



**Internationalization Strategy of the
University of Applied Sciences Baltazar
Zaprešić for the period 2021–2026**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Applied Sciences Baltazar Zaprešić is a higher education institution organized as a non-profit accredited higher education institution (hereinafter referred to as "the University"). Among the key principles guiding the University's activities is the principle of academic freedom, expressed through the freedom of research and creativity, teaching, cooperation, and association in accordance with international agreements and the Act on Scientific Activity and Higher Education. A fundamental principle in the University's operations is its autonomy, which includes the independence in structuring its internal organization, defining study and research programs, fostering international cooperation, as well as financial autonomy. In carrying out its activities, the University continuously promotes the mobility and international cooperation of students and faculty, and participates in joint educational, professional, and scientific research programs with other legal entities in Croatia and abroad.

Based on the accreditations issued by the competent ministry, the University organizes and conducts undergraduate professional studies lasting three years, specialist graduate professional studies lasting two years, and lifelong learning programs. Furthermore, the University organizes and conducts highly professional, scientific, and research work in scientific fields and disciplines in accordance with the law and provides research infrastructure for this purpose. Accordingly, the following university departments have been established at the University: (I) Department of Undergraduate Professional Studies; (II) Department of Specialist Graduate Professional Studies; (III) Department of Scientific and Professional Research; (IV) Department of Lifelong Learning and Education; (V) Department of Quality Assurance, Distance Learning, and Information Technology Development; (VI) Department of Mobility and International Cooperation.

The vision of the University is to become an advanced higher education institution with recognizable educational programs that empower students for a dynamic and unpredictable business environment; its mission is to provide quality education and support students in their career development, while promoting new knowledge through market-oriented study programs.

In this context, the mission of the University's internationalization is to foster knowledge transfer, high-quality education, scientific research, and professional activities. By networking with similar higher education institutions worldwide, the University enables its staff, associates and students to engage in continuous professional and scientific development through mobility, international cooperation, and joint projects within a global framework.

The Internationalization Strategy of the University defines the key directions and strategic objectives for strengthening the University's international position for the period 2021–2026. The foundation for developing this Strategy is the implementation of the Strategic Development Plan of the University for the same period. One of the general objectives outlined in this plan is the International Cooperation and Internationalization of the University, with specific goals including Increasing inbound and outbound mobility of students, faculty, and staff, expanding participation in international projects, establishing courses in English, and developing, maintaining, and enhancing strategic partnerships with educational institutions abroad.

In the previous strategic period, the University signed the Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education in 2013, committing to its implementation for the 2014–2020 program period. This enabled the University to successfully utilize European mobility programs by developing and implementing numerous activities and mechanisms for mobility participation. As a result, students, teaching,

and non-teaching staff gained access to professional development opportunities, acquiring new knowledge and competencies at various institutions abroad. During this period, the University became actively involved in the Erasmus+ program, establishing numerous agreements with reputable international partner institutions. This significantly enhanced student and staff mobility, a crucial element of the University's internationalization. Mobility offers employees and students various opportunities for enhancing their skills, gaining new experiences, strengthening existing collaborations, establishing new partnerships, participating in international projects, conducting research, and engaging in other activities that ultimately provide a competitive advantage. Conversely, each international student or staff member coming to the University on an exchange receives full support and opportunities to collaborate, participate in projects, gain new experiences, explore the local culture, and conduct research.

To continue these initiatives, the University applied to the European Commission for the renewal of the European Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) for the 2021–2027 period. The application was approved, ensuring the University's eligibility to participate in the Erasmus+ program and its activities in the upcoming program cycle.

The University's participation in Erasmus+ programs has led to numerous benefits, including:

- acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and experiences for students during their exchange at partner institutions
- language learning
- professional development for staff through knowledge exchange
- expanding collaborative networks, and adopting best practices

Student and staff exchange facilitates critical evaluation of the University's institutional goals and their implementation, opening doors for future participation in joint research programs and projects.

The University aims to be an active, modern, highly professional, and equal participant in EU programs and activities. In the upcoming period, the University will strive for greater involvement in mobility projects and international cooperation. The primary objective is the continuous increase in student and staff mobility while also encouraging students from underrepresented or vulnerable groups to actively participate in mobility programs. The Erasmus+ program plays a crucial role in enhancing teaching quality by providing faculty members with international teaching and training experience in a global environment.

The University strongly supports internationalization, actively encouraging students and staff to engage in mobility programs for learning, training, personal growth, and competitiveness. To further motivate faculty and administrative staff to participate in mobility programs and create prerequisites for developing study programs in English and establishing joint degree programs in the future, the University will implement initiatives aimed at strengthening the employees' language competencies in the upcoming period.

