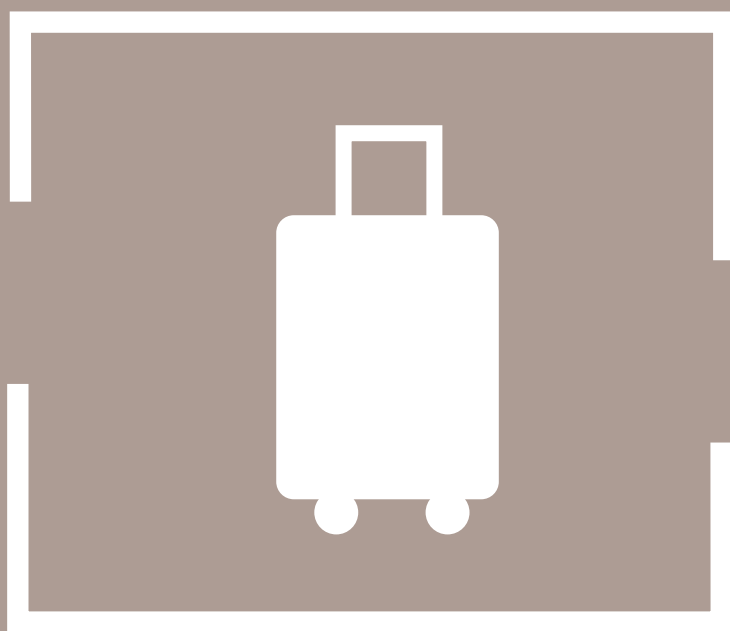
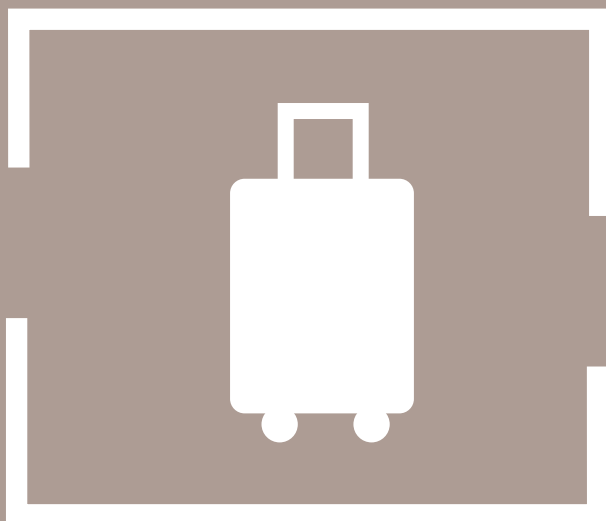


7.

## Achieving mobility for all





Mobility is a way to strengthen the links amongst all of us and this project objectives include the aim to increase it at all levels. But the aim is to do it in an innovative way, combining traditional mobilities with new ways of fostering not only mobility but also achieving a more sustainable society.

During this first year, traditional Erasmus agreements were signed between our universities in fields of knowledge where there was no previous cooperation. Thus, during the coming year, Erasmus mobility is expected to increase. Applications were submitted for 25 Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) under the Erasmus Programme, which will take place during the academic year 2021-2022. However, there are two pilot initiatives that were launched during this first year of existence which are worth describing in the following sections: UNITA Rural Mobility and UNITA virtual mobility. The first one will help address

the depopulation of rural areas by bringing work opportunities to rural areas that had not been thought of before and which have a positive impact on rural areas. UNITA virtual mobility and the future BIP will become key instruments to extend mobility exchange opportunities for students who, for different reasons, cannot benefit from traditional mobility.

## 7.1. UNITA Rural Mobility

The European inter-university Alliance UNITA - Universitas Montium gives students the opportunity to experiment new forms of mobility and to develop specific internship opportunities, contributing to both objectives of developing rural territories, and in particular cross-border mountain territories, and increasing the number of mobility opportunities. This is being achieved through UNITA Rural Mobility (URM). UNITA's universities are located in cross-border mountain regions across southern, central and eastern Europe: Serra da Estrela (Beira Interior), the Pyrenees (Pau and Zaragoza), the Alps (Savoie Mont Blanc and Turin), and the Banat Mountains (Timisoara), therefore in ecosystems sharing similar challenges. The Rural Mobility Programme is one of the opportunities to meet these challenges.

Rural mobility comes from "Desafío" and "Arriago", two programs originated in 2018 with the collaboration between the University of Zaragoza and the Provincial Council of Zaragoza. In four editions, more than 70 students of different bachelor's and master's degrees from the university participated. This program brilliantly reverses student mobility by allowing

final-year students and recent graduates to do internships in both public and private institutions in what is known as the "Fourth Space", that is, in towns and villages with less than 3,000 inhabitants. Throughout this time, students of the bachelor programs of Social Work, History of Art, Economics, Veterinary Medicine, Tourism, Fine Arts, Law, Information and Documentation, Marketing and Market Research, as well as master's degrees in Productive Operations and Logistics or Heritage Management among others, have participated. Their practices have been developed in locations such as Campo de Daroca, Bajo Cinca, Calatayud, Ribera Alta del Ebro, Ribera Baja del Ebro, Valdejalón, Tarazona

and Moncayo. All participants share the desire to gain work experience but also a vital experience in creative and innovative organizations in small municipalities. This year, in the province of Zaragoza alone, the program has received more than 300 applications and already has the support of 60 entities where students can do their internships. Within the UNITA framework, a new inspiring touch has been given to this initiative during 2021. Thanks to the UNITA-Rural Mobility students from the 6 participating universities will be able to participate internationally in a pilot rural experience.

