

## ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

### VIŠJA STROKOVNA ŠOLA RAVNE NA KOROŠKEM

#### Participation in Erasmus+

Higher vocational college Ravne (HVC Ravne) strives to introduce international cooperation to broaden the possibilities for students and staff to gather international experiences, expand their intercultural competencies and improve work performance in the environment with co-workers from different national cultures.

Internationalisation is a part of HVC Ravne strategy and yearly plan. The mission and vision of the HVC Ravne state that it is the specific task of the professional staff of our school to ensure that the higher education vocational programmes are in line with the objectives of the European education market, so that knowledge is comparable in Europe and students are flexible in their search for a job.

Participation in Erasmus+ program will allow HVC Ravne to build a network of international partners, transfers of know-how, follow enormous development in technical sciences and providing up to date knowledge, launch new study programs and/or curriculum and facilitate students to be more prepared to work in global environment. Expected contribution of an international experience are improved language competencies, raised awareness and sense of European community.

We are planning to introduce international mobility in all possible forms: study and internships for our present and incoming students and for the staff (teaching and learning).

The main purpose of the ECHE chart and participation in Erasmus+ program is to increase international recognition of our institution and provide the mobility of teachers and staff on the behalf and in the name of our organisation. Many of our employees are connected with other schools and companies, which offer participation in mobility programs and have already participated in the international programs. But we are striving to provide them with the possibility of the unique share of experiences with the teachers in Europe in similar study programs as ours: mechanical engineering and mechatronics. They will be able to observe best practices, gain new skills and insights, improve cultural and language proficiency, and connect with different stakeholders.

That will offer employees and also students the opportunity to grow and bust their carrier and professional development, strengthen intercultural awareness and intercultural integration. At the same time, it will stimulate the institution modernisation with new knowledge, ideas and pedagogical methods. The increased quality of teaching will have wider positive effect on our industry partners, local environment, economic growth, social equality and cohesion.

Mobility will increase students' employability and will also improve their learning competences, increase their independence, their own initiative, self-confidence and intercultural awareness and linguistic knowledge, boost students' motivation for further education (formal and informal) and training after mobility.

Internationalisation will enable teachers and staff to learn new, modern teaching methods, cases of good practices, start cooperation with foreign partner faculties in the implementation of international tenders within the framework of Erasmus+, to enable lecturers to gain experience in the field of scientific research work and to integrate the innovations and results of foreign research into their own research work through exchange, to provide good administrative and professional support to all foreign students, lecturers and staff who will be guests at HCV Ravne.

Great majority of companies in our region is focused on foreign markets, many of them have mixed or foreign ownership and many employees are from other nations. Therefore it is necessary for future engineers to have well developed international competencies. We will invite domestic companies to help us in building networks with their foreign partners; to introduce our leaders and international officers to partners and help to find working places for students' internships.

We will first address companies and colleges on the other side of the border in Austria, which will contribute to green transport as we have a good train connection to Bleiburg and further Klagenfurt and western Europe.

Establishing first contacts via digital communication will enhance also the digital skills of students and staff. Cooperation with European Higher education institution will be also the possibility to improve our distance teaching and modern teaching methods with the help of ICT.

The promotion of different values among them is very important and to stress the importance of their self-respect a respecting others and their diversity. Also, in Erasmus+ projects there will be very important to provide the inclusion of all underrepresented people and being non-discriminative.

As we just started our internationalisation as institution, our goal is to start with mobility program to enable students, who have been already waiting for the opportunity of an internship abroad, to gather their work experience with support of Erasmus+ funds and to enable teachers and staff to participate in Erasmus+ projects of consortium of Association of HVC Slovenia. We also plan to internationalize our conference of modern technologies.

We have operationalized those purposes in the following specific objectives:

- participation of at least 2 teachers/staff per year in mobility, starting in 2024,
- establish new partnerships and conclude new bilateral agreements (3 in 2024, plus 2 additional per year),
- participation of at least 2 students per year in internships abroad (starting in 2024),
- at least 2 incoming teacher / staff / student per year,
- at least 2 international teacher or researcher as participant in conference.

Once we have received the ECHE chart, we will immediately start activities under **Erasmus KA1: student and staff exchange**.

We will ask local companies to send cooperation requests to their partner companies in Austria and other parts of Europe, inviting them to host our students for internships. We will organise an international day at the school to present the new mobility opportunities to both, students and staff. We will invite mobility officer from Slovenian association of HVC to make a presentation of possibilities for mobility for students, graduates and staff.

We already published webpage in English to provide information of our HVC Ravne with our school and programs. Part of the page is Erasmus+.

