

1. ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS)

1.1 Erasmus activities included in your EPS

In this section, you need to tick the Erasmus activities covered by your Erasmus Policy Statement. Please select those activities that your HEI intends to implement during the entire duration of the Programme.

Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility:

The mobility of higher education students and staff

Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organisations and institutions:

Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices

Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities

Partnerships for Excellence - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees

Partnerships for Innovation

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3):

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support to policy development and cooperation

1.2 Erasmus Policy statement (EPS): your 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?

(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).

Original language (and translation into EN, FR or DE if the EPS is not in one of these languages)

The University of Teramo (UNITE), founded in 1993, is a small university (ca. 6000 students) in the Italian and international landscape of the Higher Education institutions, whose activities are focused on education & training, research and societal engagement developed in two main areas, the former related to Biosciences (i.e. Biotechnology, Agriculture and Food, Veterinary Medicine) the latter on Humanities (Communication Science, Cultural Heritage, Drama, Arts & Music Studies, Political Science, Economics, Law). The current UNITE management (Rector, vice-Rector and Delegates of the Rector) has come into force in 2018 with a renewed team of members committed to continue the renovation and modernisation of this university promoting its excellence in Higher Education, research and Public Engagement at regional, national and international level.

Internationalization is a priority of the Strategic Plan of UNITE (2019/2022, <https://www.unite.it/UniTE/Engine/RAServePG.php/P/484301UTE0104/M/20011UTE0104>) in force, as also reported in both the "Teramo Policy statement" signed at local level with the Teramo municipality and the past awarded ECHE. Actions aimed to enhance the international dimension of UNITE are developed in all the main strategic areas (research, education and societal engagement) and involve all five faculties where Delegates for internationalisation and Erasmus mobility have been appointed.

Within the previous Erasmus Charter Higher Education (ECHE, UNITE (2014-2020) reached some important goals:

- Kept the mobility (incoming, outgoing) of students to a stable entity and increased that of the teachers and staff. This represent an important achievement as Teramo and the region where UNITE is located suffered of an important economic crisis (that affected also the number of enrolled students) and an unforeseen heavy earthquakes (2009 and 2016) that reduced the mobility of both the outgoing (limited financial availability of the families) and incoming students (limited accommodation available and fear);
- Increased the number of bilateral and cooperation agreements with EU and non-EU Higher Education Institutions and research centres. As regards the international framework, UNITE in the last three years was successfully awarded of International Credit Mobility grants with an increased number of countries (2017: Ukraine, 2018: Argentina; 2019: Armenia, Thailand, Nigeria, Ukraine);
- Involved as coordinator (ASKFOOD, 2018-2020, ongoing) or as partner (EuFOOD-STA, 2015-2019) in Erasmus+ Knowledge Alliance projects;
- Involved as partner in 6 Erasmus+ Capacity Building projects (SEA-ABT-Thailand, FOODQA-Jordan, AgLAB-Georgia, Ukraine-Estonia, SPAAT4FOOD-Tunisia, ABIONET-Armenia, ARMDOCTS-Armenia)
- Involved as partner in one Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership (INTRINSIC) project.

(see https://www.unite.it/UniTE/Ricerca/Erasmus_finanziati).

In February 2020, UNITE also submitted, as a partner, an Erasmus+ European Universities project in a network with other 6 Universities to exploit the actual competences, to share knowledge and to promote innovation and sustainability within a permanent, international network of academic partners with complementary competences, excellence in Higher Education and Research.

In this framework UNITE has, thus, implemented specific actions to address the challenges of the global dimension of higher education, by setting objectives of interaction, cooperation and development in Higher Education and Research involving all

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

areas, both scientific and humanistic with promising results as highlighted by the increasing international Higher education catalogue (2 international Master's Degree Courses attracting students from EU and non-EU countries and one double degree Master study programme (Food Science and Technology) with the Chulalongkorn University (TH) from the A.Y. 2020-2021) as main outcome of the Erasmus+ CB project SEA-ABT.

