**UNIVERSITY “ISMAIL QEMALI” VLORA**

**Internationalization strategy**

**2022 - 2027**



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# ***Legal Basis***

* Law 80/2015 on Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania
* National Education Strategy 2021-2026
* Statute of University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora
* Regulations of University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora
* The strategic plan of University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora

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# ***MISSION***

 University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora, as an autonomous public institution of higher education, develops academic education services, scientific and research activities, support and professional counseling for students and researchers as well as other areas of interest. We intend to create and support a university in the service of the highest human values, promoter of developments in the territory, with quality and integrated services not only in the region of Vlora, but in the whole of Albania. We aim to form and prepare promising students, quality professionals in accordance with the trend of the labor market, professionals and scientists at the service of dynamic developments not only in the national context but also in the European one and beyond, overcoming every barrier related to their social, economic or cultural background.

The role and mission of the University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora is based on the main pillars that line:

1. **TEACHING AND STUDY.** To be an active institution in the implementation of knowledge, creative ideas and science in the territory of Albania through contemporary teaching according to all international standards, the Bologna Declaration and the Albanian Qualification Framework.
2. **INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE.** To stabilize a leading role in the development of education, science, sports and culture by determining the growth rates of the economy and society in the region and beyond..
3. **3. EDUCATION OF VALUES:** To play a defining and dominant role in the education of civic and democratic values for the integration of the society in Europe
4. **SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.** To continue to develop and implement the highest standards for basic and applied scientific research work with strong economic and social impact in the region.
5. **INFRASTRUCTURE. To use the existing human and logistical resources of the institution as effectively as possible, aiming at continuous improvement and increasing capacities.**
6. **COOPERATION/PARTNERSHIP.** To continue to cooperate as an active partner in all higher education activities at the national and international level.

Regarding the mission and objectives in the framework of European institutions of higher education, University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora aims to:

1. **INTERNATIONALIZATION.** To be fully integrated in the European area of higher education by working towards the internationalization of the institution in the field of teaching and scientific research.
2. **QUALITY AND STANDARDS ASSURANCE.** To respect and develop academic work of high quality in accordance with European ESCO standards of the European Community
3. **SOCIAL COMMITMENT.** Effective and impactful public and community services, comprehensive programs of activities to develop students and create future scientists.

 The mission of University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora is also oriented in the social aspect, aiming in these directions:

1. To contribute to the promotion and dissemination of scientific knowledge to students by offering a wide range of teaching and research disciplines.
2. To provide the necessary tools for a successful career for students, academic staff, academic assistants and administrative staff.
3. To ensure a leading role in the local economy as well as in cultural development of the city of Vlora and beyond.
4. To help in meeting the social, cultural and developmental needs of the country.

 The above wording of the mission is also based on Law No. 80/2015, dated 22.07.2015 "On higher education and scientific research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania". In particular, it is worth highlighting the educational component of the University and its role in the formation of the modern citizen to ensure education as a public good and social right.

 The university is an intellectual greatness and promotes and fights for the respect of fundamental human and social values. This University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora development strategy requires the participation of all actors according to the European approach of the four-pronged system where the central and local government, academic institutions, representatives of business and civil society address in an integrated way the needs of the territory and find effective solutions for its development . In this way, we not only fulfill our ambitions to create a leading University in the region, but turn the University into an important development pole, vanguard of innovation and technology. The implementation of this strategy will be realized only with the active participation of students, academic staff, academic and administrative assistants, civil society, as well as all interested parties (alumni, employers, etc.).

***The history of internationalization at the University of Vlora***

University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora has defined internationalization as one of the important points of its strategic institutional development based on Line No. 1 of the first Scenario "Internationalization/Globalization of University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora of the University's Strategic Plan.

The University has been very active and interested in the expansion of international cooperation through various programs with foreign funding, considering them as a key factor of its internationalization.

The University of Vlorë counts 80 agreements of understanding, which include:

1. Sharing the best practices, improving the forms and methods of organizing the teaching process, introducing the latest technologies in the teaching process.
2. Conducting joint analysis of materials (scientific, methodological, textbooks, educational aids, courses, lectures, etc.) in written and electronic form.
3. Exchange of publications and new scientific literature between libraries.
4. Invited lecturers from qualified faculties for holding lectures related to various fields of science, organizing joint seminars for improving the qualification of the personnel up to 15 people in a year.
5. Exchange of information on research, scientific conferences and symposia to enable participation in similar activities.
6. Development of joint scientific research, exchange of research results in order to conduct scientific consultations, seminars, research, etc.
7. Exchange of experience in improving the institution's quality management system with the use of information technologies.
8. Holding joint seminars/meetings regarding the improvement of the quality management system in the institution.
9. Organizing student exchange between two institutions (up to 30 students per year).
10. The development and provision of joint programs by signing specific agreements for the specific study program, where the modalities of its provision must be foreseen (such as the authorship and ownership of the deposited syllabuses, the language and method of teaching and exams, the exchange of pedagogical staff etc.). This specific agreement can also be in the form of a common teaching regulation, type and model of the degree (double, joint, multiple), approved by both higher education institutions.
11. The development of special short-term academic programs (such as continuing education courses lasting up to 1 year, professional programs lasting 1-2 years).
12. The creation of other areas in which mutual interest for cooperation has been created or will be developed.

The Academic Senate of the University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora on May 16, 2018 approved with decision no. 19 an internal regulation named "Regulation for the Implementation of Inter-institutional Agreements within the Erasmus+ KA107 International Credit Mobility Program". The Regulation has been drafted according to the Erasmus+ Program Guide, the ICM Guidelines and the best practices of partner institutions, which guarantees a fair, transparent, coherent and documented way, starting from the application process to its realization. The institutionalization of the mobility procedure has increased the number of international agreements not only in mobility, but also in various development projects, thus expanding the map of cooperation with the European Union countries and beyond. 95 inter-institutional agreements are listed in the list of the University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora within the Erasmus + ICM program. Below is a detailed list of agreements and mobilities in recent years.

**Table 1.** University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora internationalization in numbers

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description**  | **May 2018 – October 2022** |
| Memorandum of Understanding | 53 |
| Inter-institutional agreement | 81 |
| Mobility of incoming and outgoing students | 171 |
| Mobility of incoming and outgoing staff | 393 |

Thanks to University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora’s large number of international agreements, it is possible for one to thirteen University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora students to win an Erasmus + scholarship at least once within a study cycle at one of the partner universities.

In addition, internationalization has had an impact on the staff benefiting from mobility and participation in various projects with foreign financing as follows:

* Innovation and modernization of teaching practices and methods.
* Exchanging experiences, networking and sharing best practices between colleagues from international universities.
* Increasing capacities and continuing qualification.
* Identification of good practices and recommended actions, which fulfill the needs and common interests of the partner institutions.
* Implementing best practices and applying new knowledge and skills that improve their performance at work.
* Motivation for teaching/training.
* The development of foreign language skills and the ability to work in a multicultural environment.
* Gaining a new perspective of their work.
* Expanding new professional contacts at the international level.

The University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora, through projects with foreign financing, has continuously increased the following:

* Capacities of the academic/assistant academic and administrative staff
* Raising or enriching the didactic or scientific research infrastructure.
* Staff payment for engagement in project implementation
* Enrichment with literature of the library of the University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora The creation of new innovation centers/start ups etc.
* The organization of scientific conferences or the publication of various scientific works, etc.

University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora has more than 30 projects with foreign funding within the Erasmus+ CBHE program, Interreg, IPA Cross-Border, etc., from which the university has benefited. The long and successful experience of the University of Vlora in the management and implementation of projects with foreign financing has emphasized the university as a fair and reliable partner. Also, through foreign-funded projects within the Erasmus+ CBHE program with the main objective of opening international programs in University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora, for the first time it is planned to open an international program with the acronym MEP&M. The University of Vlora is a member of several international associations and networks of higher education, which have helped to increase the image of the university in the international arena and strengthen collaborations, among which we mention UNIMED, ASECU, EUCEN, MAGNA CARTA, CMU, etc. University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora is very active in undertaking and participating in information dissemination activities within the framework of foreign-funded projects.

The University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora has managed to have several important evaluations in the context of internationalization as follows:

* University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora has been evaluated as a "Good Practice" for the implementation of ICM, by the Erasmus+ National Office in Albania as well as by the universities of the program countries such as the University of Padova and the University of Piraeus. Also, according to the European Commission for International Relations, the University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora is ranked among the four Albanian universities that are considered very active partners in terms of cooperation agreements in the ICM component.
* The University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora is ranked 42nd in the world for the 2020-2021 academic year and 35th for the 2021-2022 academic year by WURI (World's Universities with Real Impact) in the field of "Mobility of students and openness". The University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora applying in this field presented the achievements of the last 4 years, with the high number of University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora students who have followed studies in European Universities, foreign students who have developed studies in University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora, lecturers and administrative staff of who have conducted lectures and/or training in European Universities as well as the foreign staff who have conducted lectures/training at University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora. In addition, the entire regulatory framework approved and implemented in University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora and the transparency of the entire process in terms of the ICM component had a positive impact on this evaluation.
* Based on the three thematic pillars such as the Development of Curricula; Innovative Approaches in Teaching and Learning and Mobilities and Internationalization, within the "Bologna Hub Peer Support" project (financed by the European Commission and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science in Albania; the Ministry of Education and Science in Ukraine; the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports in Georgia; Espanolas University; the European Union of Students as well as the German Service Exchange Academy), foreign experts have evaluated as good practices a number of aspects in University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora such as:
1. the measures taken to stimulate the involvement of the staff in international activities,
2. the high number of partnership agreements within the framework of Erasmus+,
3. bilateral cooperation,
4. the active strategy within mobility,
5. efforts to play a key role in the region's development.

The best practice video. The video organized by SPMJ within the framework of the Erasmus days 2020 with the students of University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora, beneficiaries of the program, was evaluated as a good practice by ZKE+ ( <https://erasmusplus.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ErasmusDays_NEOAlbania.pdf> ) and the European Delegation in Albania.

Also, this video received a positive evaluation from the French Erasmus+ Agency ( <https://agence.erasmusplus.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ErasmusDays-2020-coverage-and-impact-1.pdf> ), which is also the initiator of the celebration of the Erasmus day

***Broader objectives***

The University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora aims to become one of the most popular among Albanian universities worldwide by strengthening international orientation and cooperation. The main objective is to create a reliable and professional profile in relation to teaching, scientific research and international cooperation in the framework of research-development projects and cooperation for the building of mutual capacities.

In achieving this goal, the University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora seeks to become the seat of cultural values and encounters not only through strengthening international cooperation, but also through the promotion of tolerance towards, respect and recognition of other cultures.

In order to fulfill the general objectives, the University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora has set a number of long-term objectives, which focus on the following strategic aspects***:***

* Institutional partnership;
* International experience for students as well as academic and administrative staff,
* Internationalization of programs and curricula,
* International cooperation in the field of research, development and transfer of knowledge and technologies.

# **Determination of values in the direction of internationalization**

# University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora is not just a place that tries to generate knowledge for society, but at the same time I try to turn more and more into an institution to create knowledge that also has economic value. Internationalization of higher education is a natural phenomenon and an encouraging possibility for development and creativity. Advancing internationalization by focusing on attracting more international students is the strategic focus. With internationalization, education not only develops students' critical thinking and logical reasoning, but they are also well prepared and equipped to engage with other people and businesses from other countries, wherever they are, and this it opens up more opportunities for them. The functioning of the University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora in a globalized world without international relations is ineffective and in the medium and long term non-resultative. Although internationalization is a complex and multifaceted concept involving many elements, this process responds to local and global needs. Internationalization empowers students, staff and institutions with "lessons" from leading institutions abroad.

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# ***Strategic priorities***

* Increasing the number of effective agreements with foreign institutions;
* Providing joint programs;
* Scientific research and joint projects

The strategic objectives aim at the involvement of the university in new activities and enterprises towards internationalization. They include:

1. Promoting mobility for students and staff, both academic and administrative.
2. Encouraging and supporting international cooperation in the field of research, development and transfer of knowledge and technologies.
3. Strengthening the ties with the Albanian scientific diaspora.
4. Increase international visibility of the university in the region and beyond.
5. Reinforcement of administrative support services for project implementation and external relations.
6. Internationalization of programs and curricula.
7. Awareness of the cross-cultural component in relation to international partners.

# **Our aspiration**

# To increase our international reputation by providing high quality teaching, scientific research that responds to the international needs of a globalized world and partnerships with third parties for the purpose of knowledge transfer and services

**SWOT analysis**

**Strong points**

* Large number of cooperation agreements with European Institutions
* Large number of inter-institutional agreements with partner Institutions in Erasmus Program countries;
* A large number of lecturers engaged in international cooperation
* University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora is a member of several important international University networks
* The Institution's strategic point is internationalization
* The position of Vlora, which makes it attractive for international students and staff
* Consolidated and experienced international relations office
* Support from the governing authorities for lecturers to participate as much as possible in international activities
* Large number of applications in projects with foreign financing in order to increase capacities
* High ranking of University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora compared to other regional universities in Albania

