

# SSML Erasmus Policy Statement 2014-2020

The *Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici* (SSML, Higher Education Institution for Language Mediators) has been awarded the **Erasmus Charter for Higher Education for the Erasmus+ programme 2014-2021**. The Erasmus Policy Statement below sets out our institutional strategy in relation to the Charter.

With the Ministerial Decree of 31 July 2003, the *Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici* (SSML, Higher Education Institution for Language Mediators) based in Pisa, was granted the right of awarding the degree of **Bachelor of Arts** in *Scienze della Mediazione Linguistica* (Sciences of Language Mediation), following a three-year course worth 180 credits. This degree is equivalent to the degree of an Italian state university.

In September 2012, the SSML hired an **International Relations Coordinator**, who concluded three inter-institutional agreements in 2012, which rose up to 7 in 2016. The aim of the International Relations office is increasing the mobility of students, faculty and staff members and thus improve the quality of education at the SSML. The international relations coordinator also deals with traineeship opportunities within the ERASMUS+ programme. Since 2016 SSML signed additional interinstitutional agreements with universities in partner countries (Lanzhou- China, Kemerovo- Russian Federation).

The recognition of exams sat abroad is fundamental for the SSML: a workload of 25-30 hours is required per credit point. The points awarded by the SSML vary from 3 (for one-semester courses) to 13 (an entire module). The SSML follows the guidelines of the European system for the transfer and accumulation of credits. These are communicated in **ECTS points** to the national agency in Italy that deals with the Bologna Process. Partner universities of the SSML also base their marking system on the ECTS, which ensures complete comparability and recognition of course units, so that students of the SSML abroad and foreign students at the SSML can convert their exams with ease.

For the **SSML course catalogue** please see:

[https://issuu.com/ssml\\_pisa/docs/ssml\\_guida\\_studente\\_eng](https://issuu.com/ssml_pisa/docs/ssml_guida_studente_eng).

Non-language courses are taught in Italian; all other courses are taught partly in Italian (e.g. for Arabic) and some entirely in a foreign language (English, Spanish, French, German, Russian and Chinese). See also: <http://www.mediazionelinguistica.it/calendario-e-orari>.

The SSML reaches learning, teaching and training agreements after carefully vetting its **partner institutions**. The 7 inter-institutional agreements the SSML has with universities within the ERASMUS+ programme for mobility of students and teachers were reached after verifying that the partner universities have similar course programmes and teach the same languages, which is not only in line with the SSML's educational strategy, but also makes it easier for students to transfer credits.

We also organise **internships** in a variety of companies, with the aim of providing our students (and also inbound students) with invaluable professional experience abroad. Before the start of their stay abroad, a traineeship agreement is signed with the partner institution, which includes a training project, the details of working conditions and remuneration, as well as the name of the student's mentor.

The course programme at the SSML leads to a degree in language mediation (interpretation and translation), which means that our students have the **required language skills** to be able to participate in mobility

activities. In addition, the SSML organises certification exams for students to give them the opportunity to document their language skills at any stage of their taught degree. All language teachers possess above-average language skills, often in four or five languages, and help organise mobility requests for non-language teachers and administrative staff.

Since September 2012, the SSML has appointed an international relations coordinator, who is available to both inbound and outbound students and staff for information and advice about mobility activities. Each inbound student is appointed a student tutor. The **student tutor** speaks the language of the inbound student and offers advice and practical support to facilitate their stay at the SSML. The same applies to employee or faculty tutors. All information about the mobility programme is published on the SSML website: <http://www.mediazionelinguistica.it/le-relazioni-internazionali>

Courses at SSML are open to anyone who participates in mobility activities, including language modules for all levels from B1/B2 of the Common European Framework. Information concerning **language courses** for incoming students can be organized by the International Relations Office.

**Staff mobility** started in 2013. Returning teachers report to their colleagues about their experience and publish their report on the SSML website, so that all staff can benefit from their experience.

The SSML provides **funding to low-income students** to help them participate in the Erasmus mobility programme.

The SSML supports extra-curricular **Chinese** language courses, in preparation for the Chinese certificate, which is a prerequisite for a 5-month study period for students from the SSML at our partner University in Lanzhou Jiaotong, China. The collaboration with Lanzhou Jiaotong University started in 2014 and during a.a. 2015-2016 the first cohort of students participate in the mobility.

The **selection criteria** of our European Higher Education partner institutions are as follows.

- Partners must provide a similar study plan, in which Italian is as one of the foreign languages.
- Courses are of a practical nature, as is the case at the SSML, and must include translation and/or interpretation, Economy, Law, History of Art and Tourism-related modules, similar to those taught at the SSML.

Consequently, the SSML has signed seven inter-institutional agreements with the **universities of Cordoba, Sevilla, Malaga, Rouen, Mons, Cardiff and the Academy of Applied Languages (SDI) in Munich**, for a total of 30 mobilities for study.

We select our non-European partners with the same objective, namely to improve education at the SSML. We signed three bilateral agreements with partner countries (Lanzhou Jiaotong University-Cina, Kemerovo State University, Astrakhan State University, both in Russian Federation).

At the SSML we strive to broaden our geographical area to promote cultural as well as language exchanges. This applies to both Erasmus projects and traineeships with countries whose languages are taught at the SSML.

The **key objectives** of the mobility for the SSML are:

- To increase the number of international partners and with it, the flow of inbound and outbound students and staff within the Erasmus+ programme;
- To promote academic exchanges, in order to shape innovative ways of teaching both at the SSML and at partner universities;
- To foster the personal development of participants;
- To expand the career prospects of students after graduation thanks to the experience of an Erasmus mobility for study or traineeship;
- To increase all mobility activities for institutions, faculty, staff and students;
- To increase awareness among staff and students about foreign countries and mentalities.

So far, mobility activities concern third-year students and staff. The SSML is fully aware of the importance of promoting cross-cultural exchanges and for this reason embraces the **values** upheld by the Charter for Higher Education.

The SSML strives to promote these values by taking part in **Key Action 1** "Mobility of students and staff" and in future by participating in **Key Action 2** "Strategic partnerships, alliances, knowledge, capacity building together with neighbouring countries and with third countries."

Despite being a small university, with just over 330 students and 45 lecturers, the SSML wishes to contribute to the quality of mobility programmes for staff and students. We fully comply with the **principle of non - discrimination** under Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Because of its hands-on and vocational approach, the SSML has very close links with the labour market, in the form of language- and tourism-related businesses. Following a degree course at the SSML students that have also spent time abroad, benefit our university while enhancing their chances of finding work and contributing to add value to local companies once they enter the job market.