



VERN'

University of Applied Sciences

UN Global Compact

COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT

2018 - 2020



PART I. STATEMENT OF CONTINUED SUPPORT BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OR EQUIVALENT

January 13th 2021

To our stakeholders:

I am pleased to confirm that VERN' University reaffirms its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption. We hold our continuous endeavors in this areas cornerstones for our strategic development. This is our Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact. We welcome feedback on its contents.

In this Communication of Engagement, we describe the actions that our organization has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles as suggested for an organization like ours. We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders.

Sincerely yours,



Iva Biondić

Vice-Dean for Strategic Development

ABOUT VERN' University

After thirty years in the education sector, of which twenty years in the higher education system as the first and largest private institution of higher education in post-communism VERN' has achieved exceptional results in the creation, development and implementation of new study programs, as well as in other higher education related content.

VERN University has more than 1850 students that are currently active and more than 5000 alumni students. We have 14 different undergraduate and graduate professional areas of study and programs.

Undergraduate/ bachelor professional degree programs

- Entrepreneurship Economics
- Tourism and Hotel Management
- Public relations and Media Studies
- Journalism
- Film, Television and multimedia
- Business IT
- Technical Management

Graduate professional degree

- Human Resources Management
- Entrepreneurial Management
- Accounting and Finances
- Managing Sustainable Tourism Development
- Managing Business Communications
- IT Management
- Film and Television Directing and Producing

VERN offers LIFE LONG LEARNING PROGRAMS

Formal and Unformal lifelong learning programs in various fields such as Tourism, IT sector, PR and Marketing.

VERN also takes part in ERASMUS + PROGRAM

Within Erasmus + program Vern is carrying out the following: student and staff exchange; works on various projects in different fields such as strategic partnerships, innovation and exchange of good practices...

VERN's Vision and Mission

Vision

International, open, innovative, entrepreneurial university, recognizable in science and higher education, and socially responsible in its activities.

Mission

With academic excellence and socially responsible activities in the field of higher education, we develop academic, research and professional competences, innovation, entrepreneurship and business. We actively act on our own and overall social development.

Values

The personal and social values that we especially emphasize in our daily work and actions in accordance with the declared vision and mission are the following:

- We respect others and the ones that are different as a pledge of our own freedom and humane social relations.
- We recognize personal strengths, support and develop the pursuit of individuals' excellence and achievement as a fundamental component of community well-being.
- We encourage openness, courage, diligence, responsibility and ethics as traits that lead to individual success and prosperity in society.

Aware of our responsibility for community development, we will promote values that contribute to the development and prosperity of society through sustainable development, but also to the personal development of our students, with the aim of adopting those values on which the future economic and social development of the Republic of Croatia and the European Union can build.

In our further development and action, we will continue promote the principles of social responsibility and sustainable development through study programs and research, we will also continue to cooperate with local, regional national and international bodies to promote social responsibility among young people.

VERN will involve individuals and organizations in shaping the strategic orientation of the university in particular areas.

PART II. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIONS

VERN fully supports the principles of the UN Global Compact and complies with them through policies and procedures.

HUMAN RIGHTS

VERN' promotes and values diversity among their staff and among its students and provides equal opportunities regarding gender, religion, ethnic background, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital and parental status.

VERN offers equal opportunity and education to students from diverse cultural backgrounds as well offers an educational environment that supports students with disabilities and different educational needs.

VERN has been awarded the "Dr. Branko Lovrec" award for respecting the student's religious freedoms.

VERN is a place where students can work together and where mutual respect is essential.

VERN support its students with disabilities.

All employees, students and associates are welcomed and encouraged by the Board of Governors to send their ideas, suggestions and complaints to the Management. They can choose to do it directly or anonymously.

LABOUR STANDARDS

VERN' support openness, daring, diligence, responsibility and moral values as the traits that lead to individual success and prosperity of the society.

The professional development of all employees is very important to the VERN's Board of Governors.

VERN supports and encourages employees for further training and education. It encourages the writing of scientific papers by its teaching staff.

We have 33% PhDs among our teaching employees that were financed by VERN University.

Several VERN's female employees are members of the Business Women Database (Baze poslovnih žena), in the Education and Media working group.

