



ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
ΠΑΤΡΩΝ
UNIVERSITY OF PATRAS

Description of University's Internationalisation Strategy

One of the major goals of the University of Patras, since its foundation, has been to promote effective interaction between the university and its European and international environment. In 1996, a "European Policy Statement" was approved by the university's senate. Since then, a so-called internationalization strategy has been gradually embedded in all academic and research activities. The requirements of the Bologna process have been in the university's agenda at all academic levels. Staff members currently participate in activities related to curriculum upgrade and synchronization. Another aspect of this process regards the financing of research activities via European funding programmes for inter-university cooperation.

The University of Patras has long recognized that international cooperation and networking are necessities of a global economy. In our modern era, education and research can no longer stay delimited by local borders or policies. Education was one of the first domains included in the so called Common European policies, with the aim to create channels of communication, debate, as well as collaboration leading to mutual learning and to the building of formal university networks and mobility programmes. In fact, such networks have also served in the creation of collaboration bridges with other countries outside Europe, namely in North and Latin America, Asia, Africa and Australia.

An additional important role of European universities has been to contribute to the European's Union development and competitiveness. In this respect, universities play a key role in the onset of networks enhancing both research and the diffusion of knowledge. Also, universities are responsible for the formulation of future policies regarding research and education, and the supply of policy makers with a related tank of ideas.

The international orientation policy of the University of Patras is formally achieved through the cooperation of its academic staff members with universities and research institutions worldwide. Besides research, such cooperation includes activities related to teaching, intensive programmes and the development of common curricula, establishment of bilateral agreements, as well as the participation in international educational organizations, networks and university associations.

Regarding the latter aspect, the University of Patras is a member of the Santander Group, a powerful network constantly providing opportunities for its members to expand their horizons in inter-university cooperation. The EUA is a major association that formulates and suggests policy measures regarding high educational institutes. The University of Patras was the first University in Greece to incorporate the principles of "Quality Assurance" in education. To this

end, the university takes part in the Institutional Evaluation Programme of the European Universities Association (CRE). Also, the University of Patras has been a pioneer in introducing ECTS in all its academic departments since 1996. Finally, the UP was the first in Greece to adapt and implement a students' evaluation of the teaching staff performance.

Additional activities are: the UP is member of European University Continuing Education Network (EUCEN), Black Seas Universities Network (BSUN) and University Network of the European Capitals of Culture (UNECC). Its external window to Mediterranean countries is created by the establishment of bilateral agreements, membership in the Community of Mediterranean Universities (CMU), in the Réseau Méditerranéen des Ecoles d'Ingenieurs and in the Euromed Permanent University Forum. The UNIADRION Network, on the other hand, promotes cooperation opportunities between the UP and universities of neighbouring countries. Academic staff members are also encouraged to join scientific networks in their field of study and research such as the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) and the European Chemistry Thematic Network (ECTN). The UP has finally adopted the Magna Charta Observatory of Fundamental University Values and Rights.

The University encourages multicultural academic exchange and participates in European educational and mobility programmes, such as Erasmus and TEMPUS. Within the frame of Erasmus and particular the LLP/ Erasmus Programme of Studies, the UP has conducted Bilateral Agreement with over 250 European Universities that facilitate the mobility of students, teaching and administrative staff. The UP also focuses on the promotion of the LLP/Erasmus Programmes for Placements, (internship) in European companies, industry, and organizations right in advance, taking advantage of its' former experience in running the Leonardo Da Vinci programme. In fact, the UP is currently ranked first among Greek universities regarding the number of students taking part in the Placement Programme.

Within the framework of internationalization strategy, the UP has conducted a number of Bilateral and Cooperation Agreements with prestigious universities and research institutions abroad in order to enhance academic quality and increase world-wide recognition. Current programmes with world-reputed Johns Hopkins Medical School provide scholarships to students of medicine to do part of their research and/or studies in Baltimore. The Centre of Hellenic Studies of Harvard University provides, among other, scholarships to students of Humanities studies in its reputed summer schools. UP plans to introduce mechanisms for the recognition of the mobility through i.e. DS label, personnel evaluation and so on.

The geographic regions covered are mainly Europe, including Balkan countries, Russia and Ukraine, USA, Canada and Latin America, which has an increasing interest from our teaching staff to conduct cooperation agreements. The UP actively participates in the upgrading of the universities in the Balkan countries, through the reform of their curricula basically through TEMPUS. The Erasmus Mundus Programme with Argentinean Universities initiated mobility of postgraduate students from Argentina to Greece through a first-launched exchange programme.

The University of Patras has also signed agreements with North African and Middle East Universities wishing to keep and gradually evolve the already existed close ties with these countries and to strengthen their universities. Further responding to the global challenges, it takes part in an Erasmus Mundus Programme with Sub-Saharan universities providing education in doctorate level to teachers. It has also conducted agreements with Chinese and Korean Universities. These serve in broadening internationalisation in less accessible regions and they form a basis for closer future collaboration.

Most agreements are an outcome of research collaboration of the academic staff at international level (bottom-up approach). Some resulted from official visits to our University and debates recognising the need to create scientific cooperation under the University's umbrella (top-down policy). In some cases, alumni from UP, currently working as academics in prestigious educational and research institutions, undertake to build strong relationships.

UP is ready to introduce tailor-made strategies for its Faculties and Departments. The latter are encouraged to have a core of universities for collaboration, development of joint programmes and research. Students in all levels and especially those in master and doctorate programmes are supported to study abroad for at least one semester. On the other hand, given that the vast majority of the academic personnel are fluent in English, the academic departments are encouraged to offer part of their curricula, usually in postgraduate programmes, in English in order to attract foreign students. In this frame, two Erasmus Mundus Master Programmes are realized in the Department of Civil Engineering in earthquakes. Students from all over the world participate in these Programmes receiving high quality studies and excellent hosting. Academic Departments are also encouraged to participate in global rankings in order to get official recognition of their quality.

In general, the UP welcomes international students from all over the world through exchange programmes and helps them feel well-adjusted within the University community. It offers hosting in the two dormitories for international students and also Greek language courses to them. The aim is that international students become the best ambassadors of the university, and also of Greece, when they return back to their own countries.

Taking into account the current financial restrictions, the UP wishes to support its high quality personnel in all levels by providing funding opportunities and strategic partnerships, especially in the areas of its excellence. In this way the UP increases visibility of its excellent research work, supports the innovation and minimizes the "brain drain". In addition, by attracting high-quality personnel, it strengthens its quality in education and improves its fame. In this framework, and in order to enhance mobility, the UP has been a partner in the Euraxess Services Network, aiming to provide customized assistance, information, and support to incoming researchers and their families who work (or plan to work) in Patras and in the broader region of Western Greece. Such support extends to issues regarding taxation, insurance policies, visa procedures, social security, health services, education, language courses, accommodation, etc, aiming to minimize any obstructions posed to mobility.