

## Erasmus Policy statement

Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici CIELS (UNICIELS) is a university school whose aim is to promote the furthering of a culture founded on universal values such as human rights, peace, respect for the environment and international solidarity. As it is established in its Ethical code (art. 1, 2, 3), the main vocation of UNICIELS, which was founded in 2010 on the pre-existing International Language School, is to promote language learning, to enhance cooperation between countries, people, institutions within the fields of international relations, forensic communication, diplomacy, culture, marketing and tourism.

Our students attend courses to become language and cultural mediators in several fields and contexts and so international mobility plays a crucial role in their CV. Hence the importance the institute gives to international mobility and its efforts to promote it.

UNICIELS offers high profile undergraduate degree courses in Language Mediation focusing in the following key professional sectors:

- Security and Social Defense (Criminology).
- Diplomatic and International Organizations
- Advertising, International Marketing and Public Relations
- Business Management
- Tourist Management and International Trade

UNICIELS has a long-standing policy of international interdisciplinary exchange designed to meet the global challenges currently facing university education. We are convinced of the need to establish partnerships that offer our students the opportunity to gain university qualifications recognized in different countries.

International mobility increases not only students' and staff's knowledge (i.e. developing best practice), but it might increase resilience and the ability to adapt. In a world where global challenges might put a lot of pressure, being adaptable, resilient and flexible is necessary.

UNICIELS started the process of internationalization "from the bottom", focusing on students' needs and trying to give them a varied and continuously expanding network of partners. Agreements have been made with several European partners and extra-EU partners (in Latin America, Russia, and Asia).

At this moment, we have ratified more than 21 bilateral agreements with European Universities (some of these agreements provides for sub-agreements allowing a greater number of students' exchange). "Translated into numbers", UNICIELS is now able to provide its students with 72 open positions for mobility within the Erasmus+ Programme, and 20 positions for extra-EU countries outside the Erasmus+ Programme. These numbers are particularly relevant if we consider that UNICIELS is a relatively small HEI.

Furthermore, incoming students coming from so many different places are able to enrich our academic community, contributing in the reciprocal understanding of different cultural background, and the spreading of universal values and tolerance.



Placement mobility has also been implemented for outgoing students, both for enrolled students and post-graduation students (within one year from the acquisition of their BA).

In addition, every year incoming SMP students are coming from several partners (particularly UK universities).

The participation in all mobility programmes is guaranteed to all students and staff members, with no discrimination on any grounds. An important reference – when running all selection processes – is given to equal opportunities, and facilitations for those individuals with special needs is provided. In 2020, given the Covid-19 emergency, all procedures have been carried out online (no-paper application) in order to facilitate participants in their submission of necessary documents.

When looking for and selecting new partners, we have tried, and we still try, to find other language and translation institutes, but also faculties of the main subjects of our fields of study, such as Law, Economics, History, etc. The inclusive and eclectic nature of the courses we offer, has allowed UNICIELS to make agreements with very different partner-institutions and to help the students to choose the destination that better suits their interests and special study and research requirements.

Our current partners include faculties of Law, Criminology, History and Geography, etc. , besides Languages and Translating. We tend to find partners in areas where the languages taught at UNICIELS are spoken (English, French, Spanish, German, Russian, plus courses of Chinese and Arabic), but we also encourage students to study new languages taught or spoken in the different destinations (for example Catalan, Chinese, Dutch, Portuguese, Polish, Slovak).

A significant number of collected data are now able to show how – for our students – international mobility is perceived as a necessary pre-condition to be ready to face “the global market”. Indeed, considering the number of students who participated in the Erasmus+ Programme even with no funding, this provides evidence of the role played by the Erasmus+ Programme for our students. In other words, in the last years, about the 30% of students decided to participate in the Erasmus+ programme – both for studies and for placement – as “zero grant” participants. This result has been achieved given the enormous amount of positive feedbacks given by ex-Erasmus+ participants to potential future participants. In fact, during the academic year, we provide all students with the possibility to attend a series of meeting focused on international mobility opportunities. During these meetings, we often invite ex-Erasmus+ participants to present their experiences, giving tips and suggestions on how to fully exploit this opportunity. The main purpose of these meetings is to provide students, but also staff members all necessary information to become better European and world citizens.

