



## Internationalization Strategy

### Introduction

The Mediterranean University of Albania (MUA) is one of the best universities operating in the higher education market in Albania. Therefore, it aims to expand its international dimension by creating an internationalization strategy. This strategy aims at cooperation and construction of bridges with other counterpart institutions of the countries of the region, the EU and worldwide.

Mediterranean University has managed to have more partners worldwide. With these partners, the university enters into a number of collaborations in the field of research and teaching. This university attributes great importance to internationalization and its strategies, which is presented in detail below. The internationalization of MUA helps to increase the visibility of MUA in university environments and beyond, by engaging in a greater number of collaborations and partnerships with foreign universities and international research institutes.

Mediterranean University pays great importance to international exchange in teaching and research, as well as supports cooperation with universities and other partners around the world. Meanwhile, modern science and humanities have an international goal, which includes not only global dissemination, discussion of research findings, and the inclusion of international publications, but also the international exchange of students and professors, in order to have the widest international cooperation. International orientation includes all aspects of university life such as: research, teaching and administration.

In this context, in 2018, the Board of Administration voted unanimously the international strategy which is articulated in three priorities:

**Scientific priorities:** Research development is one of the basic objectives of MUA strategic plan. MUA is committed to undertaking research at the regional and global level in cooperation with other institutions. The priorities of this research are oriented in development projects in four strategic poles of MUA: economics, law, social sciences (psychology, international relations, public administration) and information engineering.

The implementation of these projects requires internationally finding strategic partners and their implementation in major international programs such as Horizon 2020, FEDER, Erasmus + (KA1 and KA2), etc. MUA is committed to undertaking and supporting a wide and diverse range of international research activities and this is closely linked to the engagement of MUA members in international academic networks, co-publications with international colleagues and their ability to publish studies in the most prestigious international journals.





**Operational priorities are:** Promoting international mobility in and out of all students and professors, researchers and staff that aims to increase student attractiveness at the bachelor and master level, a balance of student movement in the interest of those who come to us , setting up a summer and winter campus etc; development of international partnerships in research, teaching, training and administration (co-management of diplomas and theses at the International Master level); stimulation in the realization of internships and staying also in these countries thanks to the European program Erasmus + (KA1 and KA2). Also, MUA aims to establish an active policy of international communication (multilingual); assistance in improving the organization, training and research capacities of partner universities, especially those in the region (Macedonia, Kosovo, Croatia, Greece, Serbia, etc.) by gaining expertise in training programs that are open in distance as well.

The purpose of these operations is also the international recognition of the diploma that the student receives while studying at our university. Achieving this objective is also related to the quality of teaching, the level of academic staff, the level of students, study conditions (academic staff / student relations, area / student, etc.). The gradual fulfillment of these conditions offers the realization of the most important strategic objective in the degree of internationalization of MUA.

**Geographical priorities** are based on sustainable partners, but today they are not the only criteria for the development of university and scientific collaborations. In fact, our stable partners are the institutions with the Balkan and Mediterranean region. Cooperations with Central and Northern European countries or even English-speaking ones such as England and North America should be further developed thanks to previous existing collaborations.

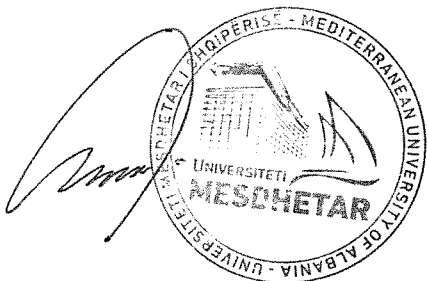
### **Internationalization plan**

The internationalization plan will serve as a guide for international actors to MUA. It is conceived taking into account:

- Suggestions and shortcomings that have been identified since the last institutional accreditation.
- Strategy for internationalization formulated by the Rectorate of MUA.
- The results of exchanges within the experiences of the academic staff of MUA.

### **Overall Objectives of the Internationalization Strategy**

Mediterranean University aims to increase public attention internationally through "internationalization", and, at the same time, to strengthen international orientation within the





institution through Internationalization@Home. The purpose of "internationalization" emphasizes the international position and reputation of the university with regard to high-profile research and teaching, research cooperations and the education of future scholars, specialists and managers.

