

## 1. Erasmus Policy Statement

Academy of professional studies Sumadija (Academy Sumadija) is a state, higher education institution, established in late 2019 in the city of Kragujevac, Central Serbia. The Academy was created as a result of reform of colleges of vocational studies by uniting four technical colleges in Central Serbia. These colleges were established in the late 1950s and the early 1960s and were prominent institutions of applied/vocational studies. The reason for founding the Academy was to create interdisciplinary environment for both students and staff, to promote research and to further cooperation with companies and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, which would eventually strengthen the knowledge triangle and lead to development of new study programs tailored to the needs of the labour market. The Academy offers study programs on the first and second level of studies in line with the European educational standards stated in the Bologna Declaration. To nourish and promote good relations with higher education and partner institutions worldwide, and to encourage international exchange of students, teaching and non-teaching staff, Academy Sumadija has decided to follow the steps of its predecessors and to continue the process of harmonization with European HEIs with the goal of becoming a part of EHEA; issue diplomas stating the level of qualification and diploma supplements with listed professional competence; and to promote system of continuous self-evaluation. All study programs at the Academy are accredited by the national Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance. Participation in Erasmus program is seen as an opportunity for implementing international, intercultural and supranational elements in higher education, scientific and professional work and research, and additional activities in order to achieve full involvement of the Academy in regional, European and global flows in the fields of science, higher education and knowledge transfer. In the period of one year, thanks to its transitory Erasmus Charter, Academy has created a network of contacts at universities in Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco and Algeria. Erasmus Charter alleviates the process of signing inter-institutional agreements and increases the level of trust between partner institutions. Thus, it represents a key instrument for the Academy in its further internationalization. The Academy intends to cooperate with institutions from the region, EU and beyond. Cooperation with universities in the region is eased by similarities in economic and technological development, educational systems, culture and minimal language barriers; while cooperation with universities in EU would be beneficial in terms of transferring practices, since these institutions operate in well-developed systems, have excellent results in transfer of knowledge, technologies towards the labour market, high degree of employability, innovative approaches and permanent improvement of the quality policy, all of which would be beneficial to the Academy. Cooperation with geographically distant countries would be beneficial in terms of raising awareness about cultural diversity, comparing educational and other differences that would be later applicable in problem solving and negotiation and generally broaden horizons of participants. Thus, the Academy intends to train students to operate equally well in different environments and cultures by providing adequate study programs, exchange programs for students who wish to complete part of their studies abroad, joint study programs (undergraduate and master) with higher education institutions abroad, greater engagement of distinguished foreign professors and researchers, and by increasing the number of foreign students at the Academy. In the upcoming period, the Academy will investigate possibilities for developing programs that will lead to the realization of joint/double diplomas. The Strategy of internationalization of the Academy incorporates all these elements with the aim to determine the main guidelines for internationalization in the light of global

trends, international affirmation, competitiveness of institutions of higher education, and above all need to pursue quality.

Through international cooperation projects Academy Sumadija will strive to improve governance and funding, the quality and relevance of higher education, the attainment levels of its graduates, the knowledge triangle, and the overall quality through student and staff mobility and international cooperation. Academy is determined to participate in all the three Key Actions. In the first year of the Erasmus+ program, the Academy will take steps to expand its network of contacts, in the region, Europe and beyond, with universities, colleges, and other partner institutions working in the field of IT, Road Traffic and Mechanical Engineering and Ecology. At the end of the first year measures will be taken to find partners for cooperation in the field of management, tourism, hospitality and design. In the first year of the program the accent will be on student and staff mobilities, and dissemination of international experience. Along with the mobilities, steps will be taken to educate staff to find opportunities and apply for other project – KA2 and KA3. The Academy will first look for partners in its existing network of partners, that is created for mobilities, and beyond. To strengthen its modernization and internationalization the Academy will: 1. Promote and sustain relations with foreign HEI; 2. Cooperate in initiating defining, realizing and presenting international projects; 3. Identify, analyze and promote information regarding international cooperation; 4. Coordinate and monitor participation in associations, institutions, consortia and other networks; 5. Support the services in charge of international mobility; 6. Organize visits by representatives of foreign HEI. To support mobility, Academy formed International Relations Office comprised by its teaching and non-teaching staff, from all departments and authorized it to perform tasks to assist and support its students and staff regarding mobility programs and project applications. To facilitate mobility, Rulebooks on staff and student mobility, and recognition of ECTS credits were adopted to regulate, guide and ensure international exchange. Participation in Erasmus Program is a part of Academy strategy of internationalization which will encourage student and staff mobility, promote transnational teaching activities, recognize the significance of visibility of the results of these activities, and above all provide for nondiscrimination practice by ensuring that all participants be treated equally in a fair, transparent, coherent and documented way. Non-discrimination policies will be further developed through different kinds of additional support to both incoming and outgoing students and staff afflicted by disabilities or lower socio-economic status.

The Academy aims to strengthen international cooperation and consequent integration into the common European higher education area (EHEA). It will continue to harmonize its study programs with the programs of universities in the EU; it has adopted credit system (ECTS) and has been promoting student and staff mobility, European cooperation in quality assurance, lifelong learning, student participation in education, and promotion of EHEA, which should lead to internationally valid diplomas. As a member of CASSS (Conference of Academies and Colleges of Applied Studies) and European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the Academy accepts priorities set by the EU, such as efforts to build EHEA based on trust, mutual recognition, cooperation and exchange of best practices, mobility and growth. Since the Erasmus + program is seen as a key instrument for accomplishing the above objectives, we believe that our participation in it will have a positive impact on the institution. The expected impact on further modernization and harmonization of the institution is:

- Modernized curricula and study programs based on experience, research and analysis from projects from the EU, adapted to the needs of the economy and the labour market;
- Higher quality of skills and competence acquired by our students, both professional and fundamental (e.g. digital, social, and ecological) and transversal, such as solving specific problems in team work;
- Strengthening the overall capacity of the institution by investing in its equipment and facilities (especially laboratories);
- Development of international mobility of students, staff and researchers in the region and beyond, as well as strengthening the human resources of the Academy;
- Establishing cooperation with relevant domestic and foreign professional-research institutions and enterprises primarily through consortia with other higher education institutions, and independently as well;
- Creating a culture of innovation and improving the process of innovation in cooperation with the economy, and other HEI in the region.

The main goal of our policy is to raise quality in all performance segments at the institutional and individual levels (and in line with EU standards). In the further period the Academy will work on expanding its network of partners (both academic and business/industrial) and focus on raising student and staff mobilities both for study and training purposes. After establishing proper network of partners, Academy Sumadija expects to be seen as an eligible and qualified partner, and to take part in KA2 project organized by experienced and prominent partners. At the peak of the Erasmus program we expect to actively participate in all types of KA2 programs, in at least one project. By 2027, we expect to have broad experience in Erasmus programs, and to be seen as an experienced partner to both academic and business partners in both program and partner countries.