International mobility also matches with the needs and requirements of UNICIELS from a practical and didactic point of view. Our students reach a C1 level in their languages of study and attend several courses of international reach, such as International Law, History of the EU, Sociology of Migration, etc. In addition, a period of placement is compulsory, thus, a number of students are willing to meet this requirement by doing the Erasmus+ for placement.

The first participation in Erasmus+ (2013) generated a sound and steady increase in the years to follow of international agreements, of the number of participating students (both SMS and SMP), and in the number of teaching members. UNICIELS has always emphasized the role of international academic networks, the



Bologna process, the thrust to developing joint degrees, the issue of institutional attractiveness. Therefore, a special attention is put in the choice of partners.

The Erasmus+ partners should respect some institutional eligibility criteria: (a) they are chosen on the basis of students' demands. We accept asymmetric flows (i.e. one way only) within a policy of inclusion, search for reciprocity and general upgrading of the EHEA.

At this moment, considering our academic dimension (small size, with roughly 170 students per year) the number of Inter-Institutional Agreements [IIA(s)] is higher than those signed by other bigger HEIs.

In the last three years, UNICIELS has also significantly implemented STAFF mobility for teaching. We doubled the number of teachers usually involved. We consider STAFF mobility for teaching as an essential part of the process of acquisition of best practices in the field of education and teaching. For this reasons, within the limits of provided funds, we are committed to enhance STAFF mobility even further.

The growth in the years of internationalization choices and activities respected a strategy of "learning by doing". Since 2019, we started using the new Online Learning Agreement (OLA) through the Erasmus+ Dashboard, and now, within the 2020-2021 academic year, we implemented this tool almost abandoning paper. We do believe in the Erasmus+ Without Paper project. We believe that through the EWP, Erasmus+ students will be given the chance to understand the importance of using technology as a mean to respect the environment and facilitate the exchange of information. Indeed, by pushing students in using the OLA, this can increase their IT skills preparing them to use technology in their future careers.

If the Erasmus+ programme is a soft power tool and it reflects the political motivation behind its creation (EU Commissioner Tibor Navracsics on European identity, 18/12/2017) including the task of legitimizing European institutions and reinforcing the idea of EU-citizenship, its next challenge is to prompt – among other values – the idea of sustainability and respect for the environment. The EWP that we have immediately endorsed goes in this direction. We are strongly committed to realize a new green and more technological approach within the Erasmus+ Programme.

### **Expected impact of the participation in the Erasmus+ Programme within the frame of the ECHE 2021-2027.**

UNICIELS confirms that its participation in Erasmus+ is part of its own strategy for modernization and internationalization, and an opportunity to strengthen the importance of technology (e.g. EPW) to respect the environment. Furthermore, UNICIELS is actively committed in the realization of the goals laid down in the communication on "Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture" published ahead of the EU Leaders' meeting in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017.

"As for the numbers" of mobility:

- We expect to enhance the number of outgoing and incoming students through the ratification of other IIAs with other HEIs. Our short-term expectations would be to reach at least a total 25 IIAs with an annual flow of 100 EU-outgoing participants, while also increasing the number of incoming students from our partners.



- We expect to enhance the number of teachers involved in STAFF mobility, both outgoing and incoming. From a technical and didactic point of view, the interaction with international partners stimulates a rethinking of teaching and evaluation methods that raises the level of transparency and pushes UNICIELS to expand and rationalize the didactic offer. The Direction and the Teachers Board are therefore actively collaborating with the International Relations Office to further internationalize the institute and to further improve the implementation of the ECTS system and other guidelines of the Bologna Process.
- We expect to increase the number of participants in the Erasmus+ SMP, both as enrolled and just graduated students. We do believe that the SMP experience can increase our students skills, making them ready for the job market challenges.

