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Erasmus Policy Statement (Overall Strategy)

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The Institution agrees to publish this overall strategy (all three parts) on its website within one month after the signature of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education by the European Commission.

Please describe your institution's international (EU and non-EU) strategy. In your description please explain a) how you choose your partners, b) in which geographical area(s) and c) the most important objectives and target groups of your mobility activities (with regard to staff and students in first, second and third cycles, including study and training, and short cycles). If applicable, also explain how your institution participates in the development of double/multiple/joint degrees. (max. 5000 characters)

Original language [EN]

Alma Mater Europaea - European Centre, Maribor (AME-ECM) is a relatively young higher education and research institution with headquarters in Maribor, Slovenia (5th generation of enrolled students, 51 graduates so far), yet it has a network of over 250 academic teachers and over 40 institutions from 12 countries in the Danube region. Engagement of AME-ECM in research and higher education study programs is oriented primarily in the field of ecology ("Ecoremediations"), reintegration ("Financial Services, Management, European Business Studies"), the intercultural coexistence ("Institute for Intercultural and Jewish Studies in Central Europe") and the health and social work ("Nursing, Physiotherapy, Social Gerontology"); all of which are important topics for the DANUBE REGION, which is also the MAIN TARGET AREA of AME-ECM's teaching, research and project activities.

In addition to our teaching programs in the areas of ecology, reintegration, intercultural and intergenerational coexistence, health and welfare; AME-ECM has been entrusted to organize the project Regional Interactive Educational Network (RIEN) within the Danube strategy.

Geographical area includes countries from Austria, alongside the Danube to Romania. Many partners come from Serbian HEIs, currently involved in some TEMPUS proposals and potential joint degrees (2014).

Partners are selected carefully by following their good work, credibility, international orientation and potentials of future academic and project cooperation. Other partners are chosen on the basis of cooperation within the Danube strategy and their priority areas (PA7 - Knowledge society, good contacts with Serbia, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania).

The most important target groups are those HEIs with similar subjects, especially in Health care (Nursing, Physiotherapy and Social Gerontology, AT BACHELOR AND MASTER LEVEL), with which we are developing new master and PhD programmes with joint forces. Staff mobility is therefore our first priority because of academic (UNDERGRAD.) and project exchange. Given that we do not yet offer study programmes in English, incoming students are not the priority at time being, but will become one in the future.

International community is estimating that reintegration of the Danubian Region has and will have key impact on Balkan Region in order to integrate peace and sustainable development in Europe. A This lead to development of the study programme European business studies (MASTER) which offers three modules/ areas:

- European Integrations
- European project management
- Regional development and urban planning

We thus see our most important strategic orientation to assist the non-EU Balkan in their endeavours with our European experience and practice, as well as master study programmes, already accredited according to Bologna principle and according to EU guidelines and regulations, which in some of those countries is not always the case.

EU strategy includes strengthening our links to the European Academy of Sciences and Arts from Salzburg that is currently in the process of establishing Alma Mater University with a seat in Vienna (we received academic patronage in 2011 - usage of name Alma Mater Europaea). Major orientation is again the Danube region; AME-ECM intends to play an important academic and research role in this endeavor since it already has several study programmes, relevant for the Danube region.

Another important milestone in the EU strategy is the international annual conference Science and Technology (AME-ECM is coorganisor), that takes place in Croatia. Our active participation at this conference resulted in the fact that AME-ECM is chairing 5 out of 12 sections, and in addition to that 2 special sections for Master students of European Business Studies and Social gerontology (topic 2013: Croatia's accession to the EU).

Other important target groups: European universities with excellent background in health sciences (master), which we are trying to upgrade with new study programmes; good cooperation would enable us to offer subjects in English, making our institution more attractive to foreign students and for Erasmus exchange. Also planned is the first summer school for Social gerontology (target group: Bachelor, Master and PhD), carried out in English, as a special training with credits for foreign students. We are also improving links with Austrian institutions that could receive our students through work placements in the future (physiotherapy centers; internship for physiotherapists and social gerontology students).

Majority of international contacts target 2nd and 3rd cycle students.

