

# Erasmus Policy Statement

## Participation in Erasmus+

The ZHAW is one of Switzerland's leading universities of applied sciences. It offers teaching, research, continuing education and other services that are both practice-oriented and science-based. In our research and development work, we concentrate on pressing societal challenges, with particular focus on energy and social integration and take an active part in shaping the digital and ecological transformation. The ZHAW has three strategic directions: European, transformative, and entrepreneurial. Through close collaboration between the university and the industry, the ZHAW prepares its students for the demands and developments of the job market. We are firmly rooted in the Greater Zurich region – a dynamic hub for education, research and innovation – while maintaining strong international partnerships.

We position ourselves as a European university of applied sciences committed to strengthening partnerships, collaboration and exchange with like-minded institutions across Europe, like the European Engineering Learning Innovation and Science Alliance (EELISA). Joining Erasmus+ represents a strategic milestone, as the Erasmus+ network serves as a long-term platform and accelerator within our internationalisation strategy.

For the current programme period, ZHAW plans to focus on Key Action 1 (KA1) and Key Action 2 (KA2):

### **Key Action 1 – Learning mobility of individuals:**

ZHAW will implement activities across all KA1 categories:

- Student mobility for studies and traineeships
- Staff mobility for teaching and training
- Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs)

Our KA1 activities align with the four overarching priorities of the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 programme: Inclusion and Diversity, Digital Transformation, Environment and Fight Against Climate Change, and Participation in Democratic Life, Common Values and Civic Engagement.

We will apply for projects under KA131 (Programme Countries), with potential extension to KA171 (Partner Countries) in future years, subject to institutional priorities and capacity.

### **Key Action 2: Cooperation among organisations and institutions**

Since 2023, ZHAW has been a full member of the European Engineering Learning Innovation and Science Alliance (EELISA), a network of ten universities across eight European countries. EELISA is part of the European Universities Initiative (EUI) and is funded through Erasmus+ KA2 – Partnerships for Excellence and Horizon Europe.

EELISA represents the core of our strategic approach to European cooperation: a long-term, institutionally integrated partnership with like-minded universities that share common European values, commitment to academic integrity, and a vision for collaborative education, research and innovation. EELISA projects are guided by the United Nations Sustainability Goals (UN SDGs) and are committed to inclusion and diversity.

Our membership in the EELISA alliance opens new opportunities to collaborate with leading universities across the EU. Students, employees and partner companies of the ZHAW benefit from interdisciplinary exchange and cooperation at a European level. Within EELISA, ZHAW actively participates in all Work Packages and co-leads the Work Packages Employability and Partnerships (WP7) and Innovation and Entrepreneurship (WP10), leveraging our strong ties with industry. In October 2023, the partners of EELISA declared their intention to organize the automatic recognition of qualifications gained by their students as part of EELISA activities ("EELISA charter for mutual recognition"). This will increase the cooperation within the alliance, promote the internationalisation of curricula, enhance the intercultural skills of students and staff, and reduce the administrative burden.

## Strategy, objectives and impact

ZHAW's institutional strategy is underpinned by three key strategic directions: Transformative (fostering science-practice exchange), entrepreneurial (driving innovation), and European (intensifying partnerships for international competitiveness).

The European orientation is the core of our internationalisation strategy, positioning ZHAW as a European university with forward-looking alliances from which students and staff benefit through diverse perspectives. Within our internationalisation strategy, we have defined seven strategic goals corresponding to three strategic fields. Erasmus+ serves as a central instrument for achieving these goals, aligned with the 2021-2027 programme period and beyond (until 2030). Below, we outline how Erasmus+ participation contributes to achieving each goal:

- Goal 1: ZHAW positions itself as a European university.
- Goal 2: ZHAW strengthens the international profile of its students and staff.
- Goal 3: ZHAW promotes diversity and intercultural competence.
- Goal 4: ZHAW orients itself towards European and international standards.
- Goal 5: ZHAW takes responsibility for sustainable development.
- Goal 6: ZHAW is an Entrepreneurial University.
- Goal 7: ZHAW is an attractive employer.

### **Strategic field 1: Development and strengthening of higher education partnerships (focus on Europe)**

Relevant goals:

- Goal 1: ZHAW positions itself as a European university.
- Goal 5: ZHAW takes responsibility for sustainable development.