To realize these goals within the activities under Key Action 1, we will ensure:

- A high quality mobility of students and staff. We are committed to achieve this goal by selecting the best participants within a fair, open to all, equal opportunities and transparent public selection process, in which curricula and motivation of candidate will be evaluated impartially by the UNICIELS scientific committee. We have already established a mechanism of selection that has ensured an equal, fair and transparent process of selection for all participants. In other words, according to the principles of nondiscrimination, the selection and the award of grants is fair, transparent, coherent, and documented in line with the provisions enshrined in the National Agency signed Convention. These principles are applied throughout all stages of mobility and in the process of responding to queries/complaints from mobile students/staff.
- A better inter-connections with our territory, in particular by reinforcing our partnerships with local and regional enterprises and authorities. In the last three years we have improved our relations with the Office of the Veneto Region in Brussels, and we now have a constant flow of SMP outgoing students. In addition, since UNICIELS has become an important and stronger actor, thanks to its internationalization that has been fostered during the last years, we are now a relevant reference for the local community. Since 2018, we have started collaborating also with regional high school within the MOVE Project to promote high school students' international mobility.
- To further develop non-discrimination policies by making express reference to the nondiscrimination principle in all Erasmus+ related activities (selection process, presentations, etc.).
- To develop integrated transnational teaching activities, by increasing the number of visiting (and outgoing) professors through the organization of seminars and conference with an international dimension.
- To publish in our website and disseminate properly the results achieved by our staff members engaged in individual mobility or in cooperation projects with strategic partners. As we started doing in 2019, we will make Erasmus+ projects results (concerning staff and students mobility) available on our website in a specific page. In addition, during frequent meetings during the year, presentations will be provided to potential participants in order to explain the potential underpinning the Erasmus+ programme.
- A full recognition of acquired ECTS for all outgoing students. In this context, the OLA will play a crucial role giving the possibility to monitor possible LA changes and establish – ex ante – the full recognition to be given to selected courses followed at the host institution. The recognition procedures will ensure that students' mobility activities will be recorded transparently (i.e., indicating the original course / subject titles at the receiving HEI in the national language and English or another widely spoken



language) and the recognition will be a full recognition within students' academic career (as integral part of their degree programme). All credits agreed in the OLA or Training agreement (for SMP students) will be recognized by UNICIELS. Students will be considered full-time students and they will be required to complete a number of credits proportional to the duration of their mobility. Thus a one semester student will be required to achieve 30 ECTS as an annual student will be required to achieve 60 ECTS.

- Equal treatment, and full opportunities for incoming students. To achieve these goals we will reinforce our established practice of creating mixed students group within classes (during courses). We will issue transcript of records within the terms established in the IIA. As for the promotion of academic inter-exchange, we will adopt measures ensuring incoming mobile participants the possibility to Integrate into the wider student community and in the Institution's everyday life. We will encourage incoming students to act as ambassadors of the programme and share their mobility experience. As we have always done, we will provide appropriate mentoring and support arrangements for mobile participants, including for those pursuing blended mobility. In addition, whether needed, we will support incoming mobile participants in learning our home language (though, being a language mediation university course, students usually know Italian and English quite well).
- Given also the experience made since the Covid-19, UNICIELS will favor blended mobility as a key concept in ensuring the flexibility of and better access to the Erasmus+ Programme (also to overcome possible emergencies as it happened in 2020). In other words, we will ensure students – both SMS and SMP – the possibility of a blended mobility as a combination of a short-term physical mobility with a virtual component. The virtual dimension will be organized to facilitate a collaborative online learning exchange and teamwork. The learning outcomes acquired in the framework of the virtual component will count towards the overall learning outcomes obtained for the entire blended mobility period. The credits obtained will therefore reflect the volume of learning based on the defined learning outcomes and the associated workload. Of course, those included in virtual mobility will be treated on equal basis compared to “physical mobility”. No difference will be made (apart on the organizational part for online courses) since the ECHE principles will apply equally to blended mobility participants as to any other type of mobility.