

goal of building a European Education Area¹ and explain the policy objectives you intend to pursue).

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

The international vocation is a unique feature of the Scuola Normale Superiore, that has been connected since its foundation with the tradition of the French Grandes Ecoles. Being an institution equally oriented towards teaching and research, the Scuola Normale deems international cooperation of vital importance, and over the years has developed a network of partners from all over the world. Partnerships are usually built starting from the contact of teaching or research staff, and then nurtured by the Internationalisation Office, that turns them into agreements for student and staff mobility or research projects. In addition to Europe, where France, Germany, Spain, the UK, and Switzerland are given a significant priority, bilateral agreements are also frequently signed with other universities and research institutions mainly located in the USA, Brazil, Russia, and Japan. However, international partnerships are not decided on a geographical basis; they depend instead on high quality standards and on the common interests shared with our institution. The Scuola Normale wishes to maintain the relationships with the current network of partners and establish new contacts (that in many cases have already been selected) under the new Erasmus+ programme, while maintaining, and possibly increasing, independently-funded exchange positions with European, North-American and Japanese institutions.

Outgoing mobility is mainly targeted at the work dedicated to research for writing the final thesis, and for this reason it mainly involves PhD students: this is also due to the double academic career of our Bachelor and Master students who are enrolled both at the Scuola Normale and at the University of Pisa, and can choose with which institution to activate a mobility. However, the number of applications from undergraduate and graduate students, especially for traineeships abroad, is constantly growing, and one of our goals for the future is to be able to involve more students at Bachelor and Master level. Inter-institutional agreements constitute a fundamental tool for supporting the quality of teaching at the Scuola Normale by offering our students the access to high-level courses in international institutions that can complement their curriculum and offer a different perspective. Great success has been registered by Erasmus+ traineeships, activated both under the Erasmus+ Traineeship programme and under the Mobility Consortium in partnership with Scuola Sant'Anna and IMT Lucca. This instrument is very appreciated by students, who use it as a chance to establish contacts in the world of research and work, and it constitute a crucial part of the internationalisation strategy of our institution and one that we wish to maintain and improve.

Doctoral work at the Scuola is often carried out under the co-supervision of international teaching staff and, in some cases, special agreements are signed with European universities for the issuing of a double PhD title (e.g.: the cotutelle programme). About 10% of the SNS PhD students are involved in this kind of bi-national cooperation, which, up until now, has always consisted of individual agreements. Under the new programme, we hope to develop some of the current programmes of joint seminars dedicated to PhD students, in order to raise the number of PhD candidates receiving a double degree.

Staff mobility is also extremely valued, and the interest of administrative staff in Erasmus+ mobility is rapidly growing, resulting in a lack of funding for all the requests we receive, while teaching staff still prefer to move independently. We would like to improve this trend and be able to encourage both teaching and administrative staff to participate in the programme and visit as many partners as possible, in order to internationalise and modernise their skills, and to share our good practices.

The Scuola Normale earned a very positive evaluation for its internationalisation strategy in comparison to the national benchmark set by the Italian ministry, and in the last years the number of incoming international students has increased. The Erasmus+ programme strongly contributed to this important goal, enhancing the quality of the offer in our institution and contributing to its modernisation. A recent survey within our community showed that the number of international students present over the academic year at our university (also including exchange students) represents more than the 20% of the total number of students. We wish to facilitate the inclusion of exchange students within the community by organising virtual meetings of candidates before the start of the mobility. Thanks to a new agreement with our neighbour institution, the University of Pisa, incoming students will now have a wider choice of courses to follow, thus helping Bachelor and Master students to easily reach their goals in terms of credits needed for mobility.

Over the next years, the Scuola Normale intends to furtherly increase its level of internationalisation with the help of the Erasmus+ programme: we are currently part of a network who submitted an application under the European Universities action, which we hope to be able to develop at a deeper level in the future. Our goal is to open new scenarios for both the academic and professional careers of our students, linking them to the world of applied research and industry, and allowing them to enrich their cultural background with fundamental skills for the research area (soft skills, career development, fundraising and management, intellectual property management, entrepreneurship, engineering skills for Digital Humanities and the valorisation and preservation of Cultural Heritage). With this project,

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

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we hope to be able to directly contribute to the formation of an European Education Area, where there are no barriers for the full recognition of titles and study programmes, and where the concept of European citizenship is widely spread thanks to the action of universities. We aspire to give our contribution to society at large by tackling some of the most pressing challenges of modern days. Moreover, the network is aimed at connecting in a more efficient way its educational and research assets, in order to broaden future career opportunities for students and researchers, even outside academia.

