

## **Erasmus Policy Statement (2014-2020)**

The School of Management in Trenčín (VSM) joined the Erasmus program in 2007. Since the very beginning, we have aimed to search for partners that offer study programs in related fields, with a high level of instruction in the English language. The standard goal is to find as many partners as possible from a variety of European countries and to offer to students and employees an opportunity to get to know a wide range of educational programs and cultures. With this goal in mind, the VSM has reinforced education in foreign languages.

The VSM is an institution of higher education with specialization in management, aiming to develop its new perspectives, such as Knowledge Management, Green Management, and Management of Non-profit Organizations. These programs are unique in Slovakia. Therefore, we welcome especially teachers and students interested in these fields and long-term cooperation with VSM. The reason is that rather than focus on raising the number of cooperating organizations, we prefer quality in the form of joint scientific events (conferences, workshops, and summer schools) and research projects leading to publications. This approach has already proven to be successful. Three years of the international summer school called "Introduction to Knowledge Management" have resulted in publication of the textbook: Jozef Hvorecký, Jozef Kelemen (eds.): Readings in Knowledge Management. Iura Edition, Bratislava 2011, 156 pp., ISBN 978-80-8078-421-8. The book has been adopted by partner schools in the Czech Republic, Finland, and Lithuania, which have participated in organizing the summer school. Teachers of these universities are also authors of individual chapters of the book. We see this form of cooperation as our optimum contribution to integration of Europe and bringing together its educational systems. In the present, we are starting our cooperation with OAMK Oulu. The Finnish partner is interested in implementation of our experience in the field of Green Management.

Our long-term priority is to become an attractive partner to transferred students and teachers and thus to increase the exchange capacity. All courses are taught in both English and Slovak. It enables faster integration of incoming students in the work system of our school and provides more opportunities of communication with Slovak students out of classroom since they can easily get in touch with classmates with similar interests, learning styles, and language proficiency. We aim to enable our Erasmus partners to identify without difficulty the position of our school in the Slovak education system (mainly the higher education system) by making the credit recognition system simpler and clearer. In 2012, we received the "Diploma Supplement Label" award, which made us one of the leaders in this area in the Slovak Republic. Currently, we are focusing on gaining the "ETCS Label", which would open the road to further simplification of mutual recognition of study results for both outgoing and incoming students, as well as to reinforcing of attractiveness of VSM to other partners.

We see room for development especially in foreign internship programs providing students with the possibility to gain work experience they could apply later in jobs in multinational corporations (of the

first and second sectors), as well as in non-governmental and humanitarian organizations. The obstacle to these initiatives is mainly a low number of the offered positions. We would also like to enhance exchange of doctoral students. The low involvement of students is caused by two factors. The first one is the fact that the first group of students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> degree of education at VSM started studying in 2010. Another one is unfavorable legislation of the Slovak Republic, which presents indirect obstacles and limits the number of daily program students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> degree study at private schools of higher education. Therefore, developing of contacts at this level is one of our priorities.

Although there is no direct transfer of syllabi and/or study programs between our school and its partners within the Erasmus program as of now, we have several examples of mutual synchronization. There is the above-mentioned common textbook created by the team of four universities and shared experience in Green Management. At present, we have submitted a project of student internship development as a joint project with four partners, one of which is not a member of the EU. If the project application is approved, we will make a significant step in improvement of exchange internship programs and their higher frequency. According to a preliminary agreement with three partners, in the next year, we will submit a project of another summer school in the field of Green Management. The project is planned for three years, and it should be completed by another co-authored monograph.

In this year, we will submit a proposal of accreditation of the study program of the 1<sup>st</sup> degree in the field of Management of Information Systems. Since our partner schools in Germany and Finland have dual study programs in this field, we hope to join their project as a partner with the ambition to award joint diplomas issued by all the three sites.

The European Union strategy of modernization of higher education has five priorities, which are carried out systematically at our school. We aim to develop the priorities in the ways described next to each one of them.

***To raise the number of higher education graduates:***

VSM interprets this priority as raising the number of graduates who are able to find an appropriate job immediately after completing their studies. Therefore, when creating new study programs, we focus on innovative fields related to information and communication technologies, ecology, and human potential development. Our ambition is not to increase the number of students at any expense but to guarantee quality of their knowledge and adequate preparation for the needs of business practice. Moreover, we are systematically developing life-long learning, especially in the online mode, because VSM is a leader in e-learning in the Slovak Republic. In this way, we contribute to a higher number of employees with higher education in the older generation, who have experienced limited access to colleges and universities due to a low number of accepted applicants in the previous decades.

- ***To improve quality and relevance of teacher training and to equip graduates with practical knowledge and skills:***

VSM was established in 1999. Since then, the quality level of scientific results has increased to the B level (according to the assessment by the Accreditation Committee of the Slovak Republic), which is an internationality recognized quality level. We publish in international journals and lecture at international conferences regularly. In the last 2 years, we have published 30 textbooks. Their focus is on “soft skills” since this topic is an undervalued part of education at Slovak colleges and universities.

- ***To provide students with opportunities to gain additional skills and to support cross-border cooperation leading to:***

Methodological approaches are closely connected to student needs. The core part of instruction has the form of individual and group projects, presentations, and discussions with the goal to develop communications skills and to apply the knowledge in practice. Internship stays focused on management are recognized as completion of related courses (in the extent of up to 1 trimester).

- ***To reinforce „the knowledge triangle“ by linking education, research, and practical experience:***

Experts with practical experience constitute almost a half of the VSM faculty. Regular contact with them enables relationship between the core workers and practical experience, and at the same time, students obtain the first-hand information on real needs of the business world. A significant number of final theses in all the three degrees of education deals with issues directly related to the needs of companies and organizations.

- ***To create an effective system of governance and funding in support of excellence:***

Since the beginning of its existence, VSM, as the first private institution of higher education, has paid attention to efficient use of sources. It promotes the idea of „full costing“; therefore, it is not dependent on state grants and subsidies. It gains resources for development by offering educational and research capacity. Its ambition is to continue in this trend.