Strengthening International Relations Offices in Moldovan HEIs for further integration into the EHEA

DELIVERABLE 1.2

Training materials on HE internationalization policies and mechanisms

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1. *Internationalization structure at Universitat Politècnica de València: Governance, Decision-Making Process.*

Introduction

The presentation analyses the internationalization framework at UPV, including its historical development, organizational structure, governance mechanisms.

Historical Evolution of Internationalization at UPV

The current internationalization model at UPV is the result of a progressive evolution. Before 1998, international activities were limited and mainly administrative in nature. A small unit was responsible for managing grants and receiving incoming students, with little coordination across faculties. Academic decisions such as student selection or credit recognition were handled independently by each school.

This situation reflected the early stages of the Erasmus programme, when cooperation between institutions relied heavily on personal contacts and informal arrangements. There was no unified institutional strategy, and internationalization was not yet considered a central component of university development.

From 1998 onwards, UPV initiated a process of transformation. The university introduced self-funded mobility programmes to complement European funding, reinforced the central office with technical staff, and developed IT systems to manage exchanges more efficiently. Over time, additional services were incorporated, including internships and broader international cooperation activities.

Parallel to this, the university expanded its involvement in international projects and partnerships, moving towards a more strategic and structured approach.

Current Organizational Structure

The internationalization system at UPV combines centralized coordination with decentralized implementation. At the top of the structure is the Vice-Rector for Internationalization and Communication, who oversees the overall strategy and policy.

The central level includes the International Area, the Cooperation Area, and the Central International Office, supported by a Strategic Projects section. At the same time, each of the university's schools and faculties has its own International Relations Office (IRO), resulting in a network of 14 decentralized units.

At the school level, the IRO typically includes an academic coordinator (such as a Vice-Dean), technical staff, administrative personnel, and support staff. This structure allows each faculty to manage its own partnerships and mobility processes while remaining aligned with institutional policies.

At the central level, the International Office is responsible for coordinating large-scale programmes and ensuring consistency. It manages Erasmus+ mobility, overseas agreements, internships, staff mobility, immigration procedures, and language support. In parallel, the Strategic Projects section focuses on international projects, including Erasmus+ initiatives and cooperation programmes, as well as international student recruitment.

Centralized and decentralized approach

A key feature of the UPV model is the coexistence of centralized and decentralized elements. Each approach offers distinct advantages.

Decentralization allows faculties to maintain close contact with students and academic staff, facilitating academic recognition and ensuring that mobility is aligned with study programmes. It also supports the development of specialized partnerships and distributes workload across the institution.

On the other hand, centralization improves coordination, reduces duplication of efforts, and creates economies of scale. It also provides a clear single contact point for external partners and ensures greater consistency in procedures.

The UPV experience demonstrates that a hybrid approach is necessary. Balancing autonomy and coordination is essential to respond to both institutional needs and the diversity of academic disciplines.

Decision-Making Processes

Decision-making in internationalization at UPV involves several levels. At the strategic level, the Vice-Rector defines policies and priorities, which may be validated by institutional bodies such as the Governing Council.

At the intermediate level, the International Relations Commission plays a central role. This body meets regularly to approve agreements, allocate grants, and make decisions on participation in restricted programmes. It includes representatives from different schools and central services.

At the operational level, the Academic Exchanges Monitoring Commission ensures coordination of mobility activities and supports the implementation of policies. Decisions are generally based on consensus rather than voting, reflecting a collaborative governance model.

Strengths and Challenges

The UPV model presents several strengths. It benefits from a high level of specialization, strong proximity to students, and effective management of international agreements. The combination of mobility and project-based internationalization increases the institution’s global visibility and capacity for collaboration.

However, challenges remain. Coordination across decentralized units can be complex, and the reliance on temporary support staff creates inefficiencies due to constant training needs. Additionally, improvements are needed in communication strategies and system robustness.

Conclusion

The internationalization system at UPV represents a mature and comprehensive model that integrates governance, management, and measurement. Its hybrid structure allows flexibility while maintaining institutional coherence, and its decision-making processes ensure participation across different levels.

2. *Measurement of Internationalization in Higher Education: The IAINT Model (UPV Case Study)*

Introduction and conceptual approach

The Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV) defines internationalization as a planned and multidimensional process that integrates both outward-looking activities (mobility, partnerships) and inward-oriented efforts (curriculum internationalization, institutional culture).

In line with its strategic objectives, the UPV developed the *Internationalization Activity Index (IAINT)* as a quantitative instrument to measure and evaluate internationalization across its academic schools/faculties. The IAINT reflects the need to systematically assess diverse international activities, improve coordination among stakeholders, and inform institutional decision-making.

The index is grounded in the understanding that internationalization contributes to institutional competitiveness, visibility, and social responsibility. It also supports evidence-based resource allocation and continuous improvement. As such, IAINT is not merely a monitoring tool but a strategic management instrument aligned with institutional planning and European higher education policies.

Policy and European Framework

The IAINT model is aligned with key European and international frameworks for higher education internationalization. It builds upon the principles of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), particularly those outlined in the Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (2009), which emphasizes mobility, quality assurance, and global cooperation.

Mobility is highlighted as a defining feature of European higher education, contributing to academic quality, employability, intercultural competencies, and institutional collaboration. The target of ensuring that at least 20% of graduates have an international experience by 2020 reflects the strategic importance of mobility in this framework.

Additionally, the IAINT incorporates principles from:

- The ET 2020 strategic framework, promoting lifelong learning, innovation, and social cohesion.
- UNESCO/OECD guidelines on quality in cross-border education.
- National evaluation mechanisms, including those of ANECA and benchmarks used by the Spanish university system.

At the institutional level, UPV recognizes internationalization as a strategic and transversal priority, extending beyond mobility to include research collaboration, double degrees, international projects, and development cooperation.

Methodology for Constructing the IAINT

The IAINT is a composite indicator developed following OECD recommendations for indicator construction. Its methodology ensures methodological rigor, transparency, and comparability over time and across academic units.

The process involves four main stages:

Conceptual Framework

A structured framework defines the scope of internationalization activities, grouped into five main dimensions:

1. Academic exchange and international student recruitment
2. Quality

3. International cooperation for development
4. International projects
5. Other internationalization activities

Each dimension is further divided into sub-dimensions and specific indicators, ensuring a comprehensive coverage of institutional activities.

Selection of Indicators

The quality of the composite index depends on the relevance and robustness of individual indicators. Indicators are selected to reflect measurable aspects of internationalization, including mobility flows, academic performance, institutional partnerships, and stakeholder satisfaction.

Data Normalization

To ensure comparability, all indicators are normalized using standardization techniques (mean and standard deviation transformation). This allows aggregation of heterogeneous data into a single index.

Weighting and Aggregation

Weights are assigned through a participatory expert-based process, distributing 100 points across indicators and dimensions. The index uses a linear aggregation method, allowing compensation between indicators.

This methodology ensures that IAINT is both flexible and adaptable, evolving with institutional priorities and policy changes.

Structure and Indicators of the IAINT

Dimension 1: Academic Exchange and International Student Recruitment (50%)

This dimension evaluates the scale and efficiency of mobility and international student attraction. It includes:

- Outgoing and incoming student mobility
- Staff mobility (academic and administrative)
- International student enrolment and visiting students

It also measures efficiency, such as mobility rates relative to the number of graduates and balance between incoming and outgoing mobility.

Dimension 2: Quality (25%)

This dimension captures qualitative aspects of internationalization:

- Satisfaction levels of students and staff (based on surveys)
- Participation in excellence programmes (e.g., double degrees, Erasmus Mundus)
- Academic management, including credit recognition and English-taught programmes
- International accreditation coverage

It reflects the shift from quantitative mobility metrics to quality-driven internationalization outcomes.

Dimension 3: International Development Cooperation (8%)

This dimension highlights the university's social responsibility and global engagement, measuring:

- Development cooperation activities
- Participation of students and staff in solidarity programmes

- Institutional support structures (e.g., UPV Centre for Cooperation Development initiatives)

Activities must comply with ethical standards, reinforcing the role of universities in global development.

Dimension 4: International Projects (12%)

This dimension evaluates participation in:

- Competitive international projects (e.g., Erasmus+, Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo AECID)
- Research and cooperation initiatives
- Study Abroad and Summer School programmes

It reflects the institution's capacity to attract funding and engage in global partnerships.

Dimension 5: Other Activities (5%)

This complementary dimension includes:

- Institutional collaboration and representation
- Participation in conferences and networks
- External funding for internationalization
- Training activities

It captures additional contributions not covered by other dimensions, ensuring a holistic assessment.

Weighting and Composite Index Calculation

The IAINT assigns weights to each dimension based on institutional priorities:

- Academic Exchange: 50%
- Quality: 25%
- International Projects: 12%
- Development Cooperation: 8%
- Other Activities: 5%

The final score is calculated as a weighted sum of normalized indicators. Additionally, a multi-year weighting system incorporates results from the previous four years, ensuring stability and reducing volatility in annual performance assessments.

This approach balances:

- Short-term performance
- Long-term consistency
- Strategic continuity

Governance and Evaluation Process

The IAINT is supported by a structured governance system:

Evaluation Bodies

A dedicated Internationalization Evaluation Commission (CEI) oversees the process, ensuring transparency, consistency, and resolution of discrepancies.

Data Collection and Validation

Data is sourced from:

- Institutional databases and reports
- Official statistics
- Information provided by academic centres

The process follows a clear annual calendar, including data submission, validation, review, and publication stages.

Reporting and Results

Each School/Faculty receives an annual report detailing:

- Indicator values
- Final IAINT score
- Comparative performance

These reports include statistical analyses, recommendations, and strategic insights to support institutional planning.

Relevance for KPI Frameworks in Moldovan Heigher Education Institutions

The IAINT model provides a robust example of how to operationalize internationalization through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in higher education. Its main strengths include:

- Comprehensiveness: covers teaching, research, mobility, and social impact
- Measurability: relies on clear, quantifiable indicators
- Strategic alignment: linked to institutional and European policy frameworks
- Flexibility: adaptable to evolving priorities

For MD HEIs, IAINT can serve as a benchmark model for designing KPI systems that:

- Support institutional transformation
- Enable evidence-based decision-making
- Promote accountability and continuous improvement

Conclusion

The IAINT represents a mature and integrated approach to measuring internationalization in higher education. By combining quantitative indicators with qualitative dimensions and embedding them in a transparent methodology, it provides a comprehensive framework for evaluation and strategic management.

Its alignment with European standards and its emphasis on quality, cooperation, and impact make it particularly relevant for institutions seeking to strengthen their international profile. As such, it offers valuable lessons for MD HEIs aiming to develop institutional KPI systems for internationalization measurement.

3. Good practices in internationalization at UPV: Mentor Programme., International Seminars, and Alumni. International Chapters.

Introduction

This chapter presents three examples of good practices implemented at the Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV): the Mentor Programme, the International Seminars model, and the Alumni International Chapters initiative. These practices illustrate different approaches to internationalisation, while sharing common characteristics such as scalability, cost-efficiency, and a strong focus on stakeholder engagement.

The Mentor Programme: Inclusive Support for Incoming Students

The Mentor Programme at UPV represents a practical example of inclusive internationalisation. It is based on peer-to-peer support, where local students assist incoming international students during their integration process. The programme is designed to address both academic and social challenges faced by international students upon arrival.

From an inclusivity perspective, the programme plays a key role in reducing barriers faced by incoming students. By providing first-level guidance and support through peers, it ensures that students with different linguistic, cultural, or socio-economic backgrounds can more easily adapt to their new environment. This contributes to a more equitable student experience and helps prevent isolation or disengagement.

In terms of sustainability, the Mentor Programme is particularly efficient. It operates with minimal financial resources, relying primarily on student participation and existing institutional structures. At the same time, it produces significant impact by improving student satisfaction, enhancing integration, and reducing the workload of International Relations Offices.

The programme also generates long-term benefits by preparing local students for future international experiences. By acting as mentors, they develop intercultural competences, communication skills, and a sense of responsibility, all of which contribute to the development of globally engaged graduates.

International Seminars: Sustainable Internationalisation at Home

The International Seminars initiative reflects the principles of internationalisation at home, bringing global perspectives directly into the classroom. The model consists of a structured course delivered over a period of several weeks by international guest lecturers, typically through short teaching visits supported by mobility programmes.

From an inclusivity standpoint, this initiative allows students who are not able to participate in mobility programmes to benefit from international exposure. It ensures that access to international experiences is not limited to a small group of mobile students, but extended to the wider student population. By offering courses in English and involving diverse academic perspectives, the seminars enhance intercultural learning for all participants.

Sustainability is achieved through the efficient use of existing resources, particularly Erasmus+ mobility schemes. The model maximises the impact of incoming teaching staff by embedding their visits into structured academic activities. It also contributes to the development of English-taught programmes without requiring significant additional investment.

Furthermore, the initiative strengthens institutional partnerships by providing concrete opportunities for collaboration. The presence of visiting lecturers facilitates networking, supports future joint projects, and reinforces academic ties between institutions.

Alumni International Chapters: Long-Term Sustainable Engagement

The Alumni International Chapters initiative extends internationalisation beyond the duration of studies, focusing on long-term engagement with graduates worldwide. By creating networks of alumni abroad, universities can maintain connections with their graduates and leverage their experience for institutional development.

In terms of inclusivity, alumni networks create opportunities for a wide range of stakeholders to remain connected to the institution. Graduates from diverse backgrounds can participate in these networks, contributing to a shared sense of belonging regardless of their geographical location.

From a sustainability perspective, alumni chapters represent a low-cost yet highly effective tool for internationalisation. They rely on voluntary participation and existing networks, while generating significant benefits such as enhanced institutional visibility, support for student recruitment, and access to employment opportunities.

Alumni also act as informal ambassadors, promoting the institution in their respective countries. Their involvement can facilitate partnerships, internships, and knowledge exchange, reinforcing the global dimension of the university's activities.

Cross-Cutting Analysis: Sustainability and Inclusivity as Key Drivers

The three initiatives analysed—the Mentor Programme, the International Seminars, and the Alumni International Chapters—address different but complementary dimensions of internationalisation, ranging from student integration to curriculum development and external engagement.

Initiative	Main Focus	Type of Impact
Mentor Programme	Student integration	Immediate, student-centred
International Seminars	Curriculum and teaching	Academic and pedagogical
Alumni Chapters	External engagement	Long-term and strategic

Despite these differences, they share several core characteristics that highlight their value as good practices and explain their effectiveness within diverse institutional contexts.

Sustainable, Low-Cost and High-Impact Design

A first key lesson is that impactful internationalisation does not necessarily require significant financial investment. All three initiatives rely on the strategic use of existing resources, such as student engagement (Mentor Programme), short-term teaching mobility (International Seminars), and alumni networks (Chapters).

By optimising these resources, institutions can develop sustainable initiatives that produce long-term benefits while maintaining financial efficiency. This is particularly relevant for universities with limited budgets seeking to expand their international dimension.

Strong Institutional Integration and Strategic Alignment

A second common factor is their strong integration within the institutional framework. Each initiative is embedded in existing structures (International Relations Offices, academic programmes, alumni services), ensuring continuity, scalability, and alignment with institutional priorities.

This integration reinforces sustainability, as initiatives are not isolated projects but part of a broader internationalisation strategy that can evolve over time.

Stakeholder Engagement as a Driver of Success

Another critical element is the active involvement of key stakeholders:

- Students, through mentoring and participation in internationalised learning environments
- Academic staff, through teaching and collaboration in the seminars model

- Alumni and external partners, through global chapters and networks

By leveraging participation rather than relying solely on administrative structures, these initiatives foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. This participatory approach enhances both effectiveness and sustainability.

Contribution to Inclusive Internationalisation

Inclusivity is a central feature across the three practices. They extend international opportunities beyond traditional mobility schemes and make them accessible to a wider audience:
- Peer support mechanisms facilitate the integration of incoming students
- On-campus internationalisation provides access to global learning experiences for non-mobile students
- Alumni networks enable continued engagement regardless of geographical location

Together, these elements ensure that internationalisation is not limited to a small group but becomes a shared experience across the academic community.

Flexibility and Transferability Across Contexts

Finally, these initiatives are highly adaptable. Their design allows them to be implemented in institutions with different levels of resources, experience, and organisational structures.
This flexibility makes them particularly valuable as transferable models, supporting the development of internationalisation strategies in diverse higher education contexts.

Conclusion

The practices presented in this chapter illustrate how universities can combine sustainability and inclusivity in their internationalization strategies. The Mentor Programme enhances student integration through peer support, the International Seminars model provides accessible international learning opportunities, and the Alumni International Chapters initiative ensures long-term global engagement.