"Internationalization@Home" is aimed at Mediterranean University itself as a place of cultural encounters and cooperation in research and teaching. The university has set its sights on creating an open culture for its international members and guests. Moreover, the university strives to convey an intercultural world view to all our members. To this end, the university takes account of its general objective to be a cosmopolitan place that shapes the concept of integration and educates students for an increasingly international labor market to become responsible leaders in business, politics, society and academia.

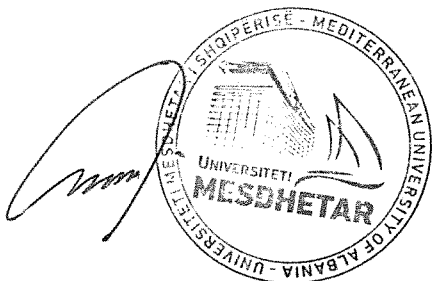
The aim of MUA is to increase exchange opportunities in Europe and beyond by increasing the number of students who take advantage of opportunities to study abroad as part of their studies at MUA. To increase the level of participation and to support students in their international activities, MUA is committed to developing partnerships on a regional and global level. Our approach to partnership is collaboration with partners and interest groups with whom we share common goals and interests.

In order to meet these overall objectives, the Mediterranean University of Albania has set a number of long-term strategic goals.

### **Strategic Goals**

The strategic goals defined in this section do not only reflect existing goals and measures but also new initiatives and activities to achieve thorough internationalization.

- 1) Encouraging and supporting international mobilities for students, faculty and researchers
- 2) Promoting and supporting international research cooperations and research activities on an international level;
- 3) Creating and expanding an "International (bilingual) Campus";
- 4) Fostering student success and degree completion among international students and doctoral candidates;
- 5) Extending intercultural awareness within the university management.





## Measures to Achieve the Strategic Goals

### **Goal I: Encouraging and Supporting International Mobilities for Students, Faculty and Researchers**

Promoting the international exchange of students and teachers is essential in preparing students for an international labor market and in conveying a cosmopolitan world view to all members of the university. On the one hand, the university needs to build an open culture for international members and guests of the university. On the other hand, it needs to reinforce the existing relationships and infrastructure at home and abroad to foster international exchange.

The concrete measures for promoting exchanges for students and teachers are the following:

1. Providing a comprehensive support and advice system for international students and scholars. This comprises the existing service structures in the International Office and at the schools and departments, providing attractive and interesting courses in English and a reasonable amount of accommodation, offering Albanian classes and promoting the expansion of the existing (Coaching Program).
2. Making sure that all of the university's students and academic staff members who plan to study or teach abroad receive top-level advice in academic and non-academic matters (e.g. regarding the recognition of coursework and examinations completed abroad).
3. Selecting partner universities abroad according to quality standards that, firstly, are determined by the university itself (e.g. international reputation, accreditations, guaranteed recognition of coursework and examinations) and secondly, are determined by the International Office (e.g. cooperation and corresponding support for outgoing students).
4. Implementing optional or obligatory mobility periods in the programs of study.
5. Establishing new, and expanding existing international degree programs (e.g. joint degrees, double degrees) in the schools.
6. Establishing new English-taught (master's) programs
7. Creating new and expanding existing short-term programs such as international summer schools.

### **Goal II: Measures to Promote and Expand International Research Cooperations and Research Activities on an International Level**

The Mediterranean University of Albania aspires to become more visible in the international research community. Therefore, the university wants to draw on its excellent reputation as a research institution to increase the number of international research cooperations in order to further expand its leading position in research at an international level and making sure these developments are sustainable.





International research cooperations and research activities on an international level are being promoted by way of the following concrete measures:

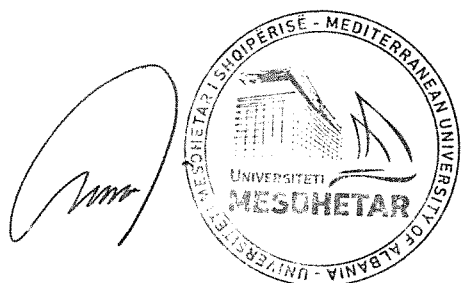
1. Supporting the establishment and expansion of international research cooperations and research projects with an international scope
2. Increasing the number of internationally renowned collaborative research projects and individual fellowships, such as from the European Research Council (ERC), Horizon 2020, and IPA Trilateral Program.
3. Intensive advising and proactive encouragement for researchers who want to apply for research programs and awards with an international orientation
4. Encouraging researchers to take up positions in international research organizations or to take up editorship or membership on editorial boards of top-level international journals and publications.
5. Recruiting researchers of all career levels worldwide, and supporting them in the relocation process, such as in the search for suitable accommodation and dual career options.
6. Inviting and mentoring international (visiting) scholars and promoting long-term research cooperations, amongst other things, by means of the alumni program for international guests.
7. Supporting international (visiting) scholars and their families by providing consulting services during their stay in Tirana.
8. Expanding the doctoral programs with an international orientation.
9. Supporting the organization of international academic conferences.
10. Encouraging young researchers to attend summer schools abroad.

