

## ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

Sveučilište VERN (VERN University) has been awarded with Erasmus Charter for Higher Education for the period 2021-2027 by European Commission. Our Erasmus ID code is HR ZAGREB10 and our Erasmus Policy Statement is following:

Your Erasmus Policy Statement should reflect how you intended to implement Erasmus after the award of the ECHE. Should you wish to add additional activities in the future, you will need to amend your Erasmus Policy Statement and inform your Erasmus National Agency.

What would you like to achieve by participating in the Erasmus Programme? How does your participation in the Erasmus Programme fit into your institutional internationalisation and modernisation strategy?

VERN' University of Applied Sciences international strategy is an integral part of the University's general Strategy. Core values expressed in our institutional strategy determine our approach to international engagement. Vern's institutional goal is to provide quality, efficient, fair and international higher education that contributes to the competitiveness of its students as well as other stakeholders and consequently the society as a whole.

Higher education institutions in international connection create conditions for joint cooperation in the areas of special interest to their stakeholders with the aim of strengthening their own capacities, as well as mutual benefits. Through Erasmus cooperation, VERN will further develop its educational, scientific and research potentials, as well as the prerequisites for individual and institutional relationships and networking.

An orientation towards ensuring the international mobility of students, teachers and researchers remains a permanent commitment strategy of VERN' as an important tool in the development of international recognition of innovative and entrepreneurially-oriented University.

Strategic goals in this area are:

- Networking and the use of multilateral platforms for international educational and scientific cooperation;
- Development of joint projects to increase networking of students and teachers;
- Strengthening international visibility by active participation in international professional and scientific associations;
- Participation in projects that enhance academic and scientific potentials as holders and partners;
- Bilateral cooperation in the creation, development and implementation of study programmes for domestic and foreign students;
- Participation in European Universities activities;
- Participation in Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees and Jean Monnet activities.

The development and connectedness of the higher education area in Europe provides great opportunities for academic mobility through which we achieve educational and scientific goals, but also the wider social ones at the

national and EU levels. The use of the Erasmus mobility platform ensures the implementation of VERN's important strategic objectives as well as the modernisation of the institution by using mobility opportunities which ensure exchange of knowledge and experience as well as the cooperation with foreign universities through projects.

- In accordance with the strategic goals of the institution, participation in the Erasmus Programme aims to:
- Encourage students, teaching and non-teaching staff in the academic and practical Erasmus mobility;
- Increase the number of incoming and outgoing students through the Erasmus Programme;
- Encourage student mobility by using other platforms to do internships abroad;
- Increase the number of international projects whose goals and activities are in line with VERN's strategy and internationalization plans but also with local geographical and social needs;
- Create new courses and joint degree studies, participate in research, organize and participate in conferences and publications in the field of EU studies.

Please reflect on the Erasmus actions you would like to take part in and explain how they will be implemented in practice at your institution. Please explain how your institution's participation in these actions will contribute to achieving the objectives of your institutional strategy.

#### Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility:

Since 2011, VERN's University of Applied Sciences has been actively carrying out activities related to the activities of students, teachers and staff. The advantages for an organization participating in KA1 activities is to increase the ability to act internationally, improve the knowledge and skills of all participants and create opportunities to gain international experience for students and staff members of the institution participating in the programme. In this way, VERN' strengthens its international component and achieves further development. It enables participants to acquire new knowledge and skills and greater competitiveness on the labour market.

VERN' has extensive engagement in internationalised programmes, with both incoming and outgoing mobility, and will maintain and develop opportunities for student and staff mobility within the Erasmus+ Programme. The main purpose is to increase the employability of graduate students, to encourage cooperative research and internship engagement with partner universities and industries across Europe and the world. The mobility of staff and students will contribute not only to the cultural and intellectual development of participants, but through the sharing of experiences and the extended personal and academic contacts will contribute to enhancing mutual understanding and provision of quality in higher education.

This is achieved through two basic categories of activities.

The first category includes students and those attending classes for study mobility at partner institution and also allows students to do their internship with one of the foreign companies / institutions. By participating in a mobility program, students acquire new knowledge and experience, work habits, meet new people and cultures, expand their horizons and gain experience about life abroad. Therefore, it is necessary to establish the partnership with institutions that have similar quality study programmes that students can attend and gain knowledge, skills and experience.