Joint degrees are predominantly planned with partner institutions from Serbia and Germany (intensifying in late 2013/2014), working group of teachers and admin from all partner universities, joining efforts to prepare new Master and PhD programs (2nd & 3rd cycle).

If applicable, please describe your institution's strategy for the organisation and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) cooperation projects in teaching and training in relation to projects implemented under the Programme. (max. 2000 characters)

Original language [EN]

Contacts with HEI, established in the academic year 2012/2013 gave a good foundation for joint bilateral and international projects, based in the Balkans and Danube area, including joint organisation of scientific conferences, related to health sciences, as well as summer schools, dedicated to social gerontology. We have started including foreign teachers into our academic process, which should result in joining training projects within the next 5-year period.

Given that we are relatively new, we will in the immediate future co-organise projects under leadership of larger HEI's from participating countries, with the intention to bring projects into Slovenia once we prepare the system and start offering courses in English.

Currently, most of the internal non-academic staff is heavily involved in the internationalization process, covering all aspects, from legal, to distance learning, to cooperation contracts and preparation of curricula, extending the cooperation base between institutions and individuals.

Strategy for non-participating members is currently linked to Tempus projects (two in the pipeline with Serbian HEI's as lead partners), hoping that their status will soon include them into participating countries so that the cooperation can intensify even further (academic and student exchange).

We are also looking for establishing official training bases for our students abroad, in the near vicinity (Austria) - compulsory internships to be carried out abroad through cooperation projects with foreign non-academic institutions yet with our students. Some joint projects have been prepared within cross-border operational programme Slovenia-Austria 2007-2013, with more being planned for the perspective 2014-2020, including educational plans within life-long-learning programme, seeking possibilities within Grundtvig, Marie Curie, Jean Monnet and other programmes/actions, available to HEIs except of Erasmus.

Please explain the expected impact of your participation in the Programme on the modernisation of your institution (for each of the 5 priorities of the Modernisation Agenda*) in terms of the policy objectives you intend to achieve. (max. 3000 characters)

Original language [EN]

It is difficult to modernise and upgrade the existing approaches without comparison from abroad, without possibilities of screening cases of good practice from other / foreign institutions with a longer history. Since we are still mostly "Slovene", we expect to modernise our approach first and foremost through offering English courses, modules and later entire programmes, since we believe that by opening up the academic sphere to the international recipients / students, the University / Faculty itself broadens horizons. Internationalization also requires state-of-the-art distance learning and technology, which will be the next important step: conference lectures being filmed and placed online, with participating professors from abroad; the same allowing foreign researchers to more actively cooperate with the internal research team. Our good cooperation with the European Academy of Sciences and Arts will continue in exchange of connecting researchers from all across Europe, which will improve even further once we introduce more PhD programmes to our existing offer (currently one PhD).

Quality can only be improved if you open up the academic space for influences from abroad, which we intend to do by signing agreements with more HEI's from especially the Danube area, which is our primary target area. The aim remains to develop study programmes that are new, show great potential and target problematic areas, such as ecology, water, elderly population, integration, minorities, ...

Mobility will allow knowledge to go both ways; our teachers to go abroad more often for getting international perspective, and foreign teachers to share their international perspective and knowledge in our institution. Added value for students is the international approach and a foreign language; added possible contacts for study exchange, cooperation in projects and potential joint degrees are also very high on our priority list.

Offering 1st cycle study programmes enables us to provide students with research and work opportunities abroad, that can replace current internships, carried out in Slovenia. It is our aim to improve international internships and cross-border cooperation, especially the cross-border activities might have the highest impact on regional development, since some of the regions on our side and across the border in Croatia and Austria have been linked historically for centuries, yet do not always function properly. It is our intention to create academic centers and regions of excellence, allowing participation from both / all sides of the border to benefit from it. Again, a foreign language approach must be used for that, which is a mid-term plan.

Our current regional dispersion includes 3 centers in Slovenia, plan: consultation centers for students in Croatia and Austria, once transnational degree issue is solved at the governmental level.

Funding: we are private HEI, private funding, project funding. No financ.support from government so far.