



## Erasmus Policy Statement (EPS)

### Erasmus Policy statement (EPS): UPC strategy

Since the beginning of the Erasmus program, UPC has participated very actively in its different actions, in such a way that it has been the true architect of the institutional roadmap to reach the achievements attained so far: high participation in mobility, both of students and of academic, technical and administrative staff, in Europe and in the rest of the geographical regions, an extensive involvement in training and cooperation projects with third countries, an active role in the creation of strategic alliances for knowledge, a prolific development of Erasmus Mundus joint master and doctorate programs and a contribution to the policies to strengthen the European Education Area.

Since 1996, the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya has been developing successive Strategic Plans for International Relations in order to promote the modernization and internationalization of the institution, of all its target groups and of the activities carried out, in a transversally and comprehensively. The last of the Strategic Plans, approved in February 2017 and valid until 2021, was inspired by the previous ECHE and it based its Strategic Challenges (SC) on:

- SC1: the internationalization of the institution,
- SC2: of people,
- SC3: of educational programs,
- SC4: of research and technology transfer,
- SC5: of development cooperation,
- SC6: the strengthening of strategic partnerships and international networks and
- SC7: development of tools and resources in order to be able to implement internationalization activities.

In this period our activity has been based on these strategic challenges and in the last two years it has focused in a very unique way the achievement and start of the implementation of an European University alliance, within the Erasmus + 2019 call. For all these reasons, the Erasmus program has been the pillar on which are based most of the activities aimed at achieving the objectives of our Internationalization Plan.

Thus, our strategy has been based, in a very significant way, on the active participation in each and every one of the actions of the Erasmus program, guided by its principles and based on its priorities. The mobility of individuals has been the quantitatively most important action; especially within Europe, but we have also established partnerships with institutions from all geographical areas, particularly with Latin America, North America, Industrialized Asia, Southeast Asia, the southern Mediterranean countries, Russia and the former Soviet republics. Regarding institutional training and cooperation programs, these have been the basis to contribute to the development of

universities in the aforementioned geographical areas, with which we have been collaborating in mobility programs or participating in common collaboration networks. The actions of strategic alliances strengthening have been the instrument used to increase our relations with the main European partners with whom we collaborate and we have used the action that articulates the creation of joint Erasmus Mundus Master's degrees to expand our academic offer, to increase its quality and to attract talent from all over the world, giving greater visibility to the European Higher Education Area.

Erasmus, therefore, has undoubtedly impacted individuals, both in those who have participated as beneficiaries in all groups (students, professors and administrative staff), and in those who have shared the experience of internationalization through the participants (Internationalization at Home). But the program has also had and will continue to have an intangible impact on the institution, through the prestige that internationalization brings it and, due to this, the quality increasement, the international visibility that it gives and the talent attraction from other countries that this implies. The program also has a very positive influence on the country's university system. It should be pointed that Spain is the country that receives the most Erasmus students, a fact that has changed the dynamics of the institutions, has modernized, updated and influenced ministerial policies.

Last year, in the first call for European University Initiatives (EUI), the UPC was awarded one of the selected projects, as part of the "UNITE!" project. This achievement has represented a stir in the approach of our future strategy, oriented towards the ambitious goal of designing and implementing a pan-European technological university and helping the rest of the institutions in the area to strengthen the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This platform will be one of the tools, surely the largest, to steer the goals to be achieved in 2027 in the EHEA. As the main goal of the alliance is to pursue a progressive integration among its members in various fields, it seems natural that the strategies of the consortium's universities regarding the objectives of internationalization and financing strategies should also be harmonized to the maximum, considering at the same time the specific needs and priorities, both at institutional, regional and national levels.

Since the EUI was launched, the European Commission clearly stated that the funding granted for the pilot project (2019-22) and its eventual extension would not be enough to carry out the ambitious plan to fully develop and establish a European University in 2025. Members of UNITE! contribute with their own funds, seek external funding and make extensive use of funding from European programs (that is, the Erasmus + program, H2020, etc.), in order to extend activities and increase their scope in the medium and long term.

UNITE! intends to adopt this approach using the vast experience of all its members in developing ideas and managing European projects, which in this context will be of great help in achieving the general goals and specific objectives set out in the Mission Statement of the alliance.

This process will be guided by the shared principle that the alliance must pursue the idea of creating internal strengths and synergies leading to a greater integration, but also the idea of developing a common identity that will allow its members to speak and act externally with one voice. This last principle will be promoted, structured and implemented by a working group (Task Force) that was created at the beginning of the activities and that will focus exclusively on the global external outreach of the alliance. One of the main tasks of this Task Force will be to define the themes, partners and strategic regions that should be prioritized for the development of project ideas in the framework of the Erasmus Program.

