

## **ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS): OUR STRATEGY**

The Conservatoire de la Vallée d'Aoste is the only Higher Education for Music & Performing Arts institute present in the small region located on the north-eastern side of the Italian peninsula, bordering France and Switzerland. The Aosta Valley has been, since Roman times and for many centuries, a passageway and a trading center for those who wanted to travel to northern Europe from Italy and vice versa, therefore the international opening is imprinted in its DNA. It received the title of "crossroads of Europe" thanks to its particular geographical position which, together with its bilingual vocation, allows today easy contacts especially with the cross-border regions, by promoting mutual knowledge for what concerns tradition, culture and history of the French-speaking countries.

The Conservatoire's internationalization strategy therefore takes into account the historical, geographical and cultural characteristics of the region in which it is located, but also the impossibility for culture and art to remain closed within narrow borders (in particular for music, which entails meeting authors of all nationalities from the very begin), as well as the cultural circulation and contamination that characterize the globalized contemporary society, which cannot be ignored.

In particular, thanks to its European roots, the Conservatoire intends to join and help creating a European Higher Education Area, where comparing and sharing practices, policies, systems, methodologies, objectives and results can contribute to the modernization and the increase of the quality of the cultural offer for the benefit of all participants, and even more so for small institutions such as ours.

The Conservatoire has been conducting masterclasses with international teachers for some time, normally followed by concerts involving all the participating students. These positive experiences offer students the opportunity to broaden and enrich their study approach, their practice and their vision of music through the comparison with different cultural interpretations and teaching methods. They also offer the Conservatoire the opportunity to establish contacts with foreign institutions, which often lead to future collaboration on several fronts.

Through full participation in the Erasmus+ program, the Conservatoire therefore intends to increase the opportunities for international cooperation and pursue the following objectives:

- strengthening the excellence, by contributing to the development of quality learning and teaching methods and by promoting high results, through innovation and the achievement of a European dimension;
- contributing to improving the quality, appeal and accessibility of the educational offer: raising awareness of the Conservatoire's teachers and technical-administrative staff professionalism and creating mutually beneficial collaborations with other European institutions actually means opening up to comparison and growth;
- widening the knowledge and understanding of European countries educational policies and practices by teachers, students and technical-administrative staff;
- implementing the tools for the recognition and validation of the skills and qualifications acquired in order to align with the other European institutions, by obtaining more easily the recognition of their study qualifications abroad;
- increasing the level of social inclusion by supporting the participation in mobility projects of individuals who are culturally, economically and socially disadvantaged or physically disabled;
- strengthening the intercultural awareness and the active society participation of all participants in the projects, as citizens of the world;

- increasing students' transversal skills, employment potential and professional opportunities, so as to support them in their life path;
- strengthening students' initiative, independence and entrepreneurship;
- encouraging to further study and train after a period of mobility abroad, by recognizing its value;
- increasing all participants' digital and language skills, possibly by supporting them with specific training.

The Conservatoire intends, for the moment, to participate exclusively in Key Action 1: mobility of students and staff of higher education institutions. The Conservatoire, in fact, has small dimensions (39 teachers, 82 students of the academic courses, 148 students of the pre-academic courses, 5 members of the technical-administrative staff), has obtained the ECHE in October 2018 and has been participating in the Erasmus+ program only since the 2019 Call. The Conservatoire therefore plans to join the European and international dimension offered by the program step by step and it will be responsible for modifying the Erasmus Policy Statement and informing the National Erasmus+ Agency/Indire in case it will open up to other activities and actions in the future.

The Conservatoire has recently (from January 2020) adopted a "Regulation for implementing mobility procedures within the framework of the European Erasmus+ program" in order to ensure the implementation of the mobility projects envisaged by the Erasmus+ program. This Regulation establishes fair, transparent and documented procedures, both in the selection of candidates and in the management of all phases of the mobility project. Such procedures include:

- the publication of an *Annual student mobility call for applications* and an *Annual teacher mobility call for applications*;
- the establishment of an *Erasmus+ Commission* set up by the Erasmus+ Coordinator, the student tutor and the program administrative contact person;
- a *Selection and guidance procedure for "incoming" students* and a *Selection procedure for "incoming" teachers and technical-administrative staff*, whose criteria are explained in the Regulation.

