



ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

Alma Mater Europaea – European Centre, Maribor (AMEU-ECM) is a young higher education and research institution with headquarters in Maribor, Slovenia, running accredited study programs since 2008. In last 10 years, AMEU ECM has developed a strong international network of partners, and signed over 50 Erasmus+ inter-institutional agreements with institutions from 20 countries in Europe. Engagement of AMEU-ECM in research and higher education study programs is oriented primarily in the field of health and social work (Nursing, Physiotherapy, Health Sciences, Social Gerontology), management (European Business Studies, Strategic Communication Management, Project Management) and ecology (Ecoremediation); all of which are important topics also for the Central Europe and Danube region, which are also the main target area of AMEU-ECM's teaching, research and project activities. In addition to our teaching programmes in the areas of health and welfare, management and ecology, AMEU-ECM has been entrusted to organize the project Regional Interactive Educational Network (RIEN) within the Danube strategy.

Partners are selected carefully by following their good work, credibility, international orientation and mostly by potentials of future academic and research cooperation. Other partners are chosen on the basis of cooperation within the Danube strategy and their priority areas (knowledge society, good contacts with Croatia, Serbia, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania). The most important target groups are those HEIs with similar subjects, especially in Health care (Nursing, Physiotherapy, Health Sciences, Social Gerontology, both at bachelor and master level), with which we are developing new master and PhD programmes also in international consortiums. Staff mobility is therefore our first priority because of academic and research exchange. Incoming students are becoming more important, so our next priority is to offer study programmes in English and German.

International community is estimating that reintegration of the Danube region has and will have key impact on Balkan region in order to integrate peace and sustainable development in Europe. This lead to development of the study programme European Business Studies (Master), Project Management (PhD) and Strategic Communication Management (PhD). 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 (we received academic patronage in 2011 – usage of name Alma Mater Europaea). Major orientation is again the Danube region, but also Eastern and Central Europe; AMEU-ECM intends to play an important academic and research role in this endeavour since it already has several study programmes, relevant for the region.

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 or German, making our institution more attractive to foreign students and for Erasmus exchange. We already offer study programme in Italian for Italian students. Also, each year we are planning summer school for Social Gerontology (target groups: bachelor, master and PhD), carried out in English, as a special training with credits for foreign students. We are also improving links with Austrian and Italian institutions that could receive our students through work placements in the future (physiotherapy centres; internship for physiotherapists and social gerontology students).

Contacts with HEI, established in previous academic years, 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 joint training projects within next years.

In the future we will cooperate in 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 and German. 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 curricula, extending the cooperation base between institutions and individuals. We are 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.

We expect to modernise our approach first and foremost through offering Italian (already have), English and German 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 require state-of-the-art distance learning and technology, which was also our 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 is improving since we have introduced more PhD programmes to our existing offer.

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

Mobility will allow transfer of good practice and 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 programs are also very high on our priority list. Offering 1st cycle study

programmes enables us to provide students with study 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, Italy, Hungary and Austria have been linked historically for centuries, yet do not always function properly. It is our intention to create academic centres 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 4 accredited centres in Slovenia and consulation centres for students in Croatia, Italy and Austria. AMEU-ECM is an independent HEI with private funding, so far not receiving any government financial support.

