

VERN



UNIVERSITY

VERN' University
1st International Week
17 - 19 June

Connect
Collaborate
Create!



1st International Week @VERN' University

Welcome to the First International Staff Week at VERN University. We are delighted to welcome you to the inaugural International Staff Week at VERN University in Zagreb, Croatia, taking place on 17–19 June 2026. This unique event brings together leading academics, practitioners, and experts from across Europe to share knowledge, foster collaboration, and explore innovative approaches to teaching, research, and professional practice. VERN University is Croatia's leading private higher education institution, recognized for its commitment to innovation, entrepreneurship, and international cooperation. Situated in Zagreb, a vibrant European capital renowned for its rich cultural heritage, dynamic business environment, and growing digital ecosystem, VERN offers a perfect backdrop for this week of professional exchange and learning. This International Staff Week offers a unique opportunity to **CONNECT** with leading educators, researchers, and professionals from across Europe, fostering meaningful international relationships. Participants will **COLLABORATE** through hands-on workshops, interactive lectures, and group activities, sharing best practices and co-creating innovative approaches to teaching, research, and professional practice. By engaging with real-world cases, digital tools, and interdisciplinary perspectives, attendees will **CREATE** actionable strategies, new insights, and lasting networks that enhance academic excellence and professional growth. This week is your platform to transform ideas into practice and become part of a vibrant, international learning community.

We cordially invite International Office representatives, Erasmus managers, Vice-Rectors or Vice-Deans and professor that work on internationalization at their respective institutions to join us for this enriching experience. Whether you are an existing partner dedicated to strengthening collaborations or a university aspiring to forge new ties, your presence will be invaluable.

We are available and glad to sign all teaching/training agreements for Erasmus staff mobility.



VERN' International Week 2026

Connect, Collaborate, Create!

Day 1 | 17.06.2026.

10:00 - 13:00 | Arrival to Zagreb

13:00 - 13:45 | Registration for International Week („Registration“ and „Photo Challenge & Instagram Wall“)

13:45 - 14:30 | Opening of International Week („Welcome presentation“ and „Schedule for the whole International Week“)

14:30 - 14:45 | Break I

14:45 - 16:15 | Leadership Through Practice: Emotional Intelligence, Trust, and Dialogue

16:15 - 17:30 | Building International Academic Communities: Combining Mobility, Platforms and AI for Sustainable Collaboration

Day 2 | 18.06.2026.

09:00 - 10:00 | Coffee & Cookies

10:00 - 10:45 | Social Entrepreneurship

10:45 - 11:00 | Break I

11:00 - 12:30 | The teacher role in the age of AI

13:00 - 15:00 | Lunch break

15:30 - 17:00 | EU digital citizens - smart city Zagreb case City Tour (Parliament workshop)

Day 3 | 19.06.2026.

09:00 - 10:30 | Building Cross-Border Alliances Against Disinformation: European Fact-Checking Networks, Policy Frameworks and Collaborative Models

10:30 - 10:45 | Break I

10:45 - 12:15 | Learning Tourism and Hospitality Through Real World Active Learning Projects

12:15 - 12:30 | Break II

12:30 - 13:30 | An Insight into Selected Teaching Methods for Enhancing Student Engagement in the Classroom

14:30 City Tour (Zagreb city center and Old Town guided tour)

Social Entrepreneurship

Mehmet Civelek

Ph.D., Asst. Prof.



The lecture that he will introduce focuses on social entrepreneurship through real-world cases, together with local examples. It will highlight the role of creativity and innovation in social enterprises and outline practical ways to foster organizational creativity and business model innovation. The lecture may motivate participants to become interested in social entrepreneurial activities.

Carriere: Dr. Mehmet Civelek is an Assistant Professor at Doğu University (Türkiye), specializing in entrepreneurship, SME finance, innovation, and international business. He earned his PhD in Czechia with a focus on credit risk management in SMEs and has built a strong international academic profile across Europe. His research examines the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation, innovation performance, digital transformation, and access to finance, with numerous publications in leading international journals.

An Insight into Selected Teaching Methods for Enhancing Student Engagement in the Classroom

This 60-minute practical workshop aims to inspire university teachers in designing interactive classroom activities and fostering more active student participation. Participants will work in several groups, each applying a different method to achieve interactivity. At the end of the workshop, groups will present their impressions, recommendations for the use of each method, and the lessons learned based on first-hand experience with its application.

Senior lecturer
Gordana Ćorić
M.Sc.



Carriere: Alongside academic role, Ms. Ćorić is the founder of Festina Lente, a consulting company providing advisory services, training, and strategic support to start-ups and growing enterprises. Ms. Ćorić is actively involved in international and regional entrepreneurship initiatives, mentoring start-ups, women entrepreneurs, and social impact ventures through leading incubator and accelerator programs. Her work bridges academia and practice, empowering students and professionals to develop sustainable, innovative, and market-oriented business models

Building International Academic Communities: Combining Mobility, Platforms and AI for Sustainable Collaboration

Tamara Kunić

Ph.D., Asst. Prof.



