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## **ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT 2021-2027 INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS IN ČESKÉ BUDĚJOVICE**

The Institute of Technology and Business in České Budějovice (ITB) profiles itself as a professionally-oriented HEI with an international dimension, whose mission is to create a multicultural university environment in accordance with European trends. The ITB's priority is to participate in international activities that 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 internationalisation of the ITB will support its development within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA).

The priorities of the ITB's internationalisation strategy in connection with the Erasmus+ Programme can be summarised as follows:

- Creating appropriate infrastructure to support international activities;
- developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with foreign educational, research and development institutions and enterprises;
- improving the academic and administrative prerequisites for the admission of international students;
- implementing cooperation projects with foreign partner institutions;
- engaging every student in some form of an international activity (by taking part in physical, blended mobility or by means of the concept "Internationalisation at Home");
- creating a range of double degree programmes.

In line 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. Active cooperation with foreign businesses is also essential.

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 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.

Partners corresponding to these criteria are often found in the Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and also in Germany and Austria, where practically-oriented colleges 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 realise the specifics of the environment on which corporate culture in German and Austrian companies is based.

In the non-European area, the ITB has long focused on the regions of China, Russia, the CIS countries and the Republic of Korea (including Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility). The Confucius Class was established on ITB premises, providing services and courses leading to the acquisition of competencies in accordance with the demand of the labor market. Great potential is seen in cooperation on projects with experts from



renowned Russian universities. Given the ITB's aim to create new fields and specialisations 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. As part of the planned development of international cooperation, the ITB will also focus on Canada, North and South America.

In the selection process of foreign partner enterprises, the emphasis is placed on international project cooperation, within which the ITB offers the use of modern laboratories and the participation of its students and academic staff.

### International Mobility

The main goal of the mobility of academic staff is to gain experience in the current and planned focus of study programmes, as well as the pedagogical process and its confrontation with the teaching process at the ITB and new knowledge and trends in the current labour market. The mobility of academics and staff has an important place in creating an international environment for all students, regardless of whether they participate in outbound or inbound mobility. The tuition provided by international guest lecturers is beneficial for both domestic students and academics.

The Erasmus+ Programme shows that mobility provides opportunities to become active and critically aware citizens and cross-border contacts are an efficient way to experience European identity. Virtual mobility is an excellent tool to enable direct contact between students.

In terms of student mobility, the emphasis is placed on practical traineeships abroad, due to the professional focus of the ITB. The traineeship is an integral part of the bachelor's study programmes 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 relevant traineeship opportunities.

Full automatic recognition of all credits gained for learning outcomes satisfactorily achieved during a period of study/training abroad was made possible by the consistent implementation of the ECTS concept. In the new phase, Erasmus+ will provide other effective tools to facilitate the recognition process.

In the current digital era, the ITB faces the challenge of re-evaluating the current teaching paradigm. New opportunities within the Erasmus+ Programme will enhance the use of blended mobility, which will support both online and traditional face-to-face teaching and international student exchange activities.

The ITB is ready to digitize the mobility process from an administrative and practical point of view, as its mobility management system is compatible with the technologies of the Erasmus Without Paper project. It expects the European Student Card initiative to improve the quality of student mobility and reduce the administrative burden in providing services or recognizing study or traineeships abroad.

### Modernisation

Participation of the ITB in the Erasmus+ Programme in the field of education, research, innovation, mobility etc. will have a significant impact on modernisation of the institution and implementation of its overall strategy. Strategy and development activities undertaken by the institute are accordant to the priorities for action of the New EU agenda for higher education.



### 1) Tackling skills mismatches and promoting excellence in skills development.

The ITB's teaching methodology is based on theoretical knowledge as well as on practical skills in order to create capabilities for solving real-world problems.

Staff mobility through the Erasmus+ Programme has a strong impact on teachers' professional development by changing their mindset into more creative and innovative thinking and therefore has a potential to increase a quality of the educational process at home.

The ITB recognises the significance of student mobility for study and traineeships under the Erasmus+ Programme for the acquirement of advanced transversal skills and key competencies, such as high-level digital competencies, numeracy, autonomy, critical thinking and a capacity for problem-solving. That will allow the participants to succeed in high-skill occupations and thus consequently contribute to filling the gap between the demand and supply in the labour market.