To provide the information on Erasmus mobility project we will publish the information in social network (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn). Promotion and dissemination will be via: [www.vssravne.si](http://www.vssravne.si), all media channels, workshops, personal interviews with an Erasmus coordinator, teacher conferences and other events enhancing international activities.

Each year we are going to organise Erasmus+ day (a day when international students, companies, mobility participants and guests present their experiences, companies, national cultures). In the future we plan to organise Erasmus week (for incoming staff and teaching staff with emphasis on cultural heritage).

We will launch a call for applications for students. We will review the applications and select the candidates and forward their applications to the consortium. Selection criteria will be foreign language skills, academic performance, motivation, involvement in HVC Ravne activities. In promotion and selection process we will take care of non-discrimination and will stimulate students from vulnerable background to take part in mobility.

We will organise individual language and cultural preparation for those selected, help them find accommodation, travel arrangements and insurance.

We will also support students in establishing contacts with their employer and mentor abroad, preparing cooperation documentation (mobility agreement, contracts), and during the placement we will also carry out a visit to the foreign employer.

For students who will perform the internship abroad, we are going to recognize all ECTS (hours which exceed obligatory 400 hours will be taken into account for the internships in second year and written in diploma appendix).

As part of Erasmus+ activities, we will focus on developing digital skills and promoting sustainability through initiatives such as Erasmus Without Papers. Additionally, we aim to encourage environmentally friendly travel options, such as train travel. Furthermore, we will actively support and promote the European Student Card initiative.

#### **KA2 activities:**

Development of a network with stakeholders connected to modern technology, automation, robotics, and education.

Erasmus KA2 will enable us to establish a network among international partners, prepare the curriculum for our new study programme and provide our partner companies with innovative solutions.

In the future, we are looking towards **KA3**, hoping it will be the next step in the evolution of this college.

Higher Vocational College Ravne aims to strengthen its visibility in the European higher education space and increase internationalization, being as open as possible to the international higher education arena. This effort will enable participation in the Erasmus program, which is an integral part of the yearly working plan for 2023/2024 and aligns with the valid long-term development plan (2021-2026). This goal will also be incorporated into the new strategy currently under preparation.

The strategic goals include internationalization:

- Developing the school into an institution that fosters professional development, trains students to become excellent employees, and supports further education. We aim to cooperate constructively with the wider environment in the following ways:
  - Devoting specific activities to enhance the reputation of the quality of our graduates when recruiting or pursuing further studies both domestically and internationally.
  - Developing internationally recognized joint study programs or modules.

The following activities, planned to implement the Strategic Plan, relate to internationalization, quality assurance, modernization, and lifelong learning:

- Achieving equal and comparable integration into a single European Higher Education Area by promoting active international mobility of students, teachers, staff, and business partners.
- Ensuring quality material and human resource conditions for the school's activities.
- Promoting knowledge and encouraging lifelong learning and education in the business profession.
- Actively cooperating with the industry in analysing educational needs and developing new professional standards.
- Updating the existing higher vocational education program and developing new modules, electives, and specialized modules.

We have three strategic orientations, which would be enhanced with internationalization, as Erasmus+ mobility programs are known to increase satisfaction and quality:

1. Quality studies leading to professional excellence.
2. Student satisfaction, fostering a good climate and culture at the school.
3. Staff satisfaction, promoting good communication and respect between students and staff.

Our values, which will be better realized through Erasmus projects, include:

- Responsibility and reliability
- Knowledge
- Professionalism
- Innovation
- Perseverance
- Respect for oneself and people who are different.

We offer the opportunity for studying and internships to all students who seek additional knowledge and experience in a foreign environment and are motivated enough to benefit from the wealth of diversity at a foreign institution. International experience will help them decide on further studies and a career.

The main purpose of the Erasmus program is to increase the mobility of teachers and staff under the auspices of our school and initiate the mobility of students in all possible forms – study, training, work practice, short programs, etc.

We have operationalized this purpose with the following objectives:

- Establish new partnerships and forge additional bilateral agreements, particularly in Austria and countries where the interests of our students are most significant.
- Empower students to enhance their learning competences through exchanges, fostering their initiative, self-confidence, intercultural awareness, and linguistic knowledge. This aims to increase students' motivation for further formal and informal education and training after mobility.
- Enable lecturers and other employees to acquaint themselves with new, more modern teaching methods, exchange best practices, and collaborate with foreign partner faculties in implementing international tenders within the framework of Erasmus+.
- Enable lecturers to gain experience in professional, developmental, and scientific research work, integrating innovations and findings from foreign research into their own research through exchange.
- Provide robust administrative and professional support to all foreign students, lecturers, and staff who will be guests at our college.