The Business Women Database (Baze poslovnih žena) is an initiative of the Croatian Association of Employers and the Gender Equality Ombudsperson.

The database brings together businesswomen who are capable and qualified with their knowledge and experience to be able to take on high management positions at any time. The database shows that there are a large number of women who have achievement and are ready for responsible positions.

The database of business women (Baze poslovnih žena) in Croatia was created on the module of the Global Board Ready Woman Initiative and the European Network for Women in Leadership.

The Board of Governors of the University VERN communicates transparent business with its employees.

The Board organizes semi-annual meetings with all employees to discuss new ideas, how to implement and improve business, income of the whole institution, how to create a brighter future together.

Vern also involves its students and lecturers in decision making on how to do more, how to improve lectures, and study program in general.

University conducts large satisfaction surveys every year for all employees and for all students.

Survey results are publicly communicated and commented on.

Every year Vern organizes socializing of employees in a relaxing atmosphere in an environment where people can discuss about their project, ideas, etc.

Our University has established an academic, ethical code that must be respected by all students, lecturers and all administrative staff.

VERN 'University implements a unique concept of education that connects the labor market and higher education called #EducationmeetsBusiness.

ENVIRONMENT

Separation and recycling of various materials such as paper, plastics, toners, etc. is important to our institution. A special attention has been paid to this matter.

VERN is firmly committed to reducing paper use. It distributes most of the teaching material to the students in electronic form through the student's portal. As well VERN recycles paper from administration offices daily.

Many environmental concerns are discussed with our students in our courses.

Vern encourages its staff and students to promote greater environmental responsibility through various initiatives, conferences and projects like Island initiative which started on the island of Vis, The international scientific conference Mediterranean Island Conference – MIC Vis, etc.

ANTI-CORRUPTION

VERN as higher education institution is fighting corruption in every form, including extortion, bribery.

In accordance with the workplace and the use of information databases, some VERN employees signed the disclaimer.

Vern seeks to pass on the awareness of corruption to its students.

One of the examples is that we hosted a panel discussion on "forensic accounting and fraud" as part of the International Fraud Awareness Week.

Students and staff were being a part of the celebration of “International Fraud Awareness Week”, organized by Deloitte Croatia in collaboration with VERN' as an active academic partner.

This is the first time that such an event has been organized in our region. As a part of it VERN students participated in a survey on corruption for the first time in this part of the Europe.

Part of the celebration of “International Fraud Awareness Week” was a contest called “Skills on Instagram Raise Awareness of Fraud” where VERN's students' won an excellent 2nd place in Deloitte's first Instagram contest in Croatia, aimed at raising awareness of the problem of corruption and fraud.



PART III. MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOMES

VERN' believe that educated, entrepreneurial and socially responsible people are the carriers of sustainable development and wellbeing of the community.

#EducationmeetsBusiness

VERN organized the OBRAD conference. OBRAD abbreviation stands for education and business (in Croatian language- obrazovanje i rad)

The OBRAD conference was the first step in uniting public and private, economic and educational interests in establishing a more modern, constructive education than what existed before in Croatia.

University VERN's is responsible for organizing and implementing one of the First University-Business Forums in Croatia and the region.

The forum was organized in partnership between the European Commission and VERN.

Forum participants exchanged experiences and examples of good practice on dual education, aligning the binary education system with labor market needs, work-based learning, monitoring student employability, the role of the economy, and politics in fostering entrepreneurship in universities, social entrepreneurship and innovation.

Under the leadership of VERN's Vice-Dean for Strategic development, VERN also conducted the first research project on the cooperation between higher education institutions and the economy, which was harmonized with European methodological practice. The project was jointly conducted by VERN University, Croatian Employers' Association, Agency for Science and Higher Education, and the Institute for Educational Development.

Based on the OBRAD conference, a project called #EducationmeetsBusiness was created.

Within this project, the University encourages students to cooperate with companies, potential employers, by integrating employers into the academic process through mentoring within the project "Partner Companies", which combines theoretical knowledge and practical work on real business challenges. Within this project, as part of teaching activities, students solve business cases of partner companies from business practice with the help of business mentors (company representatives) and academic mentors (subject lecturers).