### 2) Building inclusive and connected higher education systems

The ITB's activities aim to ensure that higher education is inclusive and open to talent from all backgrounds. Erasmus+ will create better conditions for intercultural and inter-institutional exchange in order to gain experience and offer new opportunities to all its students and staff members, thus promoting equality and non-discrimination of all professional and educational levels. All participants will be treated fairly and equally, and supported properly by the Institute. The systematic cooperation with other HEIs and stakeholders in terms of Erasmus+ mobility and international cooperation projects will help to prepare and guide the students based on their talent not their background, and provide flexible pathways between the different types of education and training.

### 3) Ensuring higher education institutions contribute to innovation

Through Erasmus+ Programme, the ITB will strive to strengthen and develop the innovative and entrepreneurial potential of students and employees, as well as the development of links between education, research and business to contribute to innovation at local, regional and European level.

International cooperation and mobility will stimulate innovative thinking and will trigger creativity. Involvement in Erasmus+ Actions will provide opportunities to learn new entrepreneurial skills from industrial partners operating in different business culture in other countries. Traineeships will offer complementary opportunities to study programmes in technology. Mobility participants will have an opportunity to exchange knowledge and skills and disseminate the results of professional and scientific work.

An integral part of the ITB's bachelor's study programmes curriculum is an internship in the application sphere. Participation in the Programme could allow the ITB to provide financial support to all of the students who wish to fulfil this duty abroad.

#### Participation in the Erasmus actions

The ITB plans to use the Erasmus+ Programme to achieve its goals mentioned above through participation in the following activities: Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility: The mobility of higher education students and staff; Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organisations and institutions:

Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices, Partnerships for Innovation; Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support to policy development and cooperation.

The institutional legal framework providing basic rules for projects' implementation and management is based on a directive Activities of the Department of Project Work. Certain international projects may be managed and implemented both at faculty and central level, depending on if they are related to specific scientific fields or if there are mutual interests on the ITB level (including joint coordination of large research and development projects or mutual capacity building activities).

— Before processing the project application, the project promoter submits a brief project plan through an online quality management tool ETMS, where he completes the project information, including its objectives, schedule and financial aspects. Authorized persons further approve the project idea: Faculty Director, Faculty Secretary, Head of the Department of Project Work, Vice-Rector - The Statutory Deputy, Bursar and Rector. Department of Project Work provides support during the project life cycle in the form of methodological work, consulting/advisory services and control activities.

The implementation of projects within KA1 can generally be divided into a preparatory, implementation and evaluation (control) phase. The PDCA (plan-do-check-act) model will be used to improve the processes. In the preparatory phase of each project, the details and phases of the project will be agreed and the responsibilities will be determined. In the implementation phase, the mobility activities will take place. The processes taking place before, during and after the mobility will be continuously evaluated and optimised. The source of information will be reports from participants and information from responsible persons at the participating institutions. Within the evaluation phase, a report assessing the project's implementation in terms of the impact on participants will be prepared based on the ongoing monitoring and final reports of the participating institutions. The report will recommend the implementation of future projects and propose measures to optimize processes.

— Erasmus+ coordinators of the Division of Foreign Relations are in charge of mobility administration. Erasmus+ coordinators are responsible for: - Project and financial management of KA1; - allocation of grants for individual mobility (in cooperation with the Economic Section); - organising selection procedures for outgoing and incoming students including preparation of the English-taught courses catalogue and instigation of selection procedures for staff at the faculty level; - administration of mobility of individuals in terms of documentation; - ensuring compliance of activities with relevant regulations (directives International Mobility, Recognition of subjects and language certificates, Organization of business trips and provision of travel allowances, Code of Study and Examination, etc.) ; - organising language, intercultural and risk prevention preparation courses for mobility participants; - undertaking activities to integrate incoming students and staff in cooperation with the student association ESN; - supervising the process of full recognition of credits earned abroad in accordance with the ECTS principles (in cooperation with the Directorate of Study Administration and Lifelong Learning); - disseminating information about mobility projects and individual projects' outputs.

Projects concerning mobility of individuals within KA1 Erasmus +, whether between program or partner countries, will enable the ITB to fulfil a priority objective No. 3 - Internationalisation within the educational process, strategic priority 'Mutual student and academic staff exchange in educational and research institutions, according to the 2019 Long-term Plan Update. KA1 will also support other goals in the field of internationalisation - creating an environment that allows and helps increase the number of international

students admitted to study, including through exchange programmes, as well as widening the possibility for foreign academics and other experts' engagement at the ITB, through short- and long-term stays.