This lecture explores a hybrid model of internationalisation in higher education, combining short-term physical mobility with ongoing digital collaboration. Using examples from European research networks, international teaching, and AI-supported research, it highlights how online platforms and collaborative tools can turn occasional visits into lasting academic communities

Carriere: Tamara Kunić, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies and Head of the Cyber Communication and Network Science and Business Communication Management programs at VERN University, Zagreb. Her research focuses on digital journalism, participatory media, modern newsrooms, and online polarisation. She authored *Participatory Journalism and Reader Comments in Croatia* (2024) and serves as Executive Editor of *Medijska istraživanja*. Combining academic research with her background as a journalist, she collaborates on European projects using quantitative, qualitative, and AI-assisted methods

The teacher role in the age of AI

Maja Kolega,
Ph.D., Asst. Prof.



As AI tools generate instant answers, the educator's role shifts from delivering content to designing learning experiences that foster awareness, critical thinking, and responsibility. Grounded in experiential learning and a Gestalt-informed approach, this interactive workshop explores what teachers can do that AI cannot. Learning is viewed as a "here and now" process shaped by the relationship between student, teacher, and context. The focus moves from content to awareness, meaning-making, and responsible choice—especially around how and why AI is used (What did I outsource? What did I verify?). Through practical activities and real classroom dilemmas, participants will develop strategies for using AI in ways that deepen authentic human learning.

Carrier: Maja Kolega graduated in Psychology at the Faculty of Philosophy, completed postgraduate study, Supervision in psychosocial work and gained Ph.D. at the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. She is currently employed at VERN' University as psychology lecturer, teaching and developing different courses. She has published several scientific and professional papers and has actively participated in different national and international conferences. Her main interests are centered around humanistic psychology and organizational development.

EU digital citizens - smart city Zagreb case

EU Smart Cities and policies as a framework within digitalization of EU cities is actual topic. There are some ambitious goals to achieve within legal framework and each of member states. Republic of Croatia as the "newest" member state is undertaking steps, as well as its capital City of Zagreb. There'll be presented actual moment in digitalization in Republic of Croatia with very focus on Zagreb - achievements, ongoing projects and biggest challenges.

Senior lecturer

Dubravka Maras

M.Sc.



Carriere: Dubravka Maras is a senior lecturer and Head of Tourism Study at VERN' University Zagreb. She has a Graduation in Economy, a Master of Science in Business Management, both at Zagreb University. She has a long professional career in business sector, management and project management and is a President of Croatian Free Zones Association since 2000, as well as National Contact Point in Croatia for WFZO. She has a several scientific and expert articles published on entrepreneurial infrastructure, regional development and macroeconomics, EU funds and projects, logistics, microeconomics. Presently her interests also include energy poverty, AI and digitalisation in education.

Workshop: Eu parliament

Learning Tourism and Hospitality Through Real World Active Learning Projects

Senior lecturer

Jorge Marques

PhD, Assoc. Prof.



This session explores how active learning methodologies can enhance student engagement and skill development in tourism and hospitality education. It presents two hands on projects: one in which students create a tourism enhancement proposal for an existing building, and another where they identify barriers and propose solutions to make a tourist itinerary more accessible and inclusive. The focus is on how real world challenges foster critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and professional readiness.

Carrier: Jorge Marques is an Associate Professor in the Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture at Portucalense University, Portugal, and a researcher at REMIT and CEGOT. He holds a PhD in Tourism, Leisure and Culture from the University of Coimbra. His work focuses on tourism and hospitality, and he is the editor of three books: Digital Transformation of the Hotel Industry, Tourism and Climate Change, and Building Human Capital in Tourism and Hospitality.

Leadership Through Practice: Emotional Intelligence, Trust, and Dialogue

Rino Medić,
Ph.D., Asst. Prof.



This lecture presents leadership as a mindful practice rooted in self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and trust-building. Drawing on insights from neuroscience, it highlights empathy and self-regulation as essential competencies for effective decision-making. The session also explores dialogical leadership, emphasizing collaboration, psychological safety, and the power of leading through questions rather than instructions. Leadership is framed as a shared process of listening, curiosity, and co-creating meaning within teams.

Carriere: Dr. Rino Medić is an expert in leadership, entrepreneurship, and community development. He earned his PhD in Entrepreneurship and Innovation, focusing on the role of volunteering in remote communities. His work emphasizes servant leadership, ethical practices, and the development of social capital, which shapes his teaching and research.

