



Erasmus+

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS)

1. Erasmus activities included in your EPS

In this section, you need to tick the Erasmus activities covered by your Erasmus Policy Statement. Please select those activities that your HEI intends to implement during the entire duration of the Programme.

Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility:

The mobility of higher education students and staff x

Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organisations and institutions:

Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices x

Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities x

Partnerships for Excellence - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees x

Partnerships for Innovation x

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3):

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support to policy development and cooperation: x

2. Erasmus Policy statement (EPS): your strategy

Your Erasmus Policy Statement should reflect how you intended to implement Erasmus after the award of the ECHE. Should you wish to add additional activities in the future, you will need to amend your Erasmus Policy Statement and inform your Erasmus National Agency.

What would you like to achieve by participating in the Erasmus Programme? How does your participation in the Erasmus Programme fit into your institutional internationalisation and modernisation strategy?

(Please reflect on the objectives of your participation. Please explain how you expect the participation in Erasmus to contribute towards modernising your institution, as well as on the goal of building a European Education Area ¹ and explain the policy objectives you intend to pursue).

Original language (and translation into EN, FR or DE if the EPS is not in one of these languages)

Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna (hereafter SSSA) is a special-statute public university institution whose mission is the pursuit of culture and the development of frontier research. Since 2017 SSSA is federated with two other leading Schools of Advanced Studies, the Istituto Universitario di Studi Superiori of Pavia (IUSS) and Scuola Normale Superiore (SNS) of Pisa, where each institution maintains its legal, scientific, executive and administrative autonomy.

Research Institutes and Departments of Excellence

SSSA engages in education and research in the field of *applied sciences*. First- and second-level university training is reserved to students (honours students) who are admitted after passing a highly competitive national selection. Entry is awarded solely on *merit and potential*, and *no costs*, including fees and accommodation, are charged for the entire duration of the student's training. From the date of its establishment, SSSA has distinguished itself as a learning community characterised by strong *shared values* and an *international orientation*. Teaching activities are conducted within two *Academic Faculties* (Experimental and Social Sciences). Scientific research and higher education programmes (including PhD degrees, Master's degrees and first and second level Master's diplomas) are developed in the context of *six Research Institutes*, equivalent to Departments: Biorobotics, TeCIP (Communication, Information and Perception Technologies), Life Sciences, Management, Economics and DirPOLIS (Law, Politics and Development).

Alongside the six Institutes, in 2018 two *Departments of Excellence* were established when the University was successful in both the fields of Experimental Sciences and Social Sciences in the National competition for funding (Law 232, 2016; 2017 Budget Law) after selection by a dedicated Ministry of Education Commission on the basis of research quality (VQR 2011-2014) and the projects submitted to the Call. They are "EMbeDS" (Economics and Management in the era of Data Science) and the Robotics and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Department of Excellence.

International Rankings

Although it is a *young University*, formally established in 1987, SSSA has achieved an extremely *high national and international standing*. It is now experiencing a phase of significant growth in its trajectory as a top research university: over the last ten years the number of SSSA scientific publications reviewed by Scopus has doubled and important research infrastructures have been realised. The University was ranked 1st among all Italian universities, 149th globally, and 7th among the world's top 250 young universities in the Times Higher Education Ranking (2020).

International Strategy

SSSA makes the attraction and development of talent its main priority, as reflected in its motto "*A research University, a school of talent, for a more sustainable and inclusive world*". This reflects the belief that knowledge is the fundamental driver of development and change in the context of the formidable social challenges we are now facing. *Complex problems increasingly require global responses* which need to be identified by working with the best Italian and foreign partners. Thus, the internationalisation agenda of SSSA, rather than being an activity to be pursued as an end in itself, is an indispensable aspect of the evolution of the University in its local and global contexts.

¹ For more information on the priorities of the European Education Area, such as recognition, digital skills, common values and inclusive education, please consult the following website:
https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en

SSSA aims to *expand and strengthen* its internationalisation strategy. On the one hand, the organisation is constrained by its small size in the number of opportunities it can simultaneously pursue; on the other, it can use its flexibility to better respond to present and future challenges. The Erasmus actions will be focal mechanisms to consolidate existing partnership and forge new avenues for cooperation with international partners. SSSA will participate in the calls for projects implemented under the Programme to further develop its international cooperation plans and enable its Undergraduates, Master's students, PhDs, Postdocs, Academic and Administrative Staff to benefit from such opportunities in the conduct of their activities, the development of their career and their contribution to society.