Meeting this goal will contribute to increasing international and professional competitiveness of the ITB's research activities and its quality. In the field of outbound mobility, KA1 will help to approach the ideal of involving every student in some form of international activities (in a physical, virtual or blended form).

Through the Erasmus+ KA1, it will be possible to promote both compulsory and optional professional internships abroad. The Professional Practice course is a compulsory part of the ITB's bachelor's study programmes and its successful completion in a foreign company will contribute to the employability of graduates in the labour market.

Last but not least, the priority of relevant foreign partner acquisition in the field of tertiary education will be supported.

Strategy for organizing and implementing 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 focus on developing transversal skills such as critical thinking and ability to use knowledge across all subjects and knowledge areas. These projects, also in view of the current educational situation caused by COVID-19, will consistently use innovative forms of education supported by new technologies, such as virtual and augmented reality, an online learning platform and learning management systems (LMS).

In order for such projects to be implemented in the period 2021-2027, the ITB wants to build on projects and cooperation implemented in the period 2014-2020, on successful Erasmus+ projects NET (2019-1-SK01-KA201-060658) or BENEFIT (609544-EPP -1-2019-1-PS-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP). The aim will be to develop open cooperation and build partnerships at all levels; with public authorities, HEIs, VET institutions, commercial institutions, associations and non-profit institutions operating in various areas of the economy.

In general, the following objectives can be defined in line with the institutional strategy:

- Continue to address Erasmus+ projects aimed at implementing innovative forms of education, thus contributing to the building of efficient and effective higher education systems, using modern technologies and providing the content of education in accordance with the needs of the labour market.
- Strengthen existing partnerships with institutions and organisations abroad and build new ones, not only within the European Union but also in the so-called Erasmus+ partner countries. The aim of this effort is to eliminate the discrepancy between the skills of graduates of study programmes or non-formal education courses provided by the ITB on the one hand and the requirements of the current labour market on the other.
- Expand the range of lifelong learning courses with an emphasis on defining and implementing procedures for recognizing prior learning outcomes.

Within the KA2 activity - Partnerships for cooperation and exchanges of practices, the ITB plans to focus mainly on transnational project cooperation between HEIs or businesses in order to examine real situations and to enhance the scientific knowledge exchange, pedagogical approaches and methods.

The intention is the application of a multidisciplinary approach, confrontation of ideas, exchange of best practice, support of entrepreneurial spirit and of creative thinking.

The thematic focus of project cooperation will be based on topics related to the study programmes. The output of this activity will be the best practice mutual transfer in the field of education within the involved institutions and the establishment of permanent partnerships with HEIs and organisations from practice.

The plan is in line with our No. 3 priority goal - Internationalization in the educational process, according to the ITB's 2019 Long-term Plan Update. The objective is to increase the number of relevant partnership agreements with foreign companies and HEIs and establish international research cooperation at the level of exchange of researchers leading towards development of the ITB as a research HEI with an international dimension. The priority is to motivate students to carry out internships abroad, including short-term internships in corporate companies, and to support international research activities of employees after their doctoral graduation. The plan generally fulfils the strategic priority of international cooperation in the field of education, research and social activities.

Activity KA2: Partnerships for Excellence - European Universities will be implemented with the intention of preparing joint educational offers with European HEIs. Activities in this area will focus on the preparation of joint curricula, intensive programs and joint modules between partner institutions from different countries, which will support the adaptation of graduates to labour market conditions. The activity is perceived as a prelude to the creation of joint accredited study programs.

The plan is in accordance with priority goal No. 3 - Internationalization in the educational process, according to the ITB's Long Term Plan Update from 2019, where the goal 3.8 is the implementation of double degree study programs.

The aim of the KA2 implementation - Partnership for Innovation projects is to develop, test, adapt and apply innovative procedures related to, for example, the area of strategic use of open educational resources and virtual mobility, including virtual learning platforms. The activity builds on the ongoing cooperation within the Interreg Programme, where one of the outputs was an online multimedia course focused on the transfer of entrepreneurial competencies.

