



ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS)

Description of the international (EU and non-EU) strategy

The **University of Padova** “*promotes the furthering of culture founded on universal values such as human rights, peace, respect for the environment and international solidarity* (Art. 1 of its Statutes)”. In this very spirit the University developed its trans-national relations, which were always active and relevant along the (almost) eight centuries of its own history. Nowadays the international dimension of the University, which is a multidisciplinary research intensive university is not only witnessed by many spontaneous activities, such as the countless research co-operation projects promoted by academics and researchers and such as the teaching offered to as many as 2220 regularly enrolled foreign students (about 4% of the total, from 108 different countries), but also by the large participation in the European Programmes regarding research (Padova share in FP7 is 53 million € up to now) and education (1200 outgoing Erasmus students, 13 Erasmus Mundus partnerships for joint programmes as well as 8 Erasmus Mundus Action 2 partnerships, active participation in several Tuning projects, coordination of the structural network EMQT, etc.). Moreover it is active in several (about 150) bilateral agreements of a “traditional” type (often existing before Erasmus), it runs special exchange programmes with China (being host to a Confucius Institute) and Brasil (CAPES-*Ciência sem Fronteiras*), it fosters co-operation activities with the developing countries, it runs its own intensive programmes, even abroad with a large foreign audience. Last, but not least, it is a convinced partner in the project activities of the Coimbra Group (i.e. the network of the European historical universities) as well as other networks.

All these activities developed gradually in the framework of increasing stimuli and motivations which consolidated the necessary supporting institutional environment. Among others, we mention here, the first participation in Erasmus (1988-89) which generated a sound and steady increase in the years to follow, the role of international academic networks, the Bologna process, the thrust to developing joint degrees, the issue of institutional attractiveness.

A special attention is put in the choice of partners. The Erasmus partners should respect some institutional eligibility criteria: they are often chosen on the basis of students’ demands. We accept asymmetric flows (i.e. one way only) within a policy of inclusion, search for reciprocity and general upgrading of the EHEA. We welcome the opportunity of bilateral agreements with third country HEIs, many of them being known to us either on Erasmus Mundus networking or on spontaneous partnerships. These latter are often promoted by dedicated academics, but must match rules officially approved by the governing bodies, including the fact that at least three different faculties must declare interest for that partnership.

The geographical areas of interest, which in pre-Erasmus time covered some European countries and US, later expanded to cover in a way or another the whole world, as synthetically described above. Except for some periods and some countries, no particular strategy was set up. But the university leadership steadily supported internationalization of its activities. In these years of economical crisis, the available budget has increased first and then remained stable, the only university budget item in such a “favorable” situation. Moreover a shared policy line regards developing degree-courses in vehicular languages. Apart from 8 degree-courses (out of 96 second cycle programmes) completely offered in vehicular language and apart from half a dozen joint

degrees, a recent resolution of the Academic Senate adopted a gradual approach to an increasingly wider offer of units taught in English. Complementing such a policy, an institutional programme to endow our teachers with better fluency in English was conceived and implemented. The growth in the years of internationalization choices and activities respected a strategy of “learning by doing”. Recently a Committee for an Internationalization Strategy was established by the Academic Senate; its findings should be available within September 2013.

In the framework of planning joint degree-courses, since a decade our university tried to root the joint initiatives in the institutional context (respect of qualification framework, specific cycle regulations, etc.). In 2002, as one of the founding members, our university promoted a sound procedure to award joint degree diplomas within the EMA-European Master in Human Rights and Democratization, based in Venice. That procedure and other relevant findings for joint activities were then steadily – and successfully – spread among our partners. Our participation in the T.I.M.E. Double Degrees agreements helped us to mature (to the benefit of host foreign students) enrolment procedures, which are flexible, but at the same time respectful of the existing legal constraints.

