

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **SMARTT recommends exploring a new funding model and ensuring the connection with the labor market in the making of a European Degree Label**

- **The SMARTT project submits to the Commission preliminary recommendations for the implementation of the European Degree Label**

Reducing bureaucratic barriers, developing a new financial model, and ensuring the connection of degrees to the labor market, are some of the preliminary recommendations that the SMARTT project (Screening, Mapping, Analysing, Recommending, Transferring, and Transforming HE international programs), funded by Erasmus+, has delivered to the European Commission (EC) to facilitate the delivery of the European Degree Label (EDL).

These preliminary recommendations are learned from pre-testing the criteria initially proposed by the European Commission. The suggestions focus on the optimization of the criteria, as well as enhancing the development and implementation of the EDL.

#### **Quality criteria and systematic barriers**

The test and validation of the comprehensive set of 20 criteria is the cornerstone of the will-be certificate attesting learning outcomes and institutional cooperation in joint programs. For instance, SMARTT suggests enhancing criteria related to the recognition of virtual mobility and the connection to the labor market, among others. The project also proposes the inclusion of new criteria that would help institutional development, as well as the research dimension within the EDL in the context of the European Research Area.

Quality criteria are also linked to available resources. SMARTT proposes the development of a new funding model for joint degrees that qualify for the label, as well as potential incentives to further support programs and institutions that might require additional resources to align with the criteria.

In the realm of policy development, results emphasize the importance of transparently communicating the motivation, scope, and purpose behind the EDL. Also, the need for flexibility, exploring the possibility of a gradual EDL deployment, and contemplating different scenarios such as the integration of the label with other existing systems and certifications.

Lastly, the project has also identified systemic barriers, such as fear of losing cultural particularities, lack of resources, and potential resistance to change. Some of the recommendations to trespass them, are to ensure a balance between European integration and national educational identities, increase the efficiency of funding allocation, and provide training to faculty and administrative staff in preparation for EDL deployment.

### **Looking ahead**

Results come from the pre-test against the EUROSUD Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degree Programme, launched four years ago by the CIVIS Alliance, one of the European alliances participating in SMARTT. In parallel, the team has selected more than 50 joint programs to continue testing the common quality criteria.

SMARTT is one of the six selected projects funded by the Erasmus+ program that are examining and testing a joint EDL, whose delivery will be a step towards a joint European degree.