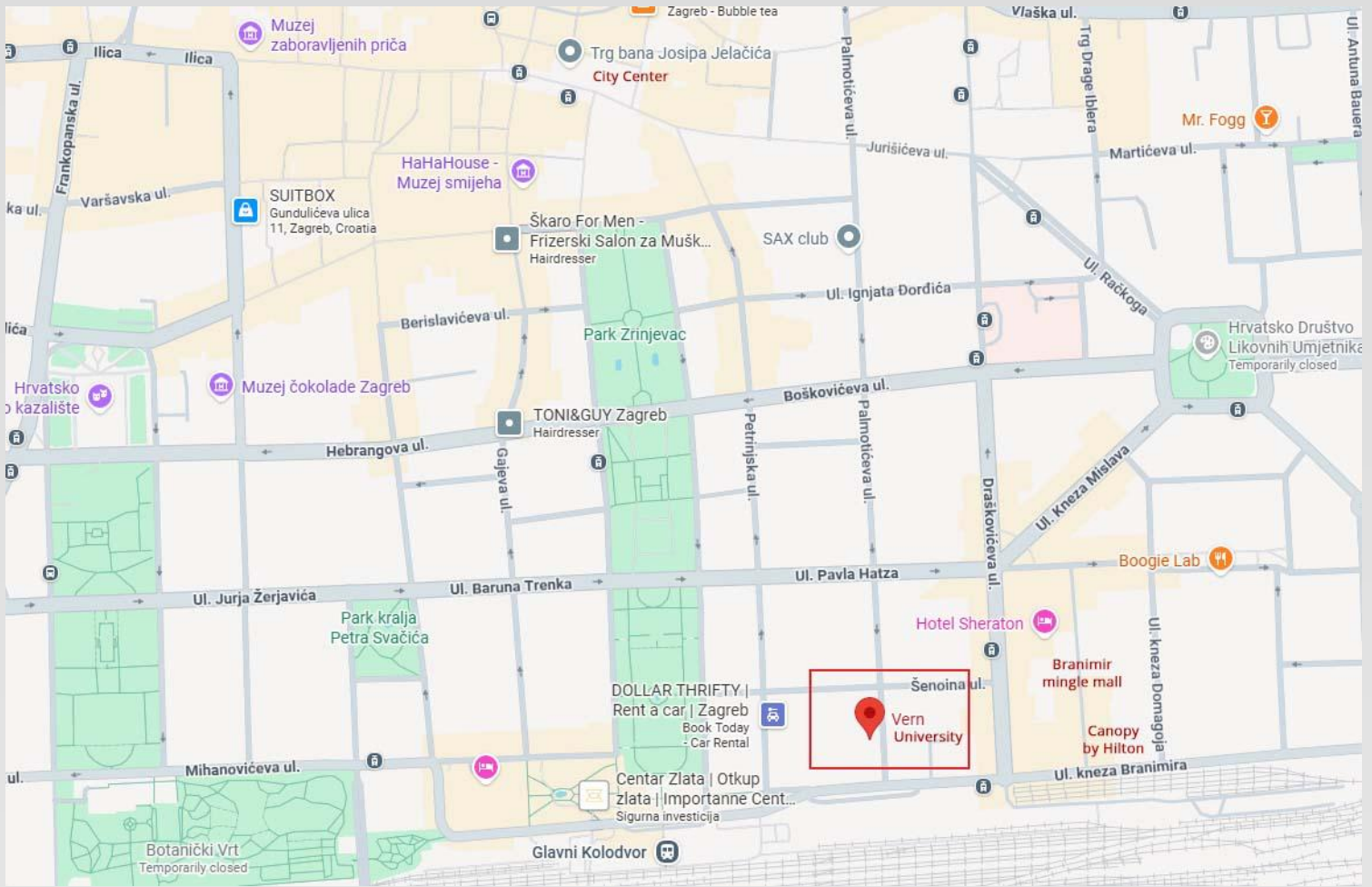
Building Cross-Border Alliances Against Disinformation: European Fact-Checking Networks, Policy Frameworks and Collaborative Models

Disinformation has become a structural challenge for democratic societies, requiring coordinated responses beyond individual fact-checking efforts. This lecture examines how European and global networks, academic institutions and media organisations collaborate to build cross-border resilience against information disorder. It highlights global and EU-level initiatives, professional standards and election-focused collaborations as examples of collective action.

Marija Slijepčević
Ph.D., Asst. Prof.



Carriere: Marija Slijepčević, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies and Head of the Public Relations and Media Studies Department at VERN University in Zagreb, Croatia. She teaches courses like Media Literacy and Fact-Checking and Theories of Contemporary Media. Her research focuses on information disorder, information warfare patterns and comparative fact-checking practices in Europe and Southeast Europe. She combines academic research with professional journalism and PR experience, promoting collaborative and evidence-based approaches to countering disinformation.



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