

Erasmus Policy Statement

The College of Applied Sciences Užice (CAS) follows the Bologna process, which is incorporated in the Serbian Law on Higher Education. CAS aims to contribute to the Bologna objectives by ensuring that the education it provides is based on state-of-the-art research and development, that it fosters innovation and creativity, and enhances international openness and mobility. In doing so, CAS regards the social dimension of equal opportunities to quality education as a must.

To this end, CAS strongly encourages and supports the mobility of staff (both teaching and administrative) and students, providing them with all the necessary information, linguistic, administrative and technical support.

In order to increase the number of students with strong international and intercultural competencies, we have developed the mechanisms of recognising their mobility achievements and including them in their Diploma Supplement.

In order to increase the number of college employees with strong international and intercultural competencies, we have flexible timetable and working hours, and they have full-pay leave while abroad. We will consider the indicators of the international activity of teachers as an additional selection criterion for the election of teachers. Through the mobility of staff, we intend to modernise our study programmes and attract a growing number of potential students, including students from foreign countries. We also intend to establish collaborative partnerships with HEIs in the country and abroad, as well as with the local and regional authorities, development agencies and youth organisations.

Our college has 8 laboratories equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, and we believe that both staff and student mobility might result in some international research projects which may lead to innovations, thus positively affecting sustainable development in our region and the country as a whole. To this end, the collaboration with industry is inevitable, as this collaboration translates research into innovations that shape our reality and transform our lives. Being a vocational college, CAS will seek to increase the opportunities for the integration of industrial experience into degree programmes.

We choose our partners based on their scientific and technical expertise, which must meet the needs of our workplan and support the achievement of our strategic objectives. We also choose them according to our positive experience in previous collaboration in the implementation of projects (TEMPUS, ERASMUS). We appreciate the recommendations of other partners as well, whereas some of the partnerships have resulted from individual links between academic staff.

So far, our project partners have been EU countries and former Yugoslav republics. However, we remain open to cooperation with any other country as well.

Our mobility activities are aimed at increasing the number of staff and students taking part in mobility, by extending the range of opportunities we can offer them. Both academic and administrative staff members are provided with mobility opportunities, as their mobility is invaluable for the successful partnership relationship management and support of cooperation projects.

We believe that teaching staff mobility leads to their competence building, which would further lead to the modernisation of our programmes and teaching practice, as our teachers would exchange experiences with their colleagues in other countries, and follow positive practices. The

mobility of administrative staff is aimed at motivating them to support the implementation of internationalisation in a highly professional manner.

As to students, we would try to explore short-term mobility in order to encourage the participation of a more diverse student body. Equal opportunities would be offered to our students in first and second cycle, regardless of their social background.

The College is committed to providing special support to students with disabilities in order to enable them to participate as fully as possible in student life. We believe that higher education is not the privilege of the elites, and are strongly devoted to the development of inclusive policies and practice.

We strive to provide our graduates with employment-related skills, and believe that mobility activities can make a significant contribution to their future success and employability.

We will actively promote to students and staff the personal and professional development benefits of international mobility, which will help them develop transferrable skills employers are looking for.

The Erasmus programme is promoted on the College website, as well as through social networks, local media and all the events organised by the College, such as the College Day celebration and the international conference we hold on a regular basis.

So far the College has participated as a partner in the implementation of five TEMPUS projects and it has been the chief coordinator of one TEMPUS project. It is also a member of the CEEPUS network. Through the participation in international cooperation projects, we have managed to modernise the existing study programmes, as well as to have new study programmes accredited, and eight laboratories fully equipped. Therefore, our institution's strategy is to actively pursue collaborations in international projects relating to teaching and training, which also complies with the Draft of the Serbian Higher Education Internationalisation Strategy.

We intend to increase both staff and student mobility number, providing equal opportunities to all of them. Mobility activities will provide teachers with opportunities for professional development and exchange of experiences with their colleagues in other countries, which would result in modernisation of our courses, making them more efficient and attractive to high school graduates both from our country and abroad. Active participation in the Erasmus+ programme will support us in offering high-quality degree programmes with up-to-date course content matching the current needs and demands of the labour market in Serbia and abroad.

Through staff mobility we also seek to establish teaching and research cooperation with both HEIs in Serbia and in other countries, which may eventually result in joint research and joint study programmes. We intend to establish cooperation not only with other HEIs, but also with enterprises, local and regional authorities, social partners, youth organisations, etc.

Teachers with international experience are more likely to support students to become mobile themselves, which complies with our intention to foster student mobility in order to enable them to benefit educationally, linguistically and culturally from the experience in other countries, which would enhance their employability and therefore positively affect the economic situation in our country, and contribute to sustainable development. To this end, we intend to organise courses to improve both staff's and students' English proficiency. We also intend to develop the precise recognition policy for staff mobility.

We expect a highly positive impact of our participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on the modernisation of our institution. Apart from the individual benefit, staff mobility would ensure better quality of education our institution offers, by introducing new content and teaching methods, establishing new international contacts and encouraging scientific work and innovation.

We believe that modernised and efficient learner-centered courses would attract more high school graduates to enrol at our college, and that they would both improve our students' basic skills (numerical, literacy, digital) and provide them with a range of transversal skills (problem-solving, critical thinking, communication...) that would enhance their employability and help them remain competitive in a changing business environment.

The cooperation with employers would help us increase the relevance of our curricula and overcome the mismatch between the skills of our graduate students and the skills required by their potential employers.

The participation in the Erasmus+ programme is also expected to ensure that the education our college offers becomes more inclusive and open to talents from all backgrounds, ensuring gender equality in all fields of study, and social inclusion of students with disabilities.

Efficient education and teachers with good pedagogical skills and modernised teaching methods, trained to provide students with career guidance and mentoring, would ensure successful completion of studies by majority of students.

Blended learning becomes necessary as it would make our programmes more flexible and more accessible especially for adult learners. To this end, all our teachers have received training in how to use the Moodle platform and design online courses.

Our participation in this programme will help us develop an outward-looking culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Through modernised courses and by modernised teaching methods, our teachers will be able to develop students' ability to think critically and creatively in order to understand new concepts, as well as to act entrepreneurially in order to develop and apply new ideas. In this manner we would contribute to local and regional development and help local businesses and other organisations adopt new ways of thinking. To this end, we need to cooperate with the government as it is the primary funder of higher education in Serbia, to foster international cooperation and reduce mobility barriers. We hope to design reward and incentive mechanisms to reward good teaching and research, innovation, social inclusion and engagement.

The above-mentioned implies improving linguistic proficiency of our academic, administrative staff and students, and raising their awareness of the necessity of independent lifelong learning.