



In 2017, Environmental Protection College (hereinafter the EPC) adopted its Development Strategy for the period 2018-2024. Based on this strategy, in 2020, the EPC updated its Erasmus Policy Statement, which was adopted in 2013. In the revised Erasmus Policy Statement, the EPC took into account the objectives of Europe 2020 Strategy and the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020), in accordance with Erasmus Charter for Higher Education principles and the general objectives of Erasmus + programme. The EPC also took into account the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Slovenian Higher Education 2016-2020 adopted by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, and some other relevant strategic documents, guidelines and recommendations of the Republic of Slovenia and the EU.

## ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT

### The Internationalisation Strategy of the Environmental Protection College

Erasmus Policy Statement (hereinafter the EPS) represents the internationalisation strategy of the Environmental Protection College (hereinafter the EPC) as part of its broader mission and development.

In its vision the EPC states its wish to become the leading Slovenian higher education institution in the field of education and transfer of (applied) knowledge of environmental studies, which will be internationally renowned and open, and will follow objectives/guidelines for quality assurance and internationalisation. EPC graduates, learning from hands-on experience, will become adequately qualified, sought-after and highly employable in the global labour market in organisations and companies which focus on the development of environmental solutions and products, and solving environmental challenges with the use of technologies/services of the future.

In order to achieve international visibility and internationalisation, the EPC adopted **six strategic objectives**, which are an **integral part of EPC Development Strategy for the period 2018-2024**.

**The EPC strategic objectives defined for the period 2018-2024 are:**

1. **Integration with recognised foreign higher education institutions in the field of environmental protection, nature conservation, sustainable development and eco-technologies** by means of:
  - cooperation in ERASMUS+, CEEPUS and some other international programmes;
  - conclusion of new agreements on cooperation with higher education institutions from abroad;
  - mobility promotion of pedagogical and professional staff of the college;
  - mobility promotion of students (incoming and outgoing);
  - increasing the number of visiting foreign higher education teachers (academics) and other professionals at the EPC.



2. The **update of Erasmus Policy Statement** in accordance with the governmental internationalisation strategy and the strategic objectives of the college.
3. **Quality implementation and continuous improvement of study programmes towards internationalisation of the curriculum / internationalisation at home:**
  - by means of integrating international and intercultural dimensions into the study process and by forming internationalised learning outcomes.
4. **Development of a new international study programme / a module providing to obtain two diplomas from two higher education institutions (i.e. double diploma).**
5. **Strengthening of the research work** of the higher education teaching staff and other higher education professionals and associates, and students in the field of fundamental and applied research by:
  - participating in international scientific consortia,
  - promoting publication of outcomes from the research work in scientific journals and publications, indexed in international bases with impact factors,
  - intensifying active participations of higher education teaching staff and other higher education professionals in international scientific conferences.
6. **Implementation of research projects through international cooperation.**

In order to implement the adopted strategic objectives, the EPC has integrated and cooperated, and it will also continue to do so in the future, with partners from abroad. It will actively operate in the international arena, particularly (but not exclusively) in regions where it sees its opportunities to be involved more actively (Western Balkans, South-East Europe), with target groups (domestic and foreign students and academic staff) at all levels of higher education (undergraduate and postgraduate study programmes), wishing to develop its own internationalised study subjects / modules / study programmes and joint modules / study programmes which lead to a joint/ double diploma, by means of participating in international consortia and also in education, scientific, research, development and applied projects, particularly within the Erasmus+ programme, and in some other European and international programmes of nature conservation, environmental studies, sustainable development and eco-technologies.