To ensure and enhance the quality of processes in the field of international cooperation, the implementation of activities is continuously monitored, and prescribed procedures are revised as needed. Special emphasis will be placed on applying for research, professional, and scientific projects funded by European funds. These projects offer multiple benefits, as they provide new opportunities for staff development, open additional financial resources, secure essential infrastructure and other resources, and facilitate knowledge transfer towards its practical application in professional and applied research. Additionally, they foster partnerships with

domestic and international institutions, both in the public and civil sectors, ultimately leading to tangible developmental outcomes.

2. AREAS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE UNIVERSITY

The areas and objectives of the Internationalization Strategy of the University of Applied Sciences Baltazar Zaprešić stem from the University's Strategic Development Plan for the period 2021-2026, where a strategic goal related to international cooperation and internationalization is defined. Based on Strategic Goal 8: International Cooperation and Internationalization of the University, strategic objectives have been adopted concerning the development of international cooperation and internationalization of the University. These objectives are as follows:

Objective 8.1: Increase Incoming and Outgoing Mobility of Students, Faculty, and Staff

Key Indicator 1	Removal of Administrative Barriers to Student Mobility
Expected Outcome	Easier utilization and recognition of student mobility periods and earned ECTS credits
Implementing Bodies	Dean, Head of the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Performance Indicator	Regulations (or guidelines) on the recognition of ECTS credits, decisions on the recognition of ECTS credits at other higher education institutions
Monitoring Mechanism	Minutes of the Academic Council meetings, individual decisions on the recognition of ECTS credits at other higher education institutions
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Key Indicator 2	Increase in Outgoing and Incoming Mobility of Students, Faculty, and Staff
Expected Outcome	Greater number of participants (students and faculty) in mobility programs
Implementing Bodies	Dean, Head of the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Performance Indicator	Number of participants in student, faculty, and staff mobility programs
Monitoring Mechanism	Annual reports on international cooperation of the University
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Objective 8.2: Increase Activities within International Projects

Key Indicator 1	Submission of International Projects with Partner Institutions
Expected Outcome	Increase in the number of international projects
Implementing Bodies	Dean, Head of the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Performance Indicator	Number of signed contracts for international projects with partner institutions
Monitoring Mechanism	Annual reports by the University and by the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation

Implementation Deadline	Continuous
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Key Indicator 2	Appointment of Project Teams for Submitting International Projects with Partner Institutions
Expected Outcome	Facilitated and accelerated submission of international projects with partner institutions
Implementing Bodies	Dean, Academic Council, Head of the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Performance Indicator	Number and composition of project teams for each international project
Monitoring Mechanism	Annual reports by the University and by the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Key Indicator 3	Training for Faculty and Administrative Staff on Project Application and Implementation Procedures
Expected Outcome	Increased capability of faculty and administrative staff in project application and implementation procedures
Implementing Bodies	Dean, Academic Council, Head of the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Performance Indicator	Number and type of lectures or workshops, number of participants
Monitoring Mechanism	Annual reports by the University and by the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Objective 8.3: Establish Teaching in English

Key Indicator 1	Preparation of Course Syllabi in English and Other Teaching and Administrative Resources in English (Professional and Scientific Literature, Tests, etc.)
Expected Outcome	Availability of teaching and administrative resources necessary for delivering courses in English
Implementing Bodies	Head of the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation, Heads of Study Programs, Heads of Chairs, Course Coordinators and Instructors, Mixed Working Groups
Performance Indicator	Approved course syllabi and corresponding teaching and administrative resources in English
Monitoring Mechanism	Minutes of the Meetings of the Department for Mobility and International Cooperation, minutes of the meetings of the working groups for the preparation of teaching and administrative resources in English
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Key Indicator 2	Training the Faculty (Teachers and Teaching Associates) for Teaching in English
Expected Outcome	Improved level of English language of faculty members (teachers and teaching associates)
Implementing Bodies	Department of Lifelong Learning, Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Performance Indicator	Conducted courses in English for specific purposes
Monitoring Mechanism	Annual reports of the Department of Lifelong Learning
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Objective 8.4: Establish, Maintain, and Enhance Strategic Partnerships with Foreign Educational Institutions

Key Indicator	Signing Agreements on Scientific and Academic Cooperation with Foreign Educational Institutions
Expected Outcome	Enhancement of the University's international cooperation with foreign educational institutions
Implementing Bodies	Dean, Head of the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Performance Indicator	Number of signed agreements on scientific and academic cooperation with foreign higher education institutions, number and type of activities carried out based on signed agreements
Monitoring Mechanism	Signed agreements on scientific and academic cooperation, annual reports on international scientific and academic cooperation
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

3. ACTION PRIORITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC INTERNATIONALIZATION GOALS

Objective 8.1: Increase Incoming and Outgoing Mobility of Students, Faculty, and Staff