**Weak points**

* Absence of international students
* Lack of study programs in foreign languages
* Non-cooperation of some Departments in the internationalization process
* Lack of alternative teaching methods
* Lack of cooperation and projects with foreign funding for scientific research
* Lack of a consolidated process to absorb foreign researchers and visiting professors
* The lack of lecturers who give lectures in foreign universities or foreign professors
* Non-cooperation with alumni members who live outside Albania
* Non-engagement of the Consultative Board
* Non-engagement of persons decorated with Doctor Honoris Causa

**OPPORTUNITIES**

* Partnerships supporting university activities
* Interest in the expansion of academic programs
* Interest in offering joint/duplicate programs
* Interest in developing cultural and social activities at an international level and/or in cooperation with foreign institutions
* International development potential
* Offering academic programs at low cost for foreign students compared to other international Universities
* The special focus of the Ministry of Education and Sports on the internationalization of Universities
* Possibilities for opening joint/dual programs using European project funding

# **The Risks**

* Lack of adequate funding
* Decrease in the number of students
* Lack of incentives for pedagogues to participate in international activities
* Non-approval by the Ministry of new study programs, including joint/dual programs
* Lack of knowledge and experience in the process of internationalization

***The internationalization plan for the period 2022-2027***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Objective | Activities | Support structures | Period |
| Internationalization through Scientific Research | * Collaboration with international prestigious universities.
* Publication of scientific articles in international magazines;
* Organizing joint activities (conferences, seminars, workshops) with foreign HEIs;
* Increasing participation in international projects.
* Absorption of scientific researchers and pedagogues with international experience.
* Applying to international scientific research projects.
 | * Main Units
* Basic units
* The sector of foreign relations
* Finance sector
 | 2022-2027 |
| Internationalization through teaching | * Offering foreign language study programs
* Offering dual/joint study programs
* Opportunities for foreign students to be absorbed
* Increasing mobility of academic staff for teaching in foreign Universities
* Increasing the mobility of students for the development of a period of studies at foreign universities
* Increasing the number of visiting professors
* Better cooperation with the network of people decorated with the title Doctor Honoris Causa
* Increasing interinstitutional agreements with European Universities
* Incentives for the academic staff to participate in international activities
* Incentive for students to participate in mobility for the development of part of their studies
* Reorganization of curricula in order to fit the needs of the international market
* Building a network of student ambassadors of the University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora who have participated in international mobility
* Making the institution more attractive for foreign students
* Providing English language courses for University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora lecturers
* Improving teaching skills for University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora lecturers through different trainings
* Request to the Ministry for the possibility of providing lectures in a hybrid way
 | * Academic Senate
* Board of Administration
* Main Units
* Basic units
* The sector of foreign relations
* - Finance sector
 | 2022-2027 |
| Increasing the visibility of the Institution at international level | * Providing all the information of the University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora website in English and Italian
* Translation of all University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora documentation into English language
 | * The IT sector
* Communication Sector
 | 2022-2027 |
| Improvement of conditions for foreign students who attend studies at University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora | * Providing specific guides for foreign students
* Facilitation of students throughout the application process, residence permit, accommodation, etc.
* The creation of a network of foreign students who have attended their studies for a period at University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora (functioning as ambassadors for University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora in their countries)
* Offering scholarships to outstanding foreign students who choose University "Ismail Qemali" Vlora for their studies
* Creating specific instruments to measure student satisfaction
 | * Main Units
* Basic units
* The sector of foreign relations
* Finance sector
* Sports and alumni activities sector
 | 2022-2027 |
| Establishing sustainable collaborations with foreign partners | * Building a specific guideline for the implementation of cooperation agreements
* Interruption of relations with Institutions which despite the agreements, nothing has been implemented
 | * Academic Senate
* Main Units
* Basic units
* The sector of foreign relations
 | 2022-2023 |
| Adaptation of the curricula at the University “Ismail Qemali” Vlora with the curricula of the respective programs offered in the partner Higher Education Institutions in the European Union countries | * Organization of meetings for the purpose of curriculum adaptation
* Adaptation of the curricula in at least two programs for each Main Unit
 | * Academic Senate
* Main Units
* Basic Units
* Education Directorate
 | 2022-2027 |
| The provision of a specific fund for internationalization, including the adaptation of curricula, the planning of joint study programs, etc. | * Specific fund for the internationalization
 | * Academic Senate
* Board of Administration
* Main Units
* Basic Units
* Foreign relations sector
* Education Directorate
 | 2022-2027  |
| Integration and recognition of the subjects/courses/modules developed during mobility | * Recognition of the subjects/courses/modules developed outside Albania in the supplement
 | * Academic Senate
* Main Units
* Basic Units
* Education Directorate
 | 2022-2024 |