In all these strands of work, we will ensure (even in a greater degree than has been done until now) the greater inclusion of vulnerable groups (socially, culturally, religiously or economically vulnerable) and we will work to advance in more sustainable, effective and efficient forms of collaboration, joining the policy of maximizing virtual management, based on the digitization of all procedures, and trying to reduce as much as possible the CO2 footprint on the planet.

## **Erasmus+ actions in which UPC will take part and how they will be implemented in practice in UPC**

Despite the undoubted strategic importance of UNITE! for the UPC, this is not the only way of collaboration that is planned for the future, although it affects very significantly in SC1 of the Strategic Plan and will serve, horizontally, to strengthen all the Strategic Challenges (SC). Individual mobility actions will still be the largest and will have the most significant impact on the internationalization of the university community, and therefore, in SC2. As a consequence, a strong commitment to KA1 action will continue to concentrate great efforts, not only within Europe, but also to strengthen collaboration with partners around the world, including, of course, those in Latin America, Asia, the Southern Mediterranean and North America, predominantly. Regarding cooperation actions within Action 2 “Partnership for Cooperation and Exchange of Practices”, our objective will include, in addition to the named areas, Russia and the former Soviet republics. Contributing to the development of institutions and countries has been a vocation of the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya for over twenty years, and therefore, we will continue to be very active in these actions, in order to contribute to a more balanced, equitable, qualified and sustainable global scenario. This activity will reinforce the objectives included in SC5.

Our fruitful contribution in the different KICs of the European Institute of Technology leads us to use the Erasmus funding mechanisms to create joint academic programs through Erasmus Mundus and to design complementary projects within the different alliances. As a reference, one of the actions that has had more activity and results in our institution has been the Erasmus Mundus Masters: calls in which we have been very successful in the past, what has made them an essential instrument to increase the academic quality of programs, increase the attraction of international

talent, give international visibility to our academic offer and, without a doubt, have contributed to its internationalization, since 30% of the master's students at the UPC are international. In addition, it has had a collateral effect that has been the contribution to the increase of teaching in English language, since, at the moment, 26 of the UPC master's programs are entirely taught in English, which is one more of the strategies of Internationalization at home of our university. In this line of actions "Partnerships for Excellence and Partnership for Innovation", we will continue working within the strategic challenges SC3 and SC4.

On the other hand, the commitment of the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya to UNITE! will allow us and our partners to streamline our efforts and those of other members, in order to increase the success rate and to address more efficiently UNITE!'s priorities in a consistent and structured way. The fact that all of us have managed together, over the years and in flexible ways, a remarkable number and a variety of collaborative projects funded by the European Commission, will greatly facilitate the process and ensure a high level of success, due to the strong trust established within the alliance. As an example, in the past 5 years, a significant number of collaborative projects have been financed and performed under action KA2 Erasmus+ with, in each one of them, the participation of at least two members of the consortium.

Though the alliance is still young, its members have collaborated bilaterally and also in the framework offered over the past thirty years within the Cluster network [www.duster.org](http://www.duster.org). Therefore, although the activities carried out jointly are continually being defined and adjusted to the changes in international scenarios, there are some issues that we can still address at the core of UNITE!, to turn them into articulated ideas of functional projects to promote specific aspects of internal and external collaborations.

One of the priorities of "UNITE! Teaching and Learning Academy" will be the design of innovative joint programs co-created by academic staff, employers, students and alumni, and characterized by innovative teaching and learning methods, with a high level of employability. This will result in joint Erasmus Mundus programs with the aim of promoting their international appeal (SC3).

The structured integration of efforts made in the framework of "UNITE! Support Services" is already identifying a number of possible synergies and developments that could, individually and collectively, identify ideas for future projects funded by Erasmus + KA2 "Partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of practices". The same happens with the initiatives that are being promoted from the "Virtual UNITE! Campus" (SC6).

The crucial importance of the support to Erasmus + mobility will be the basis of "UNITE! Mobility for All", in order to promote the mobility of academic and administrative staff and students, in the development and implementation of joint activities, and to achieve the ambitious goal of reaching in 2025 a level of 50% of mobility among the student community of the consortium. In particular, the new and more flexible possibilities of the new program will allow greater use of physical mobility



combined with virtual mobility, as well as short-term mobility, which will be of great help in achieving the expected results (SC2).

The working groups “UNITE! PhD as Learning-Research-Innovation Interface” and “Regional Involvement and Innovation” will also develop specific projects, to be submitted in the KA2 call for “Partnerships for Innovation”, with the substantial involvement of employers and managers at all levels (SC4).

