

# ERASMUS+ POLICY STATEMENT

International cooperation with HEI, research institutions and NGO's brings a vast contribution to University's vision and objectives. The European Union has an urgent need for HEIs to support and implement measures suggested by EU strategic framework and other agendas and Croatia as a new member state needs to address that needs. Internationalization of HEI is one of the priority issues, so University North looks forward to increase quality and volume of mobility and international cooperation, thus to support the EU efforts in developing the Knowledge-based society. The participation in the Erasmus programme will enable our students, teachers and other staff to gain new knowledge and skills, exchange experiences with European HEI, get to know different cultures and improve the knowledge of foreign languages. The same applies to foreign students, teachers and other staff coming to the University. Strategic plan for Institutional internationalization outlines the Strategic Framework within which internationalization is managed and demonstrates the University's aspiration to embed internationalization across all core activities. In general,

3 key objectives have been emphasized with the accompanying measures:

1) To expand student and staff mobility

- 1.1. Increasing knowledge of foreign languages within students and teachers,
- 1.2. Enabling financial support for mobility of different target groups,
- 1.3. Developing promotion strategy for internal and external information transfer,
- 1.4. Improving cooperation with student exchange organization.

2) To improve cooperation with HEI's in EU and abroad

- 2.1. Increasing number of Erasmus bilateral agreements,
- 2.2. Expanding network of reliable partners,
- 2.3. International promotion of the University,
- 2.4. Increasing a number of EU project partnerships

3) Staff „internationalization“

- 3.1. Including University staff into internationalization activities and Strategy implementation,
- 3.2. Improving foreign language knowledge and skills,
- 3.3. Enabling education on internationalization trends, EU recommendations and EU project management and implementation.

The strategy (above mentioned challenges) responds to problem identification report created by external evaluators. We expect the implementation of the Strategy to have a marked impact on the future of the students as well as the future of higher education attractiveness in the region.

The following target groups will directly benefit from mobility programmes the HEI offers:

- 1) more than 3000 Students are included in AIESEC student exchange mobility, individual project based mobility, Erasmus mobility, participation in joint degree programmes.
- 2) more than 100 Employees can apply for Erasmus mobility, project based mobility and study visits.

The University tends to develop partnerships during international conferences, workshops and congresses, as well by considering recommendations of existing partners and colleagues. When searching for specific organization that cannot be found by using the regular approach, we are using the European Commission's databases of successfully implemented project where we easily find description and contact information of the ones experienced in the field of EU project management. The method is rather successful. Organisation's capacities, background, experience, and compatibility with project requirements are the most important partner selection criteria. The geographical area of the partners we search depends solely on project objectives and its requirements. Usually, the leading point is the expertise needed for successful project implementation rather than country they come from. For searching the Erasmus partnerships we would choose European Union and EFTA, for modernization of our institution we would choose developed countries as mentors, for modernizing other institutions we would choose Balkans neighbour countries or other less developed countries etc.

The University is interested in developing double and joint degrees and is working towards that goal. Currently, the University participates in development of International (joint) master degree in Nursing with the implementing institution being Laurea University of Applied Science, Helsinki, Finland. A new possibility is being discussed about a joint degree in Logistics with University of Applied Science, Kotka, Finland. Development of a national joint degree of the third cycle with University of Rijeka is also in progress.

The University is currently participating as a partner in 4 EU projects within the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme. Some of the University staff members have prior experience in organizing and implementing of international cooperation projects and their experience is valuable, but the University as a new HEI has limited experience and only as partner. That is why the current strategy is to actively participate in EU and non-EU cooperation projects as a valuable partner and to gain experience, learn about other HEI strategies and project organization, so in the near future the University can gather all the information gained and build a successful strategy where it can organize cooperation projects as a leader of the project and then implement project results within the scopes provided by the results of the project and in the benefit of the partners region and the region of the University.

The main areas for reform identified in the new agenda are:

- 1) to increase the number of higher education graduates; Internationalism contributes to attractiveness of higher education by ouraging people to enroll and stay in the education process. Dissemination activities in partnership with local media have proven as an excellent method of attracting more people into higher education. Students are keen to learn in new, different environments, to explore different cultures and after all to gain a lifetime experience that will enable prompt employment after graduation. The number of drop-outs can be reduced by providing international, exciting education. A returning student, with its positive attitude, self-confidence and motivation creates an attractive image on higher education and mobility.
- 2) to improve the quality and relevance of teaching and researcher training to equip graduates with the knowledge and core transferable competences they need to succeed in high-skill occupations; A mobility experience is an investment into teachers' personal and professional development, with multiplier effect. His/her international experience brings great impact into the quality of teaching and research, while know-

how sharing contributes to modernization of home institution. Innovative teaching techniques provide competences for nowadays demanding labour market needs.

3) to provide more opportunities for students to gain additional skills through study or training abroad, and to encourage cross-border co-operation to boost higher education performance; The additional so called "international competences" are gained by each mobile student. The competences include assertiveness, adoptability, problem solving skills and analytical competences. Cross-border cooperation is already well developed at the University, since students have no language barriers in mobility within neighbour countries.

4) to strengthen the "knowledge triangle", linking education, research and business – The University will apply for centralized projects within Erasmus programme with existing project ideas. The projects based on partnership with non-profit organizations, enterprises, recruitment organizations, institutes and research centres, provide crucial information for curricula development and modernization, thus - it is an important strategic task that builds foundation for institutional modernization and students' employment.

5) to create effective governance and funding mechanisms in support of excellence. The senate as well as the cities Koprivnica and Varaždin (founders) have recognized international cooperation as a driver towards institutional development and growth. It is our vision to bring mobility, research and cooperation to a higher level with the support of local, national and EU financial support. The University aims to implement sustainable mechanisms that should continuously search and use new opportunities ensuring peace of institutional modernization.