We aim to enhance the international recognition of HVC Ravne. By disseminating the experiences and results of our staff and student mobility, we will increase the visibility of our students and staff among their peers and other audiences. This will be achieved through our existing events (Modern Technologies Days, Conferences, Erasmus Day, Erasmus Week for incoming staff and teachers) and college channels, contributing to the opportunities for employment and career development.

Expected Impact of Mobility:

- Improved foreign language skills and competencies (German, English, etc.) and enhanced intercultural awareness and competencies of our staff and students through various events, seminars, and courses before and during mobility, as well as communication during mobility.
- Improved digital skills.
- Improved interpersonal communication skills, problem-solving skills, and a commitment to lifelong learning.
- Improved personal and social development, including self-confidence, self-esteem, autonomy, adaptability, persistence, and an expanded network.
- Enhanced awareness of the necessity of sustainable practices and activities.
- Improved readiness to work, study, and live abroad; intention to move abroad for work, study, or to live.
- Modernized teaching methods, new teaching approaches, and research opportunities, as well as updated study programs through new experiences, knowledge, and examples of good practices, and partnerships.
- Greater exposure of staff who participated in mobility through teacher conferences, staff meetings, and sharing their experiences via the website.
- Greater exposure of students who participated in mobility through presentations to other students, Erasmus+ day, Career Centre and Alumni meetings, and sharing their experiences via the website.
- Enhanced employability of students with international experience.
- Expanded opportunities for students from economically less favourable environments and students with special needs.
- Improved awareness of the importance of sustainability achieved through empowering various stakeholders, promoting travel by train, adopting paperless operations for Erasmus+ programs, and disseminating information through digital publications.
- Improved sense of belonging to Europe and readiness to live in foreign countries through better knowledge about Europe, European countries, and cultures.
- Broadened network among potential project partners, visiting lecturers, incoming students and staff, and the development of broader contacts and friendships.

Training and learning in the field of mechanics and mechatronics hardly end with regular formal education, to be open for life-long learning, we would like to stimulate students and employees to be mobile and flexible for new connection and knowledge.

The mobility of academic staff benefits all study processes for the dissemination of newly acquired knowledge to future generations of students. International experience will be considered an added value and will assist in academic advancement. They also play an important role in helping to improve the effectiveness of foreign languages and teaching qualifications, helping to introduce new teaching methods and enabling the exchange of teaching experience.

HVC Ravne is already very active in connecting education, research and the companies in region and will strive to strengthen their cooperation. We consider the internship to be an important part of the program, which connects it to the labour market/professional orientation of the students, as well as to the labour market, economy and industry. Cooperation in European and international projects is considered the main tool for achieving general strategic goals, which are set as follows: ensuring high-quality research and teaching, internationalization and promoting the mobility of students and staff, promoting international connections with partner institutions, integration.

The impact of the Erasmus program is particularly important when it comes to quality assurance. By participating in the program, HVC Ravne wants and strengthens the quality of its services by ensuring the mobility of students and teachers. Learning exchanges make it possible to compare learning methods, discuss learning outcomes and improve the quality of curricula. We believe that only teachers with international competencies can successfully contribute to the implementation of the intercultural component in the study process and understand the true importance of internationalized learning outcomes. Developed networking between researchers at the international level also contributes to students' learning outcomes as it enables teachers to present the latest findings in their subject areas.

The emphasis is on the quality and accessibility of mobility for all students and staff. The mobility of academic staff benefits all learning processes that spread their newly acquired knowledge to future generations of students. This promotes quality and excellence in research, education and achievement

at HVC Ravne. As a result, we improve the links between theory and practice in teaching and learning and encourage creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship by offering appropriate learning opportunities.

All this will enable the preservation and strengthening of the reputation of our educational institution in Slovenian and international affairs.

#### Indicators

We would like to obtain the ECHE Charter and subsequently provide the first students and employees with the opportunity to participate in Erasmus+ mobility projects. We also look forward to welcoming the first students and teachers/staff from abroad to HVC Ravne. Beginning with two students and employees for outgoing mobility, we plan to increase that number to five per year until 2027.

Indicators of reached goals:

- ECHE application submitted before January 25, 2024
- Awarded ECHE (2024),
- 2 outgoing STA or STT mobility participation per year (starting in 2024 as part of consortium of Association of higher vocational colleges in Slovenia),
- 3 new partnerships and bilateral agreements, in 2024, 2 new each year,
- 2 outgoing student mobility for internships per year (starting in 2024 as part of consortium of Association of higher vocational colleges in Slovenia),
- 2 incoming students (internship, short visit) per year,
- 2 incoming STA or STT,
- Satisfaction of outgoing students (more than 3,5 on 5-level scale),
- Satisfaction of outgoing staff (more than 3,5 on 5-level scale).