Together, these examples highlight the importance of designing internationalization actions that are not only effective but also equitable and sustainable. They offer valuable insights for MD HEIs seeking to strengthen their international dimension while ensuring that the benefits of internationalisation are widely shared.

4. *EU funding models and financial justification: from compliance to practice. Understanding EU funding models: purpose, application, and institutional(UPV) requirements. Financial justification frameworks and internal control systems. (UPV)*

1. Introduction

The workshop entitled "*EU Funding Models and Financial Justification: From Compliance to Practice"* was designed to provide a comprehensive and practice-oriented overview of the main financial mechanisms underpinning European Union funding programmes, with particular emphasis on Erasmus+ and EACEA-managed projects. Delivered from the perspective of a university international office, the session combined conceptual explanations with operational considerations, aiming to bridge the gap between regulatory frameworks and institutional implementation.

The training responded to the growing need within Moldovan higher education institutions to strengthen their administrative and financial management capacity in EU-funded projects. Given the increasing complexity of funding rules and audit requirements, the workshop emphasised not only compliance but also the development of robust internal systems capable of ensuring accountability, efficiency, and audit readiness.

The session approach combined theoretical explanations with practical tasks, UPV case study analysis, and discussions on how the participating universities manage Erasmus+ projects.

2. Learning objectives of the workshop

The workshop was structured around a set of clearly defined learning objectives, aligned with the needs of international relations officers and administrative staff managing EU projects.

The primary objectives were:

- To develop a clear understanding of the most common EU funding models.
- To reflect critically on how regulatory provisions can be translated into effective institutional practices.
- To familiarise participants with the EU project lifecycle from the perspective of university international offices.
- To support the design and implementation of internal control systems.
- To strengthen participants' capacity to manage financial justification processes effectively.

3. Relevance for Higher Education Institutions

A key part of the workshop focused on explaining why EU funding models are critically important for universities and similar institutions.

The session highlighted that funding models:

- Directly influence risk exposure, particularly in relation to audits and financial corrections.
- Are subject to internal management decisions and processes.
- Shape the workload of academic and administrative staff, especially in terms of reporting and documentation requirements.
- Require close coordination between multiple institutional units, including international offices, finance departments, legal services, and academic teams.

This contextualisation allowed participants to understand that funding models are not merely technical tools but strategic elements that affect the overall governance implementation of EU-funded activities.

4. Overview of EU funding models

The workshop provided a systematic overview of the main EU funding models currently in use:

- **Actual costs (real cost reimbursement)**
- **Unit costs (standardised rates)**
- **Flat-rate funding (typically for indirect costs)**
- **Lump sum funding (performance-based)**

Participants were repeatedly reminded that, regardless of the funding model applied, the Grant Agreement remains the primary legal reference and must guide all financial and administrative decisions.

4.1 Actual costs

A substantial part of the workshop was devoted to the actual-costs funding model, which has traditionally been used across many EU programmes and has often served as the basis for institutional procedures for the reporting of lump-sum projects. This has resulted in inconsistencies where procedures designed for actual-costs funding have been applied to lump-sum projects without being sufficiently adapted to their specific requirements.

4.1.1 Key features

Actual cost funding is based on the reimbursement of **real expenditure incurred**, requiring:

- Comprehensive supporting documentation (e.g. invoices, payroll records, contracts).
- Full traceability between activities and financial records.
- Integration with institutional accounting systems.

4.1.2 Advantages

- High flexibility in resource allocation.
- Accurate reflection of institutional expenditure.

4.1.3 Challenges

- Heavy administrative burden.
- Continuous monitoring requirements.
- High audit exposure.
- Need for strong coordination between project and financial teams.

4.1.4 Supporting documentation

The workshop emphasised the wide range of documents required for compliance, including:

- Accounting records and ledgers
- Employment contracts, payslips, and timesheets
- Procurement documentation
- Proofs of payment
- Tax and regulatory records
- Travel documentation and inventory records

This section highlighted the importance of building robust documentation systems capable of withstanding audits.

4.2 Unit costs

The unit cost model was presented as a simplified alternative that shifts the focus from expenditure to **activities and outputs**.

4.2.1 Key principles

Under unit costs:

- Funding is based on predefined amounts per unit (e.g. per participant, per day, per travel).

- The core audit question becomes whether the activity actually took place, rather than how much was spent.

4.2.2 Advantages

- Reduced accounting burden.
- Predictable budgeting.
- Accessibility for institutions with limited financial management capacity.

4.2.3 Risks and challenges

- Potential mismatch between real costs and unit amounts.
- Strong dependence on activity evidence.
- Risk of ineligibility if supporting documentation is weak.

4.2.4 Required evidence

Examples of supporting documents include:

- Attendance lists and certificates
- Timesheets (where applicable)
- Mobility agreements and boarding passes
- Participant reports and training materials
- Digital participation records

The session stressed the need to prioritise evidence of implementation rather than financial records.

4.3 Flat-rate funding

Flat-rate funding was introduced as a complementary mechanism designed to simplify the reimbursement of indirect costs.

4.3.1 Key Features

- A fixed percentage (e.g. 7% in Erasmus+) is applied to eligible direct costs.
- Used for overheads such as administrative support and infrastructure.

4.3.2 Advantages

- Reduced administrative burden.
- No need to calculate actual indirect costs.
- Simplified reporting processes.

4.3.3 Risks

- Risk of double funding.
- Misinterpretation of cost categories and confusion between direct and indirect costs.

The workshop included a practical discussion on how different institutions classify administrative staff, illustrating how inconsistent interpretations may lead to ineligible expenditure.

4.4 Lump sum funding

A substantial part of the workshop focused on lump sum funding, reflecting its growing importance in EU programmes.

4.4.1 Core characteristics

- Funding is linked to the **completion of work packages**, not to individual costs.
- No requirement for timesheets.
- Emphasis on outputs, deliverables, and impact.

4.4.2 Advantages

- Significant reduction in administrative workload.
- Increased financial certainty.
- Greater managerial flexibility.
- Reduced audit burden.

4.4.3 Risks and challenges

- Need for highly accurate planning at proposal stage.
- Financial risk if actual costs exceed the lump sum.
- Cash flow constraints.
- Reduced flexibility for modifications between Work Packages.
- Dependence on the acceptance of deliverables, coupled with a lack of or limited internal control mechanisms for technical implementation and quality assurance.
- Alignment with institutional rules.
- Increased complexity in consortium management.

Participants were encouraged to reflect critically on whether traditional internal control tools (e.g. timesheets) remain necessary under this model and in which cases they can be necessary. The discussion also addressed specific accounting procedures and potential challenges arising when staff are involved simultaneously in projects funded through actual costs or unit costs and in activities financed through lump sums.

5. Interactive learning and case-based reflection

The workshop incorporated several interactive tasks aimed at encouraging participants to apply the concepts discussed:

- **Task 1:** Comparing actual cost and lump sum models and reflecting on institutional preferences.
- **Task 2:** Defining roles and responsibilities within international offices. Internal management regulations.
- **Task 3:** Mapping the application process and internal decision-making mechanisms.
- **Task 4:** Identifying and locating supporting documentation in preparation for audits.

These activities were designed to promote peer learning and institutional benchmarking.

6. The EU project lifecycle: institutional perspective

A key component of the workshop was the presentation of the EU project lifecycle from the perspective of the Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV) International Office.

The lifecycle was structured into five phases:

- Promotion
- Application
- Implementation
- Justification

- Audit

The session emphasised the need to strike a balance between over-regulation and under-regulation, ensuring sufficient control without creating excessive administrative burden.

6.1 Application phase

The workshop described in detail the responsibilities of the international office during the application phase.

Key tasks include:

- Dissemination of calls.
- Management of internal selection processes.
- Budget advisory support.
- Handling institutional signatures.
- Registration of proposals in internal systems.

Importantly, the international office does not typically draft or submit proposals (except in institutional projects in chich the international office participates in the technical implementation of activities), highlighting the division of responsibilities within institutions.

6.2 Implementation phase

During project implementation, the international office plays an advisory and facilitating role, apart from being in charge of internal procedures.

Its functions include:

- Registration of projects in institutional systems.
- Setting up the project's dedicated accounting code, its financial configuration and payments (both income and transfers to partners).
- Drafting, reviewing and managing the signature of agreements (Grant, Consortium / Partnership).
- Liaison with other administrative units.
- Advisory support for compliance.

However, it does not directly manage project activities or accounting processes.

6.3 Justification phase

In the reporting phase, the international office ensures compliance and internal control.

Key responsibilities include:

- Verification of financial reports.
- Review of invoices and timesheets.
- Prevention of double funding.
- Processing of financial statements.
- Registration of reporting data in internal systems.

This phase is critical for audit readiness and financial integrity.

6.4 Internal control and support in auditing processes

The workshop highlighted the importance of audit preparedness through a case-based exercise.

Participants were asked to reflect on:

- Document storage systems.
- Access to financial evidence.
- Availability of proof of payment.
- Quality of timesheet systems.
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities.

This section reinforced the need for well-defined internal processes and robust documentation systems.

7. Governance and Institutional Commitment

The final part of the workshop addressed governance and organisational culture.

Key messages included:

- Strong management support is essential.
- Internal control systems must be consistently applied ("no exceptions").
- Administrative staff must be empowered to enforce compliance.
- Institutions must ensure flexibility and capacity to respond to workload peaks.

8. Conclusion

The workshop provided a comprehensive and practice-oriented analysis of EU funding models and their implications for higher education institutions. By combining theoretical explanations with institutional case studies and interactive exercises, it enabled participants to better understand the operational challenges associated with project management, financial justification, and audit compliance.

The training placed particular emphasis on:

- The differences between funding models and the importance if adapting processes.
- The need for clear internal processes and governance structures.
- The development of audit-ready documentation systems.
- The transition from compliance-focused to performance-oriented approaches, particularly in lump sum funding.

5. ***Deep dive into Lump Sum Funding: a paradigm shift in Eu Project Management. Reporting under Lump Sum Funding: activities, deliverables and acceptance procedures. (UPV)***

1. Introduction

This session was designed as an advanced and practice-oriented training session focusing on the specificities of lump sum funding in EU programmes, particularly within the context of Erasmus+ and other EACEA-managed actions, and tightly connected to the previous workshop session.

Building upon general knowledge of EU funding systems, this session aimed to provide participants with a deeper and more operational understanding of the lump sum funding model, which represents a fundamental shift in the logic of financial management and project implementation. The workshop addressed both conceptual and practical dimensions, emphasising the transition from traditional cost-based reporting towards a performance-based approach centred on deliverables, outputs, and results.

The training responded to the increasing adoption of lump sum funding across EU programmes, in particular in the Erasmus+ Programme, highlighting the need for higher education institutions to adapt their internal processes, governance structures, and institutional culture. Particular emphasis was placed on risk management, internal control mechanisms, and consortium coordination, recognising that the responsibilities and exposure of beneficiaries are significantly transformed under this funding model.

2. Learning objectives

The workshop pursued a set of advanced learning objectives, tailored to participants already familiar with EU project management but seeking to deepen their understanding of lump sum funding.

The main objectives included:

- To understand the fundamental paradigm shift from cost-based to performance-based funding under the lump sum model.
- To analyse the implications of the "no cost reporting" principle for institutional financial management.
- To identify the key challenges associated with planning, implementing, and reporting lump sum projects.
- To reflect on the institutional transformations required to effectively manage this model.
- To strengthen participants' capacity to design internal control and validation systems focused on deliverables and outputs.
- To enhance awareness of risk distribution within project consortia and the importance of robust contractual arrangements.

These objectives were addressed through a combination of conceptual explanation, discussions, and scenario-based exercises, fostering critical thinking and practical application.

3. The paradigm shift

A central theme of the workshop was the explanation of the fundamental paradigm shift introduced by lump sum funding. Traditional EU funding models typically require beneficiaries to justify expenditure through detailed financial documentation. In contrast, lump sum funding is based on a radically different logic:

- Beneficiaries must demonstrate that the work has been carried out, rather than how much it cost.
- Funding is conditional upon the completion and acceptance of work packages and deliverables.
- Financial documentation such as invoices or timesheets is not required for reporting purposes.

Hence, the workshop highlighted three defining principles of lump sum funding:

- **Performance-based logic:** Payments are linked to outputs and results.
- **No cost reporting principle:** Expenditure is not subject to justification.
- **Pre-defined budget allocation:** The grant is fixed at proposal stage and cannot be adjusted according to actual costs.

This paradigm shift fundamentally alters the way in which projects are designed, managed, and evaluated. It moves the focus from administrative compliance towards performance delivery, placing greater emphasis on planning accuracy, deliverable quality and implementation efficiency.

4. Institutional implications

The workshop devoted significant attention to analysing the institutional consequences of adopting lump sum funding.

4.1 Internal adaptation

Institutions must adapt their internal systems to align with the new funding logic. This includes:

- Revising procedures and templates.
- Updating internal regulations and guidelines.
- Developing new operational workflows.

Besides, and beyond technical changes, lump sum funding requires a broader cultural shift within universities:

- Moving from a compliance-based mindset to a performance-oriented approach.
- Prioritising outcomes and impact over procedural correctness.

4.2 Governance and coordination within the consortium

The model necessitates:

- Clear definition of roles and responsibilities within the consortium.
- Stronger coordination between work package leaders and academic teams.
- Enhanced accountability at partner level.

4.3 Emerging challenges

One key unresolved issue identified in the workshop concerns **internal control of technical outputs**:

- Who verifies the quality and completeness of deliverables?
- Should institutions develop internal validation mechanisms prior to submission?

These questions highlight the need for new forms of oversight focused on academic and technical performance rather than financial compliance. Universities must therefore determine and regulate how lump-sum-funded projects will be subject to internal control, establishing procedures that ensure effective monitoring of project implementation, deliverables and quality. This transition may also require the creation of new human resources profiles capable of performing the internal monitoring of project activities, in line with the requirements of the lump-sum funding model.

5. Planning phase

The workshop emphasised that the success of lump sum projects depends heavily on the quality of the planning phase.

5.1 Robust work package design

Participants were encouraged to design work packages with:

- Clearly defined and measurable deliverables.
- Logical grouping of tasks.
- Strong internal coherence.

5.2 Realistic budgeting

Even though costs are not reported, accurate budgeting remains essential:

- Internal estimates must reflect real costs.
- Under-budgeting increases financial risk.
- Over-simplification may compromise feasibility.

Evaluators assess whether the distribution of the lump sum corresponds to the planned activities. Therefore, budget allocation must be justified by the workload and complexity of tasks of each Partner.

5.3 Risk-aware planning

Participants were encouraged to anticipate risks by:

- Identifying critical dependences.
- Assessing potential bottlenecks.
- Designing mitigation measures early, especially by applying a project-specific Risk Management Plan.

A key message was that, in lump sum projects, **errors in planning cannot easily be corrected during implementation**, making the proposal stage particularly critical.

6. Implementation phase

The workshop provided a detailed analysis of how project implementation is affected under lump sum funding. Implementation must be oriented towards producing:

- Tangible outputs.
- Verifiable results.

The model allows internal reallocation of resources without formal amendments, provided that core elements of the project remain unchanged, and as long as there is no budget transfer from one work package to another.

Despite the absence of financial reporting:

- Institutions must still monitor costs internally.
- Ensuring financial sustainability and avoiding losses.

On the other hand, timely completion of deliverables is essential, as:

- Delays may directly affect payments.
- Implementation schedules must be carefully managed to meet the milestones deadlines set forth with the funding authority.

7. Reporting and payment mechanisms

The reporting framework under lump sum funding was presented as fundamentally different from traditional models.

7.1 Output-based reporting

Reports focus on:

- Achieved results,
- Completed deliverables,
- Evidence of implementation.

7.2 Evaluation logic

Payments depend on the outcome of the assessment:

- Full completion → full payment,
- Partial completion → partial payment,
- Non-completion → no payment.

7.3 Binary assessment approach

The evaluation follows a relatively strict logic, with limited tolerance for incomplete or poorly documented outputs (i.e. Activity implemented? Yes / No; Work Package completed? Yes / No).

As a result, participants were advised to treat each work package as an **independent audit unit**, ensuring that:

- All necessary documentation is available,
- Evidence clearly supports completion.

8. Internal control and governance

The workshop highlighted the transformation of internal control systems under lump sum funding.

8.1 Shift from financial to technical control

Institutions are encouraged to develop:

- Internal validation systems for deliverables.
- Standardised procedures for quality assurance.
- Dedicated human resources for technical verification.

While meeting national and internal financial regulations, correctly implementing and registering expenditure.

8.2 Cross-functional coordination

Effective implementation requires alignment between:

- Academic staff.
- Administrative units.