It should be taken into account that the emphasis is not only on sending VERN' students to partner institutions, but it is also important to accept incoming students from partner institutions. For incoming students, it is necessary to organize classes, activities, ensure integration into the new environment for them to get to know and acquire all the values and opportunities for their development so that they can have a true Erasmus+ "experience". Incoming

students and domestic students who did not participate in mobility can also benefit from learning from each other about their cultures and values.

The second activity involves teachers and staff members who have the opportunity to work or teach at a partner institution / company and thus see and share their experiences and their work practices and habits. By participating in the programme, teachers and staff members have the opportunity to develop their competencies and gain new experiences and knowledge that can be applied at the home university. Incoming mobility is useful for the institution of the recipient and the sender in different ways: students get knowledge from international speakers and a different perspective on certain topics, the opportunity of creating new projects with partner institutions.

Erasmus KA1 helps VERN' to maximize international capability and influence the future development of VERN' as an international higher education institution and is compliant with KA2 activities through which VERN' has many years of experience and cooperation with many organizations of higher education and KA2 is considered to be one of the central aspects of Vern's internationalization and international strategies. These partnerships have become an essential part in the exchange of good practice, learning and developing both new study programmes and the modernization of existing ones. In the upcoming period, an important part of Vern's institutional strategy is further development of an international partner portfolio through which new ideas, innovations, curricula and programmes will be developed as well as the development of triple-helix projects. The purpose of such projects which are implemented through KA2 is to cooperate with other HEIs outside the borders of Croatia, but also to cooperate and engage foreign stakeholders in order to achieve common goals in the areas of education, training and employment. VERN' strives to participate in triple-helix projects that respond to social challenges by bringing together HEIs, the government and business sectors to cooperate as partners, and strives to choose partnerships that are in line with both VERN's needs and local geographical, social needs, thematic priorities and strategic goals while at the same time taking into consideration institutional capacities and possibilities. Another important factor to consider when establishing partnership is the sustainability of the project. VERN' maintains and implements the results of the project even after its official completion, and this will continue in the upcoming period. This is ensured, among other ways, by the dissemination and provision of a separate part of VERN's official website. In the separate part of the website there is a section on projects, partnerships, main activities and the results. In the upcoming period, the project section of the website will also include information about the employees participating in the project as well as information on how to establish cooperation with external stakeholders after the completion of the project. When establishing a partnership, after conducting a needs analysis and establishing how much the project goals are in line with VERN's, it is important to consider the institutional human capacity and provide adequate support to those involved in the project. This is ensured through the engagement of project staff and the established Project Department which manages all projects and provides support to all involved from VERN' and cooperate with partner institutions in fulfilling all obligations and activities envisaged by the project. The Project Department offers administrative support and manages all logistics and financial management throughout the project duration. So far, VERN' has participated in five KA2 projects and in the following period it plans to continue with the existing ones and to increase the number of projects.

Another activity in which VERN' would like to participate in the upcoming programme period is Jean Monnet's activities. So far, VERN' has been awarded one Jean Monnet – Module, which has been successfully implemented. As the aim of the Jean Monnet activity is to promote excellence in teaching and research in the field of European Union studies worldwide, VERN' wishes to participate in this activity in order to organize new courses, conduct research and carry out other programme activities. By participating in this activity, VERN' will achieve goals that are stated in the general University Strategy: improved employability and improved career prospects for young graduates, increased interest in understanding and participation of students and teachers in the European Union, which will lead to learning how to be a more active citizen, creating EU courses.

One of the goals in VERN's strategy is to participate in European Universities in order to offer students curricula that are delivered jointly on HEI campuses, which would also improve mobility at all levels of study. By participating in European Universities, VERN' will further develop its capacity and strive for quality development and will be able to adopt an approach based on students, academics and external partners who can work together in interdisciplinary teams to solve the biggest problems Europe faces today. Through this cooperation, we believe that there will be

faster and easier recognition of learning outcomes and recognition of diplomas between HEI and the national bodies that implement this activity.

What is the envisaged impact of your participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on your institution?

Please reflect on targets, as well as qualitative and quantitative indicators in monitoring this impact (such as mobility targets for student/staff mobility, quality of the implementation, support for participants on mobility, increased involvement in cooperation projects (under the KA2 action), sustainability/long-term impact of projects etc.) You are encouraged to offer an indicative timeline for achieving the targets related to the Erasmus+ actions.

