

ERASMUS+ PROJECT 2023-1-RS01-KA220-HED-000156660

EPIR | E-Procedure of Institutional Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Documents

The EPIR project wants to achieve enhanced digital and green capabilities of the HE sector in Serbia, Croatia, Italy and Romania by conducting the digital transformation of the partners' recognition procedure for HE documents of international students. The activities include new or improved IT systems, accompanying policies and structures, raised digital skills of students and staff and deepening of awareness of the advantages of using modern technology in the provision of HE services.

The project will implement the following activities: development of new and upgrading of existing IT tools for the recognition procedure of HE documents; creation and adaptation of appropriate institutional legal provisions and organisational structures in line with both the innovative e-approaches and national frameworks; trainings of students and staff for IT skills in the field; dissemination of the advantages of e-services in higher education through recommendations and exchange of best practices.

The project is expected to create outcomes that will be used on a daily basis for years to come. Through the development and improvement of information systems used in the recognition procedure of HE documents and the creation of well-informed institutional environments underpinning digital transformation, project results will advance the recognition process by increasing efficiency of work flows and access to HE and reducing costs, stress, and complexity of admission of international students.

„1 Decembrie 1918“ University of Alba-Iulia (UAB) is a public higher education institution with a background in internationalisation of higher education spanning more than a decade, through its successive internationalization strategies, focusing on increasing the number of international students as well as fostering mobility and transnational educational experiences. UAB has 36 bachelor degree programs and 26 master degree programs, as well as four Doctoral Program studies both in Romanian and in English, that cover a wide range of subject areas from theology, philology and arts to engineering, social sciences and economics, programs that are meant to ensure that the main role of the University in the wider region of Alba County is to push forward sustainable development and the integration in the European society through its values, shared goals of tolerance, democratic and civic participation, diversity and integration.

Currently having more than 6000 students, UAB has up to 500 international students from 20 countries mainly from Africa, the Middle East and Asia, as well as incoming students from Erasmus Program countries and partner countries not associated to the Program. With more than 24 years of experience in implementing mobility flows with over 45 countries in the world and

EPIR project partners:



UNIVERSITY
OF NOVI SAD



UNIVERSITÀ
POLITECNICA
DELLE MARCHE



ROMANIA
1 DECEMBRIE 1918
UNIVERSITY OF ALBA IULIA



50 years of
University
of Split



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
Qualifications Agency

220 partner Universities, UAB is committed to ensure the full and automatic recognition of learning outcomes obtained by its students abroad, as well as to work on expanding the number of countries where our degrees are automatically recognized (the latest example being that of Jordan which decided in 2022 to recognize the degrees issued by UAB). The same goes for the recruitment of international students, which UAB considers one of the hallmarks of its internationalisation efforts. The University of Novi Sad (UNS) and the „1 Decembrie 1918“ University of Alba-Iulia (UAB) have developed their collaboration through numerous Erasmus+ KA1 mobility projects (KA107, KA103 and KA131). Apart from exchanging students and staff, UAB and UNS have joined forces in tackling many new issues related to internationalisation, from the collaborative participation of UNS & UAB in the exploratory workshop: Internationalisation of higher education – challenges and rewards in 2021, to the Blended intensive programme (BIP) organised and hosted by UAB in 2022, dealing with Policy support needed in internationalisation and digitalisation.

UAB has made many concrete steps in the facilitating incoming student and staff mobility through digital means. In order to implement Bilateral Agreements signed between UAB and Higher Education Institution across Europe, UAB developed an online platform <https://international.uab.ro/>, where incoming participants can open their individual accounts and where, for example, all documents supporting Erasmus+ teaching and training mobility (mobility agreements and invitation letters) are generated automatically.

UAB has dedicated a lot of resources starting in 2015 to digitalise the processes of internationalisation, facilitate incoming student and staff mobility through digital means, and create online platforms that handle mobility flows and international admissions. In order to implement Bilateral Agreements signed between UAB and Higher Education Institution across Europe, UAB developed an online platform <https://international.uab.ro/>, where incoming participants can open their individual accounts and where, for example, all documents supporting Erasmus+ teaching and training mobility (mobility agreements and invitation letters) are generated automatically.

In 2020 UAB launched its own online platform for admission for Romanian diaspora students and in 2022 launched an online platform for the applications of international candidates, where all the documents required by law are uploaded, verified, approved and sent to the Ministry for final approval. In its first year the platform handled more than 1400 international applications, and UAB is currently working on further developing the platform to include marketing kits and other services required by potential international candidate to our study programs. The project will therefore support these efforts and enable new functionalities that UAB deems important in enabling broader and easier access to its academic offer.

Within the EPIR project, UAB is participating in WP2 and 3 and will be responsible for WP4. In the phase of the preliminary needs' analysis leading to the project proposal, this was agreed upon and discussed as an area in which UAB wanted to offer both its experience and its willingness to take up more tasks.

One of the objectives of the project, related to WP4, is to raise awareness of the advantages of using modern technology in the provision of HE services, from the point of view of access, efficiency, cost-effectiveness and environmental benefits. The planned promotion, dissemination and sustainability thus play a key role in making sure that project's aims achieve their intended long-term impact and that its results continue to serve all those who are already involved or will be involved in the recognition process.

In order to ensure the greatest possible outreach of this project to the stakeholders and wider public, activities in WP4 will coincide with those in WP2 and WP3, through project website, panel discussions in the HE sector of the four countries regarding recommendations, dissemination events and public appearances, and its firm commitment to the sustainability of results' utilisation.