UNITE in the next year is committed:

- (i) to enhance the competitiveness at international level, by setting actions that could favour the visibility and dissemination of the HE and research competences and excellence of UNITE;
- (ii) to improve and strengthen the international dimension of the Higher Education at all levels (1st, 2nd, 3rd). In this respect UNITE is investing internal forces to promote actions to develop double degree Master study programmes with EU and non-EU partner universities with a main focus on those presenting a higher alignment of the higher education curriculum/programme offer and fostering higher mobility of students and staff (e.g. Spain, France). The Erasmus Joint Master study programmes will also be taken into account as a tool to promote innovative HE educational path in specific sectors (biosciences, biotechnology), matching the job market needs. Based on these actions, the number of incoming students and staff is expected to increase in a mutual beneficial effect for all the universities involved.
- (iii) to support and enhance the mobility of students, teachers and staff to promote the development of the European citizenship culture, to enhance the internationalisation of the competences and skills, to favour new cooperative and collaborative opportunities and the networking at EU and international level.

UNITE, due to the covid-19 emergency, has quickly implemented an efficient virtual/online teaching system as an alternative to standard lectures and complementing the already existing e-learning platform. This has allowed all students, including the incoming Erasmus ones, to continue their classes by distance and complete the expected Learning Outcomes.

Digitalisation of paper-based procedures has started and it has been favoured by the virus emergency offering already additional opportunities and benefits for the current and future incoming students.

UNITE is interested also in undertaking programmes fully based on virtual tools (e.g. Erasmus Virtual) offering opportunities, multicultural learning experiences and mind-set in the student community. Eventually, UNITE has strategically started to plan cooperation and capacity building projects with developing countries that have already undersigned agreements based on current initiatives (*Conferenza dei Rettori Africani-International conference of the African Rectors, June 2019 within the Forum Gran*

Sasso https://www.unite.it/UniTE/Archivio_News_3/Conferenza_dei_rettori_africani_2019_all_8217_universita_di_Teramo_per_una_nuova_cultura_della_cooperazione) with special focus on the African countries with whom student exchange is ongoing (Burundi, Congo).

UNITE recognises as unique the opportunity offered by the ECHE in increasing its European and International competitiveness, by supporting innovative educational approaches and paths, enhancing the quality of Higher Education at all levels, developing international skills and competences as well as multicultural mind-sets that could positively affect professional and academic careers of students by matching the new job market requirements and in a life-long learning perspective.

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.

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UNITE is interested in taking part in/being involved/promoting/coordinating the following

- **Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility:** The mobility of higher education students (for study and training) and staff (for teaching and training). This action is a key element for the students to develop a European mind-set, develop unique multicultural competences and transversal skills offering higher opportunities for post-graduation employability.

The mobility of students (all levels) will also support the expected mobility of students within Double degree programmes thereby study programme can be properly developed. The mobility of the teachers is a key element in supporting the UNITE Strategic Plan for internationalisation as tool to share best practices, learn new teaching methodologies, network with the partner universities and plan future joint collaborative activities and projects.

UNITE will be applying for all types (study, training) of projects dealing with mobility for students and staff with program EU countries and non-EU (international Credit mobility). For the non-programme countries, the universities will be selected within a specific educational and training framework where common learning outcomes, products and objectives are clearly and jointly defined in a preliminary step, for a successful achievement of the planned activities.

UNITE will undertake a full revision of all the existing bilateral agreements that currently exist with 142 universities in 23 countries covering all the five faculties disciplines, in order: (i) to confirm the ones that present a higher number of student mobility and evaluate with them any further change in the Bilateral Agreement to further enhance the number of student as well as staff exchange; (ii) do not renew those outdated or that do not offer interesting learning and training opportunities; (iii) to contact new HE institutions that offer educational paths and training opportunities based on the new Higher Education catalogue of UNITE (e.g. Sustainable Gastronomy, Sustainable Animal production, Biotechnology, International Political Science, Media, Arts and Cultures).

Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organisations and institutions:

Based on the experience and involvement in past and ongoing projects UNITE is interested in continuing to invest in the following sub-actions:

- **Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices:** UNITE has strengthened in these last years a series of successful agreements with both EU and non-EU countries (e.g. China, Colombia, Argentina, Thailand, India) where an interest to experience joint training activities, to share best practices, to develop innovative teaching tools and methods, to co-create new training and educational paths in both scientific and humanities disciplines has been shown. In the last Erasmus+ call (2020), UNITE has been involved already in some Capacity Building projects, two out of them submitted also as coordinators. Knowledge Alliance projects are interesting framework that will allow UNITE to exploit networking and collaborative activities with key stakeholders offering interesting opportunities for the two main disciplinary areas of UNITE (scientific, humanities). Projects in the next years in this framework will be characterised by interdisciplinarity so to involve more than one faculty and to exploit sustainability, responsible societal growth and innovation concepts.
- **Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities:** UNITE has already adhered to one European Universities consortium and we are currently waiting for the results. This type of project is expected to support the development of innovative educational approaches and training paths for professional and scientific careers; favour an innovative organization of research, mobility of students, teachers, and researchers between European countries, in a life-long learning perspective. Flexible modules, micro-credentials multi-disciplinary skills will be implemented in a modern multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral framework. If unsuccessful, UNITE is planned to support the submission of a revised project proposal. The Ministry of University has supported the participation of UNITE in this project proposal by a grant to support student mobility within the project timeframe. By participating in this action it is expected to improve and strengthen the international dimension of the Higher Education at all levels and promote the modernisation of the education and research dimensions in a multicultural dimension.
- **Partnerships for Excellence - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degrees:** UNITE is interested in developing with some EU partner universities innovative educational paths aimed to improve and strengthen the international dimension of the Higher Education. UNITE has recently started to discuss with some EU partner universities projects to be exploited in the coming calls.
- **Partnerships for Innovation:** UNITE is interested in sharing its own expertise with other universities and to develop new and innovative educational and training tools (e.g. virtual reality) to favour the modernisation of the training methodologies, the quality of education and favour the access to the Higher education of individual that for several reasons are hindered (e.g. workers, low economic income, individuals with learning or other disabilities).

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3): Support to policy development and cooperation. UNITE, taking into account the specific expertise in some Faculties, is interested to develop and collaborate in projects aimed to enhance knowledge in the fields of education, training and youth, to develop initiatives aimed at developing new policies or preparing their implementation (e.g. cooperation projects on policy development, initiatives for testing projects on European policies), to support for European instruments (including those for the recognition of qualifications and skills), to set cooperation frameworks with international organizations, dialogue with stakeholders and third countries.

All these actions will contribute to develop the Strategic Plan of internationalisation of UNITE. Moreover, UNITE is closely collaborating with the local authorities and organisations to support and enhance the internationalisation, modernisation and growth of the Abruzzo region (where Teramo is located) at all levels, cultural, economic and societal. The ECHE and all the projects that will be launched and sponsored by the European Community and EACEA will offer UNITE the opportunity to educate and train students from this region with the adequate skills and competences to enhance the internationalisation dimension of their working environment and give value to the undisclosed potentiality. Incoming students, staff and teachers will have the opportunity to learn about and appreciate the Italian and local culture and traditions and in UNITE they will have the opportunity to share their own knowledge and culture in a friendly, open and multicultural framework.

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.

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UNITE is expected to obtain the following results:

Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility: In these last years, UNITE invested forces and actions to promote mobility (for both studies and training) for students and teachers. After a decreasing trend observed for several temporary and unforeseen events (economic crisis at national and regional level, the 2016-earthquake in the town of Teramo, its province and the region as a whole) in the last three years UNITE also thanks to the new management of UNITE, has shown a slight but progressive increasing trend of both incoming and outgoing students that brought us to reach the same levels as in 2015.