The aim is to enable as many students, teachers and staff as possible to participate in the Erasmus Programme:

- At present 3% of students participate in the mobility programme. The goal is ensuring that by the end of the programme period 10% of our students take part in study mobility abroad or complete a planned internship abroad.
- To achieve at least 10% of teaching and/or research staff to participate in international projects each year, give guest lectures at partner institutions, improve their knowledge and skills and/or to transfer knowledge and skills to a partner institution.
- Organize and implement Blend mobility, which means a combination of physical and virtual mobility.
- Participation in Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees. VERN' in the next programme period wants to participate in this activity because it recognizes the importance of the same. By participating in this activity, VERN' would ensure the promotion of excellence, work on innovation and further improve its internationalization. Participation in this activity would contribute to the development of awareness of the European Higher Education Area and easier recognition of periods of mobility and diplomas between institutions.
- Participation in Jean Monnet activities. In the previous programme period, VERN 'successfully carried out one activity within the Jean Monnet - Module. In new programme period the goal is to organize Jean Monnet - Module every two years, while a total of two Jean Monnet - Chairs would be organized. We also believe that during the new programme period we will also be able to participate in one Jean Monnet activity - Centres of Excellence. These activities would encourage teaching, research and reflection in the field of European integration studies at VERN.
- Becoming a partner as HEI within European Universities by the end of the programme period
- Joint Master Degrees is an activity for which VERN 'has been preparing for a certain period of time, and we will start implementing activities for this action as soon as the national legal conditions are met.

VERN' has created a network of academic and business partners with which it cooperates frequently. One of the tasks for the development of internationalization is to expand the partner network in the future with partners from all over the world. With the current academic partners, the mobility of participants within KA1 activities has been realized. Additionally, VERN' cooperates with several partners on KA2 activities, and in the future, it will be possible to expand the cooperation onto KA2 and KA3 activities with all partners. Quality cooperation with companies is important for student internships and for adapting curricula to the market needs. Erasmus + participants should be provided with all necessary support for successful participation in the mobility programme. It is necessary to ensure equal access to all potential participants, especially those with fewer opportunities. This means that all participants are familiar with the rules of programme implementation and with their rights. Thus, the student should be informed in advance and prepared for the period of mobility:

- Inform about the candidate selection process
- Give clear instructions on how to participate and how the period of mobility is evaluated and recognized, for example the recognition of credits, recognition practices, recognition of acquired competences, etc.
- Make recommendations to facilitate the preparation and departure of participants: transfer of previous experiences of participants, use of Erasmus student card, etc.
- Provide appropriate mentoring and support during the mobility period: assistance in preparing documentation for participation in mobility: ensure timely registration with a partner institution, preparation of documentation required for mobility such as Learning Agreement, OLS checks, health insurance, accommodation search assistance and inclusion in a new environment
- During the implementation of mobility participants should be contacted and the situation checked at the partner institution.
- Upon return, it is necessary to evaluate and recognize the period of mobility.
- Incoming participants need to be informed about all the opportunities they have during the mobility period and enable them to adapt to and engage in a new environment. Provide a catalogue of courses for study mobility. The method of evaluating learning outcomes will be described in the course catalogue and will include the method of assessment. Equal academic treatment of all participants will be ensured, and the student will be involved in attending classes with local students in order to ensure integration into the new environment. In order to make it easier for students to adapt, an orientation week is organized, and the staff of VERN' is available for them throughout the mobility period to provide help and anything else that may be needed to resolve any issues or possible problems should they occur.
- Increased participation in the number of projects with foreign universities. In the upcoming period, VERN aims to participate in more projects within KA2. So far, VERN' has participated as a partner in five KA2 projects, and the goal for the upcoming period is to increase this number by at least 20% for the next period. Participation in the projects is based on the analysis of VERN's needs, taking into account the goals of modernisation and internationalisation but also the key social, geographical and economic needs of this area of Europe. The projects in which VERN' participated corresponded to VERN's goals, but also to the needs of young people and the needs of Croatian society and they have reflected European values. The same will continue in the next programme period.

In order to improve the quality and relevance of higher education VERN ' has created the Alumni Club. The main purpose is to maintain communication with former students in order to use their knowledge and experience to improve the educational, academic and business potential of the University. By receiving feedback from former students, we can learn about their educational needs regarding life-long learning and career advancement and encourage the development of joint business opportunities.