

**UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES „MARKO MARULIĆ“ IN KNIN
(UASMMK), CROATIA**

Erasmus Policy Statement (Overall Strategy) of UASMMK

The UASMMK is a young institution that has not yet developed international collaboration to the desired level, which is understandable considering that, was established 8 years ago. In the same time, some of our professionals have realized the cooperation within the framework of individual projects in which they participated and collaborated with more than 20 institutions from Europe and the world (CARDS, FP7, IPA, LLP), and many participated in various international conferences in the country and abroad. Besides, in year 2010 the UASMMK participated in the international pilot project "Quality assessment and enhancement in higher education institutes of professional education in Croatia" of the Flemish Government executed by the Accreditation Organization of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) in collaboration with Croatian partners. Within the project as part of the pilot project, the UASMMK underwent an institutional audit, coordinated by NVAO aligned with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The purpose of the audit was to evaluate the institutions' internal quality system, and to contribute to the further development of institutional strategies for maintaining and enhancing the quality of their programs. Overall, the quality system of the UASMMK is considered satisfactory what the highest possible level. Also, in year 2011 the UASMMK has successfully passed the re-accreditation procedure of the Croatian Agency for Science and Higher Education.

Being aware that there is no significant institutional development without collaboration at national and especially at international level, as one of the most important strategic goals within the overall institutions' development strategy, the UASMMK emphasizes all kinds of international cooperation, especially the mobility of both incoming and outgoing students and staff (teaching and administrative) under the EU and non-EU programme. Also, the part of our strategic goals is establishment and development of joint study programs at national and international level and particularly at regional level (especially cross-border cooperation). Moreover, there are on-going preparations for creation and organization of new study programs at both undergraduate and graduate level (we established the Specialist Professional Graduate Study of "Economic and Entrepreneurship Normative Framework" starting in the 2013-2014 academic year). Also, the UASMMK offers various permanent trainings and both formal and informal lifelong learning programs. Furthermore, development of joint research and other projects, as well as accession to existing international projects and programs, particularly within the EU are also our important goals. So far, the UASMMK established good inter-institutional collaboration and cooperation with business entities at regional level, both national and international (Italy, Slovenia, B&H) and we considered this very important since different stakeholders in the region may have similar interests. Further development of international cooperation and mobility in particular within the EU Programs is of special importance for the development and affirmation of the UASMMK. Hence, in the year of 2012 the UASMMK get the Erasmus Charter and this year we hope to make the first students and staff mobility (incoming and/or outgoing) under the Erasmus Programme. Since the program concept of the UASMMK is conceived as a cycle that includes activities (education, research, professional cooperation, etc.) in primary production (Department of Karst Agriculture), processing (Department of Food Technology) and economy (Department of Business Economics and Entrepreneurship) in which practical training (Department of Innovation Centre) of young bachelors in progress is a very important activity, which will make them adequately trained for working in production upon graduation, including application, implementation and use of the new modern technologies and scientific achievements in practice, we may collaborate with many kinds of potential partners, but we prefer the institutions and business entities in mentioned areas. Also, considering the UASMMK is a young institution, some of our staff does not have extensive experience, both in working with students and in scientific/professional work, and therefore we prefer partners who are willing to mutually share experience and knowledge.

Finally, since it is a strategic objective of the European Commission that 20% of the students be involved in mobility by 2020 (the funds will be granted by the annual tenders), the UASMMK will inform and motivate students and staff about the benefits of the mobility, especially since mobility is an important indicator of individual and institutional excellence. It is generally accepted among the potential mobile participants that excellence at all levels; together with the attractive location of the host institution are the most important criteria of the incoming mobility.