- Financial services.

8.3 Documentation Culture

A strong emphasis was placed on:

- Producing evidence during implementation,
- Avoiding retrospective reconstruction of documentation.

9. Risk management in lump sum projects

The workshop provided a detailed analysis of risk distribution under the lump sum model.

9.1 Financial risk

- Overspending is not reimbursed,
- Underspending does not compensate for incomplete work.

9.2 Implementation risk

- Failure to deliver results leads directly to loss of funding.

9.3 Consortium risk

- The performance of each partner affects the entire project, so weak partners can jeopardise overall funding.

The analysis reinforced the idea that lump sum funding transfers a significant portion of risk from the funding authority to the beneficiaries.

10. Consortium management and liability

Given the increased risk exposure, the workshop stressed the importance of robust consortium management.

10.1 Clear allocation of responsibilities

Each partner should have:

- Well-defined roles and clear responsibilities over specific work packages or tasks.

10.2 Strengthened consortium agreements

Consortium agreements should include:

- Detailed liability clauses.
- Internal payment conditions linked to performance.
- Risk-sharing mechanisms.

10.3 Performance-based payments

Coordinators are encouraged to:

- Mirror lump sum logic internally.
- Link partner payments to deliverable completion, except for an initial float.

The workshop warned that weak contractual arrangements represent a major vulnerability and might favour issues among partners.

11. Documentation and audit readiness

Despite the absence of financial reporting, audit requirements remain significant. Audits focus on:

- Reality of activities.
- Quality and completeness of outputs.

11.1 Supporting evidence

Relevant documentation includes:

- Deliverables and reports.
- Meeting records and proceedings.
- Training materials.
- Participant lists.

11.2 Traceability requirements

Institutions must ensure clear links between:

- Activities.
- Outputs.
- Work packages.

The workshop also highlighted the role of system audits and oversight bodies.

12. Institutional good practices

The session concluded with practical recommendations for institutional adaptation.

12.1 Harmonisation of systems

Institutions should:

- Align procedures across programmes,
- Avoid duplication of procedures and rework.

12.2 Capacity building

- Develop institutional memory,
- Use audits as learning opportunities.

13. Interactive discussion

Participants engaged in a structured discussion addressing key questions:

- Does lump sum funding truly reduce administrative burden?
- Is internal financial documentation still necessary?
- What role should timesheets play?
- Are gains in implementation offset by increased planning effort?
- What constitutes sufficient evidence of completion?
- How can we ensure that the quality of deliverables and activities meets the funding authority's expectations and minimises the risk of a poor evaluation?

These discussions encouraged critical reflection on both the advantages and limitations of the model.

14. Case-based learning: Risk scenario

A practical scenario was presented involving the rejection of a deliverable.

Participants analysed:

- Consequences for payment,
- Responsibility allocation,
- Importance of internal validation and partner accountability.

This exercise reinforced the importance of proactive risk management and robust consortium agreements.

15. Conclusion

The workshop provided an in-depth and operationally relevant analysis of lump sum funding, highlighting its transformative impact on project management in EU-funded programmes.

Key conclusions include:

- Lump sum funding represents a shift from financial compliance to performance accountability.
- Institutional adaptation requires both procedural and cultural change.
- Planning quality is critical and determines project success.
- Internal control systems must evolve towards technical validation.
- Risk distribution places greater responsibility on beneficiaries and consortia.

CZU SECTION:

Purpose and training logic

This document forms the CZU contribution to Deliverable 1.2, Training Materials on HE Internationalization Policies and Mechanisms. It is designed as a practical continuation of D1.1, the Training Kit on European policies and practices for inclusive and sustainable internationalization of Higher Education. The purpose is not to repeat the full conceptual content of the Training Kit, but to translate selected areas into training-ready materials that can be used in workshops with Moldovan higher education institutions.

The materials are structured around five topics agreed for the CZU contribution: strategic partnerships, due diligence and risk management; international marketing and student recruitment; digitalisation of internal processes and digitalisation in Erasmus; implementation of Erasmus mobility projects; and promotion of exchange opportunities.

The training methodology follows the agreed principle that D1.2 should be more practical than D1.1. Each topic therefore combines plenary input with group work. Approximately 60% of the learning time is dedicated to explanation, examples and structured information, while approximately 40% is dedicated to university-based group work. This format is particularly suitable for the Moldovan partner institutions because they differ in size, profile, mission and internationalization capacity. University-based groups allow each institution to work on outputs that are realistic for its own context.

The expected result of the training is not only improved understanding, but also concrete institutional outputs: partner review templates, due diligence checklists, recruitment messages, digital workflow maps, Erasmus mobility calendars, mobility file checklists, promotion campaign plans and Erasmus Information Day agendas. These outputs can later support internal procedures, institutional policy development and the operational strengthening of International Relations Offices.

Training approach

- Plenary input: concepts, examples, institutional models and good practices.
- Group work: each Moldovan university works as one group and adapts the task to its own institutional reality.
- Expected output: each group leaves the session with a draft template, checklist, workflow, campaign plan or procedure that can be improved after the training.
- Facilitation method: short input, guided task, peer exchange, presentation of results and feedback from trainers.

Contents

Topic	Title
1	Strategic Partnerships, Due Diligence and Risk Management in International University Cooperation
2	International Marketing and Student Recruitment in Higher Education
3	Digitalisation of Internal Processes and Digitalisation in Erasmus
4	Implementation of Erasmus Mobility Project
5	Promotion of Exchange (Erasmus) Opportunities

1. Strategic Partnerships, Due Diligence and Risk Management in International University Cooperation

International cooperation is one of the most visible functions of a modern higher education institution. It opens access to knowledge, mobility, joint teaching, research networks, institutional visibility and long-term trust. At the same time, cooperation also creates responsibilities. A university does not only sign agreements or send students and staff abroad. It makes decisions that may affect people, data, reputation, academic freedom, legal compliance and the credibility of the institution. For this reason, internationalisation needs to be open, but it cannot be naive. It must be strategic, transparent, proportionate and supported by practical institutional processes.

For Moldovan higher education institutions, this is particularly relevant. Many universities already have international contacts, Erasmus+ experience and a history of cooperation with European and regional partners. The next step is to make this cooperation more intentional. The purpose is not to reduce the number of partners for the sake of control, nor to create excessive bureaucracy. The purpose is to ensure that limited institutional capacity is used where it brings real value, that new partners are checked before commitments are made, and that students, staff and the institution are protected when cooperation becomes more complex.

The first practical principle is to distinguish a strategic partnership from a formal memorandum of understanding. A formal MoU often has broad wording, no concrete owner, no activity plan and no monitoring after signature. It may be signed after a visit, a conference meeting or a personal contact, but then remain inactive for years. A strategic partnership is different. It supports institutional priorities, connects to fields of academic strength, has named owners, includes realistic activities and is reviewed using evidence. It may involve mobility, joint teaching, research, projects, internationalisation at home or capacity building. The key question is therefore not whether the university has an agreement, but what the partner helps the institution achieve.

A useful way to professionalise cooperation is to look at partnerships as a portfolio. Not every partner has the same role. Some partners are strategic because they are active, reliable and aligned with institutional priorities. Others are active but limited to a specific programme or mobility channel. Some partners are promising but still untested. Others are dormant: the agreement exists, but there has been no recent activity. A small number of partners may also require closer monitoring because of unresolved concerns, unclear value or higher operational, reputational or security risks. This portfolio view helps the international relations office and university leadership decide where to invest effort, where to test cooperation, where to renew, and where to close or freeze an agreement.

Partnership management should cover the full lifecycle. The cycle begins with identifying a possible partner, continues through screening and approval, moves into activation and monitoring, and ends with development, renewal or exit. The international relations office can coordinate the process, but it should not be the only owner of academic substance. Faculties, departments, programme leaders, research offices, student services, legal experts and leadership may all have a role depending on the type and level of cooperation. When responsibilities are not defined, agreements become invisible and risk is discovered too late. When ownership is clear, cooperation becomes easier to manage and easier to improve.

• Due diligence of academic partners

Due diligence means checking enough information to make a responsible decision before the university commits its people, name, data, programmes or resources. In the context of academic cooperation, due diligence should be practical, risk-based and proportionate. It does not need to become a long investigative procedure for every normal mobility agreement. A short checklist is often sufficient for routine cooperation with a recognised and reliable partner. A deeper review is needed when the partner is unknown, the destination is higher risk, the cooperation involves sensitive knowledge or data, the funding source is unclear, or there is pressure to sign quickly without standard review.

The first domain of partner due diligence is identity and legitimacy. The university should confirm that the partner is a real and recognised higher education institution, that it has a clear legal status, that accreditation or public recognition can be checked, and that communication takes place through official institutional contacts rather than only private addresses or intermediaries. This is a basic but important step. Cooperation should not begin only from enthusiasm or institutional prestige. It should begin from verifiable information.

The second domain is academic quality and fit. The partner should be relevant to the fields, programmes and activities that the institution wants to develop. Academic fit can be checked through programme descriptions, research profile, language of instruction, compatibility with credit systems, previous project experience and the capacity to host or send students and staff. A partner may be respected in general, but still not useful for a specific cooperation objective. Conversely, a smaller or less visible university may be highly valuable if it offers a strong match for a priority field, reliable academic contacts and realistic activity.

The third domain is operational reliability. International cooperation often fails not because the idea is bad, but because procedures are unclear. Before signing or renewing cooperation, the institution should check whether the partner communicates reliably, provides documents on time, understands mobility procedures, supports incoming participants, and has clear contacts for academic and administrative issues. For student and staff mobility, this includes learning agreements, recognition, accommodation information, local support, insurance guidance and emergency contacts. For joint teaching or projects, it includes timelines, deliverables, data exchange and decision-making responsibilities.

The fourth domain is legal and compliance risk. Depending on the activity, the university may need to consider data protection, intellectual property, publication rules, sanctions, export-control sensitivity, procurement rules, visa and residence procedures, or contractual obligations. The international relations office does not need to solve all of these issues alone, but it should know when to trigger legal, research, ethics or leadership review. The same applies to ethics and reputation. Public controversies, corruption concerns, discrimination, academic integrity problems or unclear third-party involvement should not automatically end cooperation, but they should be documented, verified and considered before a decision is made.

A practical due diligence process should always end with a clear decision. The decision may be to approve cooperation, approve it with conditions, postpone it until missing information is provided, or reject or freeze it when the risk is unacceptable or the strategic value is too weak. Conditions are useful when risk is manageable. For example, the university may approve a limited pilot activity, require official contacts, restrict the scope of data sharing, request a clearer mobility support plan, add a review date, or require approval by a senior body before expansion. The decision should be recorded in one page, including the partner name, country, purpose, evidence checked, main risks, decision, conditions, owner and review date. If the decision cannot be explained simply, it is probably not ready.

Red flags are signals to pause, verify and document. They do not always mean that cooperation must stop. Common red flags include an unclear purpose for the MoU, pressure to bypass standard approval, opaque funding, unexplained intermediaries, weak academic fit, unusual interest in data or laboratories, requests for access to unpublished results, or safety and reputation concerns. A professional institution does not respond to red flags emotionally. It asks for evidence, involves the right internal expertise and makes the final decision transparent.

- ## Risk management and illegitimate influence

Risk management in international university cooperation is part of professional internationalisation. It is not a sign of mistrust and it should not be used as an excuse to close the institution to the world. Its purpose is to protect openness by making cooperation transparent, ethical and institutionally controlled. International partnerships create value through mobility, teaching, research and networks, but they also create responsibilities. The main risk areas concern people, knowledge, integrity, legal compliance, reputation and operations. The international relations office should not be expected to manage all risks alone. Its role is to recognise when a risk exists, initiate the right process, bring the right people together and ensure that decisions are documented.

One of the more sensitive areas is illegitimate influence in university relations. This can appear in different forms. It may involve pressure to influence teaching, events, public communication or the choice of speakers. It may involve attempts to access sensitive data, laboratories, internal systems or unpublished research results. It may involve funding with hidden conditions, an unclear third party, personal incentives connected to institutional decisions, or requests to keep communication informal and undocumented. Such situations may affect academic freedom, institutional autonomy, research integrity, legal compliance and public trust.

The most useful institutional response is to define red flags and escalation routes in advance. Red flags include unusual urgency, pressure to sign or endorse without review, unclear sponsors or final beneficiaries, requests to remove topics or criticism from academic content, unusual access requests, personal gifts or benefits, and avoidance of written records. The first safeguard is simple: pause, verify, document and escalate when needed. This does not require every staff member to become a security expert. It requires staff to know that they are not expected to handle such cases alone and that the institution has a route for advice and decision-making.

Research and knowledge security should be understood in practical terms. Universities collaborate because knowledge should circulate, but some cooperation situations require additional safeguards. Higher-sensitivity situations include dual-use or security-relevant research, access to controlled data, infrastructure or technology, unusual confidentiality clauses, unclear intellectual property terms, external funding with conditions that are not transparent, or partnerships where academic freedom and publication rights may be constrained. In these cases, the institution should clarify the real partner and funding source, define data and access rules before the activity starts, agree on publication and IP conditions, and involve research office, legal office, ethics body or leadership when appropriate.

For many universities, the difficulty is not the absence of goodwill but the absence of a minimum process. A meeting is held, a partner expresses interest, a draft MoU arrives, and the university is expected to respond quickly. Without a clear process, staff may feel pressure to sign first and solve details later. This is risky. The stronger approach is to separate interest from commitment. Interest can be welcomed and explored openly. Commitment should come only after the purpose, academic fit, operational feasibility, compliance issues and risk level have been checked. This protects the institution and also protects serious partners, because it creates clearer expectations from the beginning.

A practical risk system should be proportionate. Low-risk cooperation should not be delayed by unnecessary procedures. Higher-risk cooperation should not proceed as if it were routine. The institution can use a simple decision logic. Normal cooperation may be approved through the standard route. Cooperation with manageable concerns may be approved with safeguards, such as limited scope, pilot activity, additional reporting, data restrictions or a review date. Cooperation with missing information should be postponed. Cooperation with unacceptable risk or no strategic value should be rejected or frozen. The important point is not to create a perfect system immediately, but to create a system that people know, use and improve.

• Travel safety and crisis preparedness

Internationalisation also creates a duty of care for students and staff who travel abroad. Mobility is often discussed through learning agreements, funding rules and academic recognition, but the university must also consider safety, health, local context, emergency communication and crisis response. Travel risk management should start before approval, not after an incident has occurred. The key question is what must be true for this mobility to be acceptable.

A practical travel security workflow begins with the travel request. The institution should know who is travelling, where, for what purpose, for how long, under which funding source, with which partner, and whether the traveller has specific needs or vulnerabilities. The next step is a destination and activity risk check. Not every trip requires the same level of review. A short visit to a low-risk destination with an experienced staff member may need only standard approval and normal precautions. A student mobility, fieldwork activity or group visit to a more complex environment may require additional briefing, emergency contacts, insurance confirmation, partner support and senior approval. A destination affected by conflict, unrest, serious health risk or official travel warnings may require postponement, a remote alternative or exceptional approval with a mitigation plan.

A risk country map can help, but it should be used as a decision tool rather than a poster. The map should not be a static document copied once and forgotten. It should be updated from official travel advisories, institutional experience and recent incident information. A simple logic is enough. Green destinations require normal precautions. Yellow destinations require additional briefing and emergency contacts. Orange destinations require a mitigation plan and higher-level approval. Red destinations normally mean that travel is not recommended, should be postponed, or should proceed only under exceptional conditions. The value of the map is not in the colours themselves, but in the decision rules connected to them.

Before departure, students and staff should receive practical guidance that is short enough to be read and clear enough to be used. It should explain how to check documents, insurance, visas, local laws, health requirements, accommodation, emergency contacts and communication rules. It should also explain what to do during travel: how to check in, who to contact if plans change, how to report an incident, and what conduct is expected when representing the institution abroad. For higher-risk travel, the institution may require a pre-departure briefing, confirmation of emergency contacts, registration of travel details, partner contact information and a simple emergency card.

Crisis preparedness depends on roles. A protocol fails if responsibilities are discovered only during the crisis. The traveller or group leader should report the incident, share location and follow safety instructions. The international relations or mobility office should help locate travellers, contact the host partner and maintain an incident log. The faculty or supervisor should support academic decisions and contact relevant group members. University leadership should approve major actions and external communication. Legal, security, student services or insurance contacts may advise on duty of care, safeguarding and practical support. Embassies, consulates or local emergency services may be needed for consular support, evacuation information or urgent local assistance.