The Conservatoire conveys all recipients information about the mobility programs participation opportunities through institutional channels and encourages teachers and Erasmus+ technical-administrative staff to monitor, contact and actively involve those individuals or groups who may not recognize themselves as recipients of these opportunities, because of cultural, social or personal reasons.

The participation of students, teachers and technical-administrative staff in mobility projects for learning, training or teaching, contributes to the achievement of many of the objectives of the Conservatoire's international strategy listed in the previous paragraph. In particular, it contributes to the modernization and innovation of the Conservatoire through the comparison and knowledge by the participants of different and new policies, practices, methods, educational and evaluation systems; through the implementation of the digital procedures provided by the *Erasmus Without Paper* project and by the *European Student Card Initiative* and the *Erasmus+ mobile App*; and through the need to communicate using foreign languages, which must therefore be learnt.

Modernization, innovation, acquisition of knowledge and experience of new practices are the essential means to achieve the objectives of quality and excellence, together with commitment, enthusiasm and dedication that all the participants have so far shown. Quality and excellence which, in turn, generate the students' and teachers' appeal by broadening the Conservatoire's horizons.

A further goal is the personal, professional, cultural and intercultural growth of those who are involved in mobility projects, and the acquisition of a deeper awareness and broadmindedness that allow them to be actors in an increasingly globalized and interconnected society. Growth and awareness are strictly connected to the development of a wider identity, which allows to reconnect with the citizens of other European countries and to get to know each other, to collaborate and to build together to create a European Education Area and therefore a better Europe.

The Conservatoire de la Vallée d'Aoste is a small size institute, but nevertheless it is committed to offering a quality and wide-ranging teaching and experience to its students and is oriented to broaden its horizons by comparing, innovating and evolving, also thanks to an active participation in the Erasmus+ program. The Conservatoire obtained the ECHE in October 2018 and has been participating in the Erasmus+ program only since the 2019 Call. For the moment it had the opportunity to carry out a limited number of projects (3 "incoming" teachers and 2 "outgoing" students; other mobility projects for teachers and staff have been postponed due to the Covid-19 emergency), which have obtained a very positive outcome.

Its objectives for the next seven years are therefore to significantly increase the number of participants and collaborations with other European higher education institutes and to increase the skills of those who are in charge of carrying out the program, who have to be familiar with the program procedures (the coordinator and the administrative contact person), with the aim of raising awareness and effectively involving the Conservatoire's students and staff, of offering increasingly adequate support to participants and of contributing to the improvement of the projects quality.

With regard to numbers, the aim is to achieve the participation of at least 5/6% of students (4/5 students out of 82), 8/10% of teachers (3/4 teachers out of 39) and 20% of administrative staff (1 staff member out of 5) for each academic year. The Conservatoire intends to reach this goal through effective information and communication concerning the importance and value of mobility experiences abroad, through raising awareness of the impact that the participation can have on the quality of training and experience offered by the Conservatoire, as well as on personal growth, and through engagement thanks to accounts provided by those who experienced mobility projects first-hand.

The Conservatoire is also willing to attract incoming students and teachers. To this end, the Conservatoire is preparing a new and more user-friendly website (which will be completed in June 2020) with a section entirely dedicated to the Erasmus+ program, including the training offer in English. The Conservatoire also intends to increase its visibility and contacts by joining the *Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen* (scheduled for next autumn), which will have the additional advantage of facilitating the procedures for outgoing and incoming students.

The second objective, that is increasing exchanges and collaborations with other European institutes, will be pursued through the teachers and technical-administrative staff networks which have been created during their mobility periods, through the coordinator and administrative contact person participation in meetings organized within the framework of the Erasmus+ program, and finally through the *Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen*, mentioned in the previous paragraph.

The third objective consists in the development of skills and knowledge of the program procedures by the coordinator and administrative contact person, aiming at an increased awareness and a more effective participants involvement, and at the possibility of offering them an increasingly adequate support by raising the projects quality. It can be achieved with the progressive proven experience of this role, the participation

in all the training opportunities offered by the program (in particular in the meetings organized by the Erasmus+ National Agency/Indire) and the first-person participation in mobility training projects at foreign institutions which have been participating in the program for the longest time.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECHE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

The Conservatoire, with the approval of the "Regulation for implementing mobility procedures within the framework of the European Erasmus+ program", approved in January 2020, establishes fair, transparent and documented procedures both in the candidates selection and in the management of all the mobility process phases. Such procedures include:

- the publication of an *Annual student mobility call for applications* and an *Annual teacher mobility call for applications*. These calls are prepared every year by the Erasmus+ Commission, approved by the Director, displayed on the Conservatoire's bulletin board and published in the institutional website appropriate section. The procedures and deadlines for submitting applications, participation requirements and criteria according to which the candidates selection will be carried out are indicated in the calls. The applications submitted by the teachers are accepted and selected by the Director, after hearing the opinion of the *Erasmus+ Commission* assessment and on the basis of the European funds availability. The applications forwarded by the technical-administrative staff (for which there is not a specific annual call for applications, given the small number of units) are accepted and selected by the Administrative Director, based on the obtained funds availability, and compatibly with the needs of the offices involved.
- the establishment of an *Erasmus+ Commission* set up by the Erasmus+ Coordinator, the student tutor and the program administrative contact person, with the task of:
  - evaluating students' applications for education or training mobility and establishing the respective ranking;
  - agreeing and approving the Learning Agreements before the student mobility;
  - agreeing and approving any possible changes to the Learning Agreements during the student mobility;
  - ordering the recognition of the students' education and training period abroad (credits earned, exams taken, marks);
  - assessing students' applications coming from foreign partner institutions;
  - evaluating teachers' applications for the teaching or training mobility, formulating and expressing their assessment to the Director;
  - preparing the annual call for applications for teachers' teaching and training mobility;
  - organizing promotion, assessment, dissemination and development initiatives of the program foreseen actions impact.
- a *Selection and guidance procedure for "incoming" students* and a *Selection procedure for "incoming" teachers and technical-administrative staff* whose criteria are explained in the Regulations.

The Conservatoire conveys information on the participation opportunities for the mobility programs through institutional channels to all the recipients and it encourages teachers and Erasmus+ technical-administrative staff to monitor, contact and actively involve those individuals or groups who may not recognize themselves as recipients of these opportunities because of cultural, social or personal reasons.

The aim is to identify those students who are in disadvantaged conditions, both for economic, social and cultural reasons, and for physical or educational disabilities, through the teachers' network which, in a small-

scale Conservatoire like ours, has direct, personal and continuous contact with the students. The main goal is to raise awareness on the opportunities offered by the program and to support them on a human, cultural and educational level.

Finally, the Conservatoire intends to provide a greater economic contribution for the mobility period for economically disadvantaged students, starting from the 2020/2021 academic year. It also establishes that the right to this contribution is acquired following the presentation of the *ISEE* certification (*Indicatore della Situazione Economica Equivalente* - Equivalent Economic Status Indicator) issued by *INPS* (*Istituto Nazionale di Previdenza Sociale* - National Social Security Institute).

The Conservatoire is aware of the *Erasmus Without Paper* project and the *European Student Card Initiative* and *Erasmus+ mobile App* tools, of the enormous benefits that their introduction entails for all the program stakeholders, as well as of the deadlines set for the institutions for their implementation, which the Conservatoire intends to meet.

The Conservatoire is working to ensure that the technical-administrative staff involved in the Erasmus+ program will soon be able to process and exchange the electronic data relating to the participants in the mobility through the *Erasmus Without Paper* network.

Thanks also to the impulse given by the Covid-19 emergency, the Conservatoire has invested in professional training aimed at boosting its employees digital literacy and it is currently successfully experimenting remote teaching strategies with its students through a digital platform, as well as smart working techniques with its technical-administrative staff.

With regard to the *Erasmus+ app*, the Conservatoire requires students participating in mobility projects to download it to their mobile phone and to start using it, familiarizing themselves with its functions while waiting for it to be fully operational.

The Conservatoire has long been sensitive to the environmental sustainability issue and promotes an eco-friendly policy which involves institutional choices at all levels, as well as the daily practices of all technical-administrative staff, teachers and students. This policy necessarily reflects on the management and implementation methods of the Erasmus+ projects. Indications provided to the staff include:

- reducing paper usage through the progressive digital conversion, as mentioned above; using both sides of the sheet; preferring black and white printing; recycling not completely used sheets; purchasing chlorine-free sheets containing a high percentage of recycled elements;
- using less plastic through, for instance, the use of reusable or 100% recyclable glasses and cups;
- waste sorting;
- saving electricity, by asking all employees to turn off their PCs, screens, printers and lights when they leave their offices, and entering into a contract with an energy provider, which uses energy only from renewable sources.

