

ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

The University of Applied Sciences Baltazar Zaprešić is the biggest business university of applied sciences in Croatia. The University has introduced innovation to Croatian higher education and adapted the curriculum to meet the requirements of labour market and employers by offering scientifically-based and practice-oriented studies. Our vision is to keep growing as a recognizable quality institution with a clear educational and research profile directed towards sustainable business and management.

The participation in the Erasmus+ programme is one of the key elements of our internationalization and modernization strategy. With the participation in the programme we want to contribute to the development of quality education in Croatia and building the European Education Area by constant improvement of our study programmes in accordance with European standards and with the achievements of our partners. The key instruments to reach this goal are the students and staff mobilities, close collaboration with similar institutions abroad and participation in international projects.

Collaboration with European and international higher education institutions on mutual projects and through the exchange of students and teachers is part of our basic priorities and organizational values. Our international strategy aims at providing all students with international competences, improving staff members' international qualifications, supporting and incorporating high quality and international skills in all curricula, participating in international projects in cooperation with key partners and becoming the recognizable quality HEI in Croatia and abroad.

Key priorities and objectives of our international cooperation strategy are:

- Establishment of cooperation networks and strengthening cooperation with similar higher education institutions abroad for the purpose of acquiring knowledge and transferring good practices.
- Encouraging incoming and outgoing mobilities of students and staff to provide wide international experience and professional inspiration, improve the quality of study programmes and prepare students for the global work environment by increasing foreign language proficiency and cultural competencies.
- Introduction of study programmes in English language with the purpose of introducing the “internationalization at home”, encouraging the inclusion of students in the exchange programmes and promoting the international visibility of the University.

Encouraging the “internationalization at home” and raising awareness of the importance of the internationalization among staff and students.

- Participation in international projects funded by Erasmus + and other programs.

The participation in the Erasmus+ programme is crucial to achieve these goals. All mentioned activities contribute to the formation of the European Higher Education Area, particularly as regards to increasing the number of students spending time abroad, learning additional languages and feeling connected to a common European cultural identity.

Within the framework of the programme, the University will focus especially on student mobility for studies and traineeships, staff mobility for teaching and training and strategic partnerships with key stakeholders.

The University will continue to promote and support student and staff mobility, especially taking care of including participants from under-represented and disadvantaged groups, according to our non-discrimination policy. The University will provide additional grants for students and staff with disabilities who wish to participate in the European and international mobility. For the incoming students with disabilities, The University will provide special counselling and blended mobility possibilities within our distance learning courses.

The University will enhance the quality of incoming and outgoing mobilities by providing constant support to all students and staff member involved, increasing the number of courses offered in English and ensuring full and automatic recognition of all credits gained for learning outcomes achieved during a mobility period abroad or a blended mobility. It will recognise the importance of the international experience of staff as part of the human resources development, providing visibility and valuating the results achieved in individual mobility as well as in international cooperation projects.

The University will continue to develop partnerships and cooperation with partners in other EU and non- EU countries. The University will regularly assess the mobility performance and outcomes and use these results for improvements and further development of the international cooperation activities.

The Department for international cooperation and mobility will continue to be responsible for all aspects of management and quality assurance of international projects, including the Erasmus+ program through the provision of information, preparation of documents and managing the implementation of activities. It will continue to work on the expanding the network of partner institutions, according to the objectives of our internationalization strategy. According to the already established procedures, the conditions of mobility will be agreed with the potential partner institution, such as the criteria for selection of candidates and general requirements regarding the quality of cooperation. The existing agreements will be reviewed and evaluated.

Students and teaching and non-teaching staff will be regularly informed about the possibilities of the Erasmus+ program via all the accessible media. We will regularly and on a timely manner update information on our web page, especially the English Course Catalogue that will follow the rules of the ECTS Users' Guide (www.bak.hr/en/international-cooperation/documents-and-forms). The incoming students will attend classes together with domestic students in order to be fully integrated into everyday academic and student life at the University. The students will be appointed a mentor to help them with academic matters.