A basic crisis response flow should follow a clear sequence. When an incident is reported, the university first tries to locate the traveller or group, assess severity, identify the responsible owner, provide support action, document decisions and review the case after it is closed. Low-level incidents may include lost documents, minor illness or travel delays and can often be handled by the IRO and host partner. Medium-level incidents may include a hospital visit, harassment or local unrest nearby and require faculty and leadership briefing. High-level incidents such as serious injury, detention, violence, conflict or evacuation need a crisis team, embassy contact and leadership decision.

For Moldovan HEIs, a realistic first step is to create a minimum institutional package: a named owner for partner and travel risk, a simple risk country logic, a travel risk assessment form, a short pre-departure guide, an emergency contact card and a crisis response flow. These documents should be practical, short and used consistently for both students and staff, with additional safeguards where needed. After each incident, crisis or mobility cycle, the institution should review what worked, what information was missing and what needs to be updated. The central lesson is simple. Responsible international cooperation protects people, knowledge, autonomy and trust. It keeps cooperation open, but ensures that decisions are intentional, documented and safe enough to stand behind.

- ## Practical group work for Topic 1

The group work for this topic helps each Moldovan university move from a general list of partners to a more strategic and risk-aware partnership portfolio. Each university group should use its own real or typical partners. The aim is not to criticize existing cooperation, but to create a simple institutional method for deciding where to invest effort and where closer monitoring is needed.

Step	Task	Expected output
1	List up to ten current international partners and classify them as strategic, active, promising, dormant or requiring monitoring.	Draft partnership portfolio map.
2	Select one existing or potential partner and apply a proportional due diligence review.	One-page partner review note.
3	Identify the main operational, reputational, legal, academic and safety risks.	Risk register with mitigation measures.
4	Decide whether the cooperation should be continued, expanded, piloted, paused or closed.	Decision note with owner and review date.

Suggested group discussion questions

Which partners are active because they support institutional priorities, and which are active only because of personal contacts?
Which agreements have no owner, no activity and no review date?
Which risks can be managed through conditions rather than refusal?
What minimum due diligence procedure could be approved internally without creating unnecessary bureaucracy?

2. International Marketing and Student Recruitment in Higher Education

• From visibility to a recruitment system

International student recruitment is often misunderstood as a promotion task. A university prepares a brochure, posts on social media, visits an education fair and expects that interest will become applications. In practice, recruitment works differently. Visibility is only the first signal. Students and their families still need to understand the country, compare the programme with alternatives, trust the institution, complete an application, receive a clear offer, solve practical arrival questions and finally enrol. For this reason, international marketing in higher education must be managed as an institutional system rather than as a set of occasional communication activities.

For Moldovan universities, this distinction is especially important. International cooperation and national visibility can open doors, but they do not automatically create sustainable recruitment capacity. The central challenge is to become clear, credible and responsive throughout the applicant journey. A prospective student does not choose a university in isolation. They compare countries, cities, costs, language of instruction, visa conditions, recognition of diplomas, safety, student life and career opportunities. Only after this wider comparison do they evaluate individual institutions and programmes. Moldova therefore needs a coherent national message, while each university must translate that message into a specific and convincing offer.

The practical starting point is to see recruitment through the eyes of the applicant. A student first discovers a possible destination through a search engine, a social media post, a fair, a friend, an agent, a school counsellor or an alumni story. The student then compares options, asks questions, checks the website, looks for costs and admission requirements, and tries to understand whether the programme is realistic and valuable. If the student decides to apply, they must navigate documents, deadlines, recognition, language requirements and payment rules. After receiving an offer, they still need support with visa or residence procedures, accommodation, travel, arrival and first contact with the academic community. A weak link at any point can make the student choose another institution.

Training participants should therefore treat the applicant journey as a management tool. The question is not only how to attract attention, but where students lose trust, become confused or stop taking the next step. If many visitors view a programme page but do not ask questions, the page may not be clear enough. If many students ask questions but do not apply, the answer may be too slow or too general. If admitted students do not arrive, the post-offer support may be insufficient. Looking at recruitment in this way changes the role of the university: the institution is not simply broadcasting messages; it is guiding students from first interest to successful enrolment.

A practical recruitment system begins with a small number of shared commitments. The institution should know which programmes it is actively promoting, which countries or regions are realistic priorities, who answers international enquiries, how quickly the university responds, where applicant information is recorded, and how admissions and pre-arrival support are connected. These commitments do not require a perfect technology platform at the beginning. They require discipline, ownership and a common understanding that every interaction with a prospective student either builds or weakens trust.

- ## Positioning the offer clearly and selectively

A credible value proposition is the core of recruitment communication. It answers a demanding question: why should a qualified international student choose this programme, this university and Moldova instead of another option in another country? The answer must be specific, evidence-based and student-centred. Generic claims such as high-quality education, modern facilities or an international environment are not strong enough because almost every university uses similar language. A stronger recruitment message connects a real institutional strength with a student motivation and a clear benefit.

In practice, a value proposition should describe the target student, the distinctive academic or professional strength, the evidence that proves the claim, and the benefit the student can expect. For example, a programme in food systems, agriculture, public health, information technology or business should not only state that it offers recognised education. It should explain what type of student it is designed for, which practical learning experiences are available, how the field connects to regional or international needs, and what skills or pathways graduates may develop. The best message is not an advertising slogan. It is a clear explanation that helps the student and their family understand why the programme is a good-fit choice.

This value proposition should then be used consistently. The same core logic should appear on the programme page, in presentations, in webinars, in fair conversations, in emails, in social media campaigns and in communication with partners. Consistency matters because applicants often meet the university several times before applying. If the website says one thing, the fair presentation says another and the email response is vague, trust declines. If every channel repeats the same clear promise with practical evidence, the institution becomes easier to understand and easier to choose.

Selectivity is the second discipline. Universities with limited budgets cannot successfully promote every programme in every country. A priority market is not simply a place where someone once showed interest. It is a country or region where demand for the field exists, where the cost of study is realistic for families, where visa and recognition procedures are feasible, and where the university can build repeated contact through schools, alumni, partners, agents, fairs or digital channels. The practical test is whether demand, affordability, procedures and repeatable contact can realistically meet before the application deadline.

The same selectivity applies to programmes. A programme should be actively promoted internationally only when it is recruitment-ready. This means that the language of instruction is clear, academic capacity is stable, admission requirements are transparent, tuition and deadlines are published, the career relevance can be explained, and the administrative process is prepared for international applicants. Programme pages should not be copied from accreditation documents or internal study plans. They should answer the questions that students actually ask: what will I study, what skills will I gain, what documents do I need, how much will it cost, when do I apply, what happens after admission and whom can I contact?

For training purposes, each institution should begin with one or two priority programmes and write a three-sentence recruitment message for each. The first sentence should identify the target student and the programme strength. The second should provide proof, such as practice, laboratories, employer links, regional expertise, international cooperation or affordability. The third should explain the student benefit, such as practical skills, career relevance, a pathway to further study or preparation for a professional field. This simple exercise forces the university to move from internal descriptions to applicant-oriented communication.

- ## Converting interest through the website and communication

The university website is the most important recruitment tool. Education fairs, social media campaigns, agents and national portals can create awareness, but serious applicants almost always check the institutional website before they apply. If the site is unclear, outdated, fragmented or written mainly for internal audiences, recruitment performance will be weak. A good recruitment website is organised around the applicant journey. It helps students find a programme, understand requirements, check costs, learn about visa and residence procedures, ask a question and start an application without unnecessary confusion.

Each programme page should work as a conversion page, not only as an information archive. Near the top, the student should understand why the programme matters, who it is for and what the next step is. The page should then explain admission requirements, documents, language expectations, tuition fees, living costs, scholarships where relevant, career relevance and contact details. The language should be direct and practical. Families and applicants should not have to interpret internal academic terminology or search through multiple pages to find deadlines and fees. If interest disappears on the programme page, the campaign has already failed.

Digital marketing should be managed with the same conversion logic. The goal is not to collect likes or impressions but to generate qualified leads: students who have a realistic interest and can be contacted again. Search engine optimisation for programme pages, paid search in priority countries, targeted social media advertising, webinars, short videos with students or alumni, and deadline reminder emails can all be useful. However, every campaign must lead somewhere specific. A general post should not send students to a confusing homepage. It should lead to a relevant programme page, webinar registration, enquiry form or application step, and the university should know how the student will be followed up.

Once a student contacts the university, speed and clarity become decisive. International applicants often communicate with several institutions at the same time, and the fastest clear answer frequently gains an advantage. A realistic service standard is more valuable than an ambitious promise that cannot be kept. The university should define who owns international enquiries, how quickly the first response is sent, which template is used for common questions and how the next step is recorded. Templates are useful, but they must not feel mechanical. A good answer thanks the student, names the programme or field of interest, answers the question directly, links to one relevant page and invites one next action such as applying, joining a webinar, booking a short call or submitting documents for a preliminary check.

Tracking is the practical foundation of responsiveness. Even a simple shared system is better than scattered inboxes and private spreadsheets. At minimum, the institution should record the student country, programme of interest, recruitment stage, owner, response date, next action and outcome. This information allows the university to see whether enquiries are being answered, whether students progress to applications and whether certain programmes or countries require additional support. It also prevents the loss of institutional memory when staff change or when several departments communicate with the same applicant.

Admissions should be understood as part of recruitment, not as a separate administrative stage. A strong applicant can still choose another country if requirements are unclear, document confirmation is slow or evaluation timelines are unpredictable. Good admissions practice includes transparent deadlines, clear document lists, online submission where possible, confirmation that materials were received, predictable assessment times and practical instructions after the offer. An offer is not an enrolment. The post-offer period requires active conversion support through visa guidance, accommodation information, pre-arrival webinars, checklists and opportunities to connect with current students or alumni.

- ## Managing partners, data and the first 90 days

External partners can support international recruitment, but only when they are actively managed. Education agents may be useful in markets where families rely on local advisers. Study portals can increase visibility, and digital marketing agencies can support campaigns and analytics. However, partners should never replace the university's responsibility for accurate information, ethical communication and admissions quality. Before cooperation begins, the institution should check references, define approved programme information, clarify logo use, commission rules, reporting duties, data protection and consequences for misrepresentation. During cooperation, the university should provide current admissions information and remain in direct contact with applicants whenever possible.

Partner evaluation should focus on outcomes, not activity alone. The number of leads is less important than the number of completed applications, admitted students, enrolled students and students who succeed after arrival. A partner who produces many poor-fit applicants creates administrative burden and reputational risk. A partner who brings fewer but better prepared students may be more valuable. For this reason, the university must remain the owner of the applicant relationship and information quality. Partners can open doors, but the institution must guide students through those doors responsibly.

A mature recruitment system is data-driven. The basic funnel runs from website visitors and enquiries to applications started, applications completed, offers issued, offers accepted and enrolled students. The purpose of measurement is not to create complex reports for their own sake. The purpose is to answer the management question: where do we lose students and why? If website traffic from a priority country is high but enquiries are low, the programme page or call to action may be weak. If enquiries are high but applications are low, the communication or requirements may be unclear. If offers are accepted but students do not arrive, visa, accommodation, financing or pre-arrival support may be the problem.

The minimum useful split is by programme, country or region, and recruitment channel. Over time, institutions should also look at visa refusals, arrival problems, first-year retention and academic performance. This quality perspective is important because recruitment success is not only the number of enrolled students. It is the ability to attract students who understand the offer, can complete the process, arrive prepared and succeed academically. Poor-fit recruitment may increase numbers in the short term but damage reputation and student experience in the long term.

National visibility can strengthen institutional recruitment when roles are clear. A Study in Moldova approach can build trust in the country, explain Moldova as a study destination, provide reliable visa and recognition information and direct students to universities and programmes. This national role is valuable because students first compare destinations before selecting a particular institution. At the same time, national visibility cannot convert applicants on behalf of each university. Institutions must still provide clear programme pages, fast enquiry handling, reliable admissions processes and pre-arrival support. A national portal can open the door; universities must guide students through the journey.

The most realistic first step is to professionalise the basics within 90 days. Each institution should choose a small number of priority programmes, write a clear value proposition for each, improve the corresponding programme pages, agree on two or three priority markets, set an enquiry response standard, prepare practical email templates, organise at least one targeted webinar and start measuring one recruitment cycle. The actions should be specific, observable and assigned to named owners rather than departments. Evidence of completion might be a revised programme page, a shared enquiry tracker, a published webinar invitation, a response template in use or a short conversion review after the deadline.

The central lesson for training participants is simple. International recruitment is not achieved by being visible once. It is achieved by being understandable, trustworthy and responsive at every step from discovery to arrival. A university that communicates a specific offer, focuses on realistic markets, answers quickly, connects admissions with support services and reviews conversion after every cycle builds a recruitment system that can improve over time. This is how international marketing becomes a practical instrument of institutional internationalisation rather than occasional promotion.

• Practical group work for Topic 2

The practical task for this topic asks each university to convert its recruitment ambitions into an applicant-oriented offer. The exercise should focus on one or two programmes that are realistic priorities for international promotion. The group should avoid generic claims and instead prepare clear, evidence-based messages that a prospective student can understand quickly.

Element	Guiding question	Draft answer
Target student	Who is the programme mainly for?	Describe the type of applicant, study level, language profile and motivation.
Programme strength	What is genuinely distinctive or valuable?	Name a concrete academic, practical, professional or regional strength.
Evidence	How can the claim be proven?	Use laboratories, practice, partners, curriculum, staff expertise or graduate pathways.
Student benefit	Why should the student care?	Explain skills, recognition, employability, affordability or progression.

Expected group output

A three-sentence recruitment message for one priority programme.
A revised structure for the programme webpage.
A basic enquiry-response template.
A list of three indicators to track recruitment performance.

3. Digitalisation of Internal Processes and Digitalisation in Erasmus

• 3.1 Digitalisation as process redesign

Digitalisation in an International Relations Office should not be understood only as the replacement of paper forms with scanned documents or PDF files. A digital process is useful only when it improves clarity, responsibility, traceability and service quality. In practice, this means that the university knows who starts the process, which data are collected, who approves the next step, where documents are stored, how changes are recorded, and how evidence can be retrieved for reporting or audit purposes. A digital tool without a clear workflow often creates more confusion, because staff continue to use parallel spreadsheets, email folders and private archives.

For Moldovan HEIs, a realistic approach is to start with the processes that are repeated every year and that create the highest administrative burden. These usually include outgoing Erasmus student applications, incoming nominations, staff mobility calls, Learning Agreements, Mobility Agreements, Inter-

Institutional Agreements, grant documentation, recognition documents, participant feedback and reporting evidence. These processes do not need to be transformed all at once. A phased approach is usually more successful: first standardise the workflow and documents, then centralise data, then introduce online forms and approvals, and only later develop more complex platform integration.

Digitalisation should therefore begin with process mapping. A process map shows the current steps, responsible persons, documents, approvals, information systems and bottlenecks. It also reveals where the same data are entered several times, where participants receive unclear instructions, where signatures take too long, and where evidence may be lost. Once the current process is visible, the university can design a simpler future process. The aim is not to make the process more technological; the aim is to make it more reliable.

• 3.2 Minimum internal digital records for an IRO

Every IRO should maintain a small set of structured records. These records can begin as shared spreadsheets or institutional databases, provided that access, ownership and backup are clearly defined. The most important records are: a partner agreement register, mobility participant register, application tracker, document checklist, grant and payment tracker, recognition tracker, promotion and enquiry tracker, and risk or incident log. Each record should have an owner and a review rhythm. Without ownership, records become obsolete quickly.

The partner agreement register should include the partner name, country, Erasmus code if applicable, subject area, study level, mobility numbers, language requirements, validity period, responsible faculty, status of the agreement, date of last activity and next review date. The mobility participant register should include the participant name, sending and receiving institution, mobility type, dates, funding status, key documents, reporting status and recognition status. The application tracker should make it possible to see how many applications were received, which were eligible, which were selected, and why others were rejected.

A useful principle is that data should be collected once and reused many times. For example, the same basic mobility information may be needed for selection lists, nomination, Grant Agreement preparation, Beneficiary Module entry, internal reporting, recognition monitoring and promotion statistics. If the university captures this information in a structured way at the beginning, it reduces mistakes later.

• 3.3 Digitalisation in Erasmus: EWP, OLA, digital IIAs and BM

Erasmus digitalisation includes several connected elements. Erasmus Without Paper supports the electronic exchange of mobility-related data between higher education institutions. Digital Inter-Institutional Agreements help institutions negotiate, approve and store Erasmus agreements in a paperless way. Online Learning Agreements simplify the preparation, approval and change of study plans. The Beneficiary Module is the core reporting and management environment for Erasmus+ projects, where mobility records, dates, grants and participant reports must be managed carefully.

