

Erasmus Policy Statement (EPS) Universidad de Zaragoza (Spain) (ECHE 2021-2027)

The participation of the University of Zaragoza (UNIZAR) in the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ is undoubtedly, part of its continuous modernisation and internationalisation strategy. In fact, the commitment of the UNIZAR with the principles of the Erasmus programme has been a priority from its very beginning. We are very proud of having one of our staff members as Erasmus Ambassador from Spain, Prof. Fidel Corcuera Manso, from the period 2012-2017.

Currently, the UNIZAR is increasingly moving towards an integrated international strategy, led at the Vice-rectorate level, which acknowledges the key contribution of international mobility of staff and students, as well as the participation in European and International cooperation projects (academic and research partnerships). This strategy also focuses on increasing the international academic offer and the students and staff participation in it, attracting foreign students, international promotion and visibility of our institution, and internationalisation at home actions, as well as contributing to development projects in partnership with local institutions.

UNIZAR modernisation strategy also includes, among other goals, exploring the possibilities for a closer integration in academic activities with other European universities and for reducing academic barriers in Europe; increasing multilingualism and mobility for students and staff (both physical and virtual); enhancing research-driven, entrepreneurial-focused and student-centered education; implementing more flexible teaching as well as customized curricula; promoting a more intense participation of students and staff in the university government; or fostering the engagement of staff and students to act as European and global citizens, to support the development of its community and to respond to societal challenges, especially sustainability and climate change.

Strategic partnerships

Building strategic EU and non-EU partnerships is a central element of our institutional policy. Partnerships are more likely to be successful when the objectives are well defined and where there is a good fit and a sense of commitment between the partners. They are based on mutual trust, an understanding of the partner institution and a compatibility of academic profiles.

Performance indicators of this partnership strategy should include increasing reputation and brand for the university, more extensive academic networks, jointly offered degrees and cross partnership teaching, and increased opportunities for student mobility.

The University of Zaragoza is generalist and offers courses in all areas: Arts and Humanities, Experimental Sciences, Health Sciences, Social Sciences and Law, and Engineering and Architecture. Requests for signing new agreements aiming to allow student and/or staff mobility can be proposed by any faculty or school, according to their academic profiles and interests. On this basis partnerships are located all over Europe and the world. However, regarding EU, particular focus is put in cross-border partnerships (with France), Romance language speaking countries (France, Italy, Portugal, Rumania) and in institutions teaching in English. As for non-EU countries, Latin American countries and China are of particular interest, apart from Eastern Asia and North America and the Pacific area. Maghreb, Africa, Central Asia, India / Pakistan are also emerging interests. There is no limit set on the number of exchange agreements and they are normally supported by the faculties and schools involved.

The partnership with universities from France, Italy, Portugal and Rumania in the UNITA Alliance to apply to the European Universities call and to develop common teaching, research and mobility activities is one of the more relevant and strategic projects in the field of cooperation with other European HEIs within the Erasmus framework and a powerful tool to achieve some of the UNIZAR strategic goals which have been mentioned above when explaining the UNIZAR modernisation strategy.

Another priority for UNIZAR is Campus Iberus, the Campus of International Excellence of the Ebro Valley, a strategic alliance formed by the public universities of the Spanish autonomous communities of Aragon, La Rioja, Navarre, as well as that of Lleida in Catalonia, with a focus on quality, excellence and internationalisation. In order to achieve its goals, it strengthens links with the productive sector, involving companies, organizations and society as a whole in the process, sharing objectives and planning and building together the scientific, educational, innovation and social integration design that constitute the triple mission of a modern university.

One of the objectives of Campus Iberus is to develop a policy of strategic alliances with prestigious domestic and international universities. Specifically, a key action is the institutional strengthening of cross-border cooperation for a qualitative leap forward, one that is leading to the construction of a Cross-border Campus with the universities of Toulouse and Pau (France) in what there is a new large-scale project that we call EBRoS (European Bioregion of Science) Western Pyrenees. In recent years, UNIZAR has participated through the Iberus Campus Consortium in 20 projects financed with European funds, in the following programs: 2 in the Horizon 2020 Program, 2 in KA2, 2 in Interreg Poctefa, 3 in K108, 8 in K103, 4 in KA107

Mobility activities

Student and staff international mobility is actively encouraged and supported in the frame of the Erasmus programme, but not only. According to recent statistics, the University of Zaragoza is one of the top-ranking Spanish universities in terms of international annual student exchange, particularly regarding the Erasmus+ Programme.

The University of Zaragoza has implemented other programmes which cover both students and staff mobility to third countries. It promotes student mobility through specific programs in Latin America, North America, Asia, Africa and other destinations, also includes cooperation internship programs, as well as internationalisation actions developed at faculty level, which make possible to expand the institution network as, well as the reception of students and teachers.

Development of double/multiple/joint degrees and joint learning itineraries

It is also a priority for our institution to develop double and joint programmes, in particular in the frame of the alliance UNITA created to participate in the European Universities call and of the cross-border EBRoS Western Pyrenees Campus, as well as to consolidate those already existing. In addition, an Erasmus Mundus Master course and an Erasmus Mundus Doctorate programme are offered in collaboration with European partner institutions. UNIZAR is currently running double Bachelors and Master Degrees with French universities, especially cross-border ones, and also with German and Italian HEIs, and outside the EU with Brazil and China.

Double/Joint degrees are considered a mean to increase the quality and prestige of our institution and, thus, the capacity of attraction to foreign students by enhancing its international academic offer. Other possibilities of more flexible curricula are being explored, particularly joint learning itineraries in the framework of the alliance UNITA to apply for the European Universities call.