**Erasmus Policy statement (EPS)**:

The Higher Hotel Institute Cyprus (HHIC) would like to continue advancing in its educational role and its contribution of competent, knowledgeable and skilled staff to the work force. In order to achieve this effectively, the Institute needs to continue practicing international exchanges in staff and student mobility. Communication and contact with other higher educational institutions with the help of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, will strengthen and upgrade its mission statement. Teaching and student learning has been upgraded through both incoming and outgoing exchanges with other institutions and businesses in abroad.

Our vision is to render the HHIC a European, qualitative and modern institution of higher education for professional specialisation recognised both in Cyprus and abroad by the industry, students, professionals, the educational and academic world and the broader society, for the quality of education it provides as well as its ability to properly prepare the students and trainees of every age for the needs of the Hospitality, Catering and Tourism Industry.

Since its establishment over half a century ago, the HHIC was characterised by its eagerness to include international students. At various times, it has been called upon by the Cyprus Government to train both foreign students and industry employees. The Erasmus Programme is vital to the continuation of its intension of functioning at a European and local level. It should be noted that the HHIC is a public higher educational institution, offering education under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, and all its objectives are steered towards assisting the public and ensuring equal access and opportunities to all.

In order for the HHIC to secure this, its new programmes that came into effect in 2012, were as a result of a joint project with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). The Culinary Arts Programme that already existed was upgraded, and a new programme, Hospitality and Tourism Management was introduced featuring 3 areas of specialisation: Food and Beverage; Rooms Division; Travel and Tourism.

HHIC as a public higher education institution with an intimate relationship with the hospitality and tourism industry gears its activities towards the public interest serving both students and the industry. European collaboration in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme upgrades and enhances the public offer of the institute and at the same time facilitates its contribution in the Common European Education Area. In this context a number of activities will be promoted through the programme. Like other higher educational institutions, the HHIC believes in the constant upgrading of its educational and supportive services and the strengthening of its comparative advantages in order to attract qualitative candidates and compete effectively both locally and at a European level.

Most of the Institute’s students are interested in studying and working in other European countries, and in most cases, the Erasmus Programme is a stepping stone for them since it gives them an opportunity to explore this experience first-hand. The HHIC is interested in increasing the number of student and staff mobility thus exposing the Institute to innovative and modern European standards.

Because of the increased demand for further studies, the HHIC intends to develop a bachelor’s degree in both programmes of study. Participation in the Erasmus programme will offer the opportunity to cooperate with other European and international higher educational institutions offering similar programmes of study for exchanging ideas, experiences and knowledge. Joint degree programmes could be initiated and this serves as one of the main principles of the Erasmus programme).

The Institute intends to incorporate blended mobility since it ensures flexibility and provides opportunities for more staff/student participation in the Erasmus programme enhancing online exchange of knowledge, experiences and know-how. Through blended mobility the HHIC will be given the opportunity to modernise its learning/teaching.

Staff mobility allows teachers to be exposed to modern European methods of teaching and learning. They are given the opportunity and incentive to acquire new competences linked to the needs of the Institute. Competences acquired by staff during motilities have been integrated into teaching, learning and training practice. Erasmus exchange of staff provides the opportunity for exchange of ideas on teaching methods and improvement of teaching practises.

Furthermore, the Institute has benefitted by inviting experts in areas commensurate with the modules it teaches. These experts had the opportunity to disseminate their expertise, not only to the students and staff of the Institute, but also to industry and government department staff invited to participate in such events. This has led to learning enhancement and modernisation of the educational work overall.

The HHIC is interested in broadening the scope of its student/staff educational achievement. Students that attend Erasmus+ mobility are more likely to continue their studies abroad and oftentimes, they return to the university where they completed their Erasmus+ mobility. The HHIC also employs Erasmus+ mobility to give opportunities to students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The Institute is working towards the reinforcement of a European Education Area by adopting some of the main measures and initiatives that were developed by the European Commission. As stated above, it upgraded its programmes, enabling their recognition across Europe and internationally. It facilitated more staff and student mobility for studies and training and rewarded its students (outgoing and incoming) with ECTS commensurate with other higher educational institutions. In its new programmes, it included (as was the case in the past), the teaching of English plus the choice on another European language (the programme Hospitality and Tourism Management even offers a choice of a second European language). The HHIC is transparent in its selection of students since applications are available to all high-school graduates that have participated in the Pan-Cyprian School-Leaving Examinations. In the framework of its public mission it offers access to education, irrespective of applicants’ socio-economic background.

Additionally, both the programmes of study, offer modules that encourage multilingualism, multiculturalism and a strong sense of European identity, understanding and tolerance of other European and international cultures. Both programmes, the Hospitality and Tourism Management and the Culinary Arts, include modules related to Cypriot hospitality, culture and gastronomy, thus allowing students to establish a further understanding and acceptance of foreign intervention on local culture, as well as an understanding on international and European culture and gastronomy. The teaching of foreign languages empowers students to communicate and understand other cultures, resulting in their ability to offer high quality services in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Through the new European Charter 2021-2027 and through a strengthened Erasmus+ programme, the Institute will be able to work towards establishing an ambitious framework for European policy on cooperation in education and training. There will be better targeted use of European funds, work on the Automatic Mutual Recognition of Diplomas and learning periods abroad and last, but not least allows the HHIC to improve the teaching and learning of languages.