For training purposes, it is important to present these tools not as isolated platforms, but as parts of one mobility workflow. An outgoing student mobility begins with a call and application, continues with selection and nomination, requires a Learning Agreement, may require changes during the mobility, and ends with transcript collection, recognition and reporting. Digitalisation is successful when the information moves through these steps with as little manual duplication as possible.

The practical challenge is often institutional coordination. IRO staff, faculty coordinators, IT departments, legal officers, finance departments and institutional signatories all play a role. If only the IRO understands the digital platform, the process remains fragile. The university should therefore create simple internal instructions: who has access to which system, who signs digital agreements, who validates learning agreements, who enters mobility data, who checks deadlines, and who archives evidence.

- ## 3.4 Data protection, data quality and cyber-hygiene

Digitalisation increases the importance of data protection and data quality. Erasmus and internationalization processes involve personal data, including identity documents, contact details, academic records, bank details, disability or fewer-opportunity information, travel information and sometimes health or emergency contact information. These data should not be scattered across private email accounts, unprotected USB drives or personal cloud storage. The university should define where records are kept, who can access them, for how long they are kept, and how they are deleted or archived.

Data quality is equally important. Incorrect dates, misspelled names, outdated partner information or missing recognition status can create administrative problems and reporting errors. The IRO should use validation rules where possible, maintain version control for templates and ensure that one person or unit is responsible for final data checks before reporting deadlines.

- ## 3.5 Change management and realistic implementation

The main barrier to digitalisation is rarely technology alone. Staff may be used to existing routines, faculties may apply different procedures, and leadership may underestimate the time needed for change. A realistic digitalisation plan should therefore include training, communication, testing, user support and feedback. It is better to pilot one process well than to launch a complex system that users do not trust.

A practical six-month plan can include: mapping one Erasmus process, agreeing on common templates, creating a central shared register, defining access rights, piloting an online application form, testing the workflow with one faculty, collecting feedback, and preparing a revised standard operating procedure. This type of gradual implementation is affordable and allows each university to adapt to its own capacity.

- ## Group work: redesign one Erasmus workflow

Each Moldovan university group should choose one current process, preferably outgoing Erasmus student mobility from call publication to recognition. The group should first map the current process and then redesign it as a more digital, transparent and traceable workflow.

Workflow element	Questions to answer
Start of process	Who launches the call, where is it published, and how are applicants informed?
Application	Which data and documents are collected, and can they be submitted through one online form?
Selection	Who checks eligibility, who scores applications, and where are results recorded?
Nomination	Who sends nominations to partners and how are deadlines monitored?
Learning Agreement	Who prepares, checks, signs and stores the agreement and any later changes?
Grant and evidence	Where are Grant Agreements, travel evidence, confirmations and transcripts stored?
Recognition	Who confirms recognition, where is it recorded, and how are delays followed up?
Reporting	Which data are needed for BM and institutional reports, and when are they checked?

Expected output of Topic 3 group work

One current process map.
One improved digital workflow.
One minimum data-field list for the selected process.
Three quick wins that can be implemented within three months.

One longer-term digitalisation priority requiring leadership or IT support.

4. Implementation of Erasmus Mobility Project

• 4.1 Erasmus mobility as a project cycle

Erasmus mobility should be managed as a full project cycle. It begins before the call is published and continues after the participant returns. A good mobility process includes planning, partner confirmation, call publication, application, selection, nomination, agreements, grant management, pre-departure support, monitoring during mobility, documentation after return, academic recognition, participant reporting, financial closure and institutional learning. If one of these stages is weak, the whole mobility experience becomes less reliable.

For IROs, the challenge is to combine service to participants with compliance and evidence. Students and staff need clear information, timely communication and practical support. At the same time, the university must respect Erasmus rules, internal procedures, transparent selection, correct grant calculation, proper documentation, reporting deadlines and audit readiness. These two dimensions should not be treated as opposites. A well-designed process supports participants precisely because it is clear and predictable.

• 4.2 Institutional roles and responsibilities

A mobility project cannot be implemented by the International Relations Office alone. The IRO usually coordinates the process, but it depends on faculty coordinators, academic departments, finance officers, student services, legal or compliance staff, institutional leadership and the partner university. The responsibilities should be documented in simple standard operating procedures. Each recurring task should have an owner, a deadline, a backup person and a storage location for evidence.

At minimum, the Erasmus mobility structure should define the roles of the Erasmus Institutional Coordinator, outgoing mobility officer, incoming mobility officer, staff mobility officer, Inter-Institutional Agreement officer, finance contact, faculty academic coordinator and recognition authority. Smaller institutions may combine several roles in one person, but the functions should still be visible. The risk in small teams is that knowledge remains informal and disappears when one person is absent or leaves the institution.

• 4.3 Planning and launching mobility calls

Before a call is launched, the IRO should know which partner agreements are active, which study fields and levels are covered, how many places are realistic, what funding is available, what deadlines apply, and which selection criteria will be used. The call should be published early enough for students or staff to prepare documents. It should include eligibility conditions, available destinations, application documents, selection criteria, scoring method, deadline, contact person, appeal procedure and expected timeline.

Transparency is essential. Applicants should be able to understand how decisions will be made before they apply. Selection criteria may include academic results, motivation, language competence, relevance of the mobility plan, previous mobility participation, fewer-opportunity status or strategic institutional priorities. The criteria should be appropriate for the mobility type and should be applied consistently. Selection results should be recorded and archived.

• 4.4 Outgoing student mobility

Outgoing student mobility is the most visible Erasmus process and usually the most document-intensive. After selection, the student must be nominated to the host institution, accepted by the host, prepare the Learning Agreement, complete any required internal documents, sign the Grant Agreement, receive pre-departure information and understand obligations during the mobility. The Learning Agreement is not only an administrative form. It is the central academic recognition tool. The sending institution, receiving institution and student should agree on the study programme before departure, and any changes should be documented during the mobility.

Recognition must be planned from the beginning. Students often hesitate to apply for mobility when they fear that credits will not be recognized. The university should therefore explain recognition rules clearly, involve academic coordinators early, and monitor whether transcripts are received and processed after return. Delayed or incomplete recognition is one of the main reasons why mobility may lose credibility among students.

• 4.5 Staff mobility

Staff mobility includes teaching and training activities. It supports international cooperation, professional development, curriculum development and peer learning. However, staff mobility also requires clear management. The call should explain who can apply, what activities are eligible, how teaching or training plans are assessed, what documents are needed, how grants are calculated and what evidence is required after return. Staff participants should be encouraged to connect their mobility with institutional development: new contacts, improved services, curriculum ideas, project concepts or follow-up cooperation.

• 4.6 Incoming mobility and participant support

Incoming mobility is an opportunity to demonstrate institutional reliability. Partner universities judge the quality of cooperation not only by agreements, but also by how their students and staff are welcomed and supported. Incoming mobility should include a nomination procedure, acceptance letters, course information, language and academic guidance, accommodation or practical information, orientation activities, emergency contacts, support during the stay and timely issue of transcripts or certificates.

A buddy system or Erasmus ambassador system can be very useful, especially for incoming students. It connects international participants with local students, improves integration and provides informal support. The IRO should also prepare basic practical information in English: campus maps, transport, accommodation, health insurance, emergency contacts, academic calendar, grading system and contact points.

• 4.7 Beneficiary Module, documentation and evidence

The Beneficiary Module is a central tool for Erasmus project implementation and reporting. Mobility records should be created and updated carefully. Planned dates, actual dates, grant amounts, participant information and report status must be checked. The IRO should not wait until the end of the project to update records. Regular updates reduce errors and make reporting more manageable.

Each mobility should have a complete evidence file. For student mobility this may include application documents, selection result, nomination, acceptance, Learning Agreement and changes, Grant Agreement, proof of arrival or confirmation of stay, Transcript of Records, recognition proof, participant report status and payment information. For staff mobility it may include application, selection, Mobility Agreement, invitation or acceptance, Grant Agreement, confirmation of stay, travel evidence if required, participant report and dissemination or follow-up note.

• 4.8 Quality assurance and risk scenarios

Quality assurance in Erasmus mobility means learning from each mobility cycle. The IRO should review the number of applications, selected participants, withdrawals, recognition delays, partner responsiveness, participant satisfaction and administrative bottlenecks. This review should be short but regular. It helps the university decide whether to continue certain agreements, adjust promotion, revise selection criteria or improve support services.

Risk scenarios should be discussed before they happen. Examples include visa delays, early return, changes to study programme, failed courses, missing transcript, staff date change, overpayment, participant not submitting the final report, safety incident or partner communication failure. The university should define who decides, what evidence is needed, how the participant is informed, how the Beneficiary Module is updated and whether financial consequences apply.

- ### Group work: Erasmus implementation calendar and mobility file checklist

Each university group prepares a one-year implementation calendar for Erasmus mobility. The calendar should reflect the academic year, partner deadlines and internal decision-making procedures. The group should then prepare a file checklist for one type of mobility and a short risk-response procedure for one scenario.

Period	Main tasks
Before academic year	Review active IIAs, available places, funding, previous results and internal templates.
Call preparation	Prepare call text, selection criteria, application form, scoring grid and communication plan.
Call publication	Publish information, organise info session, answer questions and collect applications.
Selection	Check eligibility, score applications, approve results, inform applicants and archive decisions.
Pre-departure	Nomination, acceptance, Learning/Mobility Agreement, Grant Agreement, insurance and practical briefing.
During mobility	Monitor changes, update records, support participants and solve incidents.
After return	Collect transcript/certificate, process recognition, check participant report, close grant and update BM.
Annual review	Analyse indicators, partner feedback, participant feedback, recognition delays and improvement actions.

Expected output of Topic 4 group work

A one-year Erasmus implementation calendar.
A student or staff mobility file checklist.
A RACI table showing who is Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed.
A short response procedure for one risk scenario, such as early return or missing transcript.

5. Promotion of Exchange (Erasmus) Opportunities

- ### 5.1 Promotion as a cycle, not a single announcement

Promotion of Erasmus and exchange opportunities should be treated as a cycle: awareness, interest, application, selection, preparation, mobility, return and ambassador engagement. Many institutions publish a call and assume that interested students or staff will apply. In reality, potential applicants often need repeated messages, examples, reassurance and practical explanation. They may not understand eligibility, funding, recognition, language requirements or the benefits of mobility. Promotion must therefore begin before the call and continue after the mobility through testimonials and peer support.

The purpose of promotion is not simply to increase the number of applications. It is to increase the number of informed, eligible and motivated applications from appropriate target groups. Strong promotion helps students and staff understand whether the opportunity is suitable for them, what steps they must complete and how the university will support them. It also helps the institution reach groups that may not normally apply, including students with fewer opportunities, first-generation students, students from smaller faculties and administrative staff who may not see international mobility as relevant to their work.

• 5.2 Target groups and messages

Different target groups need different messages. Bachelor students may need basic information about what Erasmus is and whether credits will be recognized. Master students may be more interested in thesis work, specialized courses or professional development. PhD students may focus on research networks, supervisors and conferences. Academic staff may need to see how teaching mobility supports curriculum development, cooperation and future projects. Administrative staff may be motivated by peer learning, service improvement and professional recognition.

Core messages should be practical and credible. Students need to know where they can go, how much funding is available, which courses can be taken, whether recognition is guaranteed, when to apply and who can help. Staff need to know what activities are eligible, what documents are needed, how the mobility can be connected to their work and what follow-up is expected. For students with fewer opportunities, promotion should explicitly mention additional support, inclusion measures and the fact that Erasmus is not only for the most confident or internationally experienced students.

• 5.3 Communication channels

A good promotion campaign uses several channels, but each channel should have a clear purpose. The Erasmus webpage should be the authoritative source of information. Social media can create awareness and remind users of deadlines. Email can provide official calls and targeted reminders. Faculty websites and student information systems can reach programme-specific audiences. Classroom visits and faculty meetings can answer questions directly. Posters with QR codes can guide students to the application page. Returning students and staff can make the opportunity more believable through personal stories.

The university should avoid a situation where different channels contain inconsistent information. The webpage should always be updated first, and all other messages should link back to it. This reduces confusion and makes it easier to correct information when deadlines or details change. A basic rule is that every promotional message should answer three questions: what is the opportunity, who can apply, and what is the next step?

• 5.4 Erasmus Information Days and application support

An Erasmus Information Day is one of the most effective promotion formats. It should not be only a formal presentation. It should combine explanation, practical examples, student or staff testimony, questions and direct support. A good agenda includes available opportunities, partner universities, funding, application documents, selection criteria, Learning Agreement and recognition, inclusion support, green travel information, experience sharing by Erasmus ambassadors and time for questions.

The event can also include an application clinic. Participants bring questions or draft documents, and IRO staff or faculty coordinators provide practical guidance. This format is useful because many potential applicants do not apply due to small uncertainties: whether their grades are sufficient, whether language is a problem, which partner fits their programme, how to prepare the motivation letter or how recognition works. Removing these barriers can improve both the number and quality of applications.

• 5.5 Website essentials for Erasmus promotion

The Erasmus webpage should be written for users who have never applied before. It should include current calls, deadlines, partner list, eligibility rules, application steps, selection criteria, funding information, recognition procedure, required documents, FAQs, contact person and testimonials. Information should be structured by target group: students, academic staff, administrative staff and incoming participants. Documents should be downloadable, but the page should also explain what each document is for and when it is needed.

The webpage should also include a clear timeline. Applicants should understand when the call opens, when it closes, when selection results are expected, when nomination takes place, when agreements are prepared and when mobility can start. Unclear timelines create anxiety and unnecessary enquiries. A simple visual timeline or table is often enough.

• 5.6 Erasmus ambassadors and returnee engagement

Returning participants are one of the strongest promotion resources. They can explain Erasmus in a way that institutional communication cannot. Their stories make mobility concrete: what they studied, how they managed travel, what surprised them, what they learned and what they would advise future applicants. The university should invite returning students and staff to information days, record short testimonials, collect quotes, organise peer meetings and involve them in buddy systems for incoming students.

An Erasmus ambassador system should be simple. Ambassadors can support information sessions, answer basic questions, contribute to social media content, join faculty visits and help selected students prepare. The university can recognize their contribution through certificates, volunteer records, public acknowledgement or small institutional benefits. The system should be coordinated by the IRO, but ambassadors should also be connected to faculties so that their experience reaches relevant programmes.

• 5.7 Measuring promotion

Promotion should be measured. Indicators do not need to be complicated. The IRO can track webpage visits, information day attendance, number of enquiries, number of applications started, number of complete applications, eligible and ineligible applications, selected participants, withdrawals, faculty representation, participation of students with fewer opportunities and staff mobility applications. These indicators help the institution understand where the promotion cycle is weak.

For example, if many people attend the information day but few applications are submitted, the application process may be too difficult or the support insufficient. If many applications are ineligible, the eligibility rules were not understood. If one faculty dominates mobility, others may need targeted promotion. If selected students withdraw before departure, the problem may be funding concerns, recognition uncertainty, visa issues or insufficient pre-departure support. Promotion data should therefore be used for improvement, not only for reporting.

• Group work: six-week Erasmus promotion campaign

Each Moldovan university group prepares a six-week promotion campaign for the next Erasmus call. The campaign should be realistic and based on channels the university can actually use. It should include target groups, key messages, timeline, responsible persons, content formats and indicators.

Week	Campaign action	Responsible unit/person	Indicator
1	Update Erasmus webpage and prepare call package.	IRO with faculty coordinators	Webpage updated and documents published.
2	Publish call announcement through website, email and social media.	IRO and communication office	Announcement reach and number of enquiries.
3	Faculty visits or short presentations in selected classes/meetings.	IRO and faculty coordinators	Number of sessions and participants.

4	Erasmus Information Day with ambassadors and Q&A.	IRO, ambassadors, student services	Attendance and feedback.
5	Application clinic and targeted reminders before deadline.	IRO	Number of draft applications/questions.
6	Final deadline reminder and eligibility support.	IRO	Complete applications received.

Information Day block	Content
Welcome and purpose	Why Erasmus mobility matters for students, staff and the university.
Available opportunities	Partner institutions, study fields, staff options and mobility periods.
Funding and inclusion	Grant amounts, additional support, fewer-opportunity measures and green travel.
How to apply	Eligibility, documents, deadlines, scoring and selection process.
Recognition and academic planning	Learning Agreement, course choice, changes and recognition after return.
Ambassador testimony	Returning student or staff member shares concrete experience and advice.
Application clinic	Participants ask questions and receive practical guidance.

Expected output of Topic 5 group work

A six-week promotion campaign plan.
An Erasmus Information Day agenda.
A revised Erasmus webpage outline.
Three social media post ideas and one email announcement.
A short KPI table for campaign monitoring.

