promoting social values, intercultural understanding and responsibility, which will not only contribute to social cohesion and a better sense of European identity, but ultimately make a positive difference in the lives of our students and staff. In this respect, in line with our Strategy for studies and study programmes, we will continue to promote social inclusion and work on opening new possibilities and assistance for all students and staff, with special attention given to students and staff from diverse backgrounds, with fewer opportunities or from underrepresented groups. More inclusive education at the University will enable us to deal with the present challenges, and foster better student engagement and an active contribution to society.

In pursuit of the research excellence goal, the University adopted a Human Resources Strategy which is open to employment of researchers from abroad and offers equal employment treatment. All current processes are compliant with the *European Charter for Researchers* and the *Code of Conduct for the*

Recruitment of Researchers. Mobility and knowledge exchange, continuing through Erasmus+, and other programmes and projects, will give access to a wider field of experts from abroad and will be used to support research and connect with other University assets such as the University's Centre for Research, Development and Technology Transfer ([CRDTT](#)). CRDTT provides support to research groups at the University in management of research projects and in establishing cooperation in technology development and commercialization of intellectual property. In addition to individual support for researchers and students, for starting knowledge and technology-based businesses, CRDTT will continue to organize workshops and other events. The University continues to promote mobility of researchers enabling them to progress in current and future global challenges.

From a national perspective, University of Zagreb is dedicated to promoting the Croatian language and culture, developing Croatian language as a research language and supporting Croatian language learning and use at the University and in other countries. Special attention is given to cooperations with foreign universities that have Croatian language courses at their universities. At the University, we support teaching the Croatian language to incoming students whose parents are part of the Croatian communities in foreign countries, which is an important element in preservation of the Croatian heritage. The University offers a Summer school of Croatian language and culture and various Croatian language study programmes, both in-class and e-classes, to non-Croatian-speaking students (<http://www.unizg.hr/homepage/learn-croatian/>). Croatian language courses for exchange students will continue to be promoted at the University homepage, at welcome weeks and with additional lecture presentations. For Erasmus students, the tailored semester course, developed and co-financed from the mobility projects will continue with the goal that more students decide to learn our beautiful language.

Development of double/multiple/joint degrees/ and European universities initiative

In accordance with our Internationalization Strategy, the University of Zagreb supports joint study programmes, primarily on master and doctoral levels and other forms of cooperation such as co-tutelle and joint research networks. To achieve better connections between researchers and the use of research capacities, the University has initiated establishment of joint master and doctoral studies with partners from Europe and the Americas including mobility exchanges of teaching staff and students. Recent important achievements in this respect include partnerships in 2 Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD): SEAS 4.0 (Sustainable ship and shipping 4.0) and IFRoS (MSc in Intelligent Field Robotic Systems). Accreditation procedures for joint degrees and degrees in foreign languages are regulated within the University.

We expect that the implementation of the European Universities initiative, our European alliance of eight universities based in post-industrial cities with a clear mission to boost mobility and inclusion for societal impact “UNIC” (<https://www.unic.eu/>), will also have significant impact. Introduction of impact-by-design methodology will confront students with new societal challenges in local and international context and teach them to use new hybrid forms of knowledge to generate innovative solutions. We will contribute to societal impact of our university in post-industrial cities and their regions by an outreaching, evidence-informed and innovative focus on co-creating research through community engaged research approaches such as participatory action research (PAR), citizen science, and other methodologies that engage academics with societal stakeholders in a reciprocal and transformative way.

University of Zagreb organisation and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) cooperation projects

The University has adopted a set of internal regulations, rules, guidelines and supporting information, which improve project organisation and enable a controlled and unified university approach for implementation of cooperation and mobility projects. This organizational system is supported by qualified administration services of the Central International Relations Office and the International Relations Offices of the faculties and academies. For EU actions and projects other than mobility projects, support to faculties/academies is provided by the Central Office for EU projects. Some faculties/academies are additionally reinforced by their own specialized project offices. Transparent decision making is provided by specialized university bodies such as: The University Senate, the Committee for Science and International cooperation, the Quality Assurance Board, the Board of Appeals specialized for mobility programmes and the Commission for Selection of Students and Staff in mobility programmes. All processes are supported by guidelines and standardised procedures of quality assurance at the University.

In Key action 1 (KA1), mobility projects, we acquired experience and have extensive expertise in organization, implementation, and financial management, leading to mobility projects with one of the largest budgets in Europe. We will work towards increasing mobility numbers, widening mobility possibilities and more inclusive opportunities for all students and staff, but keeping the high-quality level of a single mobility. Quality of inter-institutional partner agreements is monitored, and reciprocity balance in mobility numbers and corresponding study programmes is reviewed each year.