Task 1.1	Actively Promoting and Encouraging International Mobility (Physical, Virtual, and Blended) of Students and Staff
Activity Description	<p>Utilizing all available communication channels and organizing events to further promote student and staff mobility within Erasmus+ and other international programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- organizing and holding info days on the Erasmus+ program and its activities- encouraging the sharing of experiences from students and staff who participated in mobility programs (presentations at info days, articles on the website and social media, special workshops)- creating promotional posters and brochures- regularly updating the University's website with information about programs, current calls, internship offers, etc.- engaging faculty in promoting and presenting the Erasmus+ program to students
Implementing Bodies	Department of Mobility and International Cooperation, Digitalization and Public Relations Department, Heads of Study Programs
Performance Indicator	Number of conducted activities: info days, presentations, workshops; published promotional materials, updated website materials, social media posts
Monitoring Mechanism	Reports from the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Implementation Deadline	Continuous (at least one info day per year for students and staff)

Task 1.2	Removing Barriers to Student and Staff Mobility
Activity Description	<p>Conducting surveys and analysing the satisfaction of outgoing students and staff with institutional mobility support (information, mobility organization support, recognition of credits earned during mobility).</p> <p>Conducting and analysing surveys among students and staff on the reasons for potential withdrawal from mobility.</p> <p>Strengthening institutional support for mobility participants through continuous counselling and assistance, automatic recognition of mobility periods, and reducing barriers to long-term staff mobility.</p> <p>Encouraging the participation of students with fewer opportunities from underrepresented or vulnerable groups in mobility programs.</p> <p>Enhancing the language competencies of local students and staff for better mobility preparation (organizing foreign language courses for staff, introducing English-taught courses for local students, and implementing "internationalization at home" activities such as hosting guest lecturers, organizing international events, and fostering joint activities between local and incoming students).</p>
Implementing Bodies	Department of Mobility and International Cooperation, Heads of Study Programs, Heads of Chairs
Performance Indicator	<p>Conducted surveys among students and staff, with recommendations for addressing identified issues and shortcomings.</p> <p>Number of students from underrepresented groups in the Erasmus+ program.</p> <p>Conducted English language courses for staff.</p> <p>Number of English-taught courses within study programs.</p> <p>Number of international activities and events.</p>
Monitoring Mechanism	<p>Reports from the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation.</p> <p>Survey analysis.</p> <p>Results of Erasmus+ mobility calls.</p>
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Task 1.3	Strengthening Support for Students Seeking Internships Abroad
Activity Description	<p>Establishing agreements with organizations abroad for internship placements.</p> <p>Creating a database of employers where the University's students have completed internships.</p>
Implementing Bodies	Department of Mobility and International Cooperation

Performance Indicator	Number of signed agreements. Compiled employer database.
Monitoring Mechanism	Reports from the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation.
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Task 1.4	Promoting the University as a Destination for Incoming Student and Staff Mobility
Activity Description	<p>Enhancing the University's international visibility and study programs to increase incoming student and staff mobility by developing information packages, creating promotional materials, updating the English-language website, and participating in higher education fairs.</p> <p>Providing continuous support to incoming students and staff through logistical assistance, introduction of a <i>Buddy program</i>, organization of Croatian language courses, Welcome Week, social and cultural activities, and engaging the Student Council in activities.</p>
Implementing Bodies	Department of Mobility and International Cooperation.
Performance Indicator	Number of incoming exchange students. Number of incoming staff members.
Monitoring Mechanism	Published informational materials (printed and web-based). Developed promotional materials. Number of organized activities for international students. Satisfaction survey of incoming students at the University.
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Task 1.5	Utilizing Digital Tools in the Implementation of Mobility Programs
Activity Description	<p>Actively using all available tools under the <i>Erasmus Without Paper</i> initiative to simplify and standardize procedures related to the implementation and management of mobility programs.</p> <p>Encouraging all students involved in mobility programs to use the Erasmus+ Mobile App.</p> <p>Facilitating data and document exchange between institutions and users via platforms such as <i>Erasmus Dashboard</i>, <i>Online Learning Agreement</i>, and <i>IIA Manager</i>.</p> <p>Establishing all necessary prerequisites for the use of the <i>European Student Card</i>.</p>
Implementing Bodies	Department of Mobility and International Cooperation.

Performance Indicator	Registration on platforms and active use of digital tools for mobility implementation.
Monitoring Mechanism	Reports from the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation..
Implementation Deadline	Continuous, in accordance with deadlines set by the EWP initiative

Task 1.6	Organizing International Activities
Activity Description	Organizing short-term activities for international students and partners in the form of intensive blended programs (through Erasmus+ KA131 activities), international summer/winter schools, international staff weeks, and conferences. Designing lifelong learning programs, workshops, and training sessions in collaboration with partner institutions, ensuring certification of acquired competencies and student workload in ECTS credits that can be recognized by home institutions.
Implementing Bodies	Department of Mobility and International Cooperation. Department of Lifelong Learning
Performance Indicator	Number of international activities. Number of participants. Evaluation of conducted activities.
Monitoring Mechanism	Reports on conducted activities.
Implementation Deadline	Until the end of the implementation period.