Concluding note

The five topics together form a practical training package for strengthening International Relations Offices and related university services. The materials are intentionally output-oriented. They guide participants from understanding to application: from strategic partnership thinking to due diligence templates, from recruitment messages to applicant journey management, from digitalisation principles to workflow redesign, from Erasmus rules to implementation calendars, and from promotion theory to a concrete campaign. This structure supports the wider objective of IRO4ALL: strengthening institutional capacity, procedures and European integration of Moldovan higher education institutions.

USAMV of Bucharest section

The training material delves into the operational tracking of Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs). USAMV of Bucharest shares its structural models for both outgoing and incoming lifecycles. For outgoing flows, this covers establishing a transparent screening framework, drafting comprehensive multi-channel selection calls, implementing objective 1–5 point essay rubrics, and executing behavioral interviews that evaluate language proficiency alongside real-time stress tolerance. For incoming flows, the material maps out everything from submitting organizational applications to navigating the digital tracks of Online Learning Agreements (OLAs) and logging data into the European Commission's Beneficiary Module.

Furthermore, USAMV of Bucharest presents its comprehensive two-pillar strategic visibility framework. Moldovan institutions will explore how to separate short-term, recruitment-oriented visibility (such as leveraging national pavilions at international fairs like EAIE or NAFSA) from long-term, reputation-oriented visibility (such as hosting flagship scientific conferences or utilizing Francophone academic networks as multipliers for global reach). By integrating active network components like the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF) or co-organizing highly visible regional events, universities can unlock international funding and research pathways that complement traditional Erasmus+ setups.

6. Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs): Building an Institutional BIP framework. BIP as a tool for mobility and internationalization: regulatory framework and practical implementation. Institutional model: multi-faculty engagement coordinated through the IRO (USAMVB)

A Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) is an Erasmus+ initiative designed to spark innovative teaching through joint curricula and online collaboration. It features two mandatory, integrated elements:

- On-site learning: a 5-to-30-day physical stay at the host institution or country.
- Virtual learning: a flexible online component scheduled before, during, or after the physical trip. Though it has no set duration, it must be meaningfully tied to the coursework and fulfill the program's ECTS credit requirements.

6.1 USAMV Bucharest model for outgoing BIPs

Typically, the process of sending outgoing students to BIPs organized by partner universities begins with an official selection call. Because these short-term international programs offer limited slots and Erasmus+ funding, home institutions must establish a transparent and competitive screening framework to identify the most qualified candidates. This selection process call can be organized per academic year, per semester, or on a rolling basis depending on the specific partner invitations received, and it requires students to submit an application package to ensure an objective evaluation of their readiness for intensive, hybrid learning.

The Selection Call is posted on the main website and disseminated by email, WhatApp Groups and Instagram/Facebook posts and contains information on:

Program Overview

- Host University
- Number of Places available for USAMV Bucharest students.

- Financial Support: Erasmus grant / university scholarship
- Main Topic of the program
    - Online Component Dates
    - Physical Mobility Dates

Critical Dates and Location
- Registration Deadline
- Selection Interview Date and Location

Application Requirements
- Eligibility criteria
- Language Skills
- Required Documents

How to Apply
Administrative Contacts for further information

Any information provided by partner universities regarding accommodation or meal options will also be included.

The selection process for BIPs at the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest involves several strict eligibility criteria and an evaluation process consisting of:

1. Eligibility Requirements

To be considered for selection, applicants must meet the following baseline conditions:

- Language proficiency: a minimum English level of B1/B2 is required. While not mandatory, possessing an official language certificate is considered an advantage during the evaluation.
- Subject knowledge: depending on the partner's university requirements, applicants might be asked to display prior knowledge in the specific field of the program.

2. Application documents

Interested students must apply online through the official digital platform (https://international.usamv.ro/). The required dossier consists of:

- Curriculum Vitae (CV).
- Motivation essay: a one-page essay in English (PDF format) explaining how the program's theme relates to the candidate's academic and professional growth. This must be uploaded using the student's institutional email address.
- Other items that are not mandatory, but students can choose to upload are volunteering activities, extracurricular activities etc.
- *Note:* A recommendation letter is not required for these programs.

3. Selection stages and evaluation

Because these programs often have a very limited number of spots (for example, only 3 places or 5 places), the selection is competitive:

- Registration deadline: applications must be submitted by the specified date and time.
- Selection interview: candidates who have submitted their files must attend a short physical

interview.

The selection committee consists of at least two Erasmus coordinators from different faculties and a member of the International Relations Office. When grading a motivation essay for a BIP, the committee evaluates the student’s alignment with the academic theme, their readiness for collaboration, and their suitability for a fast-paced international environment. A strong essay must move beyond a generic layout to demonstrate a clear connection between the specific BIP curriculum and the applicant's academic or career goals and it should not overly emphasise the students’ desire to travel, sightsee, or party, rather than focusing on the intense academic or practical networking opportunities available on-site. Finally, attention should also be given to essays that display clarity and structure, clear arguments, and adherence to length requirements. The committee also takes into consideration AI use.

The physical interview stage provides a critical opportunity to assess an applicant’s real-time behavioural readiness and adaptability for the high-pressure environment of a BIP. Selectors evaluate the candidate's stress tolerance, intercultural openness, and proactive communication. Punctuality, active listening, and an enthusiastic mindset during the interview serve as key indicators of whether the student will be a reliable, highly engaged participant who contributes positively to the joint international cohort.

Simultaneously, the interview must gauge functional language proficiency, prioritizing spontaneous, collaborative fluency over flawless grammatical perfection. The evaluation should focus on whether the applicant possesses the vocabulary required to negotiate ideas, express polite disagreement, and actively participate in fast-paced academic teamwork. Ultimately, a successful candidate demonstrates the linguistic confidence to self-correct and keep communicating effectively, ensuring they can fully grasp lectures and cooperate meaningfully with international peers during both the virtual and on-site phases.

Each of these aspects, the essay, the physical interview and language proficiency, are graded 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest. The mean from all committee members serves as the final grade. In the event of a tie, the transcript of records is used as a tie-breaking criterion. Priority factors, such as first-time mobility, are also taken into account when final selection decisions are made.

Applicants will be classified as accepted, reserve, or rejected, and will be notified both via the platform and by email. Final selection results will also be published on the website using anonymized student IDs to ensure privacy.

The student applications contain the following information in the platform:

Outgoing Student Application

Contract: *Selectie Programe Intensive Mixte* ***Admission session:*** *Selectie Parthenope University of Naples - BIP - Coastal Protection a*

Outgoing Student Application **System data**

Id	471
Uuid	
Status	**Processing**
Status reason	
Gdpr Accepted	Yes
Date created	05-Jun-2026 15:35:18
Fully submitted	Yes
Account	
Processed by	

Outgoing Student Application **Current study details**

Mobility type	Study
Study cycle	Bachelor's Degree (EQF Level 6)
Student year of study	IV
Mobility language	
Mobility language exam	

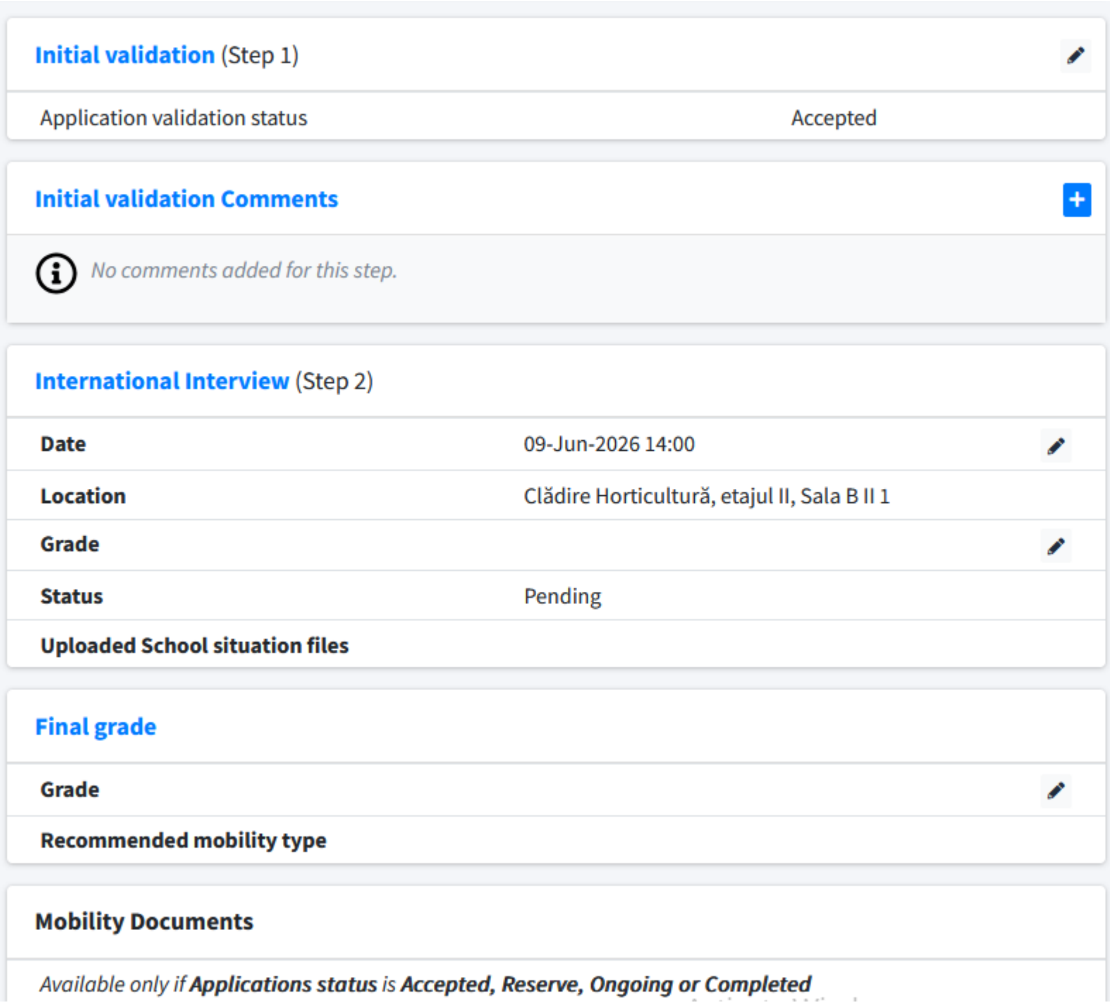
Outgoing Student Application **Personal data**

Firstname	
Lastname	
Citizenship	
Secondary Email	ay[illegible]22@bth.usamv.ro
Phone	0775154644
Student internal id	3302
Specialization at the time of application	Biotechnologies for food industry **Domain:** Biotechnologies **Faculty:** Faculty of Biotechnologies

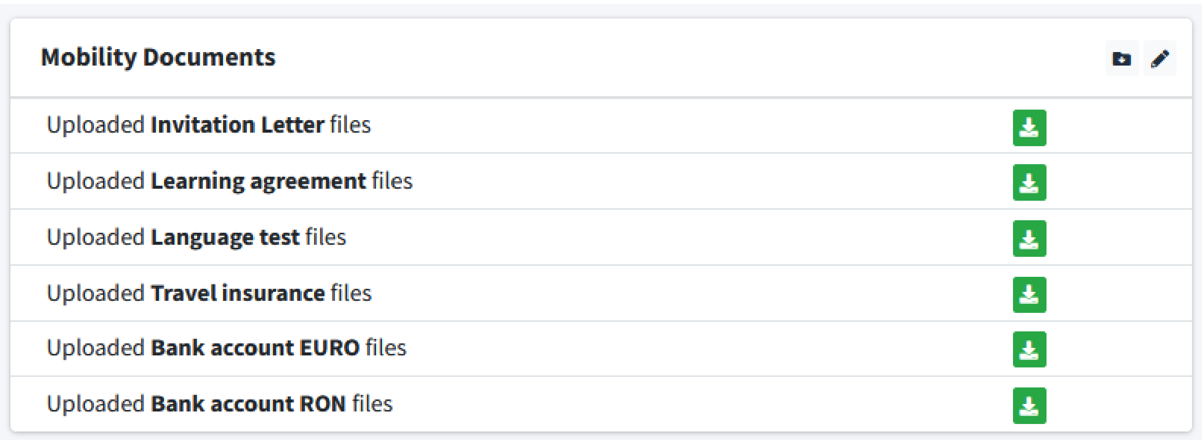
Outgoing Student Application **Documents**

Uploaded **Identity card** files	
Uploaded **Recommendation letter** files	
Uploaded **Intention letter** files	
Uploaded **Curriculum vitae** files	
Uploaded **Extracurricular activities** files	
Uploaded **Volunteer activities** files	
Uploaded **Social certificate** files	
Uploaded **Language certificate** files	

The IRO administrator can update the platform for each stage of the selection call:



Once accepted, the students can upload the necessary documents to draft the financial contracts, as seen below.



Following sprocedure involves informing students of the next administrative steps and sending out the nominations to partner universities.

6.2. USAMV of Bucharest model for incoming BIPs

The process of organising a BIP officially begins when the university submits its organizational applications during the National Agency's primary funding call in February. The lifecycle of an incoming BIP from the university's organizational point of view begins with the launch of a targeted selection call at the beginning of the academic year, where professors can apply for the organization of such a program.

An example of such a template can be found below. The template should include a detailed plan of lectures to be held both in the online component and physical component.

BLENDED INTENSIVE PROGRAMME

GENERAL INFORMATION

BIP Title	
BIP Code	
Coordinating Institution - Faculty	University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest (USAMVB) - Faculty of Agriculture
Dates for physical mobility	
Proposed period for virtual component	
Priorities addressed	☐ Inclusion and diversity ☑ Digital transformation ☑ Environment and fight against climate change ☐ Participation in democratic life ☑ Others
ECTS	3
Objectives and short description / abstract	
Methods (including final evaluation method) **and results / learning outcomes**	**Final evaluation method:** project **Learning outcomes -** At the end of the Blended Intensive Programme, the students will be able to: 1. ... 2. ... 3. …
Partner institutions	
Total number of learning hours	75 hours (equivalent to 3 ECTS), divided as follows: … hours of virtual component … hours of physical mobility (minimum 5 days) … individual study hours
Scientific coordinator	
Administrative coordinator	

Teaching team (professors from partner universities or lecturers from the industry are welcomed to teach)	
Number of learners	18
Target group / learner profile (study level, specialisation etc)	Bachelor's or Master's degree in … or a closely related field
Selection criteria (English language level, prerequisites)	English B1/B2 Knowledgeable in …

TEACHING CONTENT

	Daily program	**Content - lectures, workshops, educational trips.**
Virtual component	Day 1 - before physical mobility	•
	Day 2 - before physical mobility	•
	Day 3 - before physical mobility	•
	Day 4 - before physical mobility	•
	Day 5 - after physical mobility	•
Physical mobility	Day 1	•
	Day 2	•
	Day 3	•
	Day 4	•
	Day 5	•

Following the successful submission of the application, the management of the BIP shifts into a dual-track implementation phase, dividing administrative oversight and academic execution:

- **Academic and curricular development (the Faculty):** the host Faculty drives the educational core of the BIP. Faculty coordinators design the details of the specialized interdisciplinary curriculum, coordinate with guest lecturers, establish the grading criteria, and structure both the virtual collaboration phase and the intensive on-site lectures or laboratory sessions.
- **Administrative and financial management (IRO):** the International Relations Office (takes charge of the operational backbone of the program. This includes devising and balancing the comprehensive operational budget, managing Erasmus+ funding allocations, and coordinating essential logistical arrangements. The IRO team handles local travel arrangements, venue booking, social programs, and hospitality logistics to ensure incoming participants have a seamless on-site experience in Bucharest. It also works closely to ensure all mobility documents and Beneficiary Module reporting are done correctly.

While the Faculty finalizes the academic program, promotional efforts begin immediately. Tailored invitations, alongside detailed info-packs and program curricula, are dispatched to strategic institutional partners across the Erasmus+ network. Launching this call early is critical to securing international participant commitments well ahead of schedule. Under the Erasmus+ framework, a BIP must meet a strict minimum threshold of international learners to be eligible for organizational support funding. Therefore, it is essential to secure the minimum number of participants required as soon as possible through early, targeted selection calls and proactive promotional invitations dispatched to strategic institutional partners.

However, relying solely on the bare minimum number of required learners creates an operational vulnerability. To protect the program against unforeseen disruptions, it is highly advisable to recruit and approve a larger cohort than the baseline requirement. Aiming for a number that exceeds the minimum threshold acts as a vital safety net. This cushion fully ensures the BIP's successful organization and financial eligibility in the event of students dropping out, facing travel issues, or retiring from the mobility before the virtual or physical phases commence .