In the following, the key factors of the EPC internationalisation strategy are presented:

a) **Partners**

**International openness of the EPC** is a relevant quality element of the college and its international visibility. Since its establishment in 2007, the college has been an **open higher education institution**, ready to cooperate with domestic and foreign partners. Over the past years, the college has established a network of partner institutions, also the ones from abroad, with which it has successfully and closely cooperated and made plans for further activities. The EPC shall remain an open institution and will further expand its network of partner institutions (within and outside the EU) in line with its strategic objectives, particularly with institutions operating in the field of **environmental protection, nature conservation, sustainable development and eco-technologies**. The EPC wishes to be open to cooperation in other scientific / professional fields which will allow to pursue its strategic interests. Cooperation will be based on the **coherence of strategic guidelines and the functioning of potential partners and the EPC, their mutual interest(s) and quality of cooperation**. Quality of cooperation will be based on **mutual respect and trust**, while taking into account **cultural diversity, institutional values and mutual benefits, indicators of academic and research excellence**. It will also be based on **mobility promotion of students, pedagogical staff and other professional associates, and on promotion of applications for joint projects**. Our cooperation with partners is, and will also be in the future, based on concluded **interinstitutional agreements on cooperation** within and outside the Erasmus+ programme.

b) **Geographical areas**

The EPC wishes to stay a widely open institution. Therefore, it will continue to integrate into the European and a wider social space, particularly in the territories of **Western Balkans or southeastern Europe** (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania and Turkey) and in the **neighbouring countries** (Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia). It will also cooperate with institutions from **other European countries which are also part of the Erasmus programme, and with other partner countries. The EPC will be open to new opportunities globally;** it has already cooperated with institutions from the United States of America, Brazil, Australia, China and the Asian part of Russia. It will participate in joint projects in the field of scientific research, development and in applied science. It also wishes to participate in the design of integrated, transnational learning activities, such as joint programmes, modules and curricula, and to enable the students to finish their study holding a double/joint diploma. In doing so, the EPC will contribute to the integration of tertiary education, research and economy in order to achieve excellence, and to promote regional development.

**c) Objectives and target groups of international mobility**

In recent years, the EPC has successfully organised and performed international mobility projects, and it has also received two significant national awards, the so-called Apple of Quality. The EPC will continue to strive for the development of international mobility and will integrate into the common European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The EPC wishes to contribute to ET 2020 objective as much as possible, i.e. achieving the target of at least 20% of college graduates performing part of their study or their practical training (internship) abroad. For the EPC, it is of paramount importance to do its best to enable **domestic and foreign students, domestic and foreign teaching and non-teaching staff a possibility to make comparisons in the development and achievements of particular professions, and in practical solutions at home and abroad, to enable them to get a global insight into the development of scientific discipline, profession, to provide a possibility of understanding different cultures and development of language competences, cross-cultural and other "soft" skills / competences which are vital for achieving competitiveness of individuals in the global job market, and competitiveness of the institution itself.** It will strive to provide for all the students of all study programmes and at all levels, the EPC graduates, its academic and administrative staff to get an opportunity to go abroad as part of the mobility programme (students for the purpose of their study and internship, new graduates for the purpose of acquiring practical experience, and employees for the purpose of teaching and training) and to make all newly acquired knowledge and practical experience duly **recognised or evaluated and rewarded.** The EPC will strive to expand its offer and possibilities for student mobility in the countries of Erasmus programme and in partner countries, and will provide comprehensive academic and administrative support of good quality before, during and after mobility. The EPC wishes to be open to foreign students, also to foreign higher education teaching staff and other professionals. It would like to enable them a stimulating, hospitable environment based on interpersonal understanding and respect, consolidation of intercultural dialogue and tolerance, equal possibilities and non-discrimination. Special attention will be paid to **vulnerable groups** (individuals with special needs, people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic and other minorities, etc.). The EPC will endeavour to integrate its guests into the local, i.e. Slovenian, environment as much as possible with the aim to enable its domestic students, staff and guests the opportunity to meet other cultures and customs, to learn about tolerance and have the opportunity to improve their knowledge of foreign languages, all with the aim to implement **internationalisation of the curriculum and internationalisation at home.** The EPC will endeavour as much as possible to **continuously encourage** its students as well as the academic and administrative staff of the college to participate in **international mobility** by creating good opportunities for study and/or practical training, and work within foreign higher education institutions and other institutions abroad.

