

## **Erasmus Policy statement (EPS)**

The University of Nicosia is an International University. In 2020, UNIC's International student population and the number of international employees have reached significant numbers, providing a truly international environment for the students and staff to thrive in. Our student body represents over 70 countries, and the University therefore provides the opportunity of studying in a multicultural spirit that promotes friendship, cooperation and understanding. The University is fully committed to implementing the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) reforms. It holds the Erasmus Charter (2014-2020) and is one of the very few Universities that holds the ECTS Label (2012-2015) and the Diploma Supplement DS Label (2010-2013). Furthermore, it has developed innovative ICT tools to support the EHEA reforms. Through the reforms that have taken place (Learning Outcomes (LOs), ECTS, DS, etc.), the University has set a strong basis for implementing its International Strategy both at the EU and non-EU level. Committed to multiculturalism, the University holds since 2005, the UNESCO chair for "Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue for a Culture of Peace".

The International Strategy of the University ties very closely with the overall University Strategy in terms of growth with regards to the:

- number of degrees offered at all cycle levels
- number of students and graduates
- quantity and quality of both basic and applied research
- contribution to society
- inclusive access to higher education
- offering of cross-border education through
- campuses abroad
- franchising agreements
- double/multiple/joint degrees
- e-learning/blended learning modes of delivery.

The University therefore aims to increase its international visibility, while adhering to its motto of "Excellence in Education". The choice of strategic partners plays a crucial role in the success of the implementation of the International Strategy and therefore due

consideration is given to the selection of such partners. The International Strategy of the University is divided into two sub-strategies:

1. A general focus International Strategy that aims at building links with partners from as many EU and non-EU countries as possible, so that students and staff, through mobility and the establishment of double/multiple/joint degrees and research projects, can share experiences and best practices and thus help the University benefit from the expertise gained.

The implementation of this strategy and the University's exposure to as many different EU educational systems as possible, will ensure a true integration of the University within EHEA.

Furthermore, it will result in enhancing the University's educational/research environment. Focal to this strategy, is the choice of partners which are (or are becoming) leaders in teaching and research, and thus can provide to our students and staff the opportunity to experience a high quality educational environment. Due consideration is given to assessing our own strengths and capabilities against the partners' ones so as to ensure success of mobility activities and collaborations.

2. A specific focus International Strategy, through which partners are specifically chosen for their expertise and synergies with our University and/or vision, as well as aims and objectives in selected areas of teaching, learning, research and University governance. Focal to such decisions for partnerships are the University's strategic directions with regards to degrees, research and innovation, geographical areas targeted, joint ventures, etc. To this end, the University has set strategic aims and objectives to excel in areas where there is lack of expertise in Cyprus and where the University has already established itself as a leader. Such areas are (amongst others):

- a. E-learning and blended/hybrid learning modes that support inclusive access and provide students who cannot participate in physical mobility, to participate in virtual mobility
- b. Medical Education
- c. Accounting and Professional Qualifications
- d. Energy, Oil and Gas Management and Engineering

The aforementioned areas guide the choice of partners sought, as well as the geographical areas where the university can provide cross-border education. The following geographical areas (amongst others) have been identified as top priority:

- UK and Israel (Medical Education)
- Greece, Romania and Easter Europe (Accounting and ACCA)
- UK and Norway (Energy, Oil and Gas)
- Internationally (Cross Border Education in most subject areas): Internationalization is a key priority in our strategy and, together with our people and students, forms the main reason for our financial sustainability and our success in offering high quality education. The offering of cross border education is crucial in our endeavours and accounts for about 70% of our student body (with 50% of Distance Learning students studying mainly on joint degrees and 20% studying on campus). Cross-Border Education is delivered through different means and has proven to be a key reason for the University's success and its delivery of high quality education. We are fully committed and will invest substantially in further enhancing the offering of Cross-Border Education, which we consider crucial to our financial sustainability.
- Specific EU Countries (for general mobility and joint ventures in areas of expertise (sought expertise) of the University).

The development of double/multiple/joint degrees and joint research/innovation projects and collaborations follows from the framework of the International Strategy. The guiding principle is the synergies identified, the aim for excellence and ideally the reach to all EU and as many non-EU countries as possible, as well as institutions within each country, so that a true EU (and non-EU) Higher Educational Area integration of our University is achieved.

The University of Nicosia has set as a priority to become a global institution with an active participation in a variety of European research and educational projects. UNIC aims to foster the European identity amongst our students and staff through:

- 1) Key Action 1, **Learning mobility**
- 2) Key Action 2, **Cooperation among organisations and institutions**
- 3) Key Action 3, **Support to policy development and cooperation**

These Key Actions aim to introduce more innovation and improvements in the quality of courses taught, teaching methods applied and research conducted, with a positive impact both internally and also considering the broader society within which UNIC operates.