At the same time, the project team outlines a clear strategy to evaluate the programme's long-term impact and academic outcomes.

Once the partner universities conclude their internal selection processes and officially nominate their selected candidates, the USAMV international team steps in to manage the student onboarding process. The IRO directly contacts the nominated students to guide them through institutional registration and streamline the completion of their digital Learning Agreements (LAs), ensuring all academic credits (ECTS) are mutually recognized before the program begins. Below is an example of LA completing guide, USAMV sends to incoming students.

Online Learning Agreement (OLA) Instructions

BIP ID:

Platform Link: learning-agreement.eu

Step 1: Account Setup

- **Create an account** on the Erasmus Without Papers (EWP) Dashboard using the link above.
- **Fill out your personal data** as prompted.

Step 2: Educational Details

- **Study Programme:** Ask your International Officer for the exact ISCED code used in your university's system. If unknown, select **0888 - Agriculture, forestry, fisheries, veterinary, inter-disciplinary programmes.**
- **Study Cycle:** Select the level that applies to you:
    - Bachelor or equivalent (EQF level 6)
    - Master or equivalent (EQF level 7)
    - Doctoral or equivalent (EQF level 8)

Step 3: Institution Information

- **Academic Year:**
- **Receiving Institution:** University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest

- **Country:** Romania
- **Erasmus Code:** RO BUCURES12
- **Faculty/Department:**
- **Contact Persons:**
    - **Responsible Person**:
    - **Administrative/Contact Person:**

Sending Institution (Home University):

- Please request these specific details from your home Erasmus Office.

Step 4: Mobility & Component Data

- **Planned Start Date:**
- **Planned End Date:**
- **Semester:**
- **Language of Instruction:** English (Level: B2)

Course Component Details:

- **Title:**
- **Component Code:**
- **ECTS Credits:** 3
- **Virtual Component Description:**

Step 5: Finalize

- **Sign** the Online Learning Agreement digitally.

To ensure the highest educational standards, a strict Plan for Quality Assurance should be executed throughout the lifecycle of the BIP. To complement this internal quality framework, institutional visibility is actively maintained from start to finish by consistently posting updates, student milestones, and program highlights on digital media channels. Utilizing a multi-channel dissemination strategy, including the main institutional website, and social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, the university documents live progression through all stages of the program. This comprehensive approach captures pre-event announcements, live interactions during both the virtual and physical phases, and post-event summaries featuring statistics, photographs, or group outputs. This rigorous digital documentation serves a dual purpose: it builds immediate transparency for current stakeholders and functions as a powerful student recruitment and reputation-building instrument for future editions.

On an academic level, educational equity and transparency are safegued by ensuring that all support materials, lecture notes, and course repositories from the training sessions are systematically shared with the students. Providing unrestricted access to these academic resources ensures that international participants can smoothly navigate the rigorous 75-hour workload required to earn their 3 ECTS credits. This structured dissemination of teaching content empowers cross-disciplinary student teams to effectively collaborate during the virtual phase and successfully complete their final evaluative projects.

Finally, to fulfill strict European Commission quality standards and ensure full regulatory compliance, all participant metadata, mobility durations, and specific program parameters are meticulously logged and verified within the European Commission's Beneficiary Module. This rigorous validation process secures institutional funding and officially concludes the administrative lifecycle of the incoming BIP.

Upon the conclusion of the mobility, the focus shifts to evaluation, dissemination, and reporting:

- **Feedback and evaluation:** the IRO and host Faculty establish formal feedback methods, deploying post-programme surveys to gather insights from participants to improve future editions of the course. Efforts are also made to facilitate platforms that encourage continued contact and cooperation between international participants.
- **Reporting and dissemination:** a comprehensive final report with concrete conclusions is drafted. This report is summarized with key statistics, photos, or group outputs to showcase the program's success. These outcomes are systematically shared with internal and external stakeholders, and the results are officially reported to the National Agency.

7. International Visibility & Student Recruitment Architecture

International visibility is often treated as a communication function, a matter of websites, social media, and promotional materials. This section argues for a different framing: visibility is a strategic institutional function that requires deliberate planning, consistent resource allocation, and a clear understanding of what each activity is designed to achieve and for whom. The USAMV of Bucharest model, presented here as a transferable reference, is built on a distinction between two complementary but distinct objectives: student recruitment and academic reputation, each of which requires different instruments, different audiences, and different measures of success.

This section draws directly from the presentation delivered at the IRO4ALL Valencia training session by the USAMV of Bucharest team. It is designed to be applicable to institutions at different stages of internationalisation, and the recommendations are grounded in operational experience rather than theoretical frameworks.

7.1 Two Pillars, Two Logics

A foundational distinction runs through USAMV of Bucharest's approach to international visibility: the separation between recruitment-oriented visibility and reputation-oriented visibility. These two objectives share some instruments but are fundamentally different in logic, audience, and timeframe. Conflating them leads to poorly targeted activities, diffuse resources, and an inability to evaluate whether any given investment has achieved its purpose.

- Pillar 1: Student Recruitment: This pillar targets prospective students (undergraduate, master, and doctoral) and aims to generate applications from non-national candidates to USAMV programmes. Its primary instruments are international education fairs and exhibitions, national scholarship platforms, digital presence on programme-facing websites, and peer-to-peer networks through current international students and alumni. Its time horizon is short to medium term: the objective is applications in the next one to two admission cycles.
- Pillar 2: Academic Reputation: This pillar targets researchers, academic staff, potential project partners, and institutional decision-makers at peer universities. Its primary instruments are scientific conferences and symposia, publication in international journals, participation in disciplinary networks, and hosting of visiting academics. Its time horizon is medium to long term: the objective is building a recognised institutional identity in one or more fields that generates partnership enquiries, research collaboration invitations, and funding opportunities over several years.

Both pillars are necessary and both require deliberate planning and budgeting. A university that invests only in student recruitment may attract international enrolments but will struggle to develop the research partnerships and disciplinary credibility that sustain long-term internationalisation. A university that invests only in academic reputation may have strong research networks but insufficient administrative capacity to convert interest into applications and enrolments.

For Moldovan HEIs, the practical implication is that visibility activities should be planned and evaluated separately for each pillar, with distinct objectives, responsible staff, and success indicators.

7.2 Student Recruitment: Fairs, Exhibitions, and National Platforms

International education fairs and exhibitions are the most direct recruitment instrument available to IROs for building presence in target student markets. USAMV of Bucharest participates regularly in international education fairs in priority geographic markets, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, and in the major international higher education conference and exhibition platforms: APAIE (Asia-Pacific Association for International Education), NAFSA (Association of International Educators), EAIE (European Association for International Education), and EURIE (Eurasia Higher Education Summit). EURIE is particularly relevant for Moldovan HEIs given its regional focus on Eurasian higher education cooperation, which places Moldova within its natural catchment area. Participation in these events takes place under the Study in Romania national pavilion, coordinated by the Romanian Council of Rectors (CNR), within the broader Study in Romania national brand.

The national pavilion model is strategically significant and deserves specific attention from Moldovan HEIs. Participating under a national umbrella brand reduces the individual cost of exhibition participation for each institution, pools communication resources, and benefits from the credibility and recognition that a national brand carries with prospective students and their advisors. An individual institution presenting itself at APAIE as a standalone university from a country that the audience may not know is in a substantially weaker position than the same institution presenting as part of a coordinated national delegation. The Study in Romania platform reinforces this by providing a scholarship application infrastructure, managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that gives prospective students a concrete and credible pathway into the system.

For Moldovan HEIs, the infrastructure for an equivalent approach already exists in significant part. The Council of Rectors of the Republic of Moldova, representing 21 universities, has held permanent guest status at all CNR Romania meetings since September 2024. This is not a future aspiration: it is an operational channel that can be activated for joint international promotion immediately. The priority for Moldovan HEIs is to move from passive membership in this structure to active participation in coordinated international recruitment, including shared exhibition presence at APAIE, NAFSA, EAIE, and EURIE under a coherent Moldova higher education brand.

Lesson for Moldovan HEIs: Education fairs and exhibitions generate direct contact with prospective students and their advisors. The return on participation depends entirely on three factors:

1. The quality of the materials and the message: What the institution offers, for whom, and why it is worth choosing.
2. The follow-up system: How contacts made at the event are recorded, categorised, and acted upon within five working days.
3. The digital pathway: Whether the institution's website and application process are clear and functional enough to convert interest into application.

Without all three, fair participation produces contacts that do not become applications.

7.3 Connecting Events to Digital Presence

Event-based visibility produces lasting outcomes only when it is connected to a functioning digital presence. A conference without a website, a news article, and social media documentation reaches only those who attended. A student who encounters USAMV at a fair and then navigates to a poorly maintained institutional website or finds programme information in Romanian only has effectively encountered a closed door.

USAMV of Bucharest's digital ecosystem for international visibility includes the international.usamv.ro platform, currently under active development, for incoming students, BIP applications, and mobility management; the main institutional website usamv.ro with multilingual content and international pages; and a social media presence used for event promotion and student recruitment. The institution has been explicit in its own assessment: the digital tools are not a final product. They require sustained investment and continuous iteration. And the lesson drawn from USAMV's own experience is directly applicable to Moldovan HEIs: building digital infrastructure before the international programmes exist is significantly less costly than retrofitting it onto processes that are already running.

A practical digital amplification model for events follows a simple sequence: pre-event announcement on the institutional website and social media ➔ live documentation during the event ➔ a post-event news article, photograph set, and where applicable a highlight video ➔ and follow-up contact management with participants. Each stage produces content that extends the event's reach in time and geography, and contributes to the institution's online visibility for prospective students and partners who were not present.

8. Academic Reputation & National Network Multipliers

8.1 Academic Reputation: Conferences, Symposia, and Institutional Hosting

The second pillar of USAMV of Bucharest's visibility strategy is built around flagship scientific events hosted by the institution. Two conferences serve as the primary instruments for building academic reputation internationally.

- Agriculture 4 Life: An international scientific conference hosted by USAMV of Bucharest covering sustainable agriculture, food systems, and environmental sciences. The primary audience is professors and researchers. The conference brings together academics and practitioners from multiple countries, positions USAMV as a regional academic hub in agronomic sciences, generates ongoing contacts with international researchers, and produces publication visibility through conference proceedings. Every researcher who attends Agriculture 4 Life becomes a potential ambassador for the institution within their own academic network.
- One Health Students Conference: An international conference on the intersection of human, animal, and environmental health, hosted by USAMV of Bucharest. The primary audience is students and young researchers. The conference reflects USAMV's unique disciplinary profile, the combination of agronomy and veterinary medicine places the institution at the natural intersection of the One Health framework, and extends visibility beyond the traditional agronomic community into medicine, public health, and environmental sciences. For Moldovan HEIs, the One Health approach is particularly relevant given the alignment between its disciplinary scope and EU research priority agendas, which increases relevance in international funding calls.

The strategic logic of hosting flagship conferences is cumulative and long-term. Each edition builds on the previous one: returning participants bring colleagues, proceedings generate citations, and the institutional name becomes progressively more associated with the field in the minds of the relevant academic community. A single well-organised recurring conference establishes an institution's name in a discipline faster and more durably than participation in many scattered external events. For institutions with limited promotional budgets, a flagship event also generates digital content (photographs, testimonials, news articles, social media posts, proceedings) that extends its reach beyond those who attended.

8.2 National Networks as Visibility Multipliers

Flagship conferences and national coordination structures address the same underlying problem from two different angles: how to build a level of recognition that no institution can generate alone, working only at its own scale. Conferences build reputation discipline by discipline, through the accumulation of academic credibility over successive editions. National networks build recognition country by country, through coordinated representation that lends every participating institution a credibility baseline it would otherwise have to construct independently. Both are, in this sense, multipliers rather than substitutes for institutional effort.

Visibility through national coordination networks is not a substitute for institutional effort, but it is a significant multiplier of it. USAMV of Bucharest's position within the Consiliul Național al Rectorilor (CNR), Romania's National Council of Rectors, is a structural asset in this regard. CNR was established in 1992 as a non-governmental, politically independent, and non-profit association, operating under the legal framework provided by Government Ordinance No. 26/2000 and the National Education Law No. 1/2011. This framework gives CNR the authority to engage in dialogue with governmental bodies, contribute to higher education policy development, and represent the country's accredited public and private universities as a collective body. Its president has described the council's international function as promoting cooperation between Romanian higher education institutions and their international counterparts, through partnerships supporting joint projects — a role that extends CNR's relevance beyond domestic policy coordination into the visibility and partnership domain addressed in this topic.

USAMV of Bucharest's Rector currently serves as President of CNR, a position that both reflects and reinforces the institution's standing within this coordination architecture. The institution participates in joint international promotional activities coordinated at the national level, including representation at international exhibitions, and benefits from the national reputation that CNR-level coordination creates. This coordination architecture connects directly to the Study in Romania platform discussed under student recruitment: the underlying state scholarship scheme dates back to a Government Decision from 1993, giving the programme a long institutional history rather than a recent or experimental status, and reinforcing the credibility that Romanian universities draw on when presenting themselves collectively abroad.

The lesson for Moldovan HEIs is not to replicate a specific institutional position within CNR, but to recognise that national coordination infrastructure, when activated, produces visibility outcomes that individual institutional effort cannot replicate at comparable cost. Moldova's Rectors' Council has the institutional mandate and the existing CNR relationship to serve as the coordination platform for joint international promotion. What is required is the institutional will to activate it systematically, agree on a shared brand and message, and allocate the resources necessary to participate in coordinated international events.

8.3 USAMV of Bucharest's Visibility Portfolio at a Glance

The following overview captures key reference points that characterise USAMV of Bucharest's current international visibility infrastructure. These figures are drawn from institutional sources and the Valencia presentation; they are provided not as benchmarks to replicate, but as an illustration of how a coherent multi-channel strategy accumulates over time.

Indicator	Current Status
International partnerships	240+ international partnerships, according to USAMV of Bucharest's institutional website (usamv.ro)
BIPs as visibility instrument	19 BIPs across the 2024–2026 period, spanning 7 faculties — each edition brings international students from multiple countries to campus
International association memberships	Confirmed institutional affiliations include CASEE/ICA, EAEVE, AUF, EUFRIN, and EUA, alongside other networks referenced in the Valencia presentation

Flagship conferences	2 per year: Agriculture 4 Life (researchers/professors) and One Health Students Conference (students/young researchers)
International exhibition participation	APAIE, NAFSA, EAIE, and EURIE — under the Study in Romania / CNR national pavilion
Government scholarship participation	USAMV is a participating institution in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs scholarship programme

8.4 Practical Group Work: Building a Visibility Action Plan

The practical task for this topic asks each Moldovan university to develop a 12-month visibility action plan grounded in its existing assets and realistic capacity. The plan should not be a list of aspirations. It should be a sequence of specific, assignable, and measurable actions that can be initiated with current or near-term resources.

Each group should first complete a brief institutional audit using the diagnostic matrix below:

Audit Dimension	Questions to Answer Before Planning
Academic strengths	In which two or three disciplines does your institution have internationally communicable expertise? Is this expertise documented in English — on the website, in publications, in conference presentations?
Existing visibility instruments	Do you have any recurring events (conferences, seminars, fairs)? Do you participate in any national or international platforms? Are you a member of disciplinary networks that hold regular events?
Student recruitment infrastructure	Is your institution's website functional and readable for a prospective student from outside Moldova? Are programme information, admission requirements, and fees available in English?
Digital presence	Is there a named person responsible for the institutional website's international pages? When was the content last updated? Does social media activity currently support any recruitment objective?

National coordination	Is your institution actively engaged with the Moldovan Rectors' Council for international promotion purposes? Has your institution participated in any joint Moldovan promotion activity at an international event?

Based on this audit, define priority actions using the format of the following strategic targets:

Priority Action	Pillar	Responsible Person	Success Indicator (12 Months)
e.g. Register for EAIE or EURIE under a coordinated Moldovan HEI delegation	Recruitment	IRO Director	Confirmed participation and booth allocated
e.g. Organise first edition of a discipline-specific symposium open to international participants	Reputation	Vice-Rector Research + Faculty Dean	Event held, proceedings published, 3 or more international participants
e.g. Update English programme pages for two priority programmes, including fees and application process	Recruitment	IRO + Faculty web coordinator	Two pages live, reviewed, and linked from national platform
e.g. Engage Rectors' Council to explore joint exhibition participation at APAIE, NAFSA, or EURIE 2026–27	Recruitment	Rector + IRO Director	Agenda item confirmed at Council meeting; joint participation proposal drafted

9. Internationalisation at Home & Scholarship Infrastructures

9.1 Defining Internationalisation at Home (IaH)

Internationalisation at Home (IaH) refers to the experiences that students, staff, and researchers can develop through interactions between local and international people on campus, without requiring physical mobility abroad. This concept is directly relevant to several of the mechanisms already described in this section, because the value of bringing international students and researchers onto a campus extends well beyond the individuals who travel: it creates a continuous opportunity for local students and staff to engage with international peers, perspectives, and academic practice.

