Internationalization Strategy 2020 - 2025

In the renewed EU agenda[1] for higher education identified the following opportunities and challenges: tackling the skills mismatch in the EU between what is needed and the current reality, building inclusive and connected higher education systems, ensuring higher education institutions contribute to innovation, supporting effective and efficient higher education systems. According the European Commision it is important to ensure „that higher education is inclusive, open to talent from all backgrounds, and that higher education institutions are not ivory towers, but civic-minded learning communities connected to their communities". Higher education should also allow students to acquire skills and experiences through activities based around real-world problems, include work-based learning and, where possible, offer international mobility. Cooperation with employers can allow HEIs to increase the relevance of their curricula. To this end, among other initiatives, the European Commission intends to launch an up-scaled EU STE(A)M coalition bringing together different education sectors, business, and public sector employers to promote the uptake of relevant STE(A)M subjects and modernize STE(A)M and other curricula, including through more multi-disciplinary programmes. The EC also intends to promote development and testing of flexible and modular course design through specific priorities for Erasmus+ strategic partnerships and to encourage HEIs to award ECTS points to students for voluntary and community activities.

The Communication emphasizes that digitally-enabled open science offers new opportunities to explore relevant contemporary subjects and develop one's research skills, thus the European Commission intends to develop a digital readiness model to help HEIs, their staff and students implement digital learning strategies and exploit the potential of state-of-the-art technology.

The European Commission emphasizes that well-designed higher education programmes and curricula centered on students' learning needs are crucial for the effective development of skills and that academic staff has a key role to play here. However, too many higher education teachers have received little or no pedagogical training and systematic investment in teachers' continuous professional development remains the exception. The Communication states that through Erasmus+ programme, the EC will set up strategic support for higher education teachers to help them develop pedagogical and curriculum design skills through targeted opportunities for staff mobility for pedagogical training.

The EC also intends to enhance the academic mobility of young people, with the European Commission's Communication "Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture" (2017)[2] proposing to boost the Erasmus+ programme in all categories of learners that it already covers (pupils, students, trainees,apprentices and teachers) with the aim of doubling the number of participants and reaching out to learners coming from disadvantaged backgrounds by 2025.

2025

doubling the number of participant

The Strategic Plan of Vilnius College of Technology and Design (hereinafter - VTDK) notes that global trends, such as the rapid pace of industrial digitalization and the creation of new jobs, EU's aim to shift to a circular economy, require study and training programs that respond to constantly changing labor market needs and challenges. Thus, the Strategic Plan identifies, among other, the following strategic priorities: study programmes, focusing on innovations in the interaction of technology and design, building competencies for sustainable development and responding to the needs of industry digitization; knowledge transfer contributing to the sustainable development; high capacity academic staff; infrastructure for digital studies.

In response to the above-mentioned provisions of the EU strategic papers and Colege institutional strategic goals,

Internationalization at VTDK aims:

❏ to promote knowledge transfer on innovations for sustainable development in the fields of engineering and design,
❏ to encourage students to act proactively and socially responsibly.

The transfer of knowledge, technology and ideas through a network of international partners will encourage the uptake and adaptation of innovation, as well as allow VTDK researchers to share their findings and working solutions. Collaboration with foreign colleagues broadens the perspective and enables pooling the skills and achieving synergies in addressing societal issues, as well as introducing innovations and good practices that significantly contribute to the modernization of higher education institutions.

The College attaches great importance to the formation of appropriate attitudes of its graduates and the development of transformative competencies, such as creating new value, reconciling tensions and dilemmas, and taking responsibility. By gaining various international experiences, such as study or internship abroad, interdisciplinary projects together with foreign students at VTDK, collaboration with foreign students through various e-communication
platforms, participation in lectures delivered by foreign lecturers, students will broaden their horizons, become more open to new ideas and approaches, will strengthen intercultural and collaboration competencies, will be better able to adapt to changes, will more easily accept the complexity or ambiguity of the situation, will be more self-confident, more creative and will be better able to solve problems.

To achieve the internationalization goals, in 2020-2025 the College will seek to pursue the following tasks within the three main internationalization fields:

1.INTERNATIONALIZATION OF STUDIES

2. STRENGTHENING OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF APPLIED RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

3. DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND SYSTEMS SUPPORTING INTERNATIONALIZATION

1. INTERNATIONALIZATION OF STUDIES

1.1. Expanding the opportunities for VTDK students to gain study/work experience in an international environment – VTDK will seek to increase the number of students who have gained international experience in one of the following ways:
- study semester at a foreign partner institution;
- internship in a foreign company (at least 15 ECTS credits);
- blended mobility (at least 15 ECTS credits);
- participation in an interdisciplinary international project at VTDK (at least 5 ECTS credits).

1.2. Inviting foreign lecturers – VTDK will seek to attract visiting foreign lecturers who could contribute to positive changes in studies.

1.3. Embedding best practice (didactic and other) into study programmes – for this purpose lecturers will be encouraged to apply best experiences of foreign partners that could contribute to innovative and digital teaching, development of transformative competencies, etc. The content of study programs will be further developed in order to increase their international dimension and provide students with knowledge of global trends in the professional field.

1.4. Attracting foreign students to full-time studies –it will be pursued to form the groups of foreign students for full-time study in the following fields: Design, Media Art, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Business. The study will be promoted in various regions, focusing on the regions of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Caucasus, and Lithuanian communities abroad. VTDK will also promote its study programmes and will seek to build new partnerships with local HEIs in the Balkan region, India and China.