Participation in Key action 2 (KA2) projects within the period 2014-2020 shows a positive trend, we record an increase in the number of applications each year (both as participating or applicant organisation), while the success rate in number of awarded projects as coordinators or in partnerships increases every year. We are motivated to continue in this direction.

In Key action 3 (KA3), the University will continue to participate in projects and individually as expert staff members. Through continued participation in this action, our experts will contribute to European cohesion and Europe's position in the world.

In supporting Erasmus+ programme priorities, we will promote the environmentally friendly approach as an active member of the UNICA network and the UNICA Green initiative which promotes implementation of environmental sustainability at universities, and we will work on incorporating green practices in projects.

In view of our objectives, our administrative services will continue to give dedicated support and guidance to all students and staff. For this reason, we support training and international mobility of our administrative staff.

For all project activities, we shall give additional support by advancing further in relevant digital technologies for easier access and equal opportunities for students and staff. In view of the current situation and the necessity for full time online teaching, in cooperation with our University Computing Centre "SRCE", the University introduced supplementary training accessible to all teachers and started the development of new formats for evaluating student achievements and student study outcomes from online courses. Through new technologies we also strive to make organizational improvements that will provide superior support and advance innovation.

Mobility and enhancing skills development for all

We aim to achieve a growth of outgoing mobility and an increase in the number of enrolled foreign students as well as the number of temporary or permanent foreign staff employees and researchers. EU resources from the Erasmus+ programme will be important for achieving this goal. Educational centres, established within the University, will also create additional opportunities for exchange and new cooperation (e.g. Centre for Advanced Academic Studies in Dubrovnik [CAAS](#), [Confucius](#) institute, etc.). It is crucial to maintain a steady and significant increase in the number of study courses and study programmes taught in English or other foreign languages, in order to attract the best students and staff, which will in return contribute to our “internationalization at home”.

Enhanced through international mobility, the University will develop new mechanisms for measuring student learning outcomes with emphasis on online learning and with special focus on STEM study fields. We recognize the importance of teaching and learning new skills and competences and shall give more attention to students’ individual needs and their preparation in terms of advanced skills and competences such as: digital skills, entrepreneurial skills, language skills, communication skills, intercultural skills, flexibility, problem-solving and critical thinking. We wish to achieve systematic integration of teaching these skills into all study programmes. Enhancing skills development, in combination with new mobility experiences, will make study programmes more adaptable to future labour market needs as well as societal needs. Automatic recognition procedures will be advanced, and more flexibility introduced for mobility in scientific and art study programmes. As a result, we hope that the students will be more motivated, positive and function better in this global, modern, democratic and multicultural society. Of course, the end result should also significantly increase their employability.

Staff exchange will be vital for progress of future exchange possibilities and research cooperation activities between partners. Institutional capacity will be raised not only by financial resources, but also by human resources that are crucial for future impact.

The expected impact of the University’s participation in the Erasmus+ programme

With participation in projects and activities under the new Erasmus+ programme we expect to further advance our international competitiveness, increase inclusive and equal mobility opportunities for students and staff, and enhance research productivity through project-based collaborations between partner universities, enterprises, and the University. In line with our priorities, curriculum development will widen the impact: increase the number of modules/courses taught in English/other foreign language, enhance development and teaching of cooperative modules between partners, include more international perspectives and multidisciplinary approach and integrate internships in more study programmes. This will benefit the institution as a whole.

Our cooperation projects, strategic and innovative projects, report increased interest and increased success rate. For the year 2019, we achieved 23 approved projects, 8 projects as coordinating institution; for the year 2020, 49 approved projects, 6 projects as coordinating institution. Some of these projects are a result of long-standing partnerships strengthened through Erasmus (e.g. TIME, INNOSID, HILAR, mathSTEM, PROMISE, COGSTEP, TEACH4EDU4, etc.). These and future projects will offer concrete solutions and have long-term positive effects on students, and staff and will enhance research productivity, which will in turn have a positive impact on economic, social and cultural development of our society.

Through synergy effects between Erasmus+, ESIF and Horizon Europe and internationalization as an implementing mechanism, we are aiming to strengthen academic and research excellence and innovation activities, improve academic and R&D&I resources and capacities, and increase international visibility and recognition in academic and industry sectors.

Zagreb University wishes to serve as a model institution with a high degree of educational and social responsibility. We aim to strengthen local and regional knowledge by linking higher education research and business, and aspire to spill the positive effects of internationalization beyond the institution to other sectors for innovative approaches in teaching, technology and digital resources that will actively contribute to economic progress of Croatia and serve the people.

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