The innovative governance system of the alliance is a unique opportunity to share new approaches and models that will characterize the university management of the future; and therefore, the alliance will try to take advantage of his opportunity to play an important role in the EA, even, as a group, using KA3 “Support to policy development and cooperation” as an alliance and not as individual entities (SC1).

Finally, the new emphasis of the European Commission on the importance of the dissemination and exploitation of results agrees with the ambition of UNITE! to achieve high visibility in the global area of higher education.

The examples described above, general though not exhaustive, clearly show the impact that an appropriate and extensive use of the Erasmus Program will generate, both for the alliance as a whole, and for its members individually. UNITE! is an alliance that goes beyond the financing instrument that generated its creation and expects a permanent long-term collaboration, which will necessarily launch new activities while consolidating existing ones and is aware of the fact that a creative and consistent use of external financing instruments will be crucial in determining its level of ambition, its sustainability, and ultimately its long-term success.

Consequently, all these activities of the different actions of the Erasmus Program lead the reinforcement of the Strategic Challenges of our UPC Internationalization Plan. For this, the university has technical project offices, welcoming offices for the international community and an internationalization management office, that give support, accompany in the process and offer constant support to all the actors involved in the different actions (SC7), ensuring the quality of the actions and the achievement of the results.

## **Expected impact**

The expected impact of the Program will be the consolidation of all the action lines contained in it, not only increasing the number of participants but also seeking a qualitative improvement in the management and the results obtained. To do this, we will initiate transversal actions to foster activity and improve quality in all groups:

- Concerning the students, in addition to physical mobility, we will launch different types of mobility: short-term mobility, combined physical and virtual mobility (blended) and mobility of doctoral students (currently a minority of the total mobility). In addition,



we will increase the geographical areas in which mobility programs will be developed and we will boost the mobility for traineeships in companies. In this sense, the objective would be to increase at the end of the Program by 50% the number of students who will participate in it. For this, we are confident that being part of UNITE! will be a great incentive to achieve it.

- As for the academic staff, a challenge is to diversify the participation of the teachers who are involved in Erasmus + actions, offering here, too, opportunities in new countries. In this sense, the objective would be not only to reach a 25% increase in mobility of this group by 2027, but also to ensure that this increase is among the staff who have never participated before in Erasmus mobility actions. We consider here that UNITE! will also have a significant impact.
- Concerning the administrative staff (PAS), we foresee the same increase as for the academic staff, and with the same objective of extending participation among people who have never taken part before of any Erasmus activity. Among the PAS, the command of the English language is less widespread than in the rest of the groups, so we consider that the increase of activity in Latin America may favour the participation of people who, otherwise, would have a very difficult access to an international experience.

In addition, with the aim of increasing the number of participants and, above all, reaching those who for various reasons have not yet taken part before in any of the actions of the Erasmus program, we will implement actions that will make it even more visible, showing successful experiences, granting it a clear added value and involving groups that need more active inclusion policies. For this group we have the objective of increasing by 100% in 2027 the number of beneficiaries with special needs or belonging to highly vulnerable groups.

We plan to increase our participation in cooperation, excellence and innovation projects (in which we have already been very active in the past) by 50% compared to the current program. For this, the administrative support systems addressed to the participating professors will be increased and the institutional recognition of this type of activities will be given more visibility. Once again, we think that the implementation of UNITE! will be a platform for activity in projects that will strengthen and give visibility to the consortium, as well as it will be a working tool to ensure involvement in development projects and institutional cooperation in third countries in need of strengthening institutions and systems. Furthermore, the UPC will also continue working on this type of projects with the partners of the different networks to which it belongs, which are either focused on different geographical areas (Latin America, India, China, the Southern Mediterranean), or in different topics (double diplomas, entrepreneurial training, institutional strengthening, etc.). These projects will act as a reinforcement of the institutional internationalization strategy. The UPC will ensure the support to the staff involved, will recognize their participation and will ensure the sustainability of the results

and their institutional impact, in addition to disseminating them through the web and the different institutional social networks.

Regarding the participation in the action of Partnerships for Excellence Erasmus Mundus Joint Degrees, the objective is to increase by 50% the current ones at the end of the period. Past experience, alliances established in different networks and the privileged situation of being part of UNITE! will facilitate both the opportunities for degrees to develop and the choice of the most appropriate partners in each moment.

Finally, through UNITE! we intend to participate in a minimum of two projects within the action of “Policy Development”, that would contribute to the strengthening of the European Higher Education Area.

Throughout the program we will be concerned with ensuring the quality of participation in the different actions, through a monitoring process, evaluation of the results of the surveys of all the participants, weighing the opinion of the partners, facilitating and making the management processes more flexible, bringing them closer to the user, investing resources and involving ourselves in its execution to achieve more and better results during the years in which the Program will be in force.