**d) Development/cooperation in programmes leading to double/joint diplomas**

The EPC is well aware of the importance of its students, graduates and the staff to be competitive and employable in the global job market. Therefore, it wishes to develop, along with domestic and foreign partners, a **contemporary international study programme /module** leading to a **joint/double diploma**, which will be performed in English or in any other foreign language, while also taking into account the development of the Slovene language and Slovenian terminology. In this way, the college contributes to increasing its openness, visibility and reputation in the international arena. It will also contribute to endeavours to implement the priorities of the European Union Agenda for the Modernisation and Internationalisation of Higher Education (2011, amended in 2017). In particular, it will contribute to quality improvement and adequacy of tertiary education, and to enhancing the quality by promoting mobility and cross-border cooperation.

The growing globalisation necessitates urgent strengthening of scientific-technical excellence and promotion of sustainable development of the college. For this reason, the EPC will strengthen its educational, scientific-research, developmental and applicable approach to the work of all higher education teaching staff and other associates, and students in the field of fundamental and applied research by joining in **international scientific consortia** in the field of **environmental protection, environmental conservation, sustainable development and environmental technologies**, and by active participation in **international projects** within the key measures and actions of Erasmus+ programme (strategic partnerships, knowledge alliances). It will promote its academic staff to publish the outcomes of their research work in internationally recognised scientific journals and publications, indexed in international bases with impact factors. By using an **adequate reward system**, it will **stimulate and encourage its higher education teaching staff and associates to participate actively in international scientific conferences, symposia, in international projects and in other educational and research events.**

It will strive to perform educational, research, development and other applicative projects by means of international cooperation within countries of Erasmus+ programme and other partner countries.

#### **Description of the anticipated effect of participation in Erasmus+ programme on the EPC development**

In order to achieve its vision, the EPC, among others, plans and performs continuous international mobility development. Therefore, international mobility development is defined in all fundamental development documents of the college, i.e. strategic documents and annual work programmes, as well as in its financial plan.

Its continuous international mobility development the EPC implements through its long-term strategic objectives, i.e. active integration of the EPC into the international environment. In order to achieve its long-term objectives, the EPC plans its concrete measures (tasks) for achieving their objectives in its annual work plans. Erasmus+ programmes and other life-long learning programmes are also integrated into these plans every year. These include active participation of domestic and foreign teaching and research staff in international exchanges and joint projects, establishment and expansion of the education network with foreign educational institutions - concluding interinstitutional agreements, cooperation in international projects, and monitoring EU tenders with a **strategic focus on topics related to environmental protection, nature conservation and eco-technologies**. The EPC will continue to cooperate internationally and seek new international contacts, particularly the ones leading to inclusion in Erasmus+ programmes inside and also outside Europe.

Strategic documents and annual work programmes are adopted by the supreme governing body of the EPC; the Administrative Board and the Academic Senate.



Participation in Erasmus+ programme is one of the fundamental indicators of the EPC's involvement in the international environment. It is also one of the most important indicators showing quality of the implementation of the undergraduate and postgraduate study programme Environmental Protection and Eco-technologies, and also the quality of the contents of lifelong learning, which will also apply in the future. Cooperation in Erasmus+ programme also means continuous integration of the EPC into the common higher education area, through international student exchange, academic and administrative staff exchange, cooperation in projects implemented by strategic partners, through knowledge alliances and other key measures and actions within Erasmus+ programme. It will allow further improvement of expert knowledge for participants and acquiring international experience, which is invaluable for further development and visibility of the EPC and for each individual who participates in the international mobility, partner network and international projects. In doing so, the EPC will enable their personal growth, asserting themselves internationally. It will increase their opportunities / possibilities for employment, contribute to raising the level of education of graduates and researchers in line with the EU needs. It will **raise the level of quality and relevance of the study programmes** which are and will be implemented by the college.

