

Erasmus Policy Statement

The **School of Advanced Social Studies (SASS)** is an independent research-oriented higher education institution in the field of social sciences, located in Nova Gorica, Slovenia. The school's strategic vision and focus on high-level applied research in specific areas of the EU studies are shaped, first, by the intercultural space in which it is located, second, by the transnational character of the region, which has traditionally nurtured strong cross-border linkages and, finally, by the region's successful, smart, and inclusive transformation from a traditional industrial and rural region to one with high value-added industry and tourism, in which knowledge has played the key role.

The activities of the SASS are guided by strategic orientations towards interdisciplinarity, internationalisation, excellence, and applicability in teaching and research. Since its founding in 2006, the school has managed to attract and consolidate a highly qualified and ambitious team of mostly younger researchers and university teachers. SASS has full accreditation for BA and MA courses as well as for doctoral studies in sociology.

SASS is committed to the principles of the Erasmus programme, intending to achieve the objectives of the EU modernisation and internationalisation agenda in higher education by participating in the following activities:

a. The mobility of higher education students and staff (KA1) within programme countries and Third Countries.

b. Cooperation among organisations and institutions (KA2) - Partnership for Cooperation and exchange of good practice, Partnership of Excellence (European Universities), Partnership for Excellence (Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees), Partnership for innovation

c. Support for policy development and cooperation.

e. Jean Monnet activities - to achieve a better and deeper understanding of European integration studies in the official curriculum of the institution and to conduct further research on topics of the EU.

The modernisation and internationalisation strategy of SASS is based on the principles of the Erasmus+ programme and are reflected in the overall strategic plan of SASS 2021-2030 (in preparation, to be adopted by the end of 2020). The SASS plan includes the following key strategic goals, which are all closely linked to the policies of internationalisation and modernisation.

1. Excellence of studies:

SASS' strategic goal is the constant improvement of study programmes, quality of teaching, reinforcing the visibility of the institution in Slovenia and abroad, encouraging students to finish their studies promptly and effectively transitioning from school to the labour market. The internationalisation and modernisation of studies are seen as one of the key activities in achieving these goals, which can also be done with the participation in the Erasmus programme. SASS encourages students, as well as academic, administrative and technical staff to participate in international mobility programmes, promotes the faculty, and invites incoming students and staff to SASS, promotes its study programmes abroad, takes care of the internationalisation of pedagogical processes and will gradually introduce virtual classrooms.

International mobility is open to all students, on all cycles of study as a clear precondition of a high-quality educational process. Student mobility is seen as significantly contributing to the satisfaction of students with their studies while providing them important skills, and cultural and social capital. SASS is aware of the issue of lack of participation in mobility programmes and thus will also focus on reinforcing the process of internationalisation 'at home' in order to provide an intercultural experience also to 'non-mobile' students. SASS will address this issue also by exploring the potentials of developing systems supporting virtual mobility.

2. Scientific, research and development excellence

Academic staff mobility, in particular in terms of the development of pedagogical work and teaching, research, building partnership and networks with EU and non-EU institutions, is a necessary condition for high quality R&D. The international cooperation of teachers and researchers is strategically seen as crucial in achieving the goal of publishing activities and excellence of research. SASS' strategic goal, in addition to a high level of academic staff mobility, is also reinforcing collaboration of researchers in networks, involvement in international research, development and market projects. SASS is aiming to increase bilateral collaboration and increase its visibility in the international academic sphere

3. Business excellence

The internationalisation of staff (academic, administrative, technical) is seen as one of the key elements in reaching business excellence at SASS. Giving staff the opportunity to take part in international mobility significantly contributes to their abilities and offers the possibility of learning good practices and improving their work. Staff shall also be involved in domestic and international projects. For business excellence, SASS aims to establish successful study programmes, effective research projects, high quality HR structure and employee satisfaction. Focus on individual staff skills development is key in attaining HR excellence. In seeking personal developmental goals, staff (academic, administrative, technical) are encouraged to take part in international mobility activities. Individual exchanges to learn good practices and to contribute to the development of their professional skills, improving their job satisfaction and work performance.

4. Cooperation with the societal environment and societal responsibility

European and international partnerships of SASS are complemented by strong partnerships on the local and national levels, including local communities, schools, business sector, NGO's. SASS is constantly enhancing its visibility on all levels – national in international. Designated study programmes on BA and MA levels include mandatory systematic engagement of students in 'on the job' training where SASS offers students and employers active support and engagement when organising the activities.

In order to provide the above-mentioned modernisation and internationalisation elements, SASS' strategic priorities are the following:

- a) **Reinforce** its network of bilateral agreements by taking care of the quality of partner institutions, focus of partner institutions and compatibility of study programmes, mutual interest to provide high quality mobility programmes to students and staff. The network will be constantly upgraded and monitored concerning its efficiency to assure the best corporations possible.
- b) **Increase mobility** rates for all categories, especially targeting students from all backgrounds and all cycles for study and training mobility, increasing staff teaching and training mobilities.
- c) **Internationalisation of the curriculum**, including internationalised learning outcomes, intercultural practices in the study process.
- d) SASS' **geographical interest** is in Programme and Partner countries as well; no geographical region is excluded from potential cooperation. Particular attention is dedicated to countries of the West Balkans and countries where collaboration has been successful.
- e) Introducing **digitalised processes** in the frame of the Erasmus Without Paper initiative (digitalisation of processes), Erasmus+ application and European Student Card Initiative.
- f) Considering the implementation of **virtual mobilities** for outgoing and incoming students.

SASS aims to respect all fundamental principles of non-discrimination, transparency and inclusion, fair competition, and offer equal access to the programme for all participants (encouraging participants with fewer opportunities). SASS is committed to the highest standard of education and academic research in its principles. SASS supports full automatic recognition of all activities carried out during mobility and ensures quality services for all.

In the 2021-2027 period, SASS will give particular emphasis to implementing the priorities of the Programme – implementation of digital mobility (European Student Card initiative), promote sustainability and environmentally friendly practices, encourage the participation of individuals with fewer opportunities and promote civic responsibility and engagement of all participants (students and staff) to become more active citizens. SASS will take care to follow all measures in all staff and student mobility phases – before, during and after mobility.

From the paragraphs above is to be concluded that our participation in the Erasmus+ Programme perfectly fits into our institutional internationalisation and modernisation strategy. Moreover, our participation in Erasmus+ Programme significantly accelerates the realisation of our institutional modernisation and internationalisation goals, as well as contributing to building the high-quality European Education Area.

Accepted by the senat of Fakulteta za uporabne družbene študije on April 1st 2021.

