

The PYREN project



The goal of the PYREN project is to create a transfrontier campus with the public Spanish universities of the southern foothills of the Pyrénées (University of Basque Country, Public University of Navarre and the University of Saragossa) to help students develop competences useful for that environment.

Linguistic competence is a prerequisite for exchange, both real and virtual: more than 1,100 hours of teaching are provided each year, of which 388 are for staff. The linguistic level of participants is increasing. Teachers and administrators have shown a strong interest for the program: 38 have achieved a certification.

Long-term study-abroad programs remain very attractive. More than 40 students leave each year for at least a semester in one of the partner universities. Short-term mobility, limited to stays of several days, is also very popular, with 95 students in 2015-2016. Students are also encouraged to do internships in one of the three border regions. In 2016-2017, to prepare these internships, a dedicated instruction program was created for third-year students.

Faculty mobility continues to progress regularly and has become anchored in institutional culture. Faculty members have begun to know their cross-boarder counterparts better and to communicate regularly. Every year, there are around 25 faculty member visits.

Administrative mobility is increasing rapidly, which shows the interest among administrators for these partnerships. Forty members of the administrative staff participate in stays in one of the transfrontier universities.

Digital initiatives for the instructional parts of the program began in 2013. A call for projects for distance learning modules was launched in and seven modules are completed or in their final phases. The combine use of one module has begun, and eleven others are under review. A on-line *linguistic tandem* module has also been developed and is being evaluated by a local government structure. The program "French-Spanish Business Law", entirely as distance learning, began at UPPA in the fall of 2015, with the help of the other transfrontier universities.

One of the positive aspect of the program is that it has favored various forms of *institutionalisation*. There has been a rapid increase in the number of conventions for dual diplomas between UPPA and its partners (6 in 2011-2012, 13 in 2016-2017). It is clear that

this is due the intensification of the exchanges between campuses. PYREN is a motor for the development of UPPA's transfrontier cooperation. Beyond the activities of the project itself, the joint preparation of a number of European projects like INTERREG POCTEFA with the UPV-EHU and the UZ is a good example of this. Seminars on trans-border university cooperation provided opportunities for creating bonds between various transfrontier actors in France and abroad. Lastly, and most of all, the plan for a "Franco-Spanish university", modeled after the Franco-German university, and which UPPA helped found, provides a promising context for future developments.

More information about PYREN is available [here](#).