In the long run, the EPC will strengthen its visibility and reputation in the Slovenian, regional, European and the wider international area. EPC international networking, particularly through the Erasmus+ programme, also means the basis for its long-term development in the way of being a high-quality higher education institution which accomplishes its vision, mission, further development and knowledge in close cooperation with its immediate and distant social environment, with a continuous influx of fresh ideas and needs of all sectors of the economy, with innovative ideas, cooperation in the field of education, applied and basic research. The EPC's further cooperation in Erasmus + programme will allow to pursue its vision and mission, and to meet its long-term /strategic objectives and short-term tasks to meet these objectives. The EPC will enhance transfer of innovative ideas, and promote synergies, development of cooperation, and tolerance to overcome cultural, political, racial, religious, ethnic and other barriers among humans, especially among the youth.

The EPC is responsible for the development of intercultural and global competences of its graduates. Competences acquired during the course of study should enable the EPC graduates successful work in a local / national environment, as well as in the European and a wider international environment. For this reason, the EPC has already been working on, and is also planning for the future, the update of all current study programmes in the light of incorporation of intercultural dimensions and internationalised learning outcomes in order to promote development of **intercultural, social and civil competences of students and higher education staff**.

International mobility will incorporate **student mobility** for the purpose of their study and practical training, i.e. student placement, and **staff mobility** intended for teaching and also administrative staff. Mobility preparations are and will continue to be versatile as much as possible, and also individualised, thus accustomed to an individual participant of the mobility. The EPC will ensure equal possibilities for all participants, on a **non-discriminatory basis**. It will enable all persons with special needs to integrate into a mobility programme as easily and effectively as possible, in accordance with their capabilities. The EPC will take care of **equal possibilities** for the inclusion of **vulnerable groups in the international mobility**. The EPC will enable a level-playing field for work to domestic and foreign students and other mobility participants. In doing so, the EPC will seek to **contribute to establishing inclusive and integrated higher education systems**, as envisaged in the amended EU Agenda for the Modernisation and Internationalisation of Higher Education.

In recognising qualifications and knowledge, the EPC does not, and will not in the future, differentiate between national and international knowledge. Knowledge and qualifications, regardless of origin, will be provided and applied by using the same system, **the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)**. With regard to the recognition of achievements and competences the EPC will stay

flexible and open, since knowledge is considered contemporary. The participants of the Erasmus+ mobility programme will be **exempted from paying school fees**, enrollment fees, registration fees, costs of exams, access to the school lab and the use of libraries.

The EPC will ensure **quality promotion, support and monitoring** of the overall strategy of its internationalisation and international mobility.

The EPC will evaluate the **effects of mobility and international cooperation** by using its **own methodology for evaluating the quality system**, which will continuously be upgraded and updated. Based on the results of internal monitoring of internationalisation, international mobility and cooperation, the EPC will ensure continuous update and improvement of the quality of international mobility, study, research and applied research programmes, and other international activity.

The EPC management will create conditions to enhance **motivation** for mobility and make it versatile for students, higher education teaching staff and other associates, researchers and other EPC staff, and also for foreign students, foreign higher education teaching staff, researchers and other higher education staff from foreign higher education institutions.