The Erasmus+ mobility experience is an opportunity for all participants, especially for those who are at a young age to exchange ideas and live with different realities and lifestyles. Consequently, it produces a greater intercultural awareness, enforces recognition and respect for the cultural, historical, social and economic differences students come into contact with, and to acquire a more objective vision regarding the culture of belonging.

This experience stimulates the development of behaviors and values necessary to become responsible citizens, such as learning to respect oneself and to respect the others, to listen and resolve conflicts peacefully, to promote harmonious coexistence, to build values that welcome a variety of points of view, to build a positive self-image, as students who return from a study experience abroad often show.

Furthermore, the intercultural skills acquired are a solid basis for being able to responsibly and critically participate in public life.

The Conservatoire's Erasmus+ coordinator and contact person are in direct and constant contact with students, before, during and after their mobility and provide them with practical support, but also with any other issue they might have to face. In order to ensure easy and timely communication, it was decided to resort to the use of social networks (WhatsApp groups).

Before departure, students are encouraged to express and write down their cultural and educational experiences and to make comparisons with the different pedagogical approaches, teaching methods and different approaches to the school community. In fact, they know that upon their return they will be witnesses and ambassadors of their own experience and they will be asked to speak about it to other students. They will, in turn, have to support those who intend to leave abroad in the following academic years. By entrusting them with this role, the Conservatoire intends to promote their ability to engage in the school community and to make their contribution to their classmates by inspiring them to embark on the same experience. Knowledge, awareness, expression and action are in fact indispensable elements of civic commitment and active citizenship.

The Conservatoire has not yet accepted incoming students, as it has only been participating in the Erasmus+ program for one year. In any case, it aims to welcome those students who will apply for mobility at the Conservatoire by actively involving them in the educational life community and by providing them with all the necessary tools so that their experience can be profitable for their personal and professional growth.

The Conservatoire has joined the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The Conservatoire has in fact set up study programs in which credits are attributed to its components, whether they are full study courses or individual training units, as specified in the course catalogue relating to the first and second level of the academic courses. As is well known, this system is based on the workload required of a student to achieve the objectives of a study course, expressed in terms of learning outcomes and skills to be acquired.

The "Regulation for implementing mobility procedures within the framework of the European Erasmus+ program", approved in January 2020, establishes that all credits earned by students during a study period abroad, as agreed in the *Learning Agreement* before and during mobility and confirmed in the *Transcript of Records* that the host institution sends to the Conservatoire at the end of the period, will be transferred and fully used for the degree achievement, without requiring further examination. It also establishes that the number of credits that the student expects to earn abroad must, in principle, correspond to the same amount that the student would have acquired in the same period of time at the Conservatoire. Since full correspondence between the courses provided by the two institutions is unlikely to occur, the choice of the learning activities to be carried out abroad can open up to new content and their recognition will be based on maximum flexibility, while ensuring full consistency of the chosen training course with the learning outcomes of the study course.

The "Regulation for implementing mobility procedures within the framework of the European Erasmus+ program" gives the Erasmus+ Commission, made up of the Erasmus+ Coordinator, the student tutor and the administrative contact person for the program, the task of taking care of the entire procedure for the recognition of the credits earned abroad and of transmitting to the Conservatoire teaching secretary the recognition minutes of the study period abroad, so that the results achieved are recorded in the student's study plan.

The Regulation also provides for the possibility of adding value to the mobility periods abroad, giving the students a bonus made of a maximum of two points to be added to the degree result. To this end, the duration of the stay abroad, the study/traineeship quality and the language skills acquired and certified during the mobility are assessed.

In order to ensure the recognition procedure transparency, the Conservatoire uses the underlying ECTS documents: the Course Catalogue, the Learning Agreement and the Transcript of Records and issues the Diploma Supplement at the end of the study course.

The Conservatoire undertakes to integrate its Regulations by adding a similar procedure for the recognition of studies and credits earned following virtual mobility or blended mobility.