1.5. Optimizing partners' network – the portfolio of international cooperation agreements of each faculty will be reviewed and updated, taking into account the activities carried out with the partner during the last five years in the context of student mobility, R&D and common projects. It will be pursued to conclude new agreements with HEIs that carry out relevant study programs, support the concept of sustainable development, and carry out various initiatives that promote the interaction of technology and design. Partnership network will be developed in the following geographic regions: Erasmus + Program Countries, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Caucasus, Balkans, United States of America, Russian Federation, Republic of India, People's Republic of China.

2. STRENGTHENING OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF APPLIED RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

2.1. Intensifying the
mobility of researchers – to develop and deepen relations with relevant researchers from other countries, VTDK will promote the mobility of its researchers to HEIs and enterprises, as well as their participation in significant international events. Sustainable relations with foreign colleagues will create preconditions for the implementation of joint R&D activities,
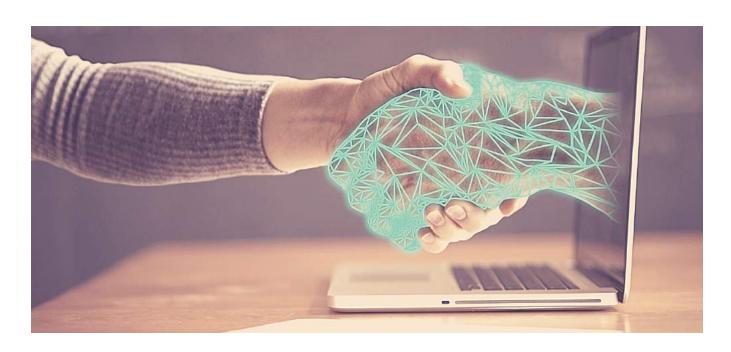common art events, and projects aimed at the development of new intellectual products.

2.2. Organization of international events –
various international events, such as conferences, international weeks, creative workshops, etc. will be organized to establish new contacts at the institutional and study program level, introduce foreign researchers and business representatives to the context of college activities, scientific interests and strategic initiatives.

2.3. Implementation of strategic partnership projects – strategic partnership and other international projects aimed at the development of intellectual products will be implemented
in the following areas: sustainable development, social innovations, digitalisation of industry/studies, engineering and design interaction, development of students' transformative competencies.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND SYSTEMS SUPPORTING INTERNATIONALIZATION

3.1. E-administration of student mobility – the digitization of all student mobility administration processes will be carried out in three stages via the Erasmus Without Paper (hereinafter EWP) platform. In the first phase, all inter-institutional and learning agreements will be signed electronically via the EWP platform. In the second phase, the college will start using the EWP platform for the administration of the outgoing/incoming students (nominating students to a partner HEI, approving the admission of incoming students). In the third stage Transcript of Records of incoming students will be issued through the EWP platform.

3.2. Engaging academic and administrative staff in the implementation of the international strategy – lecturers, researchers, administrative staff play a very important role in implementing the activities of the international strategy, applying in practice the knowledge gained through international partnerships, inspiring students to participate in international activities. It is therefore essential that academics have a good understanding of and support for the aims and provisions of the internationalization strategy. To this end, to stimulate discussion and dissemination of good practice informal meetings with teachers and administrative staff will be organized; it is also planned to organize annual awards highlighting the greatest achievements and best practices of international initiatives.

3.3. Creating a foreign student-friendly environment – to increase the attractiveness of the college for foreign students without assistance in handling official documents and accommodation issues, it is very important to integrate them into college life as soon as possible, to give them a sense of community. To this end, a mentoring program will be further developed, incoming students will have an opportunity to get closer to the local community through volunteering.

3.4. Ensuring equitable access for the students or staff with fewer opportunities – International office will provide tailor-made information on international mobility opportunities for college students/staff belonging to the groups with fewer opportunities (such as persons with special needs, persons belonging to ethnic minorities and migrants, students with a lower socio-economic background (including both financial and lower parents' education level), students coming from smaller regions, students from child care homes, students having work/family commitments). The main reasons hindering the persons belonging to the above-mentioned groups from participation in academic mobility are the following: health issues, financial difficulties, work/family-related issues, students who could not succeed academically, a person who does not feel comfortable with his/her foreign language knowledge, person's fears related to adaptation in another cultural environment. Taking into account a particular case, students and staff will be individually guided on accessible financial, academic, psychological, linguistic, mentoring support. Students will also be intensively consulted on the new formats of mobility – the virtual exchange and blended mobility.

3.5. Increasing VTDK visibility – to provide potential foreign partners and students of the College with the most relevant information, to present the specific features of the college, the college's website in English will be updated. The website will present the most interesting initiatives of students and academics related to sustainable development, the interaction of technologies and design, development of transformable competencies, community-based research. The Pinterest platform will be used to present Design faculty, VTDK Erasmus+ club activity will be presented on Instagram. The VTDK Ambassadors program will also be launched, inviting the most successful Erasmus + students to share their experiences through webcasts and face-to-face consultations.

INDICATORS

The progress of the achievements will be monitored with the help of the following indicators:

Quantitative indicators:
- Proportion of VTDK students who have
- gained study or work experience in an international environment (%)
- Number of blended/virtual mobility
- projects (at least 15 ECTS credits)
- Number of incoming students
- Number of incoming lecturers
- Number of papers written in collaboration with international partners
- Increase of staff involvement in
- international projects (%)
- Number of full-time foreign students.

Qualitative indicators:
- The impact of mobility on the
- professional and personal development of the participants (students and staff)
- Satisfaction of incoming foreign students
- with the study environment and the quality of studies
- The impact of the best practices embedded
- into curriculum
- The impact of intellectual outputs and
- practices developed in international projects

REFERENCES

[1] COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS on a renewed EU agenda for higher education (COM(2017) 247 final)

[2]Communication — Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture (COM(2017) 673 final)