The goal of this project is to integrate students into the business environment by solving business tasks, through working on real business cases of some of the most successful companies operating in Croatia. In this way, students make their first contact with potential future employers. Within this project, students have already solved business cases and cooperated with companies such as Coca-Cola HBC Croatia, Combis, Erste Bank, Falkensteiner Hotels & Residences, Croatian Telekom, Metro, Raiffeisen Bank, Uber, UNICEF, Croatian Radio and Television, Valamar Hotels & Resorts, Jysk, Rimac cars, Privredna banka Zagreb, Styria Croatia, Atlantic Group, Croatian Chamber of Commerce, and others.

As part of the Education Meets Business project, VERN 'University is teaming up with business partners to address the challenges:

- involvement of employers in curriculum development and advisory committees, for study programs to be adjusted to the needs of the economy
- creating learning outcomes according to the real needs of the labor market and better and more systematic training of students for successful integration into the world of work
- inclusion of young people in the labor market after graduation and their higher (self) employability
- cooperation in employee development
- sustainable and socially responsible entrepreneurial activity

As well VERN is working on EU funded projects who are dealing with sustainability and social innovations trough collaborating of higher education and real sector.

Projects regarding social changes, social entrepreneurship and sustainability

SIKE project -VERN's proactive role in driving social change

As part of an international partner consortium on SIKE EU funded project, one of the most exciting parts is the establishment of SIKE Units: a space on HEI campuses where knowledge exchange for social innovation can take place.

Croatian SIKE Unit is based at the University of Applied Sciences VERN' and it is based on collaboration with Social Innovation Lab and pre-existing resources and knowledge from the institution. It is located at VERN's campus as part of the library and IT classroom. The goal for this UNIT is to attract external stakeholders as well as students who see this space in everyday life and to attract also academics, representatives from private and public bodies, experts and members of wider community and all interested in social innovation knowledge exchange. This is a space for dialogue, a space for innovation and co-design and a hub for connecting people: a physical place where people can gather together. The spaces adopt the following characteristics: Creativity, collaboration with society, open-door policy, mutual-learning process, innovative copyright policy and academic credibility.

The SIKE Project responds to the need for Universities to become more proactive in driving social change through knowledge exchange and social innovation (SI).

This project aims to lay the foundations for a radical shift in knowledge exchange practice that embraces social innovation by adapting more conventional, commercial and process innovation to the social needs of communities. As such, SIKE will both facilitate the exchange, flow and co-creation of knowledge and stimulate social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills of its participants and stakeholders while also developing new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning through its training program and online tools.



EU FUNDED PROJECT SILICE WITH ISRAELI AND INDIAN PARTNERS

International consortium of European, Israeli and Indian partners has successfully ended EU funded project SILICE- Social Innovation for Local Indian and Israeli Communities and graduate Entrepreneurs.

VERN's experts and mentors Iva Biondić, Vice- Dean for Strategic Development, Gordana Ćorić, lecturer at VERN' and Tea Gagro Held, project manager, have participated in the final event of the project at the Israeli academic Centre IDC Herzliya. The last partner meeting and conference served as an opportunity to look back at the past 3 years of

cooperation, discuss the main achievements of the project and review the quality of implementation. VERN's team presented its contribution the two successful realization of this project through the following activities:

- Designing and conducting training for SinnoLab managers
- Designing and delivering programs for professors and students
- Organizing the final international multidisciplinary camp on the island of Vis

SILICE project had a goal to develop an open-source platform that promotes social innovation ideas and international cooperation at regional level between the EU, Israel, and India.

This project also tackled cross-cutting issues like gender-balance and equal opportunities for women

As part of the project, a creative and supportive environment for partner HEIs through the establishment of 9 SinnoLABs (Social Innovation Labs) was developed which will contribute to development of social enterprises in their diverse forms.

<https://www.silice.org/>

Project logo: 

Photo: <https://vernuni.eu/news/silice-FIN>



Projects regarding education and sustainability

VERN's students develop innovative service with international team at Finnish island Nauvo

VERN's students have recently returned from the Finnish island of Nauvo, where they were as a part of the Erasmus + project "VISIT - Versatile Island Cooperating for New Services and Innovation in Tourism." It is a project implemented jointly by partners from the Finnish Laurea University of Applied Sciences and VERN ' in partnership with higher education institutions from UK, Germany and Sweden.

The aim of the project is to improve the capacity and self-sustainability of the local community through cooperation in an international strategic consortium, and students will collaborate with SMEs to develop innovative or improve existing products and services as part of these activities in the islands of Greece, Croatia, Sweden and Finland. As part of the activities, students, accompanied with two of our professors traveled to Nauvo where they had an intensive study week program during which they collaborated with selected local companies.

Project logo:



Apprentice Track- Smart Electronic System for Tracking Apprenticeships (SAT)

Apprenticeships at PHE level provide opportunities to build up new skills and knowledge both on and off the job. When they are of high quality, apprenticeships promote a smoother transition from school/PHE institution to work for young people, giving them a good start to their working careers. They do so by providing a good mix of basic competences and job-specific skills as well as valuable work experience. In addition, at apprenticeships such as apprenticeships, internships, etc. are usually able to earn a wage, even if small, while studying. Quality apprenticeships can also provide an attractive learning pathway for youth at risk of dropping out early from initial education. Employers also benefit as they get support to identify and train workers while adding to their productive capacity and can still form their future employees. SAT as ICT innovation is enhancing digital competences in all target groups, giving them a management and measurement tool for ensuring quality of apprenticeship. On systemic level SAT provides transparent and comparative data among different countries to support further development of apprenticeship and relation between PHE Institutions and world of work. It is an EU funded project by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union.

The project aims for:

- Strengthening cooperation between students / HEI / SMEs during the apprenticeships
- Quick, easy and efficient way to track the progress of students
- A good overview of the role of the student in the apprenticeships for mentors
- Quick and easy ongoing evaluation of student progress at apprenticeships for mentors
- Possibility of a quick and effective response of organizers to lack of students' progression
- Directly involving the students into quality assessment of the apprenticeship
- Keeping the process of apprenticeship progression transparent, comparative and paperless

Our QA-transfer, ICT innovation based, data-driven approach to tackling responsiveness to world of work and students is unique, and thus one of the key innovations of the project.

The project will:

- Ensure that learning outcomes which should be achieved through work-based training are achieved
- Improve the quality, transparency and comparability responsiveness and of apprenticeships in PHE
- Improve efficiency of cooperation between WoW and PHE Institutions
- Meet the needs of employers, students and PHE Institutions in the field of ICT support tools

Mission of the project is to develop digital management tools that support Professional Higher Education (PHE) institutions and employers to offer and direct high-quality apprenticeships.

Vision of the project is that the digital management tools developed will be recognized as a model to improve the quality of the apprenticeships and will be adopted widely; updated and improved in the future by the users; and will serve as a basis for the development of formal international standards and guidelines.

Project partners are:

- Skupnost Višjih Strokovnih Šol Republike Slovenije
- Knowledge Innovation Centre
- Ekonomska šola Celje
- Czech Association of Professional Higher Education
- EURASHE

Project logo:



EDU-LAB Project

EDU-LAB is a project aiming to improve the professional chances of young people in the Danube region. The starting point for developing a new mindset is capacity development. EDU-LAB brings together partners from the higher education sector, business organizations, national public authorities and policy makers. This joint learning process will include further actors from civil society.

More than 20 partners from 10 countries will cooperate for 2.5 years to link education to employment in a sustainable way. A new governance model will be developed with the goal to create a binding commitment by the “Danubian Charter for young talents”. The program is co-funded by the European Union (ERDF and IPA).

International scientific conference

MIC-VIS

The international scientific conference Mediterranean Island Conference – MIC Vis is organized in partnership between the Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar and VERN University.

The conference is being held every two year on Croatia's most remote inhabited island, the island of Vis.

In 2018 MIC-Vis brought together more than 150 scientists and experts from 15 countries.

The conference was held under the auspices of the former President of the Republic of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović and the city of Vis.

International conference MIC - Vis, 2020 is a multidisciplinary scientific conference on the following topics such as: arts and literature, culture and tradition, business and economics, education, migration, renewable energy sources, sustainable development, tourism, agriculture and fisheries and others.

The goal of this year's conference MIC - Vis, 2020 is to foster new approaches to the main challenges that Mediterranean islands are facing and propose new solutions through brainstorming, discussion and scientific research.