With the adoption of Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, the EPC committed itself to follow its principles. It will strive to actively contribute to the following five priorities of the EU Agenda for Modernisation and Internationalisation of Higher Education (2011), and for implementation of the four key points in the Agenda renewed in 2017:

#### **1. Raising the level of education of graduates and researchers in line with the EU needs**

Through its participation in the Erasmus+ programme, the EPC has made several contacts with international environment within the EU. It has acquired international experience and provided mobility for students, educators and other EPC's staff. Through its participation in Erasmus+ programme, the EPC will continue to develop, enhance and raise awareness of the need to spread knowledge and skills of domestic and foreign students, the need of gaining life experiences and meeting different cultures, customs and beliefs, the need of strengthening tolerance among people, mutual understanding and respect, equal possibilities and active citizenship. By gaining its international experiences the EPC will provide personal growth of mobility participants. It will develop the awareness of the need for cooperation and networking, the need for knowledge sharing and skills in pedagogical, scientific, organisational and other professional fields with professionals coming from countries within and outside the EU. Based on its cooperation and networking, openness to fresh ideas, steady flow of knowledge and experiences from all stakeholders, the EPC will contribute to managing knowledge discrepancies in the EU. It will contribute to improving skills, such as problem solving, communication and cross-culture dialogue, and other skills necessary for an individual to become competitive in the global job market and in an ever-changing and increasingly connected world. Through its cooperation in the Erasmus+ programme the EPC will strive to actively contribute to the implementation of this priority, within the EPC and partner institutions.

#### **2. Raising the quality and relevance of educational programmes**

Through its cooperation in the Erasmus+ programme, the EPC has already been and will continue to be raising the quality of the existing study programmes, and the care for their completion and update, by making new contacts within the international academic sphere, through critical analyses and the adoption of good practices from Slovenia and abroad, and by creating prerequisites for transferring up-to-date knowledge and findings from abroad into the local environment and vice versa. It intends to develop new modules, study programmes and life-long learning contents by transferring knowledge and identifying needs for the development of new own and (possibly) joint educational programmes

with partner institutions, based on the development of contemporary institutionalised curricula and learning outcomes.

### **3. Raising quality through mobility and cross-border cooperation**

By getting acquainted with the organisation, learning methods, forms of teaching and general work of partner institutions, and making comparison with the EPC's current organisation and work methods, the EPC has already started and will continue to do so also in the future, to introduce good practices into its organisation, to improve its work process and update teaching and learning methods, and to raise awareness of the need for cross-culture dialogue and internationalisation at home. At the same time, by providing inclusion of students and work colleagues in joint educational, R&D and applicative projects the EPC will significantly enhance joint publication of topical research achievements in internationally recognised scientific journals. This will result in a significant increase in scientific excellence of work colleagues and the EPC as a pedagogical and research institution.

### **4. An effective knowledge triangle: integration of tertiary education with research activity and the economy for excellence and regional development.**

Through its participation in the Erasmus+ programme, the EPC will continue its targeted path of integrating tertiary education into research activity, based on the needs of contemporary economy in all settings. For this reason, the EPC has established a consultative body, the so-called Council of Trustees, which is made up of representatives from local, regional and national tertiary education, the business sector and non-business sectors (the result of active involvement of the Council of Trustee is also a recast and modernisation of the undergraduate study programme of Environmental Protection and Eco-technologies). Based on applicative and fundamental research, which will base on the needs of business-related economy and other end users, the EPC will contribute to excellence and regional development. Its integration will help to contribute to innovations and improvement of its innovation activities and development of its own institution. The EPC is already on its way to successfully implement that. Joint publications with partner institutions will enhance its scientific excellence.

### **5. Improvement of governance and funding activity**

The EPC will improve its own management and financing by adhering to the requirements of Erasmus+ programme and with transfer of good practices. Improvements have already been and will also continue to be incorporated into its strategic plans, annual work programmes and financial plans. The EPC will seek to adequately upgrade its teaching activity, participation in research and marketing projects, innovations, social inclusion and strategic cooperation with partners, as well as international cooperation and mobility of the EPC's staff.

*The amended Erasmus Policy Statement was adopted by the EPC Academic Senate on its 9th session on 10 February 2020.*

*The EPC Administrative Board noted the amended Erasmus Policy Statement on its 9th session on 12 February 2020.*

Velenje, 10 February 2020

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