



## Strategy of Internationalization at the Academy of Applied Technical and Preschool Studies in Niš

Internationalization is one of the key features of a modern higher education institution and as such it has extreme importance for progress, education, talent development and transfer of knowledge.

### Key Goals and Strategic Plans

Within the framework of a seven-year-strategy for the period 2020-2027, the following goals related to Internationalization of AATPS Niš, have been set out:

- for it to become a leader in internationalization of vocational higher education in Serbia, and
- take an active part in internationalization of higher education in Europe and beyond.

In order to achieve such goals, ten long-term- strategic programs have been developed:

1. Standardization of study programs based on international standards and requirements
2. Development and implementation of student mobility programs
3. Development and implementation of teaching staff mobility
4. Development and implementation of programs for obtaining joint / double diplomas
5. Participation in joint vocational education and research projects
6. Strategic positioning
7. Networking
8. Digitalization
9. Entrepreneurship
10. IR office

This strategy is based on a positive experience in international cooperation as well as the best international practices in the domain of internationalization. In terms of geographical parameters, our activities will be focused on cooperation with higher education institutions from the countries of Western Balkan, as well as the leading educational centers in the European Community and beyond.

### 1) Standardization of study programs based on international standards

Internationalization and standardization of curricula will be implemented in all programs at AATPS Niš. The primary goal will be to harmonize programs with the examples of best international practice, applying the highest standards in all teaching areas. Apart from standardization of the teaching methods and program contents, special attention will be paid to the knowledge of foreign languages and strengthening of intercultural competencies in all students and professors. At the same time, information on access to various national and international scholarship resources, such as the Erasmus student network, will be systematically given out so as to provide for the adequate budget for studies.



Through introduction of internationally standardized programs, AATPS students will acquire skills that will increase their competitiveness in both national and international labor markets. As part of the strategy, program standardization will be continued alongside program harmonization and monitoring of the best international educational experience.

## **2) Development and implementation of student mobility programs**

As part of the strategy, short and medium-term student exchange programs will be developed and implemented with the help of international partners. Adjustment of programs with the ones found at other higher education partner institutions will enable efficient exchange and recognition of study results based on the European System of Transfer and Accumulation of Points (ECTS).

Student exchange programs are crucial for increasing mobility numbers in both outgoing and incoming students. Promotion of international experience and development of international student competencies are; therefore, seen to be of great importance for the development of international competitiveness.

## **3) Development and implementation of teaching staff mobility**

AATPS Niš plans to improve the process of academic exchange for the teaching staff. Steps will be taken accordingly to find partner institutions and organizations and to involve them in active cooperation. AATPS Niš management will support mobility programs by securing all the necessary conditions (official leave, other short-term absences, contacts with partners, etc.) in order to facilitate the process of international exchange for its teaching staff. At the same time AATPS Niš will support visiting guest professors and provide needed assistance in administrative work, and finding accommodation. It is expected that the professional development of the teaching staff will significantly contribute to the improvement of professional competencies. After implementing an exchange program, the teaching staff will give its contribution through increasing the quality of the teaching process and improving the quality of study programs. Foreign professors will give a direct contribution to AATPS Niš by disseminating knowledge and the best practices through their teaching activity. In order to secure the needed conditions for exchange of the teaching staff, AATPS Niš will provide all available information to interested parties related to financing of exchange programs for the teaching staff (Erasmus +, DAAD, CEEPUS, BAYHOST etc.).

## **4) Development and implementation of joint / double degree programs**

The aim of such cooperation is to develop joint or dual degree programs in the field of technical and technological sciences. The synergistic effect of such activities can greatly contribute to the overall improvement of study programs, teaching methods and standards. In the upcoming period 2020-2027, all the possibilities of establishing new joint / double degree programs will; therefore, be explored.

## **5) Participation in joint vocational education projects**

In line with previously gained experience, AATPS Niš will make efforts to continuously participate in international projects dedicated to the improvement of vocational education. Adequate programs will be selected and joint applications will be made accordingly together with the existing and future partners. In addition, AATPS Niš will consider all the other opportunities for participating in international projects, and thus meet new challenges.



The attained results of the institutions merged into AATPS, under Tempus, Erasmus, as well as IPA programs, have fully met the expectations and have significantly contributed to the improvement of professional practice and cooperation with partner institutions through projects. AATPS Niš will continue to establish partnerships through projects employing full intellectual capacities in that process.

## **6) Strategic positioning**

### **Regional positioning**

AATPS Nis has been, for some time now, one of the leading vocational higher education institutions in the region. One of its strategic objectives is to keep this position permanently. At the same time, AATPS Nis, as a public and socially responsible institution, has an obligation to act for the benefit of development of higher vocational education in the region that is in need of support, and thus foster the international reputation of the community it belongs to.

### **Positioning in Europe**

AATPS is recognizable in Europe, but not to the extent of its full potential and its achievements in the field of vocational education. One of the strategic priorities is to increase the visibility and reputation of AATPS and its departments in the European Higher Education Area. University as a whole, and the faculties and institutes it consists of, need to be actively engaged in relevant associations and networks, and have a leading role in specific areas.

### **Global positioning**

In global positioning, AATPS needs to be recognized, valued and known, on a global scale, as an institution that has an active role in the fields of science, education and knowledge transfer. Teachers, researchers and students need to participate more extensively in global (world) scientific and expert conferences. To this end, the aim should be to have the most accomplished members of the academic community representing AATPS, with adequate organizational and financial support at their disposal.

AATPS should give its contribution to the balanced development in the global framework and offer professional, educational and technical support to individuals and institutions in underdeveloped countries, guided by the experiences and best practices of the world-renowned universities.

## **7) Networking**

AATPS needs to be part of the existing network of universities of applied sciences, international organisations and associations, which enables more continual, direct and functional connections in the field of transfer of knowledge and skills from HE institutions to the labor market and vice versa. In the areas where there is a lack of adequate form of organisation, AATPS should initiate cooperation and assume responsibility for networking and coordination.



## 8) Digitalisation

AATPS is dedicated to dealing with the process of digitalization, to make full use of the European Commission's Digital Education Action plan, as its actions support technology use and the development of digital competences in education. AATPS starts to build upon all of the IT support and structures it already has in use (developing the LSM platform, telepresence equipment from the Erasmus+ projects enabling the educational system in a collaborative environment with participants in multiple locations, Digital library of all master and BS graduate papers defended at AATPS, etc.)

## 9) Entrepreneurship

AATPS will undertake field-leading research in a wide range of contemporary business-applicable topics, including it in its international development concept. This research will cover different topics such as innovation and entrepreneurship within large companies, technological change and its impact on company strategy and industry structure, organizational learning, the impact of informal and formal structures on company performance, etc. In combination with digital strategy, entrepreneurship will help better positioning of AATPS on the labor market in the region and on the international level.

## 10) International relations office

In order to achieve its strategic mission, planned goals and prospects, AATPS Niš will foresee the possibility of establishing an International relations office.

## Conclusion

By defining the Strategy of Internationalization, AATPS Niš claims its orientation towards the internationalization through student exchange programs, empowered personnel, and the development of joint/double degree programs, demonstrating willingness to work on its continuous development. AATPS Niš will dedicate time to constructive proposals for cooperation development with present and future international partners so that the forthcoming activities can be harmonized with the strategy and professional interests of AATPS Niš.

The strategy of AATPS Niš internationalization enters into force on the day of its adoption and publication on the website of AATPS.



PRESIDENT OF THE TEMPORARY COUNCIL OF THE AATPS NIŠ

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