According to the UASMMK's Overall Strategy and based on already established regional contacts (national and cross border) and cooperation with HEI and other institutions (Croatia, Italy, Slovenia, BiH) we have planned to create and develop (double or multiple) joint study programs (short, 1st and the 2nd Cycle) firstly at regional level. These study programs should be adapted to the needs of the regional labour market as well as the Regional Development Plan and organized to prepare the professionals to work in practice upon graduation. Recently, the UASMMK get the accreditation of new Specialist Professional Graduate Study of "Economic and Entrepreneurship Normative Framework" beginning in the 2013-2014 academic year, which is conceived according the needs of the market at regional level. Based on these plans we believe that the participation in the Erasmus activities will certainly help us to find new ways of improving our strategic objectives considering new joint study programs as well as international cooperation in other areas (science and research, collaboration with

the businesses etc.). Also, we are convinced that we are ready to actively participate in all European projects considering higher-education as well as science and research.

Establishing the UASMMK in Knin (located in region of special concern of the state - lagging behind region) the government provides continuing of education for a numerous of young persons who have not the opportunity to continue their education in the dislocated large centres mainly due to their poor financial status. This also applies to middle-aged persons (employed and/or unemployed) who are unable to leave their place of residence for an extended period of time and who have need and interest to continue the education and/or retraining. This directly affects the reducing higher education drop-out rates and improve earlier education outcomes and reduced school drop-out (1st priority of the MA*). Also, the program concept of the UASMMK is conceived to enable close cooperation with other HEIs, research institutions and businesses in order to educate professionals capable of quick integration into practice and competitive on labour market as well as the development and transfer of new technologies and scientific knowledge into practice in cooperation with businesses. The UASMMK monitors the achievements of the students through the Alumni Association and permanent cooperation with the Employment Services (2nd priority of the MA*). In addition, UASMMK has a share in a joint company called "Matica Ltd"(established by the City of Knin and UASMMK), specialized for designing different projects and preparing project documentation, which could be very useful considering our future projects. Furthermore, we believe that increasing the number of contacts and establishing the cooperation with other institutions and businesses (creating close links among HEIs, research and business - 4th priority of the MA*) particularly on the international level especially under the Erasmus Mobility Program will improve ability and competences of our students and staff. The exchange of knowledge, skills and experiences through student and staff mobility (incoming and outgoing) will allow the UASMMK to improve its own quality system (e.g., adjustment the curricula to the latest market needs, enhance the ICTs, improve the Quality Policy, etc.). So far cooperation at regional level (especially cross-border cooperation) bring us several benefits that we are convinced that further expansion and improvement of the international institutional cooperation, especially at the EU level, will improve our quality system and allow us to deeply involved in the EHEA and ERA (3th priority of the MA*). Considering the total investment in higher education and science in Croatia is much lower than in EU and also often inefficient, finding alternative funding source is very important for the development and progress of our institution. Also, the experiences, new knowledge and skills of our students and staff gained during the mobility will help us to gain insight of our own strengths and weaknesses which may be very helpful in finding the right path of development (5th priority of the MA*).

Our international strategy is to strengthen our European links and assure student and teacher mobility. We will assure access to all interested in the Erasmus program irrespective of age, gender, race, disability or social background. Teacher Mobility will continue to underpin our bi-lateral relationships and serve as a starting point for the further development of multi-lateral projects.

Information concerning Erasmus activities will be publicised on the UASMMK's website, in the Student Handbook and local media. The Erasmus University Charter and the Erasmus Policy Statement will be published on the UASMMK's website. Students will receive a copy of the EUC through our e-learning system based on Moodle software and Erasmus activities will be promoted among the students and staff through presentations via the same system.

Our quality system sets down norms and procedures to ensure compliance on the use of ECTS to facilitate academic recognition of all credits earned by both incoming and outgoing students (we issue Diploma Supplement). The European Credit Transfer System will be used to facilitate academic recognition for both incoming and outgoing students. The UASMMK is convinced that realisation of Erasmus mobility will open the possibilities to collaborate with many similar institutions in Europe, where our students and teachers will be able to gain new knowledge and experiences, which will be very valuable for further UASMMK development.