The EPIR project aims to improve and develop procedures and tools for recognizing study documents for international student candidates. The dissemination activities are designed to enhance visibility and ensure wide recognition of the EPIR project and the consortium institutions, promote best practices by sharing effective recognition processes among stakeholders in higher education, engage key audiences and actively involve international student candidates, universities, and quality assurance departments and support underdeveloped regions by extending the project's results to institutions without established recognition processes.

Dissemination is not only about sharing information but also about fostering collaboration, ensuring sustainability, and creating a lasting impact on how study documents are recognized globally.

The dissemination activities will be tailored to the following groups:

- International Student Candidates: Prospective students who require document recognition to study abroad.
- Higher Education Quality Assurance Departments: Key stakeholders in ensuring standardized and fair recognition processes.
- International Relations Offices (IROs): University departments that interact with international students and handle their documentation.
- Universities Without Stable Recognition Procedures: Institutions that can benefit from the EPIR project results.
- Policy Makers in Higher Education: Decision-makers who can support large-scale implementation of improved procedures.

By targeting these groups, the project ensures a wide-reaching and meaningful dissemination effort.

The dissemination plan includes the following detailed measures and actions:

- Organizing conferences and events for the partners in the project as well as interested third parties:
 - A Project Conference at the University of Novi Sad designed to bring together universities, policymakers, and stakeholders to share project findings. The Expected outcomes of the conference include enhanced collaboration and formal recommendations. The conference will consist of presentations from consortium members, workshops and panel discussions and will form a comprehensive set of recommendations for recognition processes, increased collaboration between participants and a final conference report.
 - Representation at international events such as NAFSA, EAIE, EURIE, and BAKU EDUKA EXPO: the partners will promote EPIR project achievements and increase

visibility in targeted regions any time they attend an international event, particularly the events where HEIs from the geographical areas most international students are from.

- NAFSA: Association of International Educators – the premier conference for global education professionals.
- EAIE: European Association for International Education – Europe’s leading higher education networking event.
- BUSINET: A global business education network that facilitates collaboration between institutions.
- BAKU EDUKA EXPO: A significant platform in Azerbaijan to engage with education providers and promote the EPIR project in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
- EURIE: Eurasia Higher Education Summit – a prominent event for showcasing educational projects in the Eurasian region. Dedicated EPIR sessions or representation through consortium members' participation.
- Educational Activities:
 - Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) and Webinars: The BIP will be organized to train university staff in implementing improved recognition procedures. As it is a blended program, it will include a virtual and a physical component to ensure broad accessibility and will be aimed at the university staff involved in the admission of international students and teaching staff. The topics of the programme will cover advanced recognition tools, strategies for evaluating study documents, and case studies from consortium institutions. The BIP will take place and will be organized by the “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia. Thus, training will be ensured for the personnel capable of implementing and sustaining improved procedures in their HEIs.
 - Webinars for international recruitment: focused on countries like India, China, and Brazil to attract students and share recognition innovations by introducing EPIR as a consortium, highlighting its achievements and sharing insights into the recognition process in order to increase awareness of the consortium’s efforts and to attract international students.
- Digital Platforms and Media:
 - Dedicated Project Website: A central repository for project updates, resources, tools, and contact points. The website of the project was designed by UAB and hosted on the server of the University of Novi Sad. It includes interactive elements such as FAQs, contact forms, and tools for recognition process.
 - Social Media Campaigns: Platforms such as Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter to reach international audiences, share milestones, and engage through Q&A sessions.
- Media Outputs:
 - Podcast Series: Featuring discussions on recognition challenges and student stories, distributed via YouTube and shared on all the social media of the partners.
 - Video Testimonials: Real student experiences using EPIR tools, aimed at building trust and awareness.

Monitoring and evaluation is essential to measure the impact of dissemination activities. Key actions include defining performance indicators (participants, website traffic, engagement, institutional involvement), using tools like Google Analytics, social media insights, and surveys

for continuous feedback, regular internal reporting by all partners and biannual coordination meetings to adjust strategies.

Key actions include: the conference report, with document insights and recommendations; the report following the blended intensive programme will summarise the outcomes of the training programme in Alba Iulia, including participant feedback. These measures will ensure that dissemination efforts are effective and aligned with project objectives.

5. Timeline

Period	Activity	Responsible
Q1	Launch of the EPIR website and social media accounts	Coordinator + All partners
Q2	Release of podcast series and video testimonials	Communication partners
Q2–Q4	Representation at international conferences	Partner representatives
Q3	Regional recruitment webinar	University of Alba Iulia
Q4	Final conference at the University of Novi Sad	University of Novi Sad
Ongoing	Social media campaigns, website updates, feedback collection	All partners

As a part of the sustainability strategy meant to ensure long-term impact and continued use of the EPIR results:

- The project website will remain active for at least 3 years post-project.
- Social media platforms will be maintained by the lead institution.
- All training modules will be integrated into regular academic activities.
- A Best Practices Manual will be distributed widely and archived.
- A follow-up EPIR collaboration network will be encouraged among interested HEIs.

The EPIR dissemination plan is designed to ensure high visibility, effective stakeholder engagement, and sustainable integration of the project's outcomes into institutional practices. By combining digital outreach, academic engagement, and international collaboration, the EPIR project sets a strong foundation for transformative improvements in higher education recognition procedures.