There is also a direct connection between the reputation pillar and the Internationalisation at Home dimension described above. Incoming BIP students and visiting researchers who participate in USAMV's scientific events, or who later return as conference presenters, are doing so because the institution's academic credibility justified the visit, and their presence on campus during these events generates further interaction opportunities for local students and staff.

Incoming BIP participants. Each Blended Intensive Programme hosted by USAMV brings students from multiple partner countries to campus for the duration of the physical component. Treating incoming BIPs as an IaH opportunity means deliberately building points of contact between BIP participants and the wider local student body: a shared seminar, a joint social event, or simply ensuring that BIP sessions are not held in spaces sealed off from the rest of campus life.

Flagship conference participants. Agriculture 4 Life and the One Health Students Conference each bring international academics, professionals, and, in the case of One Health, students to the USAMV campus for a concentrated period. Conference attendance is, by default, a relatively closed experience: visiting participants interact mainly with each other and with the organising team. An IaH-conscious approach to these events looks for ways to extend contact beyond the conference programme itself — for example, by involving local students as session volunteers or rapporteurs, rather than only as an audience.

OIF and Francophone events. Events such as the Je parle français Hackathon, co-organised by USAMV as host institution, bring an international and diplomatic audience to campus for a defined event. A hackathon in particular is built around participant interaction by design. The IaH value of these events lies in ensuring that participation is not limited to students already engaged with Francophone networks, but is actively opened to the wider student body as audience, volunteers, or co-participants.

The distinction between an institution that merely hosts international visitors and one that practises Internationalisation at Home is the presence of deliberate structure. Incidental contact — a BIP student passing a local student in a corridor — happens on its own and produces limited educational value. Structured interaction requires a specific design decision: a joint activity, a shared task, or a setting in which local and international participants are placed together with a reason to interact.

Two design principles are transferable regardless of an institution's specific channels. First, structured interaction works best when it has a task, not only a social purpose: a joint seminar or a shared exercise gives participants a reason to engage beyond politeness. Second, local participants need a defined role, not just an invitation: volunteering, co-presenting, or facilitating gives local students something to do, rather than asking them to engage with international visitors as passive observers. The cost of structuring interaction this way is almost always lower than the cost of the underlying mobility channel itself — a one-hour joint session added to an existing BIP or conference programme requires planning, not new funding.

9.2 Government Scholarship Platforms & Asymmetries

Government scholarship programmes are one of the channels that feed this dynamic. Romania operates a national government scholarship programme through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, managed via an online platform and open to citizens of non-EU countries. The programme covers bachelor, master, and doctoral studies at accredited Romanian institutions, and includes tuition, a monthly stipend, and accommodation support.

USAMV of Bucharest participates in this programme and has received scholars through it across multiple cycles. Beyond its function as a recruitment mechanism, each scholarship holder who studies on the USAMV campus also becomes part of the institution's Internationalisation at Home environment: their presence in classrooms, laboratories, and student life creates structured and informal opportunities for interaction that benefit the wider student and academic community, not only the scholarship holder.

Moldova does not currently operate an equivalent centralised national scholarship programme for incoming international students. The studyinmd.mec.gov.md platform, launched in 2026, represents a first step towards a national promotional infrastructure, but the scholarship component remains limited to individual university initiatives. This asymmetry is relevant for Moldovan HEIs because it means that the burden of demonstrating financial accessibility to prospective international students falls more heavily on institutions themselves, in the absence of a national funding mechanism to support it.

9.3 Strategic Alignment for Moldovan Institutions

For Moldovan HEIs, a realistic short-term approach is to identify and publicise existing mechanisms (university-level grants, Erasmus+ inclusion support, bilateral cooperation scholarship agreements) and to communicate them clearly and accessibly on programme pages.

The medium-term priority is to engage with national authorities to advocate for the development of a structured national scholarship scheme. At the same time, Moldovan HEIs should consider every existing incoming mobility channel (BIPs, Erasmus+ exchange students, visiting researchers, conference participants) as an Internationalisation at Home opportunity in its own right, and plan accordingly for structured interaction between local and international participants, rather than treating their presence on campus as a purely administrative matter.

- **9.4 Practical Group Work: Mapping Internationalisation at Home Opportunities**

The group work for this topic asks each Moldovan university to identify its own existing incoming international channels — however small — and to design one structured interaction opportunity around the channel with the most immediate potential.

Audit dimension	Questions to answer
Existing incoming channels	Does your institution currently host any incoming Erasmus+ students, visiting researchers, conference participants, even occasionally? How many, and how often?
Current level of interaction	Are these international visitors currently in structured contact with local students, or do they remain largely separate from the wider student body during their stay?
Lowest-cost opportunity	Among your existing channels, which one would be easiest to extend into a structured local-international interaction with minimal additional resources?
Local participant role	What specific role could local students or staff play in this interaction (co-presenting, volunteering, facilitating, mentoring) rather than simply observing?

Based on this audit, each group should design one concrete structured interaction activity, built around the channel identified as having the lowest-cost, highest-potential opportunity.

Element	Description	Expected output
Target channel	Which existing incoming mobility or event channel will this activity be attached to?	Name of the channel and why it was selected
Activity design	What is the specific task or format that will bring local and international participants together?	One-paragraph description of the activity
Local participant role	What will local students or staff specifically do during this activity?	Defined role and responsibilities
Success indicator	How will the institution know whether this structured interaction achieved its purpose?	One or two simple indicators

10. Francophone Academic Networks as a Strategic Driver

This section addresses the Francophone dimension of internationalisation as a strategic asset for institutions in Romania and Moldova. It is not an introduction to what Francophonie is — the Moldovan partner universities are already well acquainted with OIF membership and AUF affiliation. The training purpose is more specific: to demonstrate what active, results-oriented engagement with Francophone networks looks like in practice, and to identify the institutional decisions and actions that separate productive membership from nominal affiliation. USAMV of Bucharest's experience across AUF, OIF, GADIF, Chaires Senghor, and the Centre de Réussite Universitaire provides the reference model throughout.

10.1 The Question is Not Whether to Engage — It is How

Both Romania and Moldova are full members of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. Several Moldovan higher education institutions are already AUF members. The Francophone infrastructure is not absent — it is underactivated. The core challenge, as USAMV of Bucharest identified it at the Valencia training session, is precisely this: how do institutions move from formal membership to active, structured, results-oriented cooperation?

The answer requires a realistic assessment of what Francophone networks offer that Erasmus+ does not. Erasmus+ operates primarily within the European Higher Education Area and connects European institutions. Francophone networks extend into Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and the Caribbean, regions where the shared linguistic and academic culture of Francophonie creates a natural basis for cooperation that has no equivalent in the Erasmus+ framework. For Moldovan HEIs, this complementarity is strategically significant: it opens access to a large and growing global academic community that is both reachable and receptive, without competing with or replacing Erasmus+ cooperation.

A second point that USAMV of Bucharest's experience makes explicit: Francophone cooperation does not require French-language programmes across all faculties. A dedicated IRO function, an institutional mandate, and the willingness to invest modest resources in network engagement are sufficient to activate the full range of Francophone cooperation instruments, regardless of whether the institution's academic programmes are delivered in French.

10.2 The Network Portfolio: Roles and Mechanisms

- Agence universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF): AUF is the world's largest university network, grouping over 1,000 higher education and research institutions in more than 120 countries. AUF is also a confirmed institutional affiliation listed on USAMV of Bucharest's official website. For USAMV of Bucharest, AUF membership provides access to co-funding calls for mobility and joint research, to collaborative event organisation, and to a communication infrastructure that amplifies institutional visibility within the Francophone academic world. The AUF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, based in Bucharest since 1994, is the operational contact point for Romanian and Moldovan institutions. The key lesson from USAMV's experience is direct: AUF membership alone generates only limited outcomes. It is the deliberate, sustained use of network mechanisms — responding to calls, participating in events, proposing joint activities — that produces concrete partnerships. The minimum institutional investment required is assigning one IRO staff member to monitor AUF calls and maintain the relationship with the regional office.
- Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF): OIF operates at the intergovernmental level and is primarily relevant for higher education institutions through its educational programmes and student engagement initiatives. The Je parle français Hackathon, co-organised by USAMV of Bucharest as host institution in 2025, with a renewed partnership for 2026, illustrates the visibility logic of OIF engagement: a competitive event open to students from OIF member countries, hosted on campus, creates a cohort of participants who experience the institution directly, discover its academic offer, and become informal ambassadors in their home countries. This is a cost-effective reputation-building mechanism that Moldovan HEIs are equally eligible to activate.
- GADIF — Groupe des Ambassades, Délégations et Institutions Francophones de Roumanie: GADIF is a Romania-specific network connecting Francophone diplomatic representations and academic and cultural institutions. For USAMV of Bucharest, GADIF serves as a diplomatic-academic connector: it facilitates contact with Francophone university delegations visiting Romania, enables co-organisation of events with diplomatic backing, and has generated new inter-institutional agreements with African and Mediterranean universities. USAMV has hosted the annual GADIF Francophonie Gala for two consecutive years — an activity that creates both internal institutional cohesion and external visibility to the Francophone diplomatic and academic community in Romania. Moldovan institutions have equivalent access to OIF regional representations and Francophone diplomatic groupings, which can serve an analogous function as partnership facilitators.
- Chaires Senghor de la Francophonie: The Chaires Senghor programme establishes Francophone academic chairs at member institutions, supporting teaching and research in French and promoting cooperation with African Francophone universities. For institutions with disciplinary strengths in agriculture, food security, environmental sciences, or public health, all areas of strong demand in West and Central Africa, a Chaires Senghor affiliation provides a direct and formalised mechanism for academic engagement with African partner institutions.
- Eugen Ionescu Scholarship Programme: The Eugen Ionescu programme is co-managed by AUF and the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Between 2023 and 2025, USAMV of Bucharest hosted 15 Eugen Ionescu researchers per cycle under a co-investment model: 5 places co-funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and AUF, complemented by 10 additional self-funded places financed from the university's own resources. In 2026, due to government austerity measures and the resulting budgetary constraints, the university was no longer able to fund the 10 self-financed places, and the programme's scale at USAMV has been affected accordingly. The majority of beneficiaries across the

programme's cycles have come from sub-Saharan African countries. While the co-investment model demonstrated, during the period it was sustained, that modest institutional supplementation can significantly increase attractiveness within AUF's Francophone network, USAMV's recent experience also illustrates that such co-funded schemes remain exposed to changes in national budgetary conditions, and that institutions building similar models should plan for this exposure.

  - The lasting effect of the scholarship programme: Beyond the funding mechanism itself, the Eugen Ionescu programme has produced a durable institutional asset: its beneficiaries become ambassadors of the university in their home countries and institutions. Former scholars continue to collaborate with USAMV's academic and research staff, co-author scientific publications, and maintain long-term professional relationships well beyond the end of their funded stay. Many return to participate in conferences, academic events, and other university activities, extending the institution's visibility and credibility within their own academic networks long after their scholarship has ended. This effect is independent of the funding scale in any given year: even where budgetary constraints reduce the number of new places, the network of former beneficiaries continues to generate value for the institution.

- Centre de Réussite Universitaire (CRU): Established within the AUF framework on the USAMV of Bucharest campus, the CRU functions as a Francophone academic community hub. It operates in collaboration with the IRO, supports Francophone academic activities and events, and provides a physical institutional signal of commitment to Francophone cooperation. Its presence enables all faculties to engage with Francophone activities, not only those with French-language programmes.

10.3 From Membership to Active Engagement: The Institutional Conditions

USAMV of Bucharest's experience across all six Francophone network components points to a consistent set of institutional conditions that determine whether membership produces outcomes.

1. Named ownership: A dedicated function within the IRO (even a part-time role) responsible for monitoring AUF and OIF calls, maintaining relationships with GADIF and other Francophone structures, and coordinating the Eugen Ionescu application process. Without a named owner, Francophone engagement remains reactive: the institution responds to what comes to it, rather than proactively using the network mechanisms available.
2. Integration into the international calendar: AUF calls, GADIF events, and OIF activities should appear in the IRO's annual planning calendar alongside Erasmus+ deadlines, exhibition registrations, and BIP delivery cycles. When Francophone activities are treated as a separate track, they are consistently deprioritised in favour of Erasmus+ processes, which are better known, more regularly monitored, and subject to external deadlines. Integration normalises Francophone engagement as part of standard IRO operations.
3. Co-organisation over attendance: Hosting a GADIF event, co-organising a Je parle français hackathon, or contributing a speaker to an AUF conference positions the institution as an active contributor rather than a passive beneficiary. Co-organisation generates significantly greater visibility within the network than attendance and creates recurring opportunities for relationship-building with network members and partner institutions.
4. Co-investment in scholarship mechanisms, planned with budgetary realism: Supplementing existing co-funded programmes with institutional resources, as USAMV of Bucharest did with the Eugen Ionescu programme between 2023 and 2025, signals commitment, increases attractiveness, and produces lasting research relationships of the kind described above. At the same time, USAMV's 2026 experience shows that self-

funded components of such schemes can be vulnerable to national budgetary conditions outside the institution's control. Institutions considering a similar co-investment approach should plan for this risk from the outset, for example by clarifying internally whether the self-funded component is a multi-year commitment or a year-by-year decision subject to budget availability.

10.4 Operationalizing the Topic: Asset Mapping and Activation Priorities

The group work for this topic asks each Moldovan university to audit its existing Francophone assets and to identify two or three concrete activation actions. The exercise is grounded in what already exists at each institution, in network memberships, language capacities, existing partnerships, and prior engagement with AUF or OIF, rather than in aspirational statements about future capacity.

First, complete the institutional audit checklist:

Asset Category	Questions to Answer
AUF membership status	Is your institution an AUF member? When was the last contact with the AUF regional office in Bucharest? Has your institution responded to an AUF call in the past three years?
Language and academic capacity	How many academic staff members can teach or supervise research in French? Are any programmes or modules offered in French? Is French used in any active research partnerships?
Existing Francophone partnerships	Do you have active cooperation agreements with universities in Francophone countries? Are any of these currently generating mobility, joint research, or joint events?
Student and alumni networks	Do you have students from Francophone countries currently enrolled? Do alumni from your institution work or study in Francophone countries and maintain contact with the institution?
Institutional commitment	Is Francophone engagement mentioned in your institution's internationalisation strategy or annual plan? Is a budget currently allocated to it? Is there a named person responsible? Has this budget been confirmed as multi-year or subject to annual review?

Based on the findings, select activation targets within the 12-month roadmap format:

Activation Action	Responsible Person	Expected Outcome
Contact AUF regional office (Bucharest) to confirm membership status, request current call calendar, and schedule a working meeting	IRO Director	AUF relationship reactivated; call calendar integrated into IRO annual planning
Identify one academic staff member willing to contribute a session to a future BIP or AUF-funded event in French; brief them on available mechanisms	IRO Francophone coordinator	One faculty-level champion identified; first Francophone academic activity planned
Propose to institutional leadership the co-organisation of a Je parle français OIF event on campus in the next academic year	IRO + Vice-Rector for International Relations	Leadership buy-in secured; OIF regional office contacted; event in planning
Review existing cooperation agreements with Francophone universities; identify two or three dormant agreements; initiate reactivation contact	IRO + relevant faculty coordinator	At least one agreement reactivated; joint activity agreed for next academic year
Explore eligibility for the Eugen Ionescu programme or an equivalent AUF mobility instrument; confirm with finance whether any self-funded component is sustainable on a multi-year basis before committing	IRO Director + Finance	Eligibility confirmed; realistic and budget-resilient cost model prepared; proposal submitted to leadership

The central lesson is the same for Francophonie as for the other topics in this section. The infrastructure for strategic Francophone engagement is already in place for Moldovan HEIs. Moldova's OIF membership, the existing AUF affiliations of several universities, and the direct cooperation channel with Romanian institutions through the CNR and the IRO4ALL project itself all provide a foundation that requires activation, not construction. What makes the difference between nominal and productive membership is a named institutional owner, a place in the annual planning calendar, and a willingness to invest modestly and consistently, with realistic awareness that budgetary conditions can change, in mechanisms that are already available.