The plan is in line with priority goal No. 2- Diversity and accessibility of educational activities, according to the Long Term Plan Update from 2019, where the partial goal is the introduction of new elements into the electronic support of the teaching process. Furthermore, it is in line with priority objective No. 3 - Internationalization in the educational process, specifically with the strategic priorities "Openness of study programs for foreign students" and "International cooperation in the field of education, research and social activities".

### Impact

An objective of the ITB is to ensure that the Erasmus+ Programme has a sustainable impact on the internationalisation process of the institution as a whole. The Programme, apart from bringing great benefit to individual students and staff, is seen as an exceptional mechanism enabling capacity building and quality improvement as part of the implementation of the internationalisation strategy priorities.



The Erasmus + programme will have a positive impact on the quality of teaching, research and the level of social responsibility. It will increase the number of opportunities for students to gain international experience, which can attract new applicants. The Programme will help the ITB produce graduates attractive for the labour market, with an excellent level of knowledge and intellectual competencies and ambitions to engage in society.

The ITB will benefit from the project in terms of strengthening the quality and attractiveness (e.g. by fulfilment of the national indicators reflecting the level of internationalisation, increasing number of international projects and graduate employability). Erasmus+ activities (especially KA2 – Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices) will enable building of relations in the area of science, research and education.

The Erasmus+ KA2 projects- Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices, if applied, would facilitate mutual transfer of good practices in education within the involved institutions and the establishment of permanent partnerships with HEIs and organisations from practice.

The Erasmus+ KA2 projects- European universities would enable to unify the form of educational programmes across partner universities and to establish a joint offer of courses. On this basis, it would be possible to create joint study programmes and thus expand the offer of education.

The Erasmus+ KA2 projects - Partnerships for Innovations would encourage the introduction of innovative approaches and modern technologies into teaching, with the use of current knowledge from practice and real data. That would greatly facilitate the internationalisation process. A good example is making use of virtual reality or simulation games providing the opportunity for intensive cooperation between students and teachers regardless of where they are - all activities take place in a virtual space.

The ITB will play the mentor role towards partner institutions from partner countries in terms of setting processes leading to a more in-depth understanding and a successful implementation of the Bologna system and ECTS system. Cooperation on international projects will also have a regional impact particularly on (an) increased involvement of local businesses resulting in technology, product and service improvement.

Students will benefit from Erasmus+ study period abroad in terms of gaining cultural awareness of the visited country and learning the specifics of their educational system, work attitude and other aspects of local people's lives. According to the past evaluation, one can assume that most students will gain the ability to cooperate with people from other cultures and backgrounds. They will become more confident and aware of their abilities, language skills, and improve significantly in adapting to new situations as well as in decision-making and teamwork. Students' newly acquired skills will lead to a bigger open-mindedness, tolerance and interest in social and political life.

Participants from underrepresented groups and disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds will have access to international experience through Erasmus+ Programme and related commitments, adopted by involved institutions.

Teachers and staff members will have the opportunity to learn new educational methods to be implemented at the ITB. Personal experience with authentic environment, fostering of professional relationships and knowledge transfer will open the door for high-quality cooperation on joint activities. Based on previous Mobility Tool+ survey results, participants enhance their social, cultural and linguistic competencies, gain

sector-specific and practical skills relevant for their current job, and their personal as well as professional development.

The project will enable staff members to conduct their mobility, within which they will work intensively on improving cooperation on mobility projects and programmes and will share valuable experience useful for practice.

The impact of the ITB's participation in the Erasmus+ Programme will be internally monitored, measured and assessed in the process of evaluating objectives using defined indicators:

1. Number of outgoing student mobility (target: increase of 30% in number of participants in each three-year period);
2. number of traineeships abroad possible to be recognised for the compulsory internship within the study programmes (increase of 20% in number of traineeships in each three-year period);
3. number of mobile disadvantaged students (target: increase of 20% till 2027);
4. number of international exchange students at the ITB (target: increase of 30% in each three-year period);
5. number of incoming academicians (target: increase of 20% in each three-year period);
6. number of outgoing staff members (target: increase of 20% in each three-year period);
7. number of submitted project applications of KA2 projects with the participation of the ITB (target: 1 project application for each of the activities of KA2 - Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices, Partnership for Excellence - European Universities and Partnerships for Innovation until 2023);
8. number of new relevant partnerships with foreign education and research institutions and businesses to implement KA2 projects: Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices (target: 5 by 2022);
9. number of innovative teaching tools implemented in an international environment (target: 2 by 2023).