- **Students** Taking into account all the actions planned within the strategic plan it is expected to have in the next years an increase of at least 20 % of the mobility of students both outgoing and incoming in the next 3 years and more by the end of the ECHE 2021-27. This figure will be enhanced up to 50% if the European Universities project will be approved this year and according to the included project plans for mobility in the network.

- **Teachers and staff.** The mobility of teachers and staff outgoing is expected to increase and currently the limited number is suffering for the limited number of grants awarded by EACEA. In general, we expect to have an increase of at least of 50% in the next 2-3 years based on the current requests that the ERASMUS+ grant does not support. The teaching and staff mobility incoming will be promoted by local networking initiatives in specific areas (e.g. agri-food, veterinary medicine, biotechnology, arts and drama, law) the organisation of specific events (summer schools) so to enhance the visit of teachers from universities with higher affinities and/or complementarity so to promote interdisciplinarity and multicultural environments.

All mobility initiatives will be supported by internal services (e.g. Modern Foreign Language Centre, International Welcome Office) local governmental authorities (e.g. the municipality of Teramo, the Province of Teramo, other regional stakeholders), the participation of UNITE in thematic networks, along with the Students associations and the Teramo Erasmus Students Network (Teramo-ESN).

The Board of International and Erasmus mobility has planned to set a **Quality Assurance plan** for the ECHE 2021-2027 to evaluate trends in the mobility of students, teachers and staff, to monitor and to highlight any critical issue that will limit the achievement of the expected goals, and to identify the specific actions to be put in place to counteract any undesired decrease.

Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organisations and institutions:

So far, UNITE has experienced the involvement in past and ongoing projects. UNITE is interested in continuing to invest in the following sub-actions with the following plans:

Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices:

UNITE will continue to exploit this project action to strengthen the interaction with universities at EU and international level. The recently adopted internationalisation strategy is promoting and increasing networking and collaborative actions with an increasing number of universities worldwide to enhance the quality of HE, promoting mobility and jointly develop innovative educational initiatives. In the last Erasmus+ call (2020), UNITE has been already involved in 6 Capacity Building projects, two out of them also as coordinators in the biosciences area (Food Science and Technology). Knowledge Alliance projects are interesting framework that UNITE is interested in to exploit networking and collaborative activities with key stakeholders other than academia offering interesting opportunities for the two main disciplinary areas of UNITE (scientific, humanities).

Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities:

UNITE has already adhered to one European Universities consortium and we are currently waiting for the results. This type of project is expected to support the development of innovative educational approaches and training paths for professional and scientific careers; favour an innovative organization of research, mobility of students, teachers, and researchers between European countries, in a life-long learning perspective. Flexible modules, micro-credentials multidisciplinary skills will be implemented in a modern multidisciplinary and multisectoral framework. If the call 2020 will not be successful, UNITE is already planning to support the submission of a revised project proposal with the same consortium or to undertake the coordination of another one.

- **Partnerships for Excellence - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees.** Until now UNITE has never developed this action but thanks to recently renewed contacts with other EU partner universities we are now offering opportunities to co-create and design innovative educational paths that could be used for an Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degree. We expect to submit at least one project for Erasmus Mundus JMD.

- **Partnerships for Innovation.** UNITE has improved the skills and competences of some teachers in new teaching tools and methods that could be applied in several disciplines, including those for students and trainees with disabilities. This specific action will be thus of main interest for UNITE either to be involved as a partner or as a proposer of projects to support the development of intellectual work transferable and sustainable over time, therefore a widening and improvement of the educational capabilities could be exploited.

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3): Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support to policy development and cooperation:

UNITE is interested to apply (either as a partner or a coordinator) for projects aimed to stimulate innovative policy development, policy dialogue and implementation, and the knowledge in the fields of education, training and youth. This action will be of main interest for the faculties in the humanities sector (e.g. Law, Political Science) that have been already involved in the past in Jean Monnet projects. This actions will be an interesting tool to develop activities that may be exploited and implemented in collaboration with other stakeholders of our region.