The strategy for the organisation and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) cooperation project in teaching and training

Main organizational strategies:

- a) Teachers of each Degree Programme will revise all existing Erasmus bilateral agreements – which cumulated in the past years – and select those ones which are really an asset for their own students. This will start already in year 2013-14, within a main organizational change with regard to the planning of the annual teaching offer. This latter is now a responsibility of 32 Departments rather than the earlier 13 large multidisciplinary faculties, while some purely coordinating tasks (including mobility) are left to 8 newly born Schools. These facts will restructure the tasks’ diagram between the central leadership/services and the Departments, between IRO and the other co-actors (decentralized Councils of Teachers, flow coordinators, etc).
- b) Take care of the uneven Erasmus reciprocity ratio (inbound mobility is low). We are facing the issue along several lines:
 - ✓improving the visibility of the annual teaching offer in terms of learning outcomes and through a better synergy with the web site experts, able to produce simpler browsing for any potential student interested in a given subject area.
 - ✓providing a full ECTS Course Catalogue in two languages within 2014. This will need strong cooperation from the about 180 degree courses.
 - ✓developing more and more course units offered in English and allowing guest students to take exams in English language.
 - ✓strengthening the Buddy Support scheme, successfully started this year.
- c) Further promoting doctoral mobility, which however is strongly supported by the university and is much higher than the Erasmus mobility (280 candidates against “less than 10” per year)
- d) Co-financing outbound student mobility and staff teaching/training mobility; organizing staff training weeks.
- e) Strengthening the IRO role in terms human resources and exploiting its growing potential in project planning support (intra UE and extra UE mobility, joint degrees, strategic partnerships, knowledge alliances, etc).

The expected impact of the participation in Erasmus+ on the EU's Modernization Agenda

Our contribution to the 5 priorities of the EU's modernization agenda occurs within a wider national context and analysis of data and trends is difficult. Nevertheless, we can state that the percentage of new enrolments at Padova with respect to the national total has been increasing from 3.2% in 2008-09 to 3.6% in 2011-12. The percentage of foreign students in the first two cycles is now 4.1 % (mainly from Balkans, but 108 countries are represented)

A steady attention has been given to improving the quality and relevance of HE. Quality is promoted centrally by the institutional leadership and via a body named *Presidio della qualità*. It is monitored annually through a centralized assessment body (*Nucleo di Valutazione*) and through student's assessment of teachers in the many course units (around 3000 units are offered). The 2011 report (2012) of Nucleo di Valutazione states that quality has "continuously improved" thanks to the steady commitment of the above actors. Relevance has been continuously reviewed and this led to a rationalization of the whole offer, characterized by a lower number of bachelor programmes.

As already stated above internationalization & mobility policies have always been high in the institutional agenda, noticeably in terms of a reinforced dedicated budget, also used to top-up the EC grants of disadvantaged students.

Internationalization has been pursued with a large variety of tools, ranging from students mobility to advanced summer/winter schools. Reports from mobile students and staff as well as active participation in several European projects and networks (e.g. the Coimbra group) continuously stimulated comparisons, provocative ideas, awareness of good practices; all this led to a genuine strengthening of our overall quality. We here mention again the European project EMQT-Erasmus Mobility Quality Tools, coordinated by our university.

Our university in the last decade devoted a great attention to placements in enterprises and businesses in the surrounding territory. Each year more than 12000 students use such an opportunity. Moreover each year several doctoral grants are funded by entrepreneurs, who sometimes ask for thesis work linked to company's needs and innovation. Finally a special central service actively interacts with the job market and innovation. Such an environment will help in maintaining updated curricula and in the long run higher quality both in HE and regional development.

Finally the need to adapt to the new relation (see above) between central leadership and decentralized departmental structures, the new accreditation procedure of the degree courses promoted in 2013 by the newly born Italian QA Agency (ANVUR), as well as the active participation of university leaders, staff and students in several international settings feeds lasting thoughts and concrete efforts aimed at improving the governance of university as a complex structure, whose many facets are more and more intertwined.