The Department for international cooperation and mobility, together with the Student Union, will continue to provide individual support for incoming students regarding all aspects of the mobility application and organization. We will ensure that outgoing participants are well prepared for their activities abroad, including blended mobility, by undertaking activities to achieve the necessary level of linguistic proficiency and develop their intercultural competences. We will individually support incoming mobility participants throughout the process of organizing and implementing their mobility, eg. finding accommodation, obtaining visas and insurance, provide appropriate language support, etc.

The selection of the mobility candidates will be organized in a fair and transparent way by the specially established Selection Committee appointed by the Dean. Students will be ranked according to the following criteria: academic achievement, motivation and foreign language proficiency. The criteria for selecting the staff will be the quality of teaching plan / work plan, benefits for the further work at the University and the method of experiences dissemination upon their return.

The Erasmus Coordinator will provide support to selected candidates in the preparation of all the documents to be signed before going to the mobility, e.g. Learning Agreement, including online learning agreements, Mobility Agreement for staff members and Financial Agreement. The successfully achieved activities according to agreements will be fully recognized without any additional procedure. The students will be awarded Diploma Supplements containing all the necessary information about the mobility period.

Incoming students will be awarded their Transcripts of Records in a timely manner and it will contain all the necessary information on learning outcomes, volume of workload (ECTS credits) and the achieved grades together with grade distribution tables.

We will actively engage in establishing joint strategic partnership projects for innovation and good practices according to our international strategy, provide support to staff and students interested in participating in these projects and ensure their quality throughout the application and implementation phases.

The participation in the Erasmus+ programme activities will contribute significantly to achieving the objectives of our institutional strategy. We expect to increase the incoming and outgoing students' mobility for studying and placements as well as transnational mobility of our staff both to participating and third countries.

We will foster international strategic partnerships with educational and business organizations in order to develop joint initiatives and collaborative projects, exchange experiences and best practices. These actions are expected to enforce our efforts to implement the highest standards of quality and best practices in institutional governance and our study programmes and curricula and will enable us to offer more attractive courses, responsive to social and business needs.

The previously described actions under the Erasmus+ programme are expected to have impacts in following:

- Assure the quality of study programmes and associated qualifications of students by implementing adequate teaching and learning methods and developing curricula and lifelong learning programmes to meet the needs of local business community and the society in a whole
- Improving the level of key competences and skills regarding in particular to their relevance for the labour market and society
- Improve the employability of our students through their international experience
- Increase language skills of our students and teachers
- Create and preserve quality human capital as a vital element for local and regional competitiveness
- Promote education and culture of knowledge
- Increase the number of high quality trained professionals as a key factor for sustainable local development

The main measurable goals that should be met by the end of the programming period and their indicators:

Qualitative:

- Improved language knowledge and proficiency of outgoing students and staff - measured by the OLS system and also more fluent use of the language, better oral and written performance in foreign languages.
- Improved specific knowledge and competencies of outgoing students - better knowledge about the studied subject, better insight in its practical applications, better insight in the European context of the subject; soft skills improvement: problem-solving, budget management, negotiating skills, collaborative skills.

- Improved key skills and motivation of teaching and administrative staff –increased implementation of project learning and active learning methods, comparing teaching methods and approaches with colleagues on methodology and subject related matters, use of new technologies, taking initiatives to disseminate the results of the project.

- Improved intercultural awareness of students and staff – having knowledge and experience of cultural and social structures at local, national and European level.
- Enhanced employability and improved career prospects.
- Better quality of the project implementation and support for participants on mobility – the participants feel that that they received full individual support before and during the mobility, number of dissemination meetings take place, better involvement of the senior management in the programme, whole institution involvement.
- Projects visibility and community links - regular results dissemination, contacts with media, contacts with the local authorities and associations.

Quantitative:

- Increase the number of interinstitutional agreements with higher education institutions in programme and partner countries for 100 percent
- Increase the number of outgoing students for studies to 30 per year
- Increase the number of outgoing students for traineeships to 10 per year
- Increase the number of participating students with special needs or fewer opportunities to 10% of outgoing students per year
- Increase the number of incoming students for studies to 15 per year
- Increase the number of outgoing staff member to 40 per year
- Increase the number of incoming staff members to 20 per year
- Increase the number of strategic partnerships projects in which the university participates to 1 in every two years