### **Goal III: Measures to Establish and Expand an "International (Bilingual) Campus"**

Thanks to the successful and extensive internationalization efforts of the University, the number of international students, professors and researchers increases continuously. A number of new challenges arise with this very positive development. It is necessary to close the linguistic and cultural gaps that have emerged as a result of the growing group of international members of the university.

It is the university's goal to create an international campus that allows international students, researchers and staff members, and guests of the university to work, research and teach in Tirana regardless of their level of Albanian language skills. At the same time, the international campus is a competitive advantage for the Mediterranean University of Albania. To accomplish this, the university promotes bilingualism in all areas focusing on providing essential information in English and insertion of English as an international research language on campus.

The concrete measures to systematically promote English as a second lingua franca on campus are the following:



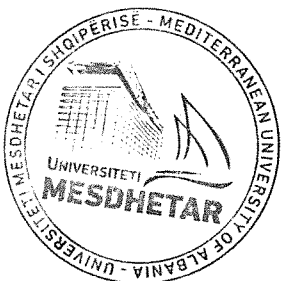
- Establishing and continuously expanding a "Corporate Language" in English for the university in order to harmonize and standardize the use of higher education related English terminology within the University of Mannheim
- Promotion of the use of the English language in administrative processes
- Increasing the number of multilingual courses and programs of study, particularly those with English as a language of instruction.

#### **Goal IV: Measures to Foster Student Success and Degree Completion Among International Students**

As an institution that strives to have an international campus and aims to offer equal opportunities to all members regardless of their personal background to foster their individual development, the Mediterranean University of Albania feels obliged to take responsibility for offering all students the best possible conditions for studying. In general, international doctoral candidates and students pursuing their degree in Albania, have a demonstrably lower success rate in terms of completing their degrees than their Albanian peers. Therefore, consulting services and support for international students and also doctoral candidates, and their integration in university processes are important fields of activity for the University.

In order to increase the success rates among international students and doctoral candidates, the Mediterranean University wants to improve the integration measures and the support and advice program with a special focus on this group. In practice, the success rates are to be increased by the following measures:

1. Intensifying the support program for international degree-seeking students and doctoral candidates for the entire duration of their respective degree programs. Support and advice will be offered through the university administration and through the respective departments and schools.
2. Expanding the support and advice program by means of integrative measures such as coaching and mentoring programs, and the closer cooperation with academic staff members in these programs.
3. Offering a sufficient number of Albanian language courses for international degree-seeking students and thereby supporting their integration in the Albanian society and increasing the chances to place international academics on the Albanian labor market.
4. Providing additional services such as intercultural training, job interview training, and special tutoring sessions at the respective departments.
5. Establishing and supervising an internal monitoring system that documents the success of international students and doctoral candidates regarding their degree completion.



**Goal V: Measures to Increase Intercultural Awareness within the University Management**

Along with the internationalization of research and teaching, all areas of the university management need to establish an infrastructure that is able cope with the demands of a campus that is becoming more and more international. Next to implementing English as a second lingua franca in campus management and administration, it is crucial to raise intercultural awareness among all members of the administrative staff who face a variety of international students and staff with a number of very different needs in their daily work. An Internationalization Strategy can only be implemented sustainably and successfully if it is backed up by a well-positioned, open-minded university administration.

Intercultural awareness within the university management is increased by the following measures:

- Providing opportunities for further education, such as language courses, intercultural awareness training and country-specific training.
- Encouraging and partial funding of mobility periods and further education abroad, such as Erasmus Staff Weeks.
- Systematic networking with partner universities and exchange of staff members of the university management according to their respective fields such as admissions, room management, academic advising and support, dual career, research support and infrastructure.

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