Objective 8.2. Increase Activities within International Projects

Task 2.1	Informing Staff about Various International Programs and Calls and Providing Support in the Application Process
Activity Description	Continuously organize presentations and workshops to introduce employees to the conditions and procedures for applying to international project calls within Erasmus+ and other programs. Providing support to staff in the application process for international projects.
Implementing Bodies	Department of Mobility and International Cooperation, Department of Scientific and Professional Research
Performance Indicator	Number of presentations and workshops held, number of project applications submitted

Monitoring Mechanism	Reports from the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation, reports from the Department of Scientific and Professional Research.
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Task 2.2	Strengthening the University's Capacity to Participate in International Projects
Activity Description	Organizing in-house training and financing external training for employees related to the application and management of international projects.
Implementing Bodies	Department of Mobility and International Cooperation., Department of Scientific and Professional Research
Performance Indicator	Number of in-house training sessions conducted, number of trained employees, number of project applications submitted
Monitoring Mechanism	Reports on completed activities
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Task 2.3	Expanding Partnerships with Renowned International Institutions
Activity Description	Strategically selecting and increasing the number of memberships in international higher education networks to improve the University's international visibility and collaboratively develop international projects. Encouraging the University's participation and active involvement in relevant international professional associations to establish contacts with businesses and higher education institutions and strengthen cooperation. Participation in seminars, conferences, and other activities organized by international associations.
Implementing Bodies	Department of Mobility and International Cooperation, Department of Scientific and Professional Research, Heads of Chairs, Heads of Study Programs
Performance Indicator	Number of international associations in which the University is a member, number of events attended by the University representatives
Monitoring Mechanism	Reports on completed activities
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Objective 8.3. Establish Teaching in English

Task 3.1	Ensuring and Encouraging the Improvement of Employees' Language Competencies
Activity Description	Organizing foreign language courses for employees to continuously enhance language proficiency for teaching in foreign languages and to support administrative staff working with international students.
Implementing Bodies	Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Performance Indicator	Number of employees enrolled in language courses; certificates obtained upon course completion
Monitoring Mechanism	Reports from the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Task 3.2	Supporting the Development and Implementation of Courses in Foreign Languages
Activity Description	Analysing the current situation, needs, and possibilities. Enhancing and adapting existing courses while developing new courses in foreign languages. Encouraging Croatian students to participate in courses delivered in foreign languages.
Implementing Bodies	Department of Mobility and International Cooperation, Heads of Chairs, Heads of Study Programs
Performance Indicator	Number of courses offered in foreign languages; number of students enrolled in courses taught in foreign languages
Monitoring Mechanism	Reports from the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Implementation Deadline	Continuous, for each academic year

Task 3.3	Organizing Guest Lectures by Eminent International Experts
Activity Description	Encouraging the participation of foreign lecturers and experts in delivering courses in foreign languages.
Implementing Bodies	Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Performance Indicator	Number of guest lecturers
Monitoring Mechanism	Reports from the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

Objective 8.4. Establish, Maintain, and Enhance Strategic Partnerships with Educational Institutions Abroad

Task 4.1	Updating Existing and Establishing New Interinstitutional Cooperation Agreements
Activity Description	Analysing existing agreements and collaborations. Continuing partnerships with institutions where collaboration has been successful. Strategically planning new partnerships based on principles of compatibility, complementarity, and geographical expansion of cooperation.
Implementing Bodies	Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Performance Indicator	Number of signed interinstitutional agreements
Monitoring Mechanism	Reports from the Department of Mobility and International Cooperation
Implementation Deadline	Continuous

4. CONCLUSION

The Internationalization Strategy of the University of Applied Sciences Baltazar Zaprešić for the period 2021–2026 encompasses objectives and activities aimed at expanding international contacts and cooperation with higher education institutions and economic entities from the international environment. The primary goal is to strengthen collaboration through joint activities and to increase the number of incoming and outgoing mobilities of students, faculty, staff, and teaching associates at the University.

In line with the Strategic Development Plan of the University for the period 2021–2026, which highlights internationalization as one of the key objectives for future development, and in accordance with relevant national and international strategic documents, the University will focus on enhancing the quality of international and interinstitutional cooperation. This will facilitate student and staff exchanges, guest lectures by international experts, launch of joint programs and projects, and participation in European networks and associations.

Efforts will be directed toward further developing courses in foreign languages, which are a prerequisite for attracting international students and experts and ensuring global recognition. At the same time, the University will continue to enhance the quality of study programs, student standards, and project and research activities to maintain competitiveness at the international level.