The Conservatoire supports the teachers and the technical-administrative staff mobility, aware that it contributes to:

- encourage the Conservatoire modernization and the creation of a more dynamic, committed and professional environment within it through the integration of good practices and new methods in the staff daily activities;
- promote the Conservatoire international perspective by increasing its ability to operate at European/international level;
- improve staff skills in relation to their professional profile;
- widen the knowledge and understanding of the practices, policies and educational systems of the European and non-European countries participating in the program;
- increase opportunities for professional development and staff career;
- raise awareness about the Institute and its teaching quality, also in order to attract prospective students;
- strengthen the staff intercultural awareness and improve its response to social, linguistic and cultural diversity;
- improve support and promotion for learning mobility activities;
- increase the teachers and technical-administrative staff language and digital skills;
- increase motivation and satisfaction in the participants daily work.

To ensure all teachers and technical-administrative staff the opportunity to participate in the program and to carry out a mobility project abroad, the "Regulations for the implementation procedures for mobility within the framework of the European Erasmus+ program" envisages fair, transparent and documented selection procedures. For this purpose, a "Teacher mobility call for applications" is published annually, which is prepared by the Erasmus+ Commission, approved by the Director, displayed on the Conservatoire bulletin board and published in the appropriate section of the institutional website. The procedures and deadlines for submitting applications, participation requirements and criteria according to which the candidates selection will be carried out are indicated in the calls. The applications submitted by the teachers are accepted and selected by the Director, after hearing the opinion of the Erasmus+ Commission assessment

and on the basis of the European funds availability. The applications forwarded by the technical-administrative staff (for which there is not a specific annual call for applications, given the small number of units) are accepted and selected by the Administrative Director, based on the obtained funds availability and compatibly with the needs of the offices involved.

The Conservatoire undertakes to give teachers and technical-administrative staff appropriate recognition for the activities carried out during the mobility period, provided it is based on a mobility agreement and in line with the institutional strategies.

The Conservatoire plans to organize, starting from the next academic year, a meeting addressed to its teachers and technical-administrative staff where the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ program will be illustrated and promoted. During this meeting, clear information on requirements, procedures, objectives and recognition will be provided. The staff will be invited to involve the students and their families, thanks to the direct and constant contact provided by the teaching activities. It is also expected to invite the staff members who have carried out a mobility project to share their experiences with colleagues, in order to inspire them to do the same.

The Conservatoire is currently preparing a new institutional website, which will be online at the end of June 2020. The website will include a section entirely dedicated to the Erasmus+ program. The web link where the Erasmus Policy Statement will be published is: <https://www.consaosta.it/erasmus/regolazione-eche-eps/>.

The Conservatoire, being a small institution that for the 2019-2020 academic year has 82 students enrolled in first and second level of the academic courses, only participates in Key Action 1 - Mobility of students and staff. The promotion of the activities envisaged by the Action includes information addressed to potential beneficiaries through institutional channels (website, institutional email, bulletin board, information leaflets) and the organization of meetings with staff and students in order to raise awareness and create opportunities so that those who have already participated can share their mobility experience. The participants in mobility projects are invited to be the program ambassadors, by promoting and sharing their experience with colleagues and friends. The Erasmus+ coordinator and the Erasmus+ administrative contact person are also committed, on a daily basis, to communicating, disseminating and enhancing the opportunities offered by the program and the results achieved both inside and outside the Conservatoire.

In the case of incoming mobility, the Conservatoire intends to proceed in the same way it did during the last academic year for what concerns the projects carried out by teachers coming from the Malaga, Granada and Strasbourg Conservatories. Within the review of "Les Jeudis du Conservatoire", the Conservatoire organized concerts open to the public, which involved the professors taking part to the mobility projects and all the students participating in the masterclasses. The Conservatoire also sent press releases to local newspapers and television channels inviting them to give visibility to these events. The whole community of the Aosta Valley became aware of the projects and had the opportunity to experience them directly by participating in the concerts.

The Erasmus+ coordinator, the Erasmus+ administrative contact person and the Director are responsible for disseminating and monitoring the application of the principles laid down in the ECHE within the Conservatoire. As for the administrative staff, which is made up of only five units, including the Erasmus+ contact person, the content is transmitted via direct and personal contact. As for the teachers, involvement takes place both through intermediate bodies such as the Academic Council, and through the daily direct and personal contacts, since the Conservatoire de la Vallée d'Aoste is a small institute. The coordinator, the



contact person and the Director firmly believe in the Erasmus+ program value and in the construction of a European Higher Education Area to which the Conservatoire is eager to make its contribution. Therefore, the commitment to fully implement the principles laid down in the ECHE is one of the priorities of their daily activities and one of the characterizing features of their role.