Erasmus Policy Statement

1. Please describe your institution’s international (EU and non-EU) strategy. In your description please explain a) how you choose your partners, b) in which geographical area(s) and c) the most important objectives and target groups of your mobility activities (with regard to staff and students in first, second and third cycles, including study and training, and short cycles). If applicable, also explain how your institution participates in the development of double/multiple/joint degrees.

The University Of Applied Health Studies in Zagreb is the oldest institution of higher professional education offering biomedicine and health studies in Croatia. It offers study programs for six health professions: nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, sanitary engineering, laboratory medical diagnostics and radiology technology, at Bachelor’s degree level and at Master’s degree level, in accordance with the Lisbon Strategy and Bologna process.

Our vision is to become the leading higher education institution in the field of professional health care education, recognized for its excellence in Croatia, Europe and beyond. In order to achieve this, and as a part of its internationalization strategy, the University strives towards quality cooperation with other similar higher education institutions in the EU and non-EU countries which would be based on high mobility of teaching staff and students, development of joint study programmes and joint expert and applied scientific research. Partner institutions are chosen after careful consideration. The choice of partners depends on the compatibility of academic programmes (type of study programmes and level), or traineeship programmes they offer. Agreements are signed after consultations with the future partners and after identifying all quality requirements for implementing the activities covered by the agreement.

The University recognises mobility as the core component of its internationalisation strategy. Mobility undoubtedly leads to educational and personal benefits - enhanced competences and knowledge, linguistic diversity and employability of mobility participants. It contributes to the improvement and expansion of academic collaboration, dissemination of knowledge and innovation, recognition of qualifications and overall modernization and internationalization of the institution, thus enhancing its visibility and attractiveness and making it a recognized institution in the EU and non-EU countries. Credit mobility of students, outgoing and incoming, both for study and traineeship, is introduced both at undergraduate and graduate level. It is aimed at raising their competences and knowledge level and offering them the experience of studying or traineeship in other cultural and educational environments. Student traineeship is of great significance in professional education, especially in the education of health professionals, whose study curriculum requires a large proportion of skills training in clinical environment. This experience would enhance their flexibility and later recognisability and competitiveness at the European and global labour market. The highest number of outgoing students is expected to participate in mobility in the EU countries enabling them to gain much needed experience and access to practices not readily available in their own study programmes. Incoming mobility is expected mostly from neighbouring non-EU countries that offer similar study programmes.

The University is also committed to increasing excellence in teaching. Therefore, the mobility of teaching and nonteaching staff (for teaching and training purposes) is readily supported and acknowledged and makes a part of the University’s plan for professional staff development through international cooperation. It is aimed at improving staff professional
competences, improving the quality of study and teaching methods, at exchange of expertise and good practices, developing modernised curricula and innovative teaching methods at all levels.

The University has already established successful outgoing staff mobility to institutions that provide compatible study programmes from EU and non-EU countries in the region. It has a role of a reference institution that offers help and support to similar higher education institutions that do not have such long tradition and experience in providing undergraduate and specialist graduate professional health studies (Moreover, it is the only institution in the region that offers professional study programmes at the specialist graduate level).

For that purpose, it organises outgoing mobility of its teaching staff whose expertise is much needed in health study programmes development (e.g. University of Applied Health Studies in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Alma Mater Europaea, Evropski Center Maribor in Slovenia). Besides outgoing mobility, incoming staff mobility is readily supported because it allows students and staff who do not have the possibility to participate in a mobility scheme, to benefit from the knowledge and expertise of academic staff from higher education institutions and enterprises in other European countries.

In order to foster student degree mobility, the University supports the creation and delivering of joint master study programmes in cooperation with other higher education institutions.

2. If applicable, please describe your institution's strategy for the organisation and implementation of international (EU and non-EU) cooperation projects in teaching and training in relation to projects implemented under the Programme.

The participation in the projects funded under the Programme is aimed at further internationalization of the University. Through strategic partnerships with foreign higher education institutions and other relevant stakeholders, the University will participate in knowledge exchanges, improve its capacity and the modernisation process, and take on an important role in the regional and European growth and development policies.

The aim of the University is to give support and actively contribute in raising the level of current health workers' qualifications and in such a way satisfy the need of the health care system for highly skilled health professionals in Croatia and beyond. This will be achieved in joint efforts of the University and its project partners to develop new lifelong learning programmes, bridging and re-training programmes and new curricula in order to satisfy the demands of the labour market and society.

One of such programmes is the bridging programme which will facilitate the recognition of nurses' qualifications in EU countries and provide them with an opportunity to work there as well. Another programme would be the undergraduate study programme for midwives which would be in harmonization with the requirements of the Directive 2005/36/EC.

Another objective for participation in projects under the Programme is to develop possibilities and eliminate obstacles in student mobility from health schools to medical schools, that is from professional studies to university studies and to integrate professional studies into university programmes. The University also aims to develop alliance with the welfare sector in order to introduce new study programmes oriented towards improvement of life quality.

Such projects will increase University relevance and capacity, boost further international cooperation activities and facilitate cross-border mobility and exchange of good practices between institutions.
3. Please explain the expected impact of your participation in the Programme on the modernisation of your institution (for each of the 5 priorities of the Modernisation Agenda*) in terms of the policy objectives you intend to achieve.

The participation in the new 2014-2020 EU Programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport will contribute to the overall modernisation of the University in a number of ways.

The mobility of the University’s students and staff will be increased and strengthened which will in turn develop greater cross-border cooperation with similar and relevant foreign institutions. Mobility will help students increase their intercultural awareness and enhance their professional skills and competences. They will gain additional skills through study and traineeship activities which will in the end increase their employability.

Through mobility projects the University will strive to eliminate obstacles to switching institutions and make qualifications gained at the University study programmes more recognizable in other countries, particularly in the EU. Other important aim of such projects is to enable vertical mobility, particularly mobility to foreign professional doctoral health study programmes since such studies are non-existent in Croatia.

The mobility of staff should consolidate and extend links between the University and other institutions for future cooperation projects and further strengthen the international cooperation capacity of the University. The mobility and international experience of staff (teaching and non-teaching) will result in the improvement of their academic and teaching competences, acquisition and exchange of best academic practices and enable transfer of professional expertise and know-how. Through new and improved study programmes, teaching methods and better management policies, the University will increase its quality, but also relevance in the higher education area. With the improved and innovative study programmes the University might attract a greater number of individuals wishing to acquire a higher level of education at professional studies it offers.

Through partnerships and alliances with relevant stakeholders, the university will be able to organize and develop new study and training programmes (joint degree programmes, new training and lifelong learning programmes, etc.) and ensure capacity building, which will provide a series of benefits for students, staff and the University alike. The University will be able to use the new programmes to position itself strategically in an international market and also attract funding from the stakeholders in need of such high skilled occupations. Not only will the University be able to develop programmes better attuned to the labour market, thus increasing student employability, it will also provide employment for additional experts and staff in order to deliver new programmes.

The results of mobility, cooperation and research activities will be employed in the overall development of the University. They will be used to promote development of related institutions sectors and contribute to a wider regional development.