**Context:**

Partnerships pool competencies and are a key lever for addressing current challenges from multiple perspectives and implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The focus is on long-term, trust-based collaboration with partners on equal footing, thus building and expanding strategic alliances (e.g., EELISA) as well as participating in high-quality networks that, like ZHAW, are consistently oriented toward sustainable development goals, excellent teaching and research, and internationalization. Through regular evaluation and targeted selection, partnerships will be systematically developed and consolidated in the future. New strategic partnerships – particularly at the European, but also global level – bring added value to ZHAW as a whole and are strategically developed with consideration for sustainability and shared values.

**Erasmus+ contribution:**

- Quality-oriented partner selection both in terms of goal 1 and 5 is facilitated by Erasmus+ requirements (ECHE accreditation, shared standards).
- Through EELISA (KA2 – Partnerships for Excellence), ZHAW participates in a network explicitly committed to the UN SDGs.
- EELISA membership positions ZHAW at the heart of the European Universities Initiative.
- KA1 mobility strengthens our European identity through personal and professional networks.
- Visibility through Erasmus+ strengthens ZHAW's profile as a European institution.

## **Strategic field 2: Expansion of sustainable and innovation-promoting international learning spaces**

**Relevant goals:**

Goal 2: ZHAW strengthens the international profile of its students and staff.

Goal 6: ZHAW is an Entrepreneurial University.

Goal 7: ZHAW is an attractive employer.

**Context:**

ZHAW aims to create forward-looking, sustainable, international learning spaces promoting future skills acquisition through diverse, flexible, and inclusive learning opportunities. Through the "Global Campus" concept, interdisciplinary learning beyond ZHAW's boundaries strengthens international visibility and attractiveness. For example, we offer various fully and partly English-language degree programmes.

**Erasmus+ contribution:**

- BIPs enable innovative, short-term collaborative teaching on entrepreneurship, innovation, and future skills while reducing environmental impact.
- Staff mobility enables faculty to learn from European colleagues, bringing back innovative pedagogical approaches and ensuring international competitiveness.
- Student mobility exposes ZHAW students to different educational cultures, building the international profile that makes them attractive in a globalised job market.

### **Strategic field 3: Promotion of diversity and transversal competencies in a global context**

Relevant goals:

Goal 1: ZHAW positions itself as a European university.

Goal 2: ZHAW strengthens the international profile of its students and staff.

Goal 3: ZHAW promotes diversity and intercultural competence.

Goal 4: ZHAW orients itself towards European and international standards.

Context:

ZHAW anchors international and intercultural competencies in its educational and organisational culture, promoting social sustainability through participation, diversity, and equal opportunities. We foster an inclusive international working environment aligned with European standards, guaranteeing future-relevant transversal competencies for students and staff.

Erasmus+ contribution:

- Alignment with European standards: ECHE framework ensures operation according to European best practices.
- Inclusion support (KA1) provides additional funding for participants with fewer opportunities, ensuring accessible mobility regardless of background.
- Multicultural campus development: Incoming Erasmus+ students and staff enrich campus culture. Through structured integration activities (e.g., collaboration with Erasmus Student Network ESN), diversity translates into intercultural competence.
- Staff mobility enables learning about diversity practices from partners, continuously improving our inclusive approaches.
- Future skills development: Mobility experiences develop transversal competencies, including adaptability, intercultural communication, and problem-solving in diverse teams.

#### **Contribution to building a European Education Area**

ZHAW's participation directly supports the European Commission's goal of establishing a European Education Area where learning, studying, and research transcend borders:

- Removing mobility barriers through full implementation of Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) and European Student Card Initiative (ESCI), enabling seamless, paperless mobility
- Enabling automatic recognition of learning outcomes, ensuring free movement without credit loss
- Deepening institutional cooperation through EELISA, creating integrated partnerships with joint governance and shared curricula
- Promoting shared values of inclusion, diversity, democratic participation, and sustainability in all activities
- Linking education and research through EELISA's dual funding (Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe)

### **Envisaged impact on ZHAW**

- Modernisation: Digitalisation of mobility management (EWP/ESCI); pedagogical innovation through collaborative formats (BIPs); curricular development through joint programmes; quality enhancement through European best practices
- Internationalisation: Structural internationalisation through EELISA membership; increased visibility as a European university of applied sciences; stronger quality-oriented partner networks; enhanced attractiveness through Erasmus+ brand recognition
- Strategic goal achievement: Quantitatively – increased mobility numbers, expanded partnerships, more joint programmes; Qualitatively – deeper sustainable partnerships, stronger international profiles for students and staff, enhanced European cooperation capacity; Culturally – stronger European identity, inclusive campus culture, organisation-wide commitment to international engagement

By participating in Erasmus+, ZHAW operationalises its strategic commitment to becoming a leading European university of applied sciences – transformative, entrepreneurial, and European.