The Scuola Normale intends to strengthen some of its historical collaboration by transforming them into strategic partnerships aimed at developing innovative research projects and at sharing knowledge and skills. We already have some ongoing discussions and we hope to be able to develop them under the new programme.

The participation in the Erasmus+ programme also allows the Scuola Normale to pursue its original vocation in the formation of teachers: our institution is part of a strategic partnership that recently launched the SEMPER project, dedicated to innovation in school education, with particular attention to STEM subjects. We are very dedicated to this particular action and it is something we wish to keep working on in the following years.

In conclusion, the Erasmus+ programme offers fundamental opportunities both for improvements in the quality of teaching, research and work in our institution, and for helping us spread our results and contribute to society at large. The different actions of the programme are essential tools for implementing our internationalisation strategy and both incoming and outgoing students and staff strongly benefit from it.

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

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The Scuola Normale intends to continue its activities under Key Action 1 "Learning Mobility". The number of student mobilities in the last years has been very encouraging and ever growing: our students are particularly interested in exchanges for traineeship, which we wish to keep offering in order to increment their contacts and their experience with the job market in Europe in a critical phase of their education. Thanks to a new agreement with our neighbour institution, the University of Pisa, we also hope to increase the number of mobilities for study, that up until now have not been in high demand due to the double status of our Bachelor and Master students, who are enrolled at the same time at the University of Pisa and at the Scuola Normale and could experience difficulties in having recognised the activities performed during an exchange activated through our institution on both careers. The new agreement should solve this issue, since our students will now be able to insert in the Learning Agreement teachings to be validated on their curriculum at the University of Pisa, thus allowing mobility for credits without any risks for their double academic career. The agreement will also favour incoming mobilities, since international students will now have the chance to follow courses both at the Scuola Normale and at the University of Pisa, thus having a huge choice of courses that should suit the needs of all. Incoming mobility plays a big role in the internationalisation strategy of the Scuola Normale and we wish to start planning virtual meetings during the nomination season from home universities, so that potential candidates and nominated students can actually get to know the Scuola even before their arrival, and can get in contact with our administrative staff and students, thus strengthening personal relations and creating a feeling of belonging to our community. International students will keep being offered Italian courses and both outgoing and incoming trainees will follow a mandatory course on safety procedures in a work environment. The Scuola also wishes to encourage its staff to participate in outgoing mobility. Administrative staff can ask for the official approval of the activity and have it recognised as formation: we are having a good response and the demand has been increasing so much that we did not have the funding to accept all the requests. We wish to keep encouraging this trend. Teaching staff mobility is quite different: while we have been signing more and more agreements specific for this kind of exchange and we have been accepting an increasing number of incoming educators, our teaching staff still prefers to move independently. We hope that the new agreements we intend to sign with historical partners will encourage our teachers and researchers to use this instrument.

Under the new Erasmus+ programme, the Scuola intends to also participate in the Key Action 2 "Cooperation among organisations and institutions". In particular, our institution is currently part of a network that submitted an application to the European Universities action. We wish to continue the work started with our partners and we are strongly committed to strengthen the relations with them and start working on the project. The announced upcoming interaction between the Erasmus and the Horizon Programmes under the framework of the European Universities action seems to offer additional scenarios of cooperation, allowing our institution to plan an important project related to the attraction and training of new generations of future European researchers from all around the world.

In the meantime, the Scuola Normale also intends to establish new partnerships both by building on historical collaborations and by creating new ones with selected institutions sharing our same research interests. We thus hope to start new Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices, through which we intend to organise both joint programmes of seminars and joint research programmes. The several existing collaborations between our Doctoral courses and those offered by our partner institutions in France in terms of PhD students' education and research encourages us to establish new partnerships under the Key Action 2 of the Erasmus Programme.