UNIC has set as a top priority to continue embarking on projects and promoting the European culture. Through participation in Individual Mobility, EJMD, Strategic Partnerships and the Capacity building projects, UNIC continues to mark improvements towards its internationalization policies. UNIC aims to expand its involvement in new opportunities proposed by the European Commission in order to maximize the achievement of its internationalization strategy. The University of Nicosia participates in the European University alliance UNIQUE, a proposal submitted in February 2020, which was established in order to contribute to the development of the European Education Area, by forming a new, innovation based, European University. The alliance partners identify themselves as pioneers and ambassadors for creating a new European higher education institution, intertwining teaching and learning with innovation and research and encouraging wide-scale cooperation with the society at large. We aim by 2024 to be part of a consortium of a European University.

The University of Nicosia is currently working on building and expanding its partnerships within the EU and beyond. Moreover the Cyprus higher education area, unlike its other European Union counterparts, is itself relatively young. The Erasmus Program is of importance as participation within KA2 projects in particular assists the University in building and strengthening its international links. Funded projects allow institutional and individual faculty visibility through cooperation, exchange of knowledge and know-how.

Participation in ERASMUS alliances/consortia assists the University to implement its internationalization and modernization strategy by achieving more specific objectives like the improvement of the quality of the services and the advancement of programmes offered. The immense transformation of society through digital technology and the need for adjustment to better respond to the contemporary challenges and needs arose from

unpredictable causes (like COVID-19) call for new forms of learning and teaching structures that can be achieved through Collective Effort and exchange of know-how. ERASMUS is the core of education, bringing together universities and stakeholders from different cultures with different strengths and weaknesses; offering opportunities for development and advancement of the European Education Area. Thus, participation in the ERASMUS Programme contributes to the University's internationalization and modernization strategy through the implementation of specific actions and achievement of objectives.

Involvement in ERASMUS projects is also transferred into the classroom, as well as into everyday work. As an entrepreneurial digital university, we are, to a considerable extent, finetuned to the economy, promoting both teaching and learning innovation and driven by pedagogy.

To this extent, the ERASMUS Program contributes towards modernizing our institution but also in various projects we also assist in the upgrading of higher education institutions outside the EU.

As a university, there is a commitment towards internationalization and quality guide that guide is to offering cross-border education, through joint/ double programs with other prestigious universities in Europe.

Hence by default and through the various ERASMUS Program projects that we are involved in, we pursue this significant target.

UNIC aims to continue contributing towards its modernization by taking measures regarding the goal of building a European Education Area, by implementing the following policies:

- Offering almost all courses in English language thus supporting the vision that spending time abroad to study and learn should become the norm;
- Providing the majority of the courses on-line or in blended learning format;
- Use of ECTS and working towards full implementation of the automatic mutual recognition process. UNIC thus fully supported The Bologna Process in its efforts to bring more coherence to higher education systems across Europe.
- Full recognition of the courses and traineeships undertaken abroad through the signing of a Learning Agreement, with the aim of making higher education in Europe more

attractive and competitive worldwide and aligning the skills of the workforce with the needs of the EU economy;

- Full recognition of all the teaching or training activities carried out abroad through the Teaching/Training Agreements;
- Providing the opportunity to both incoming and outgoing students to take language courses in French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and more, adopting the standard of knowing two languages in addition to one's mother tongue;
- Offering courses in European Policies and Culture, thus fostering people's strong sense of their identity as a European, of Europe's cultural heritage and its diversity
- Holding the UNESCO chair in "Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue for a Culture of Peace"
- Encouraging and promoting the participation in Erasmus+ to the student society through presentations and through the use of mass and direct marketing, in order to ensure that everyone is able to access high-quality education, irrespective of their socio-economic background
- Constantly updating the course content and teaching methods in order to improve key competences and digital skills of our students as European citizens;
- Transparency of the Course description on UNIC's website;
- Increasing the number of strategic partners within the EU and beyond through the signing of inter-institutional agreements
- Supporting the European Universities initiative with a focus on co-envisioned longterm strategies on sustainability, excellence and European values offering students opportunities for mobility and cooperation in inter-disciplinary teams to tackle the biggest issues facing Europe;
- Organizing open conferences (with the participation of external associates of the University) with Invited Speakers through Erasmus+;
- Organizing on an annual basis the Erasmus+ Info Day;
- Organizing on an annual basis the Erasmus+ International Staff Week;
- Fostering high quality and excellence in education and research, by strengthening the link between teaching, research and innovation and knowledge transfer to reinforce an

inclusive, life-long-learning-based and innovation-driven approach to education and training;

- Developing joint degree education and participation in several European Mundus Projects;
- Preparing the ground to start materializing blended mobilities, given the fact that UNIC has a great experience in providing distance learning programs of study