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## **ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT 2014-2020 INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS IN ČESKÉ BUDĚJOVICE**

Participation in the international activities is the ITB's strategic priority making it possible to prepare students and graduates for the European labour market while providing continuous incentives for the integration of new educational trends in terms of content and new forms of teaching methods.

The ITB's international strategy priorities can be summarized as follows:

- developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with foreign institutions
- creating appropriate infrastructure to support international activities
- initiating recruitment of foreign students
- implementing cooperation projects with foreign partner institutions
- engaging every student in some form of an international activity
- creating a range of double degree programmes for degree courses

In accordance with the ITB's Long-term Plan, the activities are aimed at establishing and strengthening partnerships with foreign HEIs and institutions both in the fields of education, research and development and in terms of participation in international projects. An important element of the cooperation with these partners is the emphasis on the mobility of students (studies, long-term hands-on training), academics and staff, including the creation of academic conditions for the admission of students from abroad.

Students are able to complete a semester or a full academic year abroad, thus gaining valuable experience, expertise and foreign language skills. In addition to these semester exchanges, the ITB offers short-term activities within the framework of cooperation projects, programmes and events such as the "International weeks", summer schools, etc., where students from multiple partner schools get together in teams to work on a project. One of the goals to have been met by 2020 is to create a choice of double degree programmes that will be implemented in cooperation with selected partner HEIs in Europe, as well as in non-EU countries.

The recognition of learning outcomes achieved at other HEIs has been made possible due to the implementation of the ECTS system. In 2012, the European Commission granted the ITB the prestigious ECTS Label.

### Partner Selection Strategy

Natural foreign partners for the ITB are those HEIs that put the practical employability of graduates first and are able and willing to flexibly adapt to dynamically changing requirements of the European labour market. These are usually smaller HEIs with professionally oriented fields of study and that emphasize project teaching. As with the ITB, long-term hands-on training in the application sphere is an integral part of these HEIs' curricula. Such partners are found in the Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and also in Germany and Austria, where practically oriented colleges (called Fachhochschulen) have established themselves as a distinct and widespread type of HEIs.



The selection of the ITB partners also reflects the geographical position of the South Bohemian Region and its economic and cultural link with Germany and Austria. Learning mobility (study stays and mainly internships) to these countries allow students to not only master the German language, but also to realize the specifics of the environment on which corporate culture in German and Austrian companies is based.

Still, the ITB makes sure the partner universities that are offered for mobility programmes are as geographically diverse as possible. Before entering into partnership with HEIs in countries where the knowledge of English is not common, the ITB checks whether the institution, in addition to the quality teaching in English, provides its students with the assistance to help overcome the language barrier in everyday life.

Given the ITB's aim to create new fields and specializations focusing on specific regions in Eastern Europe and Asia, efforts are being made towards signing new partnerships with universities in Russian speaking countries and in the Far East. In the future, the ITB intends to implement a more extensive international cooperation project aimed precisely at the region of Russia.

#### Target Groups of Mobility Activities

Student mobility is the priority mobility activity. The opportunity for students to study abroad has the same weight for the ITB as the opportunity for students to do an internship abroad, which is an integral part of the study programme as a compulsory subject. The ITB aims to ensure that all international internship candidates are provided with funding opportunities. One of the steps taken by ITB to approach this ideal was entering the consortium Educa International, o.p.s. which provides additional funding for student internships as well as valuable contacts for companies accepting interns.

In terms of staff mobility, the priority is academic staff mobility due to a greater number of people that can benefit from the activity. The tuition provided by international guest lecturers is beneficial for both domestic students and academics.

**The strategy for the organization and implementation of cooperation projects in teaching and training** is in line with the ITB's international strategy and aims to provide training to, among others, "non-traditional" students. Given that the ITB is a professionally oriented HEI, its projects focused on teaching and training will emphasise the development of transversal skills such as critical thinking and the ability to use the knowledge across all subjects and knowledge areas. In order to implement these projects, the ITB should seek open cooperation and enter into partnerships at all levels, including public authorities, HEIs, VET institutions and social partners, in particular employers' associations. Therefore, there is the desire to create a bridge from traditional forms of teaching to diverse traditional and alternative learning opportunities that are more process and outcome oriented.

The ITB recognizes that the effective implementation of projects focused on teaching and training will require a paradigm shift. These projects should not be primarily focused on the transfer of knowledge, but they should use modern educational opportunities. In accordance with the concept of lifelong learning, they should emphasize the development of individual capabilities and learning competencies. The core of the project concept should be an effort to motivate people to "learn how to learn".

The ITB intends to participate in the implementation of cooperation projects in the following categories: Strategic Partnerships, Knowledge Alliances, Sector Skills Alliances, International Cooperation and Capacity Building.

Four basic needs can be defined as being in line with this strategy:

- becoming involved in EU projects so as to enrich the lifelong learning agenda within the institution
- involvement of key stakeholders and gaining their support
- providing counselling to students, prospective students and employers
- developing policies and practices to recognize prior learning

**The participation in the Programme will help the ITB to meet the goals outlined in the following five priorities of the Modernisation Agenda.**

1) Increasing attainment levels to provide the graduates and researchers Europe needs

Although the ITB currently offers only bachelor's degree courses, the next phase of the Programme should expand the offer to master's degree courses and other on-campus and off-campus learning opportunities to make use of modern technologies (such as e-learning courses, virtual learning environments, etc.). If matching funding is provided by the Programme, it will be possible to initiate projects to create programmes adapted to the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

2) Improving the quality and relevance of higher education

Since its inception, the ITB has been connected with the industrial and business sectors, that are actively involved in the development and teaching of courses within their area of expertise. This allows the curricula to reflect the current situation in industry and business. It is expected that the next phase of the Programme will see the initiation of projects that will bring the curricula in conformity with the NQF and the EQF, so that the learning outcomes are consistent with the requirements of the labour market.

3) Strengthening quality through mobility and cross-border co-operations

The participation in the Programme can provide the ITB with sufficient funding and the administrative framework for the implementation of student and staff mobility.

Increased mobility would result in improved language skills of the stakeholders, an increased employability of the students and the modernized teaching methods at the ITB.

An integral part of the ITB curriculum is an internship in the application sphere. The participation in the Programme could allow the ITB to provide financial support to all of the students who wish to fulfil this duty abroad.



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#### 4) Making the knowledge triangle work

As the only technical university located in the South Bohemian Region, the ITB has established a good rapport with the regional authorities, businesses, public and state sectors; the ITB is currently implementing projects with some of them.

Adequate funding of Programme activities can give support to the process of creating strong partnerships with other institutions abroad and the development of projects within the European research area.

#### 5) Improving governance and funding

Education is a national priority area and it will depend on the government whether it will provide sustainable funding and be willing to invest in high-quality education systems. For ITB as a teaching college, it is difficult to raise funds from private sources. In this situation, the primary instrument to improve the governance and funding of the institution will be through the creation of adequate international service infrastructures and further involvement in the Programme, as well as in other EU and non-EU activities.