Picture 7.1: UNITA Rural Mobility - UNITO



## UNITO RURAL MOBILITY

The UNITA Rural mobility pilot project launched by UNITO took place in Oстана (CUNEO Province), a model smart rural village in the Po Valley. A total of 6 students from 5 UNITA Universities (UPPA, UNITO, UNIZAR, UVT, UBI) were enrolled in this rural internship from August 16th to September 5th, 2021. The trainees discovered the territory (people, culture, and nature) under the guidance of professionals, university professors and researchers and actively participated in the development of ongoing cultural/scientific projects. The students learned and practiced the inter-comprehension method and developed team working and communication skills.

We believe the model of URM developed at UNITO (and at UVT as well) represents a unique kind of traineeship for UNITA students to experience directly some of the core topics of the Alliance, such as cultural heritage, circular economy, multilingualism and the sustainable development of rural and mountain villages. The pilot URM in Oстана was very successful according to the feedback received both from the students and from the local partners (social enterprise VISOAVISO and the Alpstream Research Center).

This pilot project is now being developed, transforming it into a durable best practice of UNITA - Universitas Montium through a co-designed strategy with the local partners for the next two years. Simultaneously,

an implementation more "classical" traineeships in rural territories has been planned, selecting hosting organizations with a direct impact on the sustainable development of rural areas.

## UVT RURAL MOBILITY

In July 2021, five students from the UNITA campuses in UNITO, UNIZAR, USMB, UBI, UPPA arrived in Timisoara in order to start their incredible journey in the picturesque mountain territories in Banat, a cross-border mountain region located in the southwestern region of Romania. Besides enjoying the spectacular landscape the students were able to work together developing innovative ideas for the sustainability of this specific rural mountainous region. It was an amazing chance for students who wanted to go the extra mile with their research and build unique memories!



Picture 7.2: UNITA Rural Mobility - UVT

## UBI RURAL MOBILITY

From 7th July to 6th September 2021, Covilhã (UBI) received two students from USMB and UNITO, who carried out mobility in the Associação Cultural Amigos da Serra da Estrela. This association is one of the main references of environmental defence in Serra da Estrela, the highest point in continental Portugal, which lives on the voluntary work of its members and friends, whose common motivation is simply the preservation of Serra da Estrela as national heritage. Clearing paths in the middle of the mountain and other activities that the students had the opportunity to do were certainly an unforgettable experience.



Picture 7.3: UNITA Rural Mobility - UBI

## UNIZAR RURAL MOBILITY

Since July until October 2021, UNIZAR received 20 students on Rural Mobility, 12 students from UNITO, 4 from UBI, 2 from UVT, 1 from UPPA and 1 from USMB. The students made their

mobilities in local governments (Cubel, Daroca, Herrera de los Navarros, Quinto), in Non-for-profit organizations (Amigos de Bubierca, Adecobel Asociación para el Desarrollo Rural Integral, Fundación Aquagraria), in companies (such as SAT MANubles, Traza Soluciones), in other public institutions such as the Aragon Health System, or public companies such as Fomento de Ejea de los Caballeros, and Territorio Mudéjar. As a result, the students participated in many different activities depending on their area of expertise. Some of them worked in tourism, others in management of agricultural organization, management of cultural heritage, or day care of elderly people. The different background of the students and their activities shows how Rural Mobility can offer a great experience to students of the more diverse backgrounds.

Since the initiative is developing its pilot phase, this first experience allows models to be tested and evaluated so that the Alliance will have efficient and sustainable models at its disposal to pursue and intensify the actions to be undertaken in the future. Sharing this unique experience, the teams have evolved day by day, learning from their different backgrounds, discovering and experiencing inter-comprehension strategies, entering in contact with local people and caring for each other. With a very high level of satisfaction, the success of this pilot project is the best trigger to expand Rural mobility in the territory and increase the number of students involved for the next years. Moreover, during this phase, UNITA's partners focus on creating communities of practice and sharing resources, including teachers, researchers, and administrative staff. At the end of this period, the team is used to working together, helping each other, and exchanging ideas that will undoubtedly lead to new innovations and new projects.



Picture 7.4: UNITA Rural Mobility - UNIZAR

## 7.2. UNITA Virtual Mobility

The aim of involving the maximum number of students in internationalization strategies that allow them to gain different perspective over key topics in their training, together with the acknowledgment that physical mobility is not always possible, have been two of the main driving forces of UNITA Virtual Mobility. The UNITA program for Virtual Mobility allows

students to participate in courses and lessons in virtual classrooms at a different partner university while staying in their home institution. The initiative was launched during May, and challenges and opportunities are being analysed to be able to launch it again for the spring semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. The students can choose among almost 200 courses of many different disciplines, and they can personalize their curriculum. Earlier students are our best ambassadors of this initiative.