New teaching actions

The University plans to fully integrate the Erasmus Programme and its initiatives (e.g. Erasmus Student Card Initiative, Erasmus Without Papers) in its modernisation effort as fundamental sources of support, stimuli and opportunities for growth and improvement. First of all, in order to meet the training needs of all types of beneficiaries, significant investments are essential to innovate teaching methods, including the development of distance learning and an expansion of the range of international activities. The measures to improve *teaching methods, teaching formats and the dissemination of best practices* will be a primary target for SSSA in the next few years. Participation in the European Universities project could help us achieve these goals on a European scale. Moreover, starting from a.y. 20/21 SSSA will launch new courses ("*Seasonal Schools*") focused on the frontier research themes of each of its departments. These programmes will have a duration of one to two weeks, and are designed to attract talented students, enrolled in Italian and foreign universities, seeking integrative learning opportunities as part of their career development. The preferential teaching language will be English and at the end of the training course, upon verification of learning outcomes, ECTS will be recognised and certificates of participation will be issued.

International Collaborations

Regarding the consolidation and expansion of the range of collaborating partners, SSSA aims to strengthen existing linkages with higher education institutions that work in cognate fields of applied sciences and in particular with Universities that can provide students with opportunities to combine formal training and research at the forefront of their disciplines or in combination with other disciplines. In working towards new collaborations, SSSA will consider the quality of the partner institution, the expected impact of the collaboration on the School's activities (research, training, but also impact), the projects relevance and originality, and the respect of fundamental ethical considerations embodied in the Erasmus Charter.

Scaling-up internationalisation through alliances

In order to achieve scale and scope in the development of international agenda, since SSSA has joined the Tuscan Organisation of Universities and Research for Europe (Tour4EU), a non-profit association bringing together Regione Toscana (the regional governing authority), and the seven prestigious Tuscan Universities (SSSA, University of Florence, University of Pisa, University of Siena, University for Foreigners of Siena, IMT School for Advanced Studies of Lucca, Scuola Normale Superiore). TOUR4EU promotes the Tuscan Higher Education system, encourages cooperation and international activities by developing more advanced and innovative modes of interaction between higher education institutions and all relevant stakeholders (industry, local and national policy makers and civil society) with a strong focus on the initiatives inspired and funded by the European Community.

Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree

The commitment of SSSA to the development of its international strategy is exemplified by the School's success in a number of projects that enhance our relationship with esteemed European partners and provide effective mechanisms of student, researcher and Faculty exchanges. The Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees has allowed SSSA to realise 8 editions of two popular Masters Degrees in ICT (the Mapnet and Pixnet Courses). These have been very useful benchmarks to build experience towards the exploration of similar avenues for cooperation in future programmes.

Culture of Exchange

Also thanks to the International Credit Mobility system, the strategic actions SSSA implemented in the last few years resulted in almost 30% of international students enrolled in the 10 English-taught PhD programs. In addition to the EU, which remains a primary target, the School has expanded its portfolio of activities in Asia (especially in China), Russia, the Middle East, Africa, and South America. Staff mobility and the direct involvement of

Professors, Researchers and administrative personnel has spread inside SSSA the Erasmus Culture and each person with a mobility grant was encouraged to become an Erasmus Ambassador within their Institute and research area.

Undergraduate students

As far as undergraduate students are concerned SSSA would like to multiply the opportunities of exchange and study period abroad that are already integral parts of their study plan, towards both EU and non-EU higher education institutions. Given its relatively small number of students and the strong support of each scientific supervisor, SSSA can promote these opportunities with strong commitment, and would encourage all the students to create *personal learning paths* that can strengthen their curricula and enrich their experience as citizens and future decision-makers.

In order to facilitate international exchange and derive as much benefit as possible from these initiatives, in 2020 SSSA, Scuola Normale Superiore, and the University of Pisa signed a partnership agreement that establishes a *unified policy for the governance of outgoing and incoming mobilities*. This agreement is unique in the Italian context and a clear indication of the Pisan university system to forge innovative solutions and leverage interdependencies and complementarities.

Postgraduate students

At the postgraduate level, over the last 10 years SSSA has been launching new Master's Degree (M.Sc.) and Graduate Programmes in collaboration with prestigious Italian and foreign Universities. These can be highly attractive to future incoming students due to their interdisciplinary, international and innovative approach; their use of English as language of education; and the systematic reliance on the ECTS system. SSSA now aims to broaden access as well as the number of collaborators with new EU and non-EU institutions.

Traineeship Mobility

In the 2009/2010 academic year, SSSA activated the Erasmus Consortia Placement "Talent at work" together with Scuola Normale Superiore. From the second year of the initiative, the IMT School of Advanced Studies of Lucca joined as full partner. The *strategic collaboration* of the three Tuscan Schools has been growing for more than ten years with a distinctive international focus involving a variety of companies, institutions and international research centres. Over the last ten years, the Consortium has received and spent more than 1.052.000€ to nurture talents through the development of placement services. More than 340 students (a substantial number for a small institution), of which a high percentage was represented by international students, gained the opportunity of fully-funded experiences abroad through a public annual call for applications that indicated as a priority consideration of disadvantaged categories (e.g. students without ministerial scholarship). On a personal income basis, most Erasmus+ scholarships are *integrated with public funds*, allowing students to pursue traineeships abroad in a financially safe way.

To conclude, SSSA is committed to extend and improve its ability to produce *value for society*, acting as a driving force for cultural, scientific and technological development through and beyond research and education. The international strategy of the University in an essential enabler if this mission.

Please reflect on the Erasmus actions you would like to take part in and explain how they will be implemented in practice at your institution. Please explain how your institution's participation in these actions will contribute to achieving the objectives of your institutional strategy.

Original language (and translation into EN, FR or DE if the EPS is not in one of these languages)

The Internationalisation strategy of SSSA involves academic and administrative staff and students, and aims to enable those initiatives that are compatible with the values of the institution and are functional for its core activities of teaching, research and socio-economic impact.

SSSA participated in all activities of Action KA 1 and KA 2 over the last seven years.

Erasmus Coordinator and Permanent working group on Internationalisation

Due to the increasing number of projects and initiatives, SSSA is planning to appoint a new *Erasmus Institutional Coordinator* (this could correspond to the *Pro-Rector for International Relations*) charged with the task of promoting the Erasmus agenda and overseeing the development of Erasmus projects. The Erasmus Coordinator will be supported by an advisory working group (*Permanent working group on Internationalisation* hereinafter *Internationalisation working group*) including delegates for Internationalisation appointed by the Institute Directors for each of the six different research and education areas. They will have a promotion, monitoring and advising role, and will facilitate the flow of information across different parts of the University in order to stimulate cross-departmental learning and exploit emergent opportunities of interdisciplinary (international) collaboration.

This working group will also benefit from participation, when required, of the *Pro-Rector for Outreach and Social Mobility*, the *President of the Equal Opportunity Committee*, the *Pro-Rector for Inclusion and Disabilities of the University*: this will guarantee that all our processes are designed in a transparent and comprehensive framework to face potential issues of equal opportunities, gender balance and social equity. Moreover, the *ICT Services Division* of SSSA will be involved in the gradual implementation of the student card initiative and the Erasmus-without-paper process, following the digitalisation roadmap outlined by the European Commission (a dedicated taskforce is being constituted to include the *International Relations Office (IRO)*, the *Head of Teaching Offices* and the *Administrative Director's team of the University*).

Action KA1

The KA1 mobility programme is managed by the *International Relations Office* (KA103 and KA107 Teaching Training and study mobility) and by the *Placement Office* (Traineeship Mobility - Erasmus Consortia Placement "Talent at work"). SSSA has put significant efforts in developing the KA 107 and each year starting from 2015 the University was able to obtain funds to develop cooperation and mobility programmes in strategic areas such as Asia, Russia and the Sub-Saharan region. The International Relations Office of SSSA initially focused on staff mobility (including the mobility for pedagogical skills) in order to increase the number of Erasmus partner Universities, starting with the direct involvement of its faculty and enlarging the Agreement to include study mobility after careful consideration the collaborations track records. The Agreement guarantees full automatic recognition of all credits gained for the learning outcomes achieved. During the 2021-2027 period, SSSA aims to develop the Erasmus Study mobility programme in particular for honours college students.

IRO is routinely screening all existing agreements that include study mobility for those destinations that are complementary in terms of teaching/training/research programmes and are also willing to explore the new options of virtual and blended mobility. In keeping with the SSSA overall approach, the *attention to equal opportunities, gender balance and social equity* and the presence of *infrastructures* suitable for people with disabilities will be taken into account in the selection process of partner universities.

In order to facilitate the planning and management of opportunities for international mobility SSSA has recently signed a *new Learning Agreement* with its local partners, the University of Pisa and Scuola Superiore Normale (SNS). In the Pisan University system, the students of SSSA and SNS are enrolled at the University of Pisa. In addition to the general courses, the students of SSSA and SNS take integrative and advanced courses at SSSA and SNS. The new agreement enables the mutual recognition of international credits for exchange programmes managed by any of the three institutions. SSSA and SNS are planning to complete a second partnership agreement to include also the University of Florence in the process of mutual recognition of credits and academic qualifications.

Concerning the Traineeship Mobility programme, as envisaged in the 6-year strategic plan of the SSSA Rector (2019-2025), collaboration between Schools of Advanced Studies are of crucial importance. Thus, the establishment of a joint Erasmus+ Mobility Consortium involving three of them (SSSA, Scuola Normale Superiore, IMT School of Advanced Studies of Lucca) is extremely useful to share best practices and scale-up the availability of funds to finance disadvantaged categories. The over ten-year-long experience of the Erasmus+ Mobility Consortium demonstrates that partnerships with international research centres, institutions and companies have been very successful in consolidating and encouraging collaborative

projects and the circulation of ideas and people.

Action KA2

Each of the six Research Institutes of the University has significant experience in managing KA2 projects. In order to improve monitoring and assessment, SSSA is planning to foster stronger cross-departmental coordination between research areas through the *Internationalisation working group*. Beyond the support this working group can provide in the management of proposals, this working group will be able to generate additional opportunities for partnerships in the areas where the University may be in the process of developing new interdisciplinary activities.

European Universities

SSSA regards the European Universities initiative as a tremendous opportunity to benefit from, and in turn contribute to, the evolution of the European Education Area. The programme resonates strongly with the international vocation of the University and its principles of exchange and knowledge sharing in the face of present and future societal challenges. In order to meet the training needs of all types of stakeholders, a significant investment is necessary to innovate teaching targets, processes and methods, and these include different ways to shape international teaching and research pathways. The European Universities can play an important role in fostering and supporting the ongoing process of modernisation of the University.

What is the envisaged impact of your participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on your institution?

Please reflect on targets, as well as qualitative and quantitative indicators in monitoring this impact (such as mobility targets for student/staff mobility, quality of the implementation, support for participants on mobility, increased involvement in cooperation projects (under the KA2 action), sustainability/long-term impact of projects etc.) You are encouraged to offer an indicative timeline for achieving the targets related to the Erasmus+ actions.

Original language (and translation into EN, FR or DE if the EPS is not in one of these languages)

We expect the following impacts from our participation in the Erasmus Programme relative to the strategic plans described above:

1. Improvement of scholarly and professional skills of successful applicants, leading to higher achievement levels and better employment prospects after graduation;
2. Contribution to the professional development of researchers via staff mobility, as well as broader doctoral training through learning mobility towards renowned research centres at partner institutions in relevant fields of study;
3. Exposure to and absorption of international best practices through staff teaching/training mobility of faculty and researchers;
4. Enhancement of professional and leadership skills through staff mobility, leading to an improvement in our institution's human resource management and governance;
5. Expansion of the networks of potential partners in future cooperative projects through International Calls (Erasmus, Horizon 2020, Jean Monnet);
6. Continued excellence in international research funding performance (top in Italy);
7. Achievement of a greater international visibility. This strategic goal is particularly challenging: SSSA has world-class research, teaching and third mission performances on a per-capita basis, but it is overall small in size relative to world-leading higher-education institutions and cannot compete on scale.

Targets, Monitoring and Indicators

SSSA is planning to achieve the following targets by 2025 (end of Rector's mandate). We privilege gradual improvements to make change over time sustainable and subject to adjustments. SSSA aims to involve 150 beneficiaries on an average annual basis (of which indicatively 60% KA1, 30% KA2, 10%KA 3). We aim to increase the number of student mobility grants, incoming and outgoing, and to consolidate the experience and volume of

activity achieved for staff mobility. Concerning *KA103 Student Mobility*, SSSA aims to achieve at least a 50% increase in the number of student mobility by 2025, to maintain the current volume of outgoing staff mobility, and to increase the number of incoming visiting researchers. On the *KA 107 International Credit Mobility*, we aim to consolidate the recently achieved investments and volume of activities. Targets for European Universities are conditional on the success of the SSSA Consortium proposal.

Qualitative information on the programmes will be collected through annual surveys of participants. We aim to obtain an average of 80% “high satisfaction” of respondents in terms of their subjective ratings of the overall experience. This target could be reached during the first three years. The SSSA *Internationalisation working group* will draft a specific set of indicators for the KA2 and KA3 programmes that will be helpful in monitoring the development of these activities and identifying both critical instances and opportunities for cross-fertilisation across research areas. The *Internationalisation working group* will also work to promote the potential of the KA 2 and KA 3 actions in order to achieve a 20% the number of proposal submitted by SSSA (